



the movies

**Louise
Snider**

'Concrete Jungle' filled with cliches on life behind bars

If there is an original idea in "The Concrete Jungle" (R), it must be encased in the concrete.

This movie about a woman's prison repeats every cliché you've ever seen in prison movies. The only showman incident that is missing is the prison break. Maybe omitting it constitutes an original idea.

Nothing clicks in this movie and nothing holds up to scrutiny. Tracy Bregman plays the supposedly innocent victim of a frame-up. "Innocent" because, without her knowledge, her boyfriend hid cocaine in her skis as a way of getting the drug carried into the United States.

She was caught going through customs and quicker than you can say "track," she landed in prison.

"SUPPOSEDLY INNOCENT," because you have to wonder about how easily she accepts the fact that her boyfriend is smuggling cocaine. How did she think he was earning a living? There is nothing to suggest he had a job.

Nevertheless, we are supposed to regard her as a noble person because she will not reveal her boyfriend's name to the authorities. The result is that she gets the slammer and he gets to roam free, pick up other girls and try again. He does visit her now and then, just to continue professing his love while urging her not to reveal his name.

All this time, she is being abused and mistreated by other inmates and the prison staff. Heading the prison staff is Jill St. John as the warden.

This has to be the worst miscasting of the year, maybe the decade. Wardrobe has dressed her in mannish clothes and given her glasses, but to no avail. She looks like a warden the way Marlon Brando looks like a ballet dancer.

Perhaps such offbeat casting was meant to be comical; the movie does flirt with the comic. Unfortunately, I don't believe laughter was really intended. For example, there is the time that Elizabeth (Bregman) is assaulted by two inmates. She dispatches them with an amazing display of martial arts prowess.

WHERE DID THIS sweet innocent person learn to fight like that? There isn't a hint that she possesses such knowledge, skill or physical fitness. Also, she doesn't ever do anything to make anyone think she is smart, yet in this movie she is always referred to as smart. On the contrary, everything she is involved in, from her boyfriend's deceitfulness to her scrapes inside prison, suggest someone whose cornflakes have gone soggy.

At the center of all illegal and immoral activity within the prison is an inmate known as Cat (Barbara Luna). She and the corrupt warden are working together to make big bucks off drug traffic within the prison.

Cat struts around amid an entourage of nervous underlings. She doesn't seem to do anything more demanding than lighting a cigarette, yet when she is attacked, she also reveals all kinds of skills in hand-to-hand combat.

Whether "The Concrete Jungle" was meant to be an action-exploitation movie or a social drama about the need for prison reform, it is so trite it fails on both levels. Where it succeeds is in bringing together poor writing, poor acting, poor directing and poor editing.

The result is a poor movie.

what's at the movies

ANNIE (PG). The successful Broadway musical is expanded and brought to the screen by director John Huston, with talented Aileen Quinn as Annie and Albert Finney and Carol Burnett.

THE BEASTMASTER (PG). Mythic-era adventure. Mark Singer has supernatural ability to communicate with animals which he uses to avenge death of his family.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS (R). Burt Reynolds is Sheriff Ed Earl and Dolly Parton the whorehouse madam in musical comedy based on the Broadway hit.

THE CONCRETE JUNGLE (R). Prison survival story. Tracy Bregman is sent to women's prison where Jill St. John is the warden.

DIVA (R). New wave film from France is a comedy, a thriller and a romance. Written by Jean-Jacques Beineix, directed by Philippe Ruellet.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (PG). Steven Spielberg's best film yet, and probably the best film of the year, develops story of an alien being stranded on earth and befriended by a young boy.

FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH (R). Comedy focuses on the extracurricular activities of high school students seen through the eyes of an undercover student.

FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART III (R). The horror schlock continues, but this time in 3D.

INCUBUS (R). John Cassavetes in a tale of mystery and fear.

NIGHT SHIFT (R). Whacky, inventive comedy about two friends who manage a call-girl business from the city morgue. Stars Henry Winkler and Michael Keaton.

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN (R). Richard Gere and Debra Winger in gritty love story about a loner trying to rise above his seamy past and become a naval aviation officer.

POLTERGEIST (PG). Steven Spielberg film is a succession of special effects as suburban family is terrorized by spirits in their home.

THE ROAD WARRIOR (R). End-of-the-world theme in action movie that pits forces of good against evil as Mad Max battles villains.

SIX PACK (PG). Kenny Rogers as stock car racer who ends up with a pit crew of six youngsters whose pastime is theft.

STAR WARS (PG). Original action adventure that made George Lucas, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and the rest household words is back.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP (R). Robin Williams excels as young writer T.S. Garp in succession of off-the-wall adventures.

ZAPPED (R). Sky high school genius (Scott Baio) stirs things up when he develops telekinetic powers.

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.

Monster film to be shown

"The Monolith Monsters" will be shown once each day at 1 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday in the Detroit Institute of Arts Recital Hall.

The 1957 film continues Afternoon Film Theatre's current theme series, "Science Fiction Films of the 1950s."

Tickets at \$1 per person may be purchased at the door.

Directed by John Sherwood, "The Monolith Monsters" deals with a meteorite particle which crashes to earth and becomes a towering, menacing crystal when it comes in contact with water.

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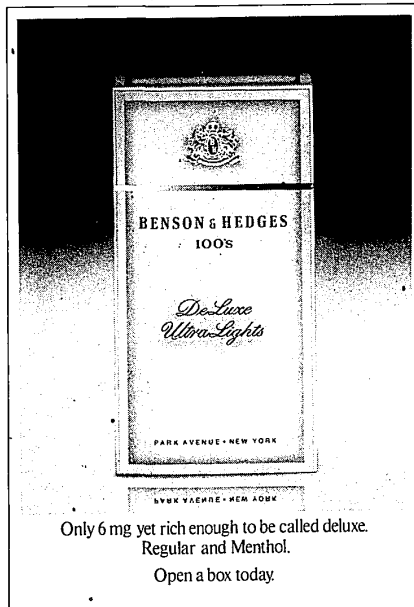
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