



Cold war hot in 'The Front'

Looking at the recent past and presenting it fairly is a difficult task. Get the scene and you lose the overall atmosphere, the big picture. Stand back and you lose the individual lives, the details. Where's the right spot where everything will coalesce?

Woods, Allen and company may have found it. The new movie 'The Front' (PG) is set in the cold war year of 1953. From the beginning it captures the contradictions: the paranoia, and even the human abundance of the decade.

An opening montage of old newsreel clips presents personalities and events of the 1940s: the MacArthur, married Korean War veteran. This emerges against an ironic musical background of Frank Sinatra singing 'Young at Heart'.

'The Front' is a tall and luscious looking, rides in an open convertible. Think of all you'll derive just from being alive. Sinatra

SENATOR JOSEPH McCarthy, smiling and dapper (he's not at the wedding), cuts the wedding cake with his bride. 'Fairy tales can come true,' it can happen to you.

None of this matters to Howard Prince (Woody Allen). He doesn't want to get involved. He's a school who trips the cash register in a steam New York bar. He makes book, owes money and takes out for number one, possibly.

When Howard meets the new girl, a successful television writer, gets blacked by the network for being a communist sympathizer—much he follows and Al work out a solution.

Al's demands write scripts, but he will put Howard's name on them. Howard becomes the front man to get the top and all the right trip he can handle as a bonded writer.

The parade is successful. Howard takes on two more black and white writers. While the writers, actors, directors and others in the entertainment industry are being victimized by self-styled super-patriots, Howard's income soars and his lifestyle escalates.

THE MOVIES new threads new days and a sharp new girl friend, played with spirit and sensitivity by Andrea Marcovici. Takes over for Howard. It's better for those around him.

Howard Brown, played by Zero Mostel, is a large figure, a comedian who would be a snigger, right for the part. He's a black, good comic, but allowed to make people laugh anymore. He's ground down made to growl, then blackmailed into spying on Howard in an effort to discredit his patriotic purity.

Howard's conscience, political or moral, is finally awakened as the distance closes between him and those whose lives have been ruined by the witch hunt. He kills himself. Howard's girlfriend saves him because he won't protest the blacklisting.

The film is good. The circumstances of the plot lead themselves to a certain fate, who by his own admission can't even handle a comedy, but is asked to make last-minute script revisions.

And when this literary impostor is fawned over at cocktail parties, a better believe that a better believe that a dumb thing he says is interpreted as a politically oriented, cleverness.

THERE ARE plenty of sharp one-liners, snappy put-downs of pompous people and the kind of magical jokes that Woody Allen does so well. When Howard's well-bred girlfriend explains to him, 'The greatest sin in our family was raising your voice.' 'How relevant.' 'The greatest sin in our family was buying real estate.'

The First, given us the 1940s. Close enough to remember, or not, a woman who does. Real enough to evoke our sympathy and together for individuals. Broad enough to encompass the larger dimensions of the decade and the specter that hovered over it.

At the specter of a communist, but the specter of a free society, looking at the fear and conscience.

GLIMPSES

NEW RELEASES

BURST OFFERINGS (PG): Predictable plot as haunted house takes over the family. Betty Davis, Oliver Reed and Karen Black star. **3-11-78**

12TH TALK ABOUT MEN (PG): A 10-year-old social satire by Lisa Wolpert, in which she strays together four episodes dealing with men-women relationships. As usual, she manages to capture both the agonies and the humor of her characters' bittersweet lives. **3-11-78**

LEWIS'S RUN (PG): Michael York, Jenny Agutter and Peter Cushing compete with the special effects department in a 23rd century world where 29 years is all you get. Makes '55 and out' look pretty good. **3-11-78**

MILITATION MAN (R): A spy thriller which overwheats a terrific cast with a surfeit of blood and violence. Laurence Olivier, Dustin Hoffman, William Devane and Roy Scheider give it their best. **3-11-78**

A MATTER OF TIME (PG): An angry, unimpressed comedy. Ingrid Bergman reveals her glamorous life and attempts to inspire a starn-eyed chambermaid. Lisa Monelli. Liz tries, but she can't cut it. **3-11-78**

MURDER BY DEATH (PG): Wonderful spoof by Neil Simon, who concerns the world's five greatest detectives to solve a murder. Among them, Peter Sellers, Alec Guinness and David Niven match wits and steal scenes. Lots of puns. **3-11-78**

WARMERS... IS THAT VARY (PG): A black and white comedy by Redd Foxx and Pearl Bailey star, in the adaptation of the Broadway comedy. Dad brings home a hooker, Tamara Dobson to lure his gay son into heterosexual pleasures. **3-11-78**

DEPRESSION (PG): Suspenseful romance with Cliff Robertson as a man who falls in love with a woman who looks just like his dead wife. **3-11-78**

THE OMEN (R): Presents some unique contributions to movie horror in the grisly deaths which abound in this supernatural thriller. Gregory Peck and Lee Remick star. **3-11-78**

THE RITZ (R): All the homosexual jokes you would expect when a straight running from his men unwittingly hides out in a gay bathhouse. Jack Welson and Rita Moreno do a good job with some lurid material. **3-11-78**

THE SAILOR WHO FELL FROM GRACE WITH THE SEA (R): Adaptation of a strange Japanese novel. Erotic couplings of the sailor and the widow while her psycho son secretly watches them. **3-11-78**

SILENT MOVIE (PG): Mel Brooks makes a silent movie about a guy making a silent movie in 1976. Inspired jokes, sick jokes and slapstick. **3-11-78**

BACK AGAIN

HAROLD AND MAUDE (PG): Cult film of understanding and love between young man and old woman, each rebelling against conservative structures of a middle-aged, middle-class society. **3-11-78**

KING OF HEARTS (R): Charming film of inmates of a mental asylum who take over the 'normal' routines of life in a deserted village. Alan Bates and Genevieve Bujold star. **3-11-78**

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

G: General audiences admitted.
PG: Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
R: Restricted. Parents or guardians must be with person under 18.
X: No one under 18 admitted.

And Entertainment Guide

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