

Movie reviews: The horror of war

by mike argento

Apocalypse Now is a film of surrealistic images woven into a story loosely based on Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**. Unlike other Vietnam films of this era, **Apocalypse** deals with the moral effects of war rather than the effects of war on individuals. There are no characters that the audience can personally relate to as in **The Deerhunter** or **Coming Home**. The characters in **Apocalypse** are symbols, representative of moral values.

For those not familiar with **Heart of Darkness**, here is a quick summary of that story. Marlow, skipper of a steamboat trading in ivory on the Congo River, goes in search of Kurtz, the trading company's number one agent. The idealistic Kurtz had entered the jungle with hope of civilizing the natives. In the wilderness he discovers in himself the great evil of which humans are capable. Kurtz sets himself up as a god to an army of natives, inciting his worshippers to robbery, persecution, and murder. Marlow's

encounter with the fatally ill Kurtz leave him profoundly disillusioned—shattered by his knowledge of human potential for evil.

In the film, Marlow is represented by Captain Willard, played masterfully by Martin Sheen. Willard, a trained assassin, is obsessed with the jungle. He lives for the hunt, for another mission, for another victim of his merciless, impersonal method of assassination. He is instructed to find Kurtz, played by Mar-

lon Brando, and murder him with "extreme prejudice." The first half of Willard's journey is a struggle to distance himself from the absurdity of the war. Along the way, he encounters insane Colonel Kilgore, brilliantly portrayed by Robert Duvall, who plays Wagner's classical music over a public address system during his attacks, and who loves surfing.

In the first half of the film, Colonel Kilgore's modern cavalry is seen surfing among

Vietnamese corpses followed by a truly bizarre USO show and an absurd battle at Do Lung Bridge. After the scenes at the bridge and a truly shocking encounter with a sampan, the film changes drastically: Willard is traveling back in time until he reaches Kurtz's camp.

The end of the film has caused a bit of controversy among critics. To this critic, the ending ties the movie together. The whole moral dilemma of war is dealt with-

the necessity of being motivated by great feeling of love, and yet being able to kill without any emotion, drawing on primordial instincts. To some this may seem ambiguous, but it is indeed a serious concept when dealing with war.

I am sure that this review cannot truly explain this film. The amazing images, the sweeping beauty and the horror of **Apocalypse Now** must be experienced. It is definitely a unique cinema experience.

And the comedy of religion

by jeff drinnan

The Pythons are back with another innovative satire—**Life of Brian**—this one set back a little further in history than **Monty Python and the Holy Grail**.

The scene is Jerusalem in the time of Jesus Christ. Partway through the movie, Brian is mistaken for Christ.

Brian is part Jew and part Roman, and hates the Romans. Also hating the Imperialist Romans is the People's Front of Judea, not to be mistaken for the Judean Peo-

ple's Front, whom the People's Front of Judea also hate.

Inevitably, Brian meets up with the People's Front of Judea and decides to join them, but first he must be initiated. He must write anti-Roman graffiti on a public wall in Latin. He's caught by a Roman soldier (John Cleese) who gives him a lesson in Latin grammar.

Life of Brian displays modern attitudes in first-century Jerusalem, showing how ridiculous radicals, religious fanatics and other people mis-

using Christianity are. There is no satire *per se* on Christ himself, but on philistine use of religion—on misinterpretation and general use of religion for one's own ends. Inconsistencies with the Bible are shown throughout the film.

The opening shot is a humble manger scene followed by a not-so-humble scene.

The use of the cross as a symbol of salvation is satirized. The crucifixion of a couple of hundred people is displayed as a social event, with polite Roman hosts and a jesting Jew.

When Brian uses the figurative speech of the Bible, onlookers take it literally, interrupting him and ridiculing him.

A day in the life of Brian consists of stonings, listening to speeches by Christ and religious fanatics on soapboxes and more.

The plot revolves around the radicals' plan to overthrow Pontius Pilate. Their rhetoric is satirized through Socratic dialogue and through dramatic action, showing their irrationality. The radical factions fight amongst themselves more than with those they call their mutual enemy—the Romans.

After having passed the initiation into the People's Front of Judea, Brian joins them in a plot to seize the Roman palace in modern radical style. On the way they meet another radical group, and guess what happens? Brian is caught and brought before Pilate, the straight man, in a very funny scene. Brian escapes, and of course the unpredictable happens in his flight.

While eluding the Romans, Brian drops on top of a soapbox, gives a speech, and runs off. After a group of people find his sandal, they are sure he is Christ. Graham Chaplin plays the disinterested Brian well, as he tries to rid himself of the unwanted followers.

The surrealistic cartoons greatly enhanced the film and were up to Python standards. Terry Gilliam played Brian's wise-cracking (and occasionally nagging) mother well; John Cleese added much understated humor as a radical Roman soldier; Michael Pallins played a silly leopard and an absurd Pontius Pilate; and Graham Chaplin kept a straight face in the midst of absurdity and played an convincing Brian mistaken for Christ. The innovation and chemistry of Python worked to make a uniquely funny film.

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