



LOUISE BRIDGER

Films add up to record profits

THE YEAR 1977 stands as one of the most paradoxical in American movie history. In terms of overall quality, it was more mediocre than memorable. Of the 226 films by major American companies and independent producers, fewer than five per cent (perhaps only two-three per cent) can lay claim to excellence.

In terms of profits, however, it was a fantastic year. The film industry grossed \$2.3 billion to set a new record. "Star Wars," which seems to be a sociological phenomenon as well as a movie, easily led the big box office draws for 1977.

With more than \$127 million in domestic film rentals accrued to the distributor, 20th Century Fox, "Star Wars" is at the top of "Variety's" list of all-time film rental champs, although it was released only last May.

Another mind-boggling thought is that the return from foreign market rentals generally equals or surpasses the domestic.

Playing catch-up with "Star Wars" is "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." This is another sci-fi film which has made a last impact at the box office and done wonders for the stock of its producer, Columbia Pictures.



GEORGE BURNS

Robert Altman's "Three Women," was devastating as a teenage schizophrenic in "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden."

Further, there were the breathtaking performances of Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave in "Julia," Anne Bancroft and Shirley MacLaine who created dramatic fireworks in "The Turning Point," and Diane Keaton who scored twice this year, first in "Annie Hall," then in "Looking for Mr. Goodbar."

Many of the Vietnam films anticipated in 1977 haven't been released yet, including the long overdue Francis Ford Coppola film, "Apocalypse Now." Of the two which were distributed, "Heroes" fostered a sympathetic view of the Vietnam veteran, but was too cutesy, and "Rolling Thunder" was a vicious revenge film.

A strong antidote to the mayhem was the abundance of ruse and laughter in 1977's films. Many of the year's best movies were comedies or movies which possessed strong comic elements within their content. These include "Annie Hall," "The Late Show," "Star Wars" and "Close Encounters."

OTHER COMIC MOVIES which were big with the public, if not with the critics, are "The Spy Who Loved Me," (comic-macho-spy western) and "Oh, God" (comic-Everman).

1977 was the year of the big record movie look-up. Movie audiences were exposed to the music and went out and bought the records. Radio audiences heard the records and went to see the movies. Among the top singles in the country were Debby Boone's "You Light Up My Life," Meo's "Star Wars Title Theme," and Carly Simon's "Nobody Does It Better" (from "The Spy Who Loved Me").

I haven't mentioned foreign films because so few have been available for viewing in metropolitan Detroit. Until the Maple 3 theater opened this year, the Detroit Film Theatre at the Institute of Arts was the sole showcase for foreign films and for American films of limited commercial appeal.

Hopefully, because of the offerings of these two theaters, there will be an opportunity to see notable movies without attending a film festival in New York or San Francisco.

Glimpses

NEW RELEASES

THE CHORIBOYS (R). Joseph Wambaugh's story of big-city policemen who relieve the pressures of their jobs in periodic, drunken revelries.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (PG). Stephen Spielberg's megabuck epic about contact with extraterrestrial beings. Special effects make this another treat for sci-fi fans.

EQUUS (R). Intense, realistic film of prize-winning play with Richard Burton as the self-doubting psychiatrist treating a boy (Peter Firth) who has blinded six horses.

THE GAUNTLET (R). Clint Eastwood as tough cop battling against the mob and other police in reason-defying film.

THE GOODBYE GIRL (PG). Neil Simon comedy of set-up situation and laughs when an actor (Richard Dreyfuss) moves in with a twice-dumped, actor-hating hooper (Marsha Mason).

JULIA (PG). Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave excel in Lillian Hellman's deeply moving story of the warm, courageous friendship of two women.

THE LACEMAKER (R). Sensitive love story of beauty shop assistant and sophisticated university student. Fine acting by Isabelle Huppert. In French with English subtitles.

LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR (R). Judith Ruster's steamy best seller brought to the screen with stunning impact. Diane Keaton scores as woman who teaches children by day, picks up men by night.

PETE'S DRAGON (G). Combination of animation and live action in Disney adventure about desperate boy helped by friendly dragon.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (R). John Travolta (of Kotter's sweat hops) is the main man in film with plenty of disco action.

SEMI-TOUGH (R). Self-improvement schemes and football take equal lumps in comic but raunchy film with Burt Reynolds and Kris Kristofferson.

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

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.

'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'

Family Players to do show

Theater

"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," written and adapted for play and screen ("Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory") by mystery writer Roald Dahl, is being presented for the first time in Michigan by the Farmington Family Players. Performances will be given 7:30 p.m. Jan. 27, 28; 7 p.m. Jan. 29; 7:30 p.m. Feb. 4, and 7 p.m. Feb. 5 at Franklin Community Church, Feb. 2 is a show date.

The group was started in 1974 by Sally Sawyer, when she did a production of her own play "Charlie and the Marshmallow Dragon" as a course project towards her M.A. degree.

Mrs. Sawyer has directed a variety of community cultural events. She has conducted children's theater work-

shops at Cranbrook School, has conducted a puppet workshop for the West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Department and also leads a group of preschool children in the Art Start Program in Farmington Hills.

HER HUSBAND Jerry, an M.D., designs the sets for his wife's productions. Son Don gets involved in sound production and daughter Terry does the acting and dancing.

Mrs. Sawyer is a drama teacher and

character actress and has appeared in many community theater groups, including the Franklin Village Theatre, St. Dunstan's Playhouse, where she also is make-up artist, and is past director of the Birmingham Children's Theatre Group.

Besides being a registered nurse she also finds time to be a Sweet Adeline. Recently her play "How the Penguin Got His Tuxedo" was selected by the Community Theatre Association of Michigan as the first prize winner. Children's Category for 1977 in the CTAM playwrighting contest.

Ceci Orman, director, is one of Farmington Players' most versatile actresses and is acting coach at the Farmington Community House. Stuart Orman, Ceci's husband, is also a sea-

soned actor in the community. He plays the lead role of Willy Wonka.

Dave Roberts is the musical director. He is past president of the Franklin Players and directed "Prescription Murder" for them. He also directs the choir at the Franklin Community Church and is a volunteer for the Fire Department of Franklin. His occupation is veterinarian.

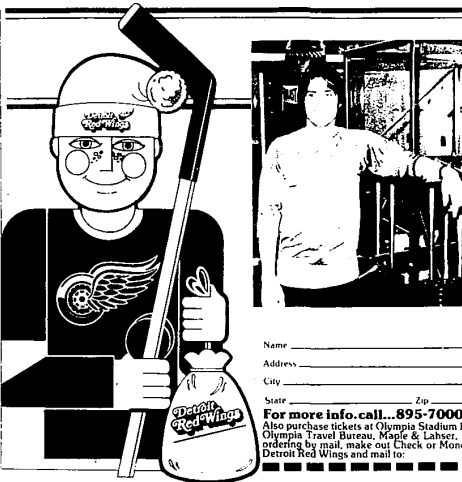
"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" is a musical production with special effects for making children disappear and turn into blueberries. The Candy Dancers have gotten together their own arrangement and funny costumes and the whole cast joins in for the finale of "The Candy Man" song. Ticket information is available by calling 982-8822 or 642-8387.

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