

Man must fight for life

By Cheryl Rudert

The twentieth century is teaching us many things. Among them is survival — in a retrogressive sense. For if primitive man led a perilous daily life, constantly pitted against the adversaries of weather and wild beasts, modern man leads an equally challenging one. Only his adversaries have evolved, ironically, from his own self.

John Schlesinger's chilling *Marathon Man*, besides providing a first-rate armchair-gripping story of torture, enigma, and betrayal, offers a disturbing hypothesis: 20th century technology, advanced beyond the perimeter of efficiency, has turned cities into nightmarish outposts of antagonism and violence, thereby giving rise to the existence of pure evil (specifically in the form of Nazism). The consequences force the pacifist, nobler members of society to defend themselves with the same violent methods they object to.

The theme sounds quite similar to the one Sam Peckinpah proposed in *Straw Dogs* (also with Dustin Hoffman). This time however, Hoffman is faced with an evil more potent and malignant than the half-witted hate of a peasant family. The story's horror is derived from the fact that the evil is inherent in a nebulous tentacle agency of the U.S. government (the "Division" — doing the jobs the FBI and CIA won't touch) whose ambiguous motives are never clearly defined, and a member of one of the supposedly humane professions — dentistry — transformed into a fiend by ambition and the ideals of Nazism.

Hoffman, as "Babe" Levy, a Jewish graduate student whose father committed suicide when persecuted during the McCarthy witch-hunt, is a sort of marathon "everyman." Seen on the surface he is a symbol of benign humanity, naive in the face of enemies, which appear to be all around him, and complementing his moral antithesis, Christian Szell.

Szell, played by Laurence Olivier, is a former Nazi dentist, who amassed a fortune in diamonds as bribes for freedom from Jews in a concentration camps. There he transformed his art into a demonic form of torture, gaining a reputation as "The White Angel" (because of his head of white hair) among his victims. Szell lives comfortably for years in Uruguay off of his stash of diamonds, which is kept in a safe deposit box in New York. When his brother dies in a bizarre auto accident, losing the only other key, Szell, mistrustful of his team of diamond-smuggling "Division" couriers, decides to come to New York to collect the fortune himself.

Arriving like a dim ghost from an unspeakable past, Szell radiates a diabolical presence in the midst of a confused world. One of the most haunting scenes occurs when he walks through the primarily Jewish diamond-market district and is recognized by two of his former victims. It is the type of scene that strikes raw nerves and stays fixed in a racial memory, outliving the film itself.

Babe becomes unsuspectingly involved with Szell when his brother "Doc" (Roy Scheider), one of Szell's enigmatic couriers, staggers into his apartment profusely bleeding to death. Erroneously thinking that Doc's last words to Babe concerned his mission, Szell has Babe captured and strapped to a dentist chair. Then the pain begins — the white, shrieking, glaring pain that makes you never want to see a dentist again.

As the film progresses, William Goldman's plot becomes a bit hazy for an audience accustomed to direct answers. Instead we are transmitted a blurred image of corruption and innocence battling it out amongst a heavy overlay of details and symbols. It is not necessarily an objectionable criticism however, and the superb control of tension, Hoffman's and Olivier's acting, the photography and immaculate editing bring the film's calibre up to a high level — high enough even to pay three dollars to see it.

The film's resolution lies in Babe's transformation from an inactive spectator. "I don't confront things," he tells one of his professors. Bitterly harboring desires for revenge, which surface partially in his doctoral thesis, he lives mutely in a jungle of antagonism — until he is goaded beyond human patience.

Forced to make a moral decision, his actions become the film's catharsis. He represents all the latent powers of good stirred into being, unwillingly but compulsively.

Watching this polarity of morals has its lighter moments as well. One of the film's redeeming factors is its roller-coaster ride of humor, fright and sobriety. Seconds before Hoffman undergoes his dental ordeal the audience is caught chuckling. It is a bitter-sweetness that makes the film a bit more concrete than a dream — or a nightmare.

Putting *Marathon Man* into a specific category is difficult. How does one recommend it to a friend? Say it is a thriller and one's mental process conjures up a Hitchcock film; say it is a film with a social statement and *Grapes of Wrath* or *Metropolis* flash across the mind. It is exactly this quality of combining genres into one celluloid strip that makes the film work. Instead of detracting from the tension the depiction of our worldly woes gives us a more relative substance to savor in our thoughts when the film has ended.

Szell and the "Division" are not improbable freaks of nature; they are spawned from the twentieth century along with a whole Pandora's box of goodies. Because of this, Schlesinger's artwork is not a comfortable one to watch. But then, neither is our current state of affairs.

Oregon Daily Emerald



By Eric S. Lee

If you tried to get in to the pitcher sale at Duffy's Friday before last and couldn't make it through the crowd, it's because there's a scandal in town and everybody wants to hear it.

It goes like this: Steve Myers of Patterson Alley and Free and Easy fame, and Richard Price, onetime member of the Archies and current composer for the Williams bread ads, have started a new group. The group's name is Scandal — and here's the good part — Myers and Price make no bones about the fact that this is a copy-rock band.

Can you do that in Eugene? Well, the Fox and Weasle have been doing it successfully for quite some time. "I think that Tom Greenough is the best entertainer in this town," says Myers. "But there's only so much two people can do. I wanted to design a band from the beginning that could play commercial music — Top-Forty stuff — and do it as well as it could be done."

With this in mind Myers and Price sat down and made a list of all the material, the arrangements and the set lists and made tapes of everything before they even picked the musicians. They knew exactly what they were going to do and how it was going to sound, they even scouted for equipment before they finally got around to choosing the people for the group, which make them sound like sort of an afterthought, but wait till you hear where they got them.

Myers, a two year student at the music school, decided to draw from among his classmates. Although he conceded "a lot of people were skeptical that you could take a classically trained musician and get them to play rock and roll," there was a method in his madness. "One of the hardest things to work with in forming a new group is prior expectations. Any musician with any experience has a very clear conception of what he's worth and he doesn't want to work for nothing." It is a well known fact that the

music school never has paid too well.

For a strong vocal sound, Myers picked three women, all classically trained in voice: Jeanne Ferguson, Laurie Tellock and Katie Hargreaves. "They're really the backbone of the group," says Myers. "We couldn't do what we're trying to do without them. Besides giving the stage a warm feeling, when they open their mouths, they're all in tune. That's something you don't hear very often."

The rest of the Scandal personnel include Steve Myers on lead guitar and pedal steel, Richard Price — rhythm guitar and sax, Steve Larson on the Keyboards, Tom McCauley does Bass and Jim Watson is the drummer. "I never know what I'm going to hear next from these guys," Myers says. "They've got these licks from other worlds of music and they put them in very professionally."

Myers and Scandal worked together all summer and their debut at the pitcher sale was an incredible success. They also played to an enthusiastic crowd in the Ballroom last Saturday night and according to Myers, he's having a hard time keeping up with the bookings already.

But how can a band that is conceived and constructed as methodically as a piece of recording equipment, be successful in a town with such high audience expectation as Eugene?

According to Myers, the show is designed with the audience in mind. The sets are long, the women are there adding class and relating directly to the audience; the musicians are tight and the sound is well engineered and well balanced. Myers philosophy is that the most important thing for a musician, or any kind of performer, is to remember that there's an audience out there that came to be entertained and if you're not there to entertain them, you may as well be home watching television.

There's an old axiom that says "It's not what you do — it's how you do it." I don't really think it matters what kind of music Scandal plays, as long as they do it well. And they do.

Folk music master holds workshop concert

This Sunday Mike Seeger, a master of traditional folk music, will perform on the stage of the Community Center for the Performing Arts, 8th and Lincoln.

He was born into a famous American music family. The father, Charles Seeger, is a famous folklorist. The mother, Ruth Crawford Seeger, is the author of several well known folk music books, Pete Seeger, is his half-brother, and Peggy Seeger, another well known folk singer, is his sister.

Seeger is considered an expert on the folk music of Appalachia and the Southern Mountains, country music of all kinds, and bluegrass music.

He is also one of the most extensive collectors of traditional music throughout the South and a spokesman for the urban appreciation and study of the music of the southern Appalachian region.

As with most of Seeger's solo and group albums (with the New Lost City Ramblers) over the past 16 years, the bulk of his music is traditional — the kind that has been handed down from generation to generation and only recently has been written down on paper.

His performances are designed to show the breadth and depth of southern American folk music, both instrumentally and vocally. He plays in a variety of styles, many of which are still current in the South today. He sings songs that range from the old unaccompanied English ballads to some of the more recently composed folk-based songs.

The emphasis in the first half of the program is usually on stylistic development progressing from melody oriented songs, such as those accompanied by fiddle or banjo, to chord oriented songs accompanied by autoharp or guitar. The second half emphasizes themes: rural topical songs reflecting industrialization of the South, some principal occupations of the south, as well as some of the themes dealt with in one of the South's major industries, contemporary country music.

Traditional music has been and always will be the fore-runner to bluegrass, country, and rock and roll music. And Mike Seeger — who plays all the instruments used in mountain music: guitar, banjo, fiddle, autoharp, french-harp, jewsharp, dulcimer, mandolin and harmonica — is one of the leading exponents of it.

At 3:30 p.m. the musicologist will present a matinee workshop. This will be an informal lecture-performance, and interested musicians should bring their instruments. Then at 8 p.m. Seeger will appear in one concert performance.

Tickets for each event are \$3 in advance, \$3.50 day of show. Children 12 and under get in for half price. Ticket outlets are Sun Shop, Everybody's and the Community Center for the Performing Arts. For more information call 687-2746.

