

Excellent book details wineries



wine
Richard Watson

It occurred to me recently that it has been a long time since this column has reviewed any new books. The reason, alas, is too obvious. After a flurry of fine wine books published between 1975 and 1978, the momentum collapsed. There have been few, if any, to report. Until now.

The giant, excellent release that triggers all this is Hugh Johnson's "Modern Encyclopedia of Wine," (Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1983). Johnson is author of the authoritative "The World Atlas of Wine" (same publisher, 1971), the book that has been the map guide to the wines of the world for so long.

The new book does not replace the earlier. Indeed, it is rather light on maps, though those in the early pages are excellent. Rather, the encyclopedia is a detailed listing, with highly intelligent and comprehensive commentary, of the wineries of the world. Johnson's somewhat more general book, "Wine" (published in 1974), is also different for it focuses on a discussion of wine regions.

used, name of winemaker, viticultural status, cost of certain issues in national currency, and then gives a quick commentary on each. Some of the descriptions are of one sentence, some full paragraphs. In addition, some major wineries are given one-page reviews.

The organization is by nation and is conventional for the most part. But the detail! Who else but Johnson knows enough about Swiss wines to fill seven pages, and his eight pages on South African wines are probably more than most of us need to know. And 15 pages on Australia.

Where I feel reasonably competent to evaluate the nature and fairness of Johnson's commentary was only in the American section, and I found nothing of substance to quarrel with. He is fair, thorough and accurate. And knowledgeable.

The book, at \$29.95, is less than half a case of decent wine. And the information to be had browsing through it!

VICTOR HAZAN's book, "Italian Wine" (Knopf, N.Y., 1982), has been available for more than a year now. Reading and then rereading it, I continue to be impressed with its lucidity. Not only a knowledgeable wine man, Hazan is a fine writer, as well.

While geography is considered, the orientation of the book is on wines and wine-types. It moves from big reds through medium range red wines, followed by the light reds.

Then crisp whites are followed by a section on fruity whites. Sweet wines finish the major section. In addition there are lengthy discussions of the laws supporting Italian wine production and the inevitable discussions of tasting and serving rules. The maps are competent.

The narration is the thing here, however. Hazan has been in the places he writes of and expresses himself with conviction and sympathy. He is not an apologist but an articulate spokesman for his subject.

THE THIRD book, "Winemaking in California" (McGraw-Hill, 1983), is essentially a chronicle of the people who have made the industry. The richest parts of the book, which has a county-by-county focus, are descriptions of some of the founding giants, especially in the mid and late 19th century.

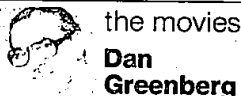
Here are names to be reckoned with: Agoston Haraszthy, Vallejo, Yount, LeFranc, Jacob Schram, Charles Krug, Jacob Beringer, the Korbel brothers. The authors, Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun, also devote a full chapter to the most difficult era to grasp, when America came away from Prohibition and an industry tried to right itself.

The pictures are the most interesting, however. It is fascinating to see shots of scenes and buildings from the 1880s that are today, essentially unchanged.

All in all, if you like to learn about the people of wine and their histories, a decent book. If not, it can get a bit tedious as people-oriented histories can.



Rachel Ward is a rich girl and Jeff Bridges is a football player, who are lovers in the adventure film, "Against All Odds."



the movies
Dan Greenberg

'Against All Odds' just hasn't a chance

This seems to be the season for remakes, with virtually every other film a new edition of an earlier model.

"Scarface," "Unfaithfully Yours," "To Be or Not To Be" and "The Man Who Loved Women" quickly come to mind.

"Against All Odds" is a remake of the 1947 "Out of the Past" starring Kirk Douglas, Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer, who has a supporting role in the current release. I don't remember that film, but it couldn't have been any worse than the present offering.

Somehow the current production has beaten the odds by turning a good gangster story with splashy California settings, beautiful Mexican location photography and a good cast into a boring, repetitious film that never fulfills the promise of its ingredients. Missing was a sensible script clearly directed.

Jessie Wyler (Rachel Ward) is a rich but neurotic woman who can't decide whether she wants to love crooked books-nightclub owner Jake Wise (James Wood) or football star Terry Brogan (Jeff Bridges).

MOTHER WYLER (Jane Greer) is a wealthy real-estate developer and football-club owner. She doesn't like either of her daughter's lovers and has attorney Ben Caxon (Richard Widmark) — who is really "Mr. Big" — take care of these and other things, like "fixing" city council and environmentalist objections to her new real-estate development.

Both principal, as well as supporting, roles are effective. Included is Alex Karras who always does well, particularly in football roles, although one might wish he hadn't shown up so quickly to interrupt the film's hottest love sequence.

Certainly any film with Rachel Ward is going to look terrific. She indicates considerable acting potential but so far has been restricted to pretty parts, such as Domino in "Shirley's Machine" with Burt Reynolds.

Also on the looks level, there are attractive Mexican sequences filmed in the ancient Mayan and Toltec ruins, never before used for theatrical motion pictures.

If the Mexican Government had scrutinized the script more closely it might not have granted permission to film on those sacred ruins. "Against All Odds" certainly is not a respectful monument to Mayan Civilization.

The very weak script and flabby direction drag this production down. Character motivation is unclear and the action rambles in what should be a tightly paced mystery-thriller that meanders around for two pretty but boring hours.

"TANK," ON THE other hand, is not a remake of anything because no one in his right, or wrong, mind would dream up such a stupid movie twice.

Perhaps this was a left-over "Rockford Files" script that the network had the good sense to scratch. The film does exhibit television characteristics: Intense action followed by relaxed interludes, conveniently structured for commercial inserts.

TV Emmy-award-winning Director Marvin Chomsky ("Inside the Third Reich," "Holocaust," "Victory at Entebbe," "Aktion" and several episodes of the original "Roots") may know his television, but TV's interruptive pattern doesn't work well for two hours on the big screen.

The hashed-up story includes a sadistic small-town Sheriff Buelton (G.D. Spradlin), who turns Dukes-of-Hazard silly near the end, and Sergeant-Major Zack Carey (James Garner). They destroy the jail and rescue his son Billy (C. Thomas Howell) from the prison farm using a restored Sherman tank while wife LaDonna (Shirley Jones) raises media and political support.

There are serious moments of sheriff-sadism intermixed with images of the "new" Army, an impossible motorcycle jump, a weak attempt at father-son relationships shadowed by the guilt of an elder son's death, biker heroes, marching bands and so much nonsense you wouldn't believe.

THIS INAPPROPRIATE combination may mix on television, with commercials breaking the audience's concentration, but it doesn't work here.

However, if you enjoy "Mrs. Partridge" swearing while Rockford squashes jails and shoots cars with his restored Sherman, go see "Tank."



In "Tank," James Garner is Sergeant-Major Zack Carey, who uses the force of a Sherman tank to get his way.

what's at the movies

AGAINST ALL ODDS (R). Poorly scripted, weakly directed, pretty-looking gangster story.

ANGEL (R). Do you care what drives a 14-year-old, all-A student to night-time prostitution?

THE BIG CHILL (R). College friends from the 1960s sit around feeling guilty.

BLAME IT ON RIO (R). Comedy-romance with Michael Caine as man involved with his best friend's daughter.

BROADWAY DANNY ROSE (PG). Woody Allen at his best in warm comedy about New York characters.

CARMEN (R). Beautifully choreographed dance version of the opera. A very mild "R."

THE DRESSER (PG). Excellent backstage drama of touring Shakespearean company. Best picture of the year.

ENTRE NOUS (PG). Well-acted, beautifully photographed story of two women. Character motivation and dramatic credibility weak.

FOOTLOOSE (PG). Energetic dance numbers wasted in mish-mash of musical comedy and attempted drama.

HARRY AND SON (PG). Paul Newman and Robby Benson as father and son who have nothing in common.

HOTEL NEW HAMPSHIRE (R). Based on John Irving's best-seller about the oddball Berry family. With Jodie Foster, Nastassja Kinski and Beau Bridges.

LASSITER (R). Tom Selleck as international jewel thief working for Scotland Yard.

LIQUID SKY (R). The R is for rotten. Plot's about aliens and New Wave decadence.

NEVER CRY WOLF (PG). Beautifully photographed tale of Arctic wolves watched by a dippy biologist.

SILKWOOD (R). Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell and Cher in moving story about Karen Silkwood, plutonium poisoning and union politics.

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