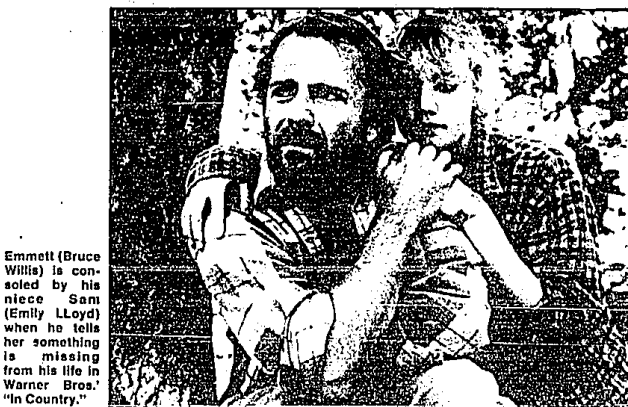


MOVING PICTURES



Emmett (Bruce Willis) is consoled by his niece Sam (Emily Lloyd) when he tells her something is missing from his life in Warner Bros.' "In Country."

'Country' makes attempt to heal Vietnam wounds

"In Country" (B+, R 110 minutes) is an often poignant, sometimes maudlin slice of life about a lot of good ol' boys struggling to recover from their experiences in Vietnam. It's also about a daughter of one of their fallen comrades, searching for her father's image.

Samatha Hughes (Emily Lloyd) never knew her father who was killed in combat when she was an infant. Her mother Irene (Joan Allen) has moved on to another husband in another town, Lexington, trying and succeeding — in rebuilding her life.

"In Country" opens with Samatha's high school graduation in Hopewell, Ky. Sam lives with her Uncle Emmett (Bruce Willis), also a Vietnam vet. Emmett is almost totally distracted from life by the traumatic aftermath of his combat experiences.

Gradually, as the film progresses, Sam begins to wonder about her father and she ferrets out his old letters and diaries. She begs Emmett and his buddies for information about "what it was like."

One of the structural problems of "In Country" is that it seems rather strange that such a bright young girl would wait so long to wonder about her father.

The film's other major problem is its slowness, a slice of life with very little action. What saves it are the characters who populate the landscape. They are as well acted that most of the time they're enough to carry the film. In particular, Emily Lloyd demonstrates a rare, fine talent as a young woman struggling to understand the cards life has dealt her.

FINALLY, THE film is about healing and it concludes with a touching, emotional trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. What healing is foreshadowed earlier in a Vietnam vet dance at the local gym. There, as the drinking continues, the ingrained hostilities surface and two vets fight. They're separated, then they reconcile, shake hands and hug. Somehow that sequence erases all the poison.

The scene has a great deal of pathos with the lucky guy getting the poor turnout, friends fighting among themselves — all factors emphasizing the loneliness and rejection Vietnam veterans suffered.

"In Country" won't completely heal the wounds of Vietnam, but it is a moving statement that begins the process.

"Johnny Handsome" (F, R, 90 minutes) is an ugly movie. It interposes medical grandstanding, excessive brutality and gritty shootouts with slow, maudlin sequences about poor John Smedley (Mickey Rourke) who was born deformed.

Echoing the "Officer Krupke" routine from "West Side Story," he's depraved because he's deprived. And there's no hope. Despite the love of a good woman, Donna McCarthy (Elizabeth McGovern), and the faith and trust of both Dr. Steven Resher (Forest Whitaker) and Sister Luke (Yvonne Bryceland), he is doomed.

IN ANY EVENT, all this reconstructive surgery and speech therapy performs miracles on the exterior Johnny but fails to deter his corrupt, self-destructive inner impulse for revenge for the gruesome double-cross that opens the film.

The double-cross, the reconstructive surgery, the revenge, the whole thing pessimistically proves that it's impossible to go straight. Deformed criminals remain twisted.

It also proves that a lot of money gets spent on unpleasant, stupid movies that are best ignored.

STILL PLAYING:

"The Abyss" (D-) (PG-13) 135 minutes. Despite excellent underwater sequences, this muddled and murky sci-fi sea saga sinks.



the movies

Dan Greenberg

"Batman" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes. Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"Black Rain" (D-) (R) 120 minutes. Unpleasant, urtic detective story stars Michael Douglas.

"Cage" (R). Two Vietnam veterans involved in cage fighting.

"Casualties of War" (B+) (R) 105 minutes. Grim, gripping and graphically violent story of Vietnam war.

"Coolie" (C+) (R) 90 minutes. A couple of confusing stories run together as mother Peter Falk tries to reconcile with daughter, Coolie (Emily Lloyd) while scamming mob and feds.

"Dead Poets Society" (A+) (PG) 124 minutes. Robin Williams' sensitive portrait of a fine teacher is complimented by excellent young actors as his students.

"Hearts of Dixie" (F) (PG). Southern gentility faced with late '50s civil rights movement.

"Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (B+) (PG) 105 minutes. It's fun but it ain't easy to be small.

"Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (B+) (PG-13) 120 minutes. Good entertainment, but enough already.

"Kickboxer" (F) (R). Vengeance and rescue are in order as an American Kickboxer travels to Thailand.

"Lethal Weapon II" (B+) (R) 115 minutes. Glover and Gibson do it again in high, albeit violent, style.

"Lockup" (R). Stallone is in jail and Donald Sutherland is the warden. Best wishes to the latter.

"Nightmare on Elm Street V" (R). Freddy's back.

"Parasite" (A-) (R) 120 minutes. Large, talented cast in complex, but entertaining story about a family which includes Jason Robards, Steve Martin, Tom Hulse, Martha Plimpton and Diane West, among others.

"Peter Pan" (A) (G) 77 minutes. Disney's classic animation of Sir James Barrie's story.

"The Package" (R). Gene Hackman and Joanna Cassidy in a story of deceit on the international scene as career military man escorts prisoner back from Russia.

"Phenomena of the Mall: Eric's Revenge" (R). Morgan Fairchild and others involved in love, horror and revenge.

"Reisetter" (F) (R). Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, Leo Rossi and Meg Foster in story of driven young man who becomes a killer.

"Romero" (A) (PG-13) 105 minutes. Disturbing and frightening, but provocative story of El Salvadoran Archbishop

Dr. Resher (Forest Whitaker) hopes that reconstructive surgery performed on Johnny's (Mickey Rourke) face will help the felon lead a normal and law-abiding life in "Johnny Handsome."

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ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

DFT salutes Peckinpah

By John Monaghan
special writer

Sam Peckinpah's reputation as a hard-drinking, hard-cussing macho western director followed him through two decades and a dozen films. His most famous, "The Wild Bunch" and "Straw Dogs" were visually charged exercises in violence.

But amid all the slow-motion brutality, there was also beauty and poignancy. The Detroit Film Theatre pays tribute to Peckinpah this weekend with screenings of "Ride the High Country" (1962) and "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid."

Playing on Sunday, "Ride the High Country" is the first film to gain Peckinpah international acclaim. Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott (in his last film) play aging cowhands recalling their pasts while guarding a shipment of gold.

Though originally buried in the bottom half of a double bill, it attracted critics' attention and became a minor hit. Many still consider it the finest western of the 1960s —

perhaps the best western ever made.

PECKINPAH didn't have quite the same luck with "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" a decade later. Countless problems on the set — many of them caused by Peckinpah himself — put the film a month behind schedule. Slapdash editing caused director to disown the film.

Peckinpah had been monkeying with a director's cut from then up to his death in 1985. The DFT will run 16 additional minutes when it screens the film this Saturday as part of its ambitious wide screen series.

Screenwriter Rudy Wurlitzer envisioned the film as an existential story of two mythic western figures on a fateful collision course. Peckinpah changed all that, immediately establishing their relationship, making the final shootout a meeting of two different parts of a collective personality.

For "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid," Peckinpah compiled his most unusual cast.

Kris Kristofferson was still work-

ing in a Los Angeles nightclub when cast as Billy the Kid. He brought his entire band for parts in the film, which also featured James Coburn as Garrett, and Jack Elam, Harry Dean Stanton and Jason Robards.

Then there was Bob Dylan, who scored the film ("Knockin' on Heaven's Door") and had a small part as Billy's friend Alvin.

"DYLAN WAS never really elated into what he was supposed to do," Kristofferson has said. "Whenever I'd complain, he'd say, 'At least you're in the script!'"

Audiences stayed away, although some critics noted the beautiful wide-screen imagery and lamented a film that might have been. There was simply too much missing — the framing device that shows Garrett as an old man murdered in an ambush and domestic scenes that present him as more than just a killer.

Although there are still problems with the film, added motivation and character development will give audiences a chance to see more of what Peckinpah had in mind.

SCREEN SCENE

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (33)

"Back to Ararat" (Sweden — 1980, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Oct. 6. Documentary about the destruction of the a number of Armenians in 1915, an atrocity now referred to as Armenian Genocide.

"Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" (USA — 1973, 7 and 9:30 p.m. Oct. 7. Sam Peckinpah's flawed but fascinating western, starring Kris Kristofferson, James Coburn, Jason Robards and Bob Dylan, who also provided the sound track. Recently restored to its full 122-minute running time. In wide screen.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (free)

"Life Goes to the Movies" 7 p.m. Oct. 2. A fast-paced, documentary look at movies of the '30s and '40s. With selected short subjects.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free)

"Fidler on the Roof" (USA — 1971, 10 a.m. Oct. 3. The hit Broadway play about a man trying to preserve Jewish heritage in his small town of Anatevka, made a

starring trip to the screen. Director Norman Jewison filmed on location and compiled a powerful, little-known cast. As part of the mall's month-long tribute to musicals.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 14301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"How Green Was My Valley" (USA — 1941, 7 p.m. Oct. 3-4. John Ford's Academy Award winning story about a large family of Welsh miners, starring Donald Crisp, Walter Pidgeon and Maureen O'Hara.

"Field of Dreams" (USA — 1989, 9:20 p.m. Oct. 3-4. If Kevin Costner builds a baseball diamond in the center of his Iowa cornfield, Shoeless Joe Jackson will come and play. Gargantuan mythic, but a definite "feel good" movie.

"Heathers" (USA — 1989, 7:15, 11:30 p.m. Oct. 6. Bitter satire of high school life, about an attractive, intelligent Junior (Winona Ryder) involved in the murder of the school's most popular clique.

"Casualties of War" (USA — 1989, 9:15 p.m. Oct. 6. Brian DePalma takes his stab at the horrors of the Vietnam War with Sean Penn and Michael J. Fox questioning how far to take the brutality of war.

REDFORD THEATRE, 17350 Lusher, Detroit. Call 537-2560 for information. (R)

"Gold Diggers of 1935" (USA — 1935, 8 p.m. Oct. 6-7. "Lullaby of Broadway" is just one of the great numbers in this vintage Busby Berkeley musical. Who else would have dreamed an elaborate number with 56 girls on miniature pianos?

SOUTHWEST PUBLIC LIBRARY, 26000 Evergreen Road, Southfield. Call 354-9100 for information. (Series membership \$5, students and senior citizens \$2.50)

"The Palm Beach Story" (USA — 1942, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 5. Classic Preston Sturges screwball comedy starring Claudette Colbert running away from husband Joel McCrea, falling in with crazy crowd in Palm Beach. Shown on large screen video.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN, Recreation Center, 4901 Evergreen, Dearborn. Call 593-5390 for information. (free)

"Beaches" (USA — 1988), 7:30 p.m. Oct. 4-5. Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey become lifeline friends in popular Hollywood comedy-drama.

— John Monaghan

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossally bad
*	No advanced screening

Oscar Romero and the events leading to his assassination. Subb-performance by Raul Julia in title role.

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Seldom do old movies evoke great emotion. They may be quaint or fun or interesting or nostalgic, but it's not very often that they have the capacity to move us with the strength of their emotional appeal.

One that does is the 1935 20th Century-Fox production of "Les Misérables" (black and white, 104 minutes), starring Fredric March as Jean Valjean and Charles Laughton as Inspector Javert.

The entire cast is excellent although the only names familiar today are Florence Eldridge as Fantine, Sir Cedric Hardwicke as Bishop Bienvenue and John Carradine in the minor role of Enjolras.

Based on Victor Hugo's famous novel, first published in 1862, "Les Misérables" has been available on video tape for some time. If you've passed it by, back track and pick up a copy. You'll be amply rewarded by this touching story of a man condemned for stealing bread to feed his sister's starving children.

It is a story for everyone but, in particular, those who enjoyed Michigan Opera Theater's recent presentation of the Alain Boublil/Claude-Michel Schoenberg musical at the

Fisher Theater will appreciate the March/Laughton interaction.

ALTHOUGH THE film is much bleaker than the musical, there are many visual similarities and both touch our minds and hearts with the same sensitivity to injustice which characterized Hugo's novel.

The wide popularity of that novel carried over to the cinema and "Les Misérables" has been filmed at least four times in the United States (not including a recent made-for-TV version), five times in France plus at least one each in Egypt, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Russia.

"Les Misérables" strong condemnation of social injustice is clearly at the heart of its appeal. No matter what time and place, the hungry and their sympathizers readily relate to Jean Valjean (March) who, after a long prison sentence for stealing bread, is told he must carry a yellow passport.

As a paroled convict, he must report to the police wherever he travels. The liberty, equality and fraternity of the French Revolution quick-

ly disappeared in 60 years of turmoil when re-instituted many autocratic rules.

Jean Valjean, the paroled convict, couldn't find work or even lodging in a country inn. And the rigid Inspector Javert (Laughton) was always there to insure compliance.

While this may sound outrageous today, there are plenty places around where the hungry, homeless and disenfranchised suffer. They certainly can relate to Jean Valjean's misery.

IN 1935 when this production of "Les Misérables" was released, America was in the throes of the Great Depression, a time of economic travail that is difficult to comprehend today. Then the social safety nets we take for granted were not in place.

When Jean Valjean defends his theft of bread — "What else could I do?" — he struck a responsive chord in mid 1930s America, which hungered for bread and social respectability.

A chance encounter with Bishop

Bienvenue (Sir Cedric Hardwicke) changes Valjean's life, but it involves an illegal name-change to escape the despised yellow ticket, the mark of the social outcast.

Wherever Valjean goes, Inspector Javert is hot on his trail. Javert was a man driven, constrained by his own psychological needs to enforce the rules, no matter how unjust they may turn out to be.

Laughton is particularly adept in his depiction of this rigid personality, using an overly erect stance, a slight facial twitch and very precise diction. Indeed, a compelling portrait.

In contrast March's Valjean — once he learns the Bishop's lesson that life is for giving — moves with calm deliberation, consistently doing the right thing, giving to others as their need dictates.

Jean Valjean's transformation from outcast convict to respected member of society has provided an outstanding, shining example of life's possibilities and, no doubt, for that reason "Les Misérables" has been extremely popular.

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