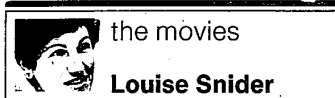




Michael Caine is a cartoonist, who loses his hand, and finds it — floating in space — in "The Hand."



the movies

Louise Snider

Disembodied hand ought to scare you

There is the hand that rocks the cradle and the hand that wins at poker, the hand that's faster than the eye and the hand you give a performer. Then, there is just "The Hand" (R).

"The Hand" is about a disembodied hand — just four fingers and a thumb, but creepy when not at the end of an arm.

The severed terminus at this movie belongs to Michael Caine. Caine is a cartoonist who loses his hand in an auto accident.

He wasn't a very pleasant guy before the accident, which occurred after a bitter argument with his wife (Andrea Marcovicci). He was an arrogant, oppressive husband. The loss of the limb and his wife (she takes their 8-year-old daughter and leaves him) doesn't improve his personality.

HE MOVES from his Vermont studio to a teaching job in a Northern California college town, taking his rotten attitude with him. He also takes the hand with him. Not in his suitcase, of course, but it does appear to pursue him.

So does one of his students (Annie McEnroe), who seems to be set on a kinky seduction. The change of partners, however, like the change of scene, doesn't deter the appendage from hounding him.

Based on a novel, "The Lizard's Tale," by Marc Brandel, this psychological horror schlock contains some scary scenes. Although in retrospect, they don't seem as frightening as a similar 1940s horror film, "The Beast with Five Fingers," with Peter Lorre. But I was more easily frightened then.

I still remember (or am I imagining it?) that wild-eyed look of Lorre's as he repeated in a terrified voice, "the hand, the hand."

Michael Caine doesn't produce the same effect. More to the point, Carlo Rambaldi does. Rambaldi is not in the movie. According to the production notes, he is the man responsible for creating the special effects. He designed the radio-controlled hand — actually, many hands. A crawling hand, walking hand, etc.

No wonder Michael Caine couldn't get away from it. It was multiplying, handily.

Lusting, grunting, spark 'Caveman'

Somewhere at the nether end of the comedy ladder, between gross and infantile, there's a rung occupied by "Caveman" (PG), which bases its claim to fame on the presence of Ringo Starr.

The film is set in the good old historic days, before pollution or inflation. From the intellectual level of the characters, the time is not only before the emergence of Cro-Magnon man, but pre-Neanderthal.

(As we used to say at the University of Michigan when studying early man, they look like students from State.)

Ringo, Barbara Bach and the other members of the battling tribes, the Mifflins and the Hostiles, run around in animal skins and do a lot of lusty and grunting.

WITH IQs scarcely above that of a dinosaur egg, they manage, nevertheless, to discover and invent a few things such as music, fire and war.

While pursuing these firsts, they occupy themselves with bathroom jokes and generally crude physical humor.

Carl Gottlieb, who wrote and directed "Caveman," was the screenwriter for "The Jerk." The Steve Martin movie had some genuinely funny moments because of its central character and his screwy view of social situations.

No such luck with "Caveman." It's gibberish from start to finish.



Ringo Starr plays Atouk to Barbara Bach's Lana, two prehistorics who fall in love in "Caveman."

Cleo Laine stars in opening concert

The Meadow Brook Music Festival will open its Friday night variety series June 26 with singer Cleo Laine performing with flutist James Galway.

Ms. Laine, who the London Times says is "the best singer in the world," scats duets with Galway and his golden flute. Galway has popularized classical music on network television and has appeared recently on a John Denver special.

The letter-sweaters are gone, but the Lettermen are still going strong with "The Way You Look Tonight" and "When I Fall in Love." On July 3, the Lettermen will share a double bill with the Four Freshmen, who became a hit with the early record "It's a Blue World."

Fireworks will light up the sky following the concert.

TONY BENNETT may have "left his heart in San Francisco," but he will bring his romantic vocals to Meadow Brook July 10. Rodney Dangerfield will

"get respect" with his comic routines July 17.

Singer Harry Belafonte will appear July 24. Fresh from the "Barbara Mandrell Show" comes the star herself, with country music July 31.

Singer/songwriter Kris Kristofferson, male lead in the movie "Heaven's Gate," performs Aug. 7 with Billy Swan.

Glen Yarbrough, Theodore Bikel and Tom Paxton present an American folk music concert Aug. 14. Yarbrough is best known for his record "Baby, the Rain Must Fall" and Tom Paxton for "Marvellous Toy."

Internationally renowned folk singer Bikel played Teyve in "Fiddler on the Roof" on Broadway.

IT'S ALL jazz Aug. 31 when Count Basie plays his familiar single-note piano pattern with his big band, and the Dave Brubeck Quartet demonstrates the distinctive harmonies and unorthodox time signatures that have distinguished it for three decades.

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what's at the movies

EXCALIBUR (R). Sweeping adventure of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, with Nicol Williamson as the wizard, Merlin.

HARDLY WORKING (PG). Slapstick comedy with Jerry Lewis as middle-aged, unemployed circus clown creating havoc in a variety of jobs.

THE HOWLING (R). Oddball movie mixes horror and humor in werewolf story.

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES II (R). Albin and Renato get involved with spies in this sequel to "La Cage aux Folles." It's not as funny as the first, but it does offer some sharp commentary on sex roles and expectations.

NIGHT HAWKS (R). Fast-action drama as a pair of special N.Y. cops (Sylvester Stallone and Billy Dee Williams) confront a vicious terrorist.

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Larry Davis, Detroit Free Press

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