

Paul Newman is Essex in the enigmatic "Quintet."



Survivors huddle in strange world without meaning

Perhaps every ambitious director has an end-of-the-world film in him. There was Bergman's "The Serpent's Egg" and Kubrick's "Dr. Strangleve." For Robert Allman, it's a film about an icy wasteland where survivors play a deadly game called "Quintet." Allman has brought together an impressive international cast. It includes Bibi Andersson, Paul Newman, Brigitte Fossey, Fernando Rey, Vittorio Gassman and others. He has put his players, one might almost call them pawns, in a strange, oddly fascinating setting. But he has given them precious little to head to the street of th

in unneasted rooms wintle bands of scavenging dogs devour bodies left on the streets outside. Identification of time and place is purposed lyl valcing, Similarly, Identification of hints of what brought the world to this bleak state. Is this an act of nature, another lice Age? Or has mankind managed independently to alter and destroy his environment?

THE CIRCUMSTANCES are ambiguous. Altman leaves almost everything to the viewer's imagination. But without a touchstone to orient us, and without characters we care about, the film never takes hold.

Altman, who co-authored the story and script with Frank Barhydt,
Patricia Resnick and Lionel Chetwynd, must take final responsibility for the lack of substance. Consequently, the film is so vague that it could mean anything or nothing. One person may view it as a medieval morality play with Newman as Everyman. Another may see it as a metaphysical exercise. A third person may discover a boggled attempt at a sci-fit thriller.

cal exercise. A third person may discover a boggled attempt at a sci-fit thriller.

Production notes accompanying the film explain it as a consequence of the director's interest in games. Altman considers games the reflection of a civilization's culture, of its poetry and ethics and aesthetic caluses. This premise saddles the game of quintet with more sociological significance than it can handle.

Quintet is a simple elimination game. The stakes are life or death. This ultimate version appears to be played by an elite cadre. Stoically, they throw the dice and move their talisman-like pieces. Whatever the details may be, the object is to get the other players before they get you.

Aside from the physical volonec, the game does not hold our interest. Neither to the implacable players win our sympathy or the leaden disables to the played of the played of the details of the control of the played of the control o

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NEW RELEASES

AGATHA (PG). Speculation on the 11-day disappearance of Agatha Christie is framed in handsome film with Vanessa Redgrave in title role and Dustin Hoffman as a brash reporter.

THE BRINK'S VOB (PG). William Friedkin directed this comic adventure about the big heist with Peter Falk, Peter Boyle, Warren Oates and Gena Rowlands.

CALIFORNIA SUTIE (Pg). Neil Simon's comedy of four episodes should guests at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Starry cast includes Jane Fonda and Walter Matthau.

EVERTY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE (PG). Country-western-style action comedy with Clint Eastwood, Sandra Locke and Clyde, the orangutan.

FAST BREAK (PG). Gabric Kaplan is a N.Y. deli derk named to coach a motley crew of basketball players at an obscure college.

GET OUT YOUR HANDERGHIEFS (R). Eccentric view of malefemale relations as woman's husband and lover work toward her happiness in unconventional way.

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THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (PG), Adventure caper in 1855 at stere
attractive crooks plan the first robbery of a moving train.

HARDOORE (R), George C. Scott is a religious, midwestern businessman
who searches the porn underworld for his missing teenage daughter.

ICE CASTLES (PG). "The Other Side of the Mountain" meets "Slow
Dancing in the Big City" in teen romance of skater who overcome
handicap.

BYMASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (PG). Remake of chilling sci-fi
thriller about allen invasion in the form of plant pods.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE
General audiences admitted.
Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
No one under 18 admitted.

G AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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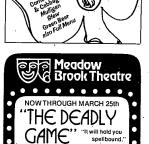










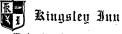


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BY JAMES YAFFE

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