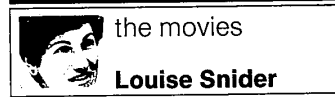


Burt Reynolds is vice squad detective Sharky, who falls in love voyeuristically with a beautiful call girl, in "Sharky's Machine."



the movies

Louise Snider

The plot's familiar, but Burt Reynolds makes story move

Burt Reynolds has starred in such a succession of fast-car, cross-country, good-old-boy movies that seeing his name associated with "Sharky's Machine" (R) might make you think the "machine" is an automobile or truck. Not so. Sharky is a vice-squad detective, and his machine is a group of fellow detectives who work with him in one smoothly functioning unit.

The group consists of Brian Keith, Bernie Casey and Harry L. Bertini, with Charles Durning, as their chief, whose bark is worse than his bite.

This is a distinct change of pace for Reynolds, although it's not a novel one. We've seen him before in the tough guy and the hooker routine ("Hustle").

In "Sharky's Machine," however, the hookers are just one aspect of a complex case the detectives are working on. The case, one of corruption in high places, involves a newly elected governor, a criminal kingpin, his ring of high-priced prostitutes, a spaced-out assassin, a corrupt cop and a couple of martial arts experts.

REYNOLDS DIRECTED the movie, which itself is a smoothly functioning machine but a violent one. Brutal, bloody events are commonplace. Reynolds, however, has provided the audience with a titillating respite in the form of a one-way romance.

Sharky, with wire taps, binoculars and cameras, conducts his round-the-clock surveillance of Dominoe, the \$1,000 hooker, and his interest becomes more than professional.

He seems to make a transition from detective to high-fashion photographer and remote lover as he points his telephoto lens toward Dominoe's apartment and takes countless photos.

Sometimes, the movie tends to linger too long on these voyeuristic adventures, but it captures a soft, gossamer quality that constitutes a necessary and welcome contrast to the blood-and-guts action.

It has all been done before. "Sharky's Machine" is a composite of many movies — martial arts movies, "Dirty Harry"-style movies, and even that classic oddie, "Laura."

Reynolds brings it all together, both as director and actor, and pumps a lot of vitality into familiar formulas.

ONE OF THE reasons he succeeds is that he, personally, seems to work well with other actors, and he has a fine cast to work with. Bernie Casey as the zen-practicing detective and Harry L. Bertini as the electronics whiz are especially entertaining.

The bad guys include Henry Silva as the crazed killer and Vittorio Gassman as the big-city crime czar. Gassman has never been so wicked or menacing as in this role.

A relative newcomer to movies is Rachel Ward, who plays Dominoe. She is a stunning-looking English girl. A former model, she shows a lot of promise in her first major role.

Among all this talent, Reynolds still stands out. He is better than any other actor at playing the tough guy who is really a softie. When he says he likes to sit at a window and watch children playing, you believe him.

It's pure corn, but Reynolds knows how to pop it.



Rachel Ward portrays Dominoe, the \$1,000-a-day hooker whom Sharky wiretaps and photographs while working on a police case.

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