



'Apocalypse Now' exciting to the eye but story is murky

"Apocalypse Now" (R) is a great beast of a film; provocative in its moral thrust, fascinating in its literary interpretation, mesmerizing in its visual effects and intimidating in its size.

Its deficiencies are no less imposing. They are the opposite of its merits. The oral position becomes murky, caught between an abhorrence for war and an admiration for military heroics. The literary content, adapted from Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," never achieves a cinematic force equal to the impact of the novel.

Finally, the size of the film in terms of running time (just under three hours), becomes a handicap that tests the viewer's patience.

Only the visuals are true to their promise. Stunning scenes of an air-cavalry strike mounted to Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," of a battle at a bridge realized in hallucinogenic colors and sounds, and of an eerie tableau of painted warriors in their canoes are highlights of the dazzling cinematography.

THESE EXTREMES testify to the scope of the film which virtually assures the existence of sizable problems, even though the director, Francis Ford Coppola, has proven himself a master of epics with "Godfather" I and II to his credit.

However, in "Apocalypse Now," he eschews those very qualities which vitalized the Godfather films; namely, the close scrutiny of characters; the piling up of details of speech, dress and manner; and, most important, the narrative drive that invigorates the storyteller's art. Instead, Coppola appears more intent on creating a psychological reality rather than a material one.

It seems like a haunting idea, to integrate the experience of Vietnam with the haunting power of Conrad's novel. Simply put, the Conrad novel chronicles a journey from civilization and reason to jungle savagery and the dark forces of the id. In place of Conrad's narrator, we have Capt. Willard (Martin Sheen).

Willard, an intelligence officer, is ordered to proceed upriver to the jungle compound of the renegade Green Beret officer Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando) and to "terminate" his command. The irony of the mission is not lost on Willard who reflects that "accusing someone of murder in Vietnam is like handing out speeding tickets at the Indy 500."

Willard's continued voice-over narration and persistent presence might be expected to give unity to the film. They don't. The two stories never mesh. Conrad's moral horror, difficult to convey, is not the same thing as war's moral anarchy.

THUS, IT IS not surprising that the Vietnam scenes are the more vivid and real. Neither Sheen nor Brando (who doesn't appear until the last quarter of the film) can match the energetic characterization of Robert Duvall as the ferocious Lt. Col. Kilgore who leads the helicopter attack, then sends his men out to surf during mop-up operations.

The fragile, boyish-looking Sheen is never credible as the seasoned killer that Willard is supposed to be. And Brando's Kurtz is never more than a hulking, shadowy figure who reads poetry in a deep, sonorous voice — though the fault is with the script, not Brando.

"Apocalypse Now" contains individually brilliant passages and awesome visuals, but it never succeeds as a coherent film.

2 Charley's taverns offering pigskin parties

Pigskin parties are once again a weekly event in Michigan. Two family taverns in the Detroit area have free popcorn, hot dogs sold from a hotbox, waitresses dressed in shorts and football jerseys and bartenders sporting football jerseys. All the trimmings can be found at Chuck Muer's Bloomfield Charley's and Northville Charley's where giant television facilities are featured for easy viewing.

A traditional event at the Muer Taverns, Monday Night Football begins about 9 p.m., but seats are available on

a first come, first served basis. Northville Charley's is at 41122 W. Seven Mile in Northville, and Bloomfield Charley's is at 5656 W. Maple (at Orchard Lake Road) in West Bloomfield.

Pigskin parties are being planned at both taverns for Wolverine and Buckeye football fans who can't make it to the big game Saturday, Nov. 17. A special afternoon of fun and refreshments is slated for those who want to watch the game on giant screen television.



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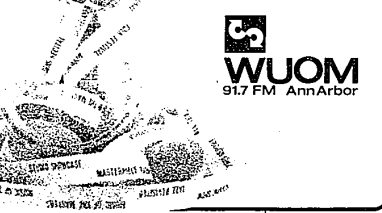
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Premiering

Alex Karras and Susan Clark await the next scene of "Jimmy B. and Andre," a made-for-TV movie filmed entirely in Detroit last summer. The world premiere of the movie will be presented Friday, Nov. 2, at the Detroit Plaza Hotel. The event, featuring Alex Karras, is sponsored by the Michigan Chapter, American Society of Interior Designers, for the benefit of the American Lung Association of Southeastern Michigan. The film also introduces Curtis Yates, a young Detroit actor, as Andre, the ghetto youth who in real life was befriended by Jimmy Buttslears, owner of the downtown Detroit Lindell AC. Tickets are \$50 and \$35, with reservations available from the American Lung Association by calling 961-1697.