



An epic too long

"A Bridge Too Far" (PG) is truly a movie of epic scale and achievements. Based on the bestselling novel by Cornelius Ryan, it chronicles the events of Operation Market Garden. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's overly ambitious plan to end the war in Europe in September, 1944.

The plan called for 35,000 English and American airborne troops to be dropped 43 miles behind the German lines in Holland. They were to secure and hold six bridges until the ground forces could push through and reinforce them. From the last bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem, they would sweep into the industrialized Ruhr and devastate German production.

For a combination of reasons, the operation was a disaster. Twice as many troops were lost in Operation Market Garden as in the Normandy landings. The British First Airborne Division, assigned to hold the Arnhem Bridge, lost 8,000 of its 10,000 men.

The movie records scenes of bravery and ineptness, fortitude and futility. It attempts to convey the same honesty of approach present in the carefully researched novel. Generally, it adopts a neutral stance, letting the audience draw its own conclusions.

SEVERAL FACTORS do stand out, however, in contributing to the debacle. One of these is the built-in failings of a military caste system. No one wants to express doubts or disagree with decisions from superiors because that would be "rocking the boat."

Another factor, one that has been discussed in several books about Viet Nam, is the willingness of the military to ignore intelligence reports which do not fit in with accepted theories and plans.

The logistics of making this three-hour long war movie boggle the imagination. The staggering requirements for personnel and equipment, including World War II uniforms, weapons, transports and trained paratroopers for the massive air drops, rival the real thing in complexity and coordination.

To put it all together took a group of pros. Joseph E. Levine, the producer, has almost 500 film credits including "The Graduate" and "Day of the Dolphin." Director Richard Attenborough, interestingly enough, also directed the satirical anti-war film "Oh! What a Lovely War."

Cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth won an Academy Award for "Cabaret." Screenwriter William Goldman, who wrote the scripts for "Marathon Man" and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," wrote this screen adaptation of Ryan's last novel.

DIRECTOR ATTENBOROUGH presents a mosaic of events and personalities. The first hour of the film is particularly brisk and exciting as the plan is revealed and set into motion. At the same time, brief but striking individual performances maintain interest on the human side.

In a film of this scope, dealing with myriad personalities involved in the same undertaking, one doesn't expect any real character development. Nevertheless, Sean Connery, Dirk Bogarde, Michael Caine, Edward Fox and Anthony Hopkins define and vitalize their characters in short but revealing scenes.

Fox particularly is outstanding as the British General Horrocks, in charge of the ground forces. With his bright, chirpy manner, he creates a memorable character in record time. Bogarde, Connery, Maximilian Schell and the others also give excellent performances.

However, there is one featherweight among the heavyweights. Ryan O'Neal. He portrays General James Gavin. With his thin, flat voice and choirboy face, he never succeeds in sounding anything but petulant. He certainly never looks convincing, not beyond the Eagle Scout stage anyway.

Unfortunately, as the Allied forces get bogged down, so does the movie. The energetic pace set at the beginning grinds to a halt.

THE POST-MORTEM account of the campaign was summed up by General Broun of the film that the Allies may have tried "going a bridge too far." Perhaps this movie, solidly crafted as it is, attempts to go an hour too long. They serve to who only sit and watch.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

ANNIE HALL (PG). The best Woody Allen film yet. Truth and comedy go hand in hand in this touching, contemporary love story. Diane Keaton is also at her best as Annie.

THE BOATNICKS (G). Robert Morse is an inept Coast Guard Ensign who foils the bad guys through sheer stupid luck.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR (PG). Crisp World War II drama chronicling major but ill-fated Allied campaign in Holland. Bounty of stars make brief but effective appearances.

THE DEEP (PG). Suspenseful aqua-thriller with exciting underwater action and photography. Jacqueline Bisset, Nick Nolte and Robert Shaw feed for treasure and thrills.

EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC (R). There's not much that can save this imbecile movie although Richard Burton and Louise Fletcher try. How do they keep from laughing?

FOR THE LOVE OF BENJI (G). The lovable mut Benji is footloose but not fancy free during an accidental excursion through the Greek Islands.

THE LATE SHOW (PG). Comedy and suspense tangle in this melodramatic about a kooky girl (Lily Tomlin), a missing cat (identity unknown), and an over-age private eye (Art Carney) who still knows a trick or two.

THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT (R). Tawdry film of vanity and vengeance. Marie-France Poirier wastes her talent in this clunker. More sex and less story and they could have gone for the "Emmanuelle" trade.

ROLLERCOASTER (PG). Suspense thriller about extortionist (Timothy Bottoms) who plants bombs at amusement parks and a safety inspector (George Segal) who doesn't think that's funny.

STAR WARS (PG). Super-comic sci-fi adventure about a rebellion of solar systems in a distant galaxy. Good time movie with laughs and special effects. Two robots steal the show.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

G General audiences admitted.

PG Parental guidance suggested.

R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 12.

X No one under 18 admitted.

Europe by train-Part II

Watch that schedule

Travel

(This is the second of a two-part series on travelling through Europe by train.)

By KATIE KERWIN

Read schedules carefully, watching for symbols indicating that a train runs only on weekdays or only on Sundays or holidays, or that it's an express for which a supplement is charged.

I began to pay closer attention to this detail after a return trip from Waterloo one Sunday, when the train I'd been patiently awaiting sped right through the station without stopping.

Re-examination of the timetable showed that the train didn't stop there on Sunday. I caught a later train, but the delay caused three missed connections and a 4 a.m. arrival at my destination.

The French seem to have a penchant for including in their schedules mysterious trains which only run the evening of April 24 or the mornings of July 8 and 9, etc., which can add to the confusion of unwary foreigners.

When boarding the train, pay attention, too, to the destinations marked on the sides of the cars. Many trains disconnect cars at stops on long-distance runs and if you get on the wrong one, you may be left behind. If you're not sure, ask a railroad employee.

EVEN IF YOU don't know the language, repeating the destination in a questioning tone will usually get you pointed toward the right car. Be careful also, if you change cars once aboard, that you don't settle down in a car that will be disconnected at a stop somewhere before your destination.

Train stops in large cities are usually fairly long, but if you're boarding at a small town, be ready to jump out as soon as the train stops. It may only be in the station for two or three minutes.

The same goes for getting off. If you're debarking at a small station, have your bags by the door and be ready to go.

Quick boarding and debarking are big reasons for traveling light when you're going by train. Lugging heavy suitcases all over Europe can be a bother, but missing your stop because of too much luggage to handle can be a minor disaster. And once you get aboard, you still have to cope with getting everything through the corridors and doorways to your seat. Backpacks, which young travelers often find to be the most convenient form of luggage, can be rather awkward on a crowded train.

Food service on trains ranges from mundane, and often stale, pre-packaged items to a delicatessen-like spread on the Scandinavian catenaria cars to the hot gourmet meal offered on some French trains—all of them expensive. Your best bet, usually, is to bring along your own food and eat picnic-style in your seat.

Bring along beverages, at least, on long trips. Tap water on the trains is not drinkable and the bottled water, soft drinks, wine and beer sold on trains and in stations is outrageously over-priced.

Toilet facilities are about the same on all trains. They are adequate, if not too thrilling, and you can forget all the rumors about having to bring your own toilet paper.

Overnight trains are often a good idea for long trips. You miss the scenery on the way, but it saves on hotel bills and you arrive in the morning ready for a day of sight-seeing. Especially important when vacation time is limited, overnight trains can help you avoid spending precious days on travelling.

SIMPLE BERTHS, called couchettes, can be reserved in advance or sometimes even arranged with the conductor after you're on the train. There are six couchettes, equipped with blankets and pillows, but no washing facilities, toilet or privacy, in second-class compartments and four in first-class. Wagons-lits, smaller, more private sleeping compartments, are often available, but at a much higher cost.

Hardier souls on a budget may prefer to skip the couchettes and try to catch some sleep in their seats. For those lucky enough to find a compartment with empty seats to stretch out on, it can be quite comfortable.

If you're stuck in a compartment with seven other people, it can be a long, uncomfortable night, unless you're a contortionist. Some, in desperation, have resorted to the luggage racks over the seats, which aren't had when padded with a few coats.

Once a friend and I had the good fortune to settle in an empty compartment with a door that stuck once closed and we had a whole night of undisturbed sleep all the way from Zurich to Paris, where we were rescued by railroad workers when we arrived in the morning.

It's nearly impossible to give any further description of European trains to fit them all, though, because each country's trains seem to have a character all their own:

•Italian trains are not known for promptness. The only time they're on time is when you're not.

•Spanish trains are not known for an impeccably smooth ride. A postcard I attempted to write on one came out looking like the polygraph test of the Boston Strangler.

•Scandinavian trains are modern, clean and very pleasant. Second-class compartments were so nice we frequently had trouble distinguishing them from first-class.

•French trains are not known for cleanliness and fresh air. Wherever the celebrated polite, immaculate Frenchman may be hiding, it's certainly not on the French trains.

As long as you remain flexible and keep in mind that even what seems like the greatest calamity at the time will be a story to laugh over later, trains can become a part of the adventure of travelling in Europe and not just a way to get from place to place.

Arte Johnson to appear in 'Stop the World...'

Arte Johnson will open the Star Theatre of Flint's sixth season at Whiting Auditorium. Johnson will appear June 21-26 in the musical "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off."

Johnson is known for his appearances on television's "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In" in the early 1970s. He was the only "Laugh-In" cast member to win an Emmy Award.

More recently, he has been seen in "Love, American Style," "Hollywood Squares" and "The Gong Show."

His stage credits include "No Time For Sergeants," "Seven Year Itch," "Finnian's Rainbow" and "The Last of the Red Hot Lovers."

"Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" is the story of a man called Littlechap who sings, dances, acts, and mimes his way through life. The

show's songs include "Gonna Build a Mountain," "Once in a Lifetime," and "What Kind of Fool Am I?" The book and music were written by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse and the show enjoyed success in London and on Broadway.

This season at the Star Theatre will also include Hal Linden in "Kismet," Joel Grey, Connie Stevens, and Carol Lawrence in "Sweet Charity," and Ed Ames in "Fiddler on the Roof."

Performances are Tuesday-Saturday at 8:30 p.m. and Sunday at 7:30 p.m., with Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:45 p.m. Tickets are available for the entire season at \$55, with individual seats going for \$65.

They can be picked up at the Whiting Auditorium box office or reserved by calling 239-1464.

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