



At the movies

'Splatter' film is pointless

When's the last time you heard this one? Charles Bronson plays a professional assassin after a criminal so evil and sadistic that you thank God for vigilante justice.

Well, it's here again, and this time it's called "The Evil That Men Do." The major difference between this and Bronson's previous outings, besides a higher degree of blood and gore, is an international flavor.

The bad guy is a professional torturer known as the Doctor who hires himself out to small Latin American dictators. How did he get on Bronson's bad side? By doing away with one of his friends, a freedom-loving journalist critical of the Doctor's practice.

The Bronson character is named Holland in this film, and he's retired and living on a peaceful desert island. The brutal death of his friend pulls him back for one more job, however, which he performs gratis — out of the goodness of his heart. Yes, it's comforting to know that there are still avenging angels like Holland around, with a sawed-off shotgun in one hand and a high-caliber revolver in the other, leaving a trail of corpses behind him on his mission of glory.

"The Evil That Men Do" is a poor film even by Bronson's standards. He simply walks through his part and director J. Lee Thompson adds no style to the picture. The script is full of particularly bad dialogue and writers David Lee Henry and John Crowther have Holland pull some real boners.

The first moment he lays eyes on the Doctor and the entourage, he is caught staring at them for a full minute at the very least. In addition, he agrees to let an "emotional" female tag along to the most dangerous spots knowing full well the danger he is letting her into and the problems she could cause him in a tight situation.

All this film has going for it is a suave performance from Joseph Maher as the cool, calculating Doctor. Otherwise the picture is just another poorly made sensationalistic "splatter" film, filled with excessive gore, sadistic violence and one totally gratuitous moment of full female frontal nudity. If it wasn't for Bronson's name, this would just be another exploitation flick filling the second bill at drive-ins.

It plays at Cinema World and at the Eugene Drive-In.

Also Playing: This week only, Cinema 7 is playing one of the most beautiful and subtle films to grace Eugene screens all year.

The film is called "The Ballad Of Narayama," and it's about a culture and world view totally alien to our way of thinking. Set in rural Japan a hundred years ago, "Narayama" explores the lives of one family and how they live and die in the

harsh world ruled by a beautiful but deadly nature.

Highlighted by rich, striking photography shot almost exclusively in natural light, this looks like no other film of its kind and has a power and intensity of enormous magnitude. They arise from the subtle script and low-key but stylish direction.

It plays on a double bill with "Boat People," the story of the Southeast Asian boat people before they get on the boat. I have mixed feelings about this film. Though it is powerful and disturbing with moments of real poignancy, overall it's more shocking than subtle, relying on

sensational violence and brutality for impact.

I don't doubt the authenticity of director Ann Hui's portrayal of life in Vietnam after the '75 revolution, but I would prefer to see the political subtlety displayed in films such as "The Mission," an underrated film that played earlier at the festival.

This double feature ends this Thursday so I urge you to make the time to see "Narayama," and to stick around for "Boat People" if you can. Whether or not you agree with its politics, I suspect you will not leave the theater unchallenged.

By Sean Axmaker

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