

## Film maker seeks investors from area

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Detroit has more buildings that look like Berlin in the 1920s than Berlin has, claims filmmaker Hayry (Peter) Toukhanian.

The Motor City has been chosen as a backdrop for a projected feature film by Toukhanian, the Beirut-born executive producer-director of Video Films Inc. in Detroit.

His background in industrial film production, with many awards to his credit, is launching him on "Assignment Berlin."

Toukhanian is seeking investors for the production, and will hold another in a series of meetings at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Somerset Inn, Troy. Persons who want to attend may call Toukhanian at 393-0880.

THE DOCU-DRAMA is based on a

true story of an assassination. The cast includes David Hedison, who played the captain in the TV series "Journey to the Bottom of the Sea," as the assassin, code name Lightning; Eddie Mekka, who plays Carmine on TV's "Laverne and Shirley," as Torch; and Val Avery, as the Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire, who is assassinated.

French singer/actor Charles Aznavour has a role in the film. The film will be marketed internationally, and Aznavour asked only for 3 percent of profits in France, Belgium and Switzerland, in accepting the film role, Toukhanian said.

Budgeted at \$1 million, "Assignment Berlin" still needs \$128,000 of \$550,000 the film's producer-director is seeking to raise. Toukhanian said investors may come in for as little as \$1,000 a unit.



Burt Reynolds is the Bandit who outwits Smokey again in "Smokey and the Bandit II."



the movies

Louise Snider

## 'Smokey' rehashes same old story, with car wrecks

"Smokey and the Bandit II" (PG) has all the entertainment value of a traffic jam and is just about as novel.

Replaying the first film with only slight variation on the theme, the original cast is reassembled and supplemented, thank goodness, by the presence of Dom DeLuise.

DeLuise does a shtick as an Italian gynecologist who ministers to the other new member of the cast, a pregnant elephant named Charlotte. DeLuise's hyperantics are matched by those of Jackie Gleason as the continually frustrated sheriff, Buford T. Justice.

The sheriff, always in "hot pursuit," and the gynecologist, always guzzling wine, eke out a few laughs in a repetitious film where crudity substitutes for comedy.

Burt Reynolds as the Bandit, with his sidekick the Snowman (Jerry Reed), Fred the bassett hound and Frog (Sally Field) once again are lured to the open road by a lucrative mission: To transport an elephant (the pachyderm's condition is discovered en route) from Miami to Dallas.

NATURALLY, THIS presents big problems. The biggest of these is sobering up the Bandit and getting him into driving condition.

This unpromising beginning sets the tone for the entire film. Sour Reynolds's flair for light comedy emerges in scenes where he seches repeatedly, just one witty blast after another.

It seems that after a fling with fame, fortune and fooling around, which prompted the Frog to leave him, the Bandit hit the skids. Will he pull himself together? Can he make the run from Florida to Texas? And can he do it without jeopardizing the health of his cargo and cargo-to-be?

About 165 minutes and maybe 165 car wrecks later, one gets the answers. They aren't unexpected, worth waiting for or of any possible consequence to anything.

Even so, the film tries to flesh out the frail plot with an in-joke about the Bandit (and by implication, Reynolds) being publicity starved. It pokes fun at his need for celeb treatment and recognition, for a "People magazine fix."

THE RESULT is that the film is both a rehash of the original and a cynical commentary on popularity, but neither perspective enhances or contributes to the other.

The Bandit guns his TransAm across America's highways, but he isn't the lovable rascal he used to be. Now he just leaves a trail of empty beer cans and notorious fumes.

## what's at the movies

### NEW RELEASES

**AIRPLANE (PG).** A picture that takes off. This spoof of all those "Airport" movies is one of the zaniest films around.

**THE BLUE LAGOON (R).** Lush photography but silly story of two shipwrecked youngsters who grow up uninhibited on tropic isle.

**CADDYSHACK (R).** Chevy Chase and other comics in misadventures of caddies at a stuffy country club.

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (PG).** Added footage and some judicious editing improve an already good product, Spielberg's sci-fi adventure of aliens contacting Earth.

**DRESSED TO KILL (R).** Horrory murder mystery with more than a passing resemblance to Hitchcock's "Psycho."

**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (PG).** "Star Wars" sequel unites original cast in continuation of battle against the evil empire.

**FAME (R).** Lots of young talent in vibrant musical about students at New York's School of Performing Arts.

**THE FIENDISH PLOT OF DR. FU MANCHU (PG).** Not very funny or very fiendish, but Peter Sellers' last film does include an occasional flash of comic genius that reminds us of what a gifted actor he was.

**THE FINAL COUNTDOWN (PG).** Kirk Douglas in action drama of a warship that goes through a time warp to the hour before Pearl Harbor.

**HERBIE GOES BANANAS (G).** Herbie, the Volkswagen bug, returns to the screen in a new adventure.

**HONEYMOON ROSE (PG).** Willie Nelson is the center of attention in story about a country-western star who forgets he's married whenever he's on tour, which is most of the time.

**THE HUNTER (PG).** Steve McQueen returns to the screen again as a modern-day bounty hunter in pursuit of fugitives.

**MOUNTAIN MEN (R).** Charlton Heston and Brian Keith in violent story of hunters in the Rockies in the early 1800s.

### MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.  
PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.  
R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.  
X No one under 18 admitted.

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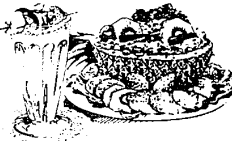
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