

activities

In defense of "The Shining"

By T. A. RHODES

When I wrote last Spring that "The Black Stallion" may equal or surpass any movies released during the summer, I was hoping that I'd be wrong. Alas, I was right. Only two and one-half films came even close to the excellence of "The Black Stallion."

One was the re-release of "Close Encounters." The half was the first hour of Alan Parker's musical "Fame." The second as the much underrated thriller "The Shining."

No need to justify "Close Encounters," and only the first hour of "Fame" was truly noteworthy. The second half fell apart due to melodrama. There is a need, however, to justify Stanley Kubrick's adaption of Steven King's bestseller of the same title. It is unlike any thriller of its kind. It is a milestone to the horror film as Kubrick's own "2001: A Space Odyssey" was to the science-fiction genre.

After "2001," it was impossible to accept an outer-space film without realistic special effects. It marked the end (with a few exceptions) of--"The Aliens Are Taking Over!"--gloom doom cold war sci-fi. Unfortunately, special-effects have taken over the sci-fi industry while intelligence

and feeling have taken a back seat.

I am hoping that "The Shining" will do for horror film what "2001" did for the sci-fi. That is, change the emphasis. What "The Shining" did so well was slow down and spend time developing the characters. The focus on character rather than cheap thrills is a definite milestone. The change is Jack Nicholson's character was far more entertaining than, say, Betsy Palmer getting her head lopped off in "Friday the 13th."

Nicholson refined his character so well that it was impossible to watch "Friday the 13th," or "The Amityville Horror" without breaking out into helpless fits of laughter. The film also has more comedy than any other thriller of its kind.

The characters and their intellect were more essential to the story's denouement than perhaps any other thriller. Rather than grabbing an ax and trying to chop Nicholson's head off, the son (Danny Lloyd), instead tries to lose him in the gigantic maze and uses his resourcefulness rather than fighting violence with violence. That was refreshing.

If nothing else, that is what has been missing from the thriller. Characterization essential to the story's climax, an emphasis on character, and humor.

"The Shining," like all milestone films, was underrated at release and I am hoping its importance will be realized because the horror film is in danger of becoming dangerously trite and a change of emphasis would be refreshing.

Since the release of those two and a half movies, a drought has occurred in the business. None of the major summer releases have been worth writing about, until now.

The movie is Bette Midler's "Divine Madness." The old Breakfast cereal ad fits this movie perfectly. If you don't like Bette you'll like it, if you like Bette you'll love it.

"Divine M." is one of the most entertaining concert films to come around since Richard Pryor's "Live in Concert."

Filmed at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif., "Divine Madness" is nothing more than a filmed concert. Michael Ritchie ("The Candidate," "Smile," and "Semi-Tough"), who directed the whole operation, set 12

cameramen in the audience and onstage and film Midler's concert. It offers some of the best concert photography ever. Willie Fraker (1941, "Close Encounters") and his assistants beautifully photographed Midler. Fraker and his assistants' photographs deserve award nominations for excellent work.

What Midler does during filming of the concert is (with her backup vocals, Harletts), dance, perform, tomme, and tell some disgusting, and very funny jokes.

Despite the problems the sound system at the Box theatre the night Bette Midler was an entertainer, indeed.

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