



Raul Julia stars in "Romero," a film about Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, champion of the country's poor and defender of human rights, who was assassinated in 1980.

Kudos for Julia, 'Romero'

For most of us who lead relatively secure lives in which violence is a crowded freeway, the latest slasher movie of TV cop show, "Romero" (A, PG-13, 105 minutes), this week's major release, is a frightening, disturbing and provocative experience.

As well it might be, for we live in a world where money and power are more important than the humanitarian values to which we pay lip rather than real service. Money talks and it talks with a vicious tongue.

Nowhere is this more true than in Central and South America where recent decades have been characterized by brutal official repression of peasant and worker efforts to achieve decent living standards.

The motion picture is capable of vividly portraying all as it is being lived — but it seldom does. There have been very few motion pictures about Central and South American rightist repression — "The Official Story" and "The Kiss of the Spider Woman" are two major and very worthy examples.

The latter featured Raul Julia whose masterful performance in the title role of "Romero" should earn him many — or more — honors than did his portrayal of a political prisoner in "Spider Woman."

Based on the actual story of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, the film opens prior to national elections and shortly before the consecration of Romero as archbishop.

Throughout the film, which concludes with his March 1980 assassination by a right-wing governmental terrorist squad, the interplay of Church and governmental forces is vivid, forceful and graphically tragic.

BUT IT'S not just a church/state struggle for both those forces have their own internal competition. Tragically, individuals bear the brunt of pain generated by such combat.

Much to the credit of "Romero," human suffering is the central issue at the rather mild and conservative Father Romero is chosen as archbishop on the theory that a bookish priest won't inflame the situation.

But Romero is caught in a milieu of escalating violence. His aristocratic friend, the minister of agriculture, Rafael Zaida (Omar Rodriguez), is kidnapped.

Father Rutilio Grande (Richard Jordan) and other priests feel strongly that their allegiance to the church demands that they work with the peasants in their struggle for decent living standards. "You are Jesus here and now," is their credo.

Gradually, as he sees and experiences the daily repressive conditions in El Salvador, the different Romero grows and speaks out against violence and abuse.

Raul Julia develops this gradual radicalization of Archbishop Romero with great restraint and vastly underplays the role to achieve a tremendously touching poignancy, as effective as one can imagine.

Cinematographer Geoff Burton adds to that poignancy with memorable images of the people and the



Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but, notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the colossally bad
	No advanced screening

countryside. In particular, the faces, however, deeply lined with suffering, are strong and effectively amplified in close-up. At every crucial juncture, these faces appear to affirm the humanitarian values the archbishop knows the Church upholds.

JULIA's masterful acting — and the rest of the cast as well — taken with this photographic emphasis on faces leads to a graphic personalization of these major, abstract issues of power.

This emphasis on individual pain and struggle makes "Romero" at one and the same time frightening and poignant, touching and disturbing — a film about a real suffering in our world.

"Kickboxer" (*, R) and "Time Trackers" (*, PG) also opened last Friday. Neither seem destined to rise above potboiler status.

The former details the trip to Thailand by a young American kickboxer. Purpose of travel: vengeance and rescue.

"Time Trackers" are off through time chasing down a mad scientist in a stolen time machine. Good luck.

STILL PLAYING:
"The Abyss" (D-) (PG-13) 135 minutes.
Despite excellent underwater sequences, this muddled and murky sci-fi sea saga sinks.

"Batman" (C+) (PG-13) 120 minutes.
Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"Casualties of War" (B+) (R) 105 minutes.
Grim, gripping and graphically violent story of Vietnam war.

"Cheetah" (D-) (G) 75 minutes.

Slow, clichéd Disney in Africa epic that left its excitement at the airport.

"Dead Poets Society" (A+) (PG) 124 minutes.
Robin Williams' sensitive portrait of a fine teacher is complimented by excellent young actors as his students.

"Eddie and the Crockers II: Eddie Lives" (PG-13).
They're still looking for Eddie's body.

"Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (B+) (PG-13) 120 minutes.
Good entertainment, but enough already.

"Lethal Weapon II" (B+) (R) 115 minutes.
Glover and Gibson do it again in high, albeit violent, style.

"Licence to Kill" (B+) (R) 105 minutes.
Number 16 in the 007 series with Carey Lowell as Dalton's lovely lady. Outrageous but entertaining.

"Lock-up" (R).
Stallone's jail and Donald Sutherland is the warden. Best wishes to the latter.

"Millennium" (PG-13).
Sci-fi thriller features Kris Kristofferson as government investigator who finds strange clues at airline disaster site.

"Nightmare on Elm Street V" (R).
Freddie's back.

"Parental Guidance" (A-) (R) 120 minutes.
Large, talented cast in complex, but entertaining story about a family which includes Jason Robards, Steve Martin, Tom Hulce, Martha Plimpton and Diane West, among others.

"Peter Pan" (A) (G) 77 minutes.
Disney's classic animation of Sir James Barrie's story.

"The Package" (R).
Gene Hackman and Joanna Cassidy in story of deceit on the international scene as career military man escorts prisoner back from Russia.

"Relentless" (*, R).
Judd Nelson, Robert Loggia, Lou Gossett and Meg Foster in story of driven young man who becomes a killer.

"Turner & Hoock" (D) (PG) 95 minutes.
Man and slothful dog bonding against background of confusion — and confusion — murder investigation.

"Weekend at Bernie's" (C) (PG-13).
A one-joke film about conning boss of insurance company.

"Wired" (R).
Bob Woodward's best-seller was basis for this story of John Belushi's rise and fall.

"Young Einstein" (D+) (PG) 90 minutes.
Off-the-wall re-interpretation of history that never realizes its humorous potential.

Jean-Claude Van Damme, as Kurt Sarno, steals himself for another round with his brutal challenger in "Kickboxer."

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

DFT widens with 'Scope

By John Monaghan
special writer

When CinemaScope came to the movie screen in 1953, it was just another gimmick to get people away from television and back into movie theaters. But where 3-D and CinemaScope proved limited, 'Scope still remains a vital part of many filmmaker's visions.

When shown on television, most wide screen movies are cropped to fit the dimensions of the small screen. As a result, you only see about 1/2 of the original image in a "letterboxed" format.

Elliot Wilhelm considers this as much as travesty as colorization. That's why he has mounted an amazing 13-film tribute to the art of wide screen at the Detroit Film Theatre.

The series begins with "Bye Bye Birdie" (USA — 1958), based on the Broadway musical inspired by Elvis Presley hysteria. It traces the rise of Conrad Birdie who, like Elvis, gets drafted into the army. It screens at 7 and 9:30 p.m. this Saturday at the Detroit Institute of Arts auditorium.

Wide screen is accomplished by filming with a special anamorphic

lens that condenses the panoramic image onto a standard piece of film. A similar lens on the project pulls the image apart and splashes it across the screen. The effect, when shown with the right equipment, can be breathtaking.

WHILE MANY directors were originally stymied by the wider image, others — especially epic directors — found it opened the screen up for bold images. Wilhelm believes that Sam Peckinpah, Sergio Leone and especially Akira Kurosawa remain the masters of wide screen.

Each director is amply represented. Kurosawa's "High and Low" (Japan — 1963) is based on a hard-boiled Ed McBain kidnapping story. Japanese streets are filmed with the same grittiness as New York City (Dec. 17).

Practically a staple for DFT fans, "Once Upon a Time in the West" (Italy — 1969) is an operatic "spaghetti western" from Leone, who died earlier this year. Henry Fonda plays a blue-eyed murderer who meets his match in avengeful Charles Bronson (Dec. 10).

Peckinpah's "Ride the High Country" (USA — 1962) plays Oct. 7. It

stars old-timers Randolph Scott and Joel McCrea in a film that many consider the symbolic end to the popular American western. His recently restored "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" (USA — 1973) stars Bob Dylan and screens Oct. 8.

Jerry Lee Lewis fans will adore the opening of "High School Confidential" (USA — 1958), where "The Killer" performs the title song from the back of a flatbed truck. The film follows undercover narcotics agent Russ Tamblyn, who cracks a high school drug ring while posing as a student. Busty Mamie Van Doren plays his seductive "aunt" (Nov. 11).

FOR ME, THE most exciting title is Federico Fellini's flashy "La Dolce Vita" (Italy — 1961), which is too typically shown in "flat" prints. Marcello Mastroianni is at his hand-somest as a paparazzi journalist tiring of decadent Rome (Nov. 12).

Though film fans can argue favorite 'Scope titles that aren't on the schedule, selections have been based on the availability of quality prints.

"I didn't want to get a 'Scope picture just to show it wide and then have a choppy print with faded color," Wilhelm explained.

SCREEN SCENE

CENTER FOR JAPANESE STUDIES, Lorch Hall, 922 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 764-6307 for information, (free).

The center continues its Saturday series of rare Japanese films with a double feature, "Oshichi Eiga" (1936) at 7 p.m. Sept. 15 is the story of a woman, rejected by family and friends, who turns to prostitution. With "Sisters of the Gion" (1936) about two Gion sisters and their various involvements with their customers.

CINEMA GUILD, Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe, Ann Arbor. Call 984-0027 for information. (\$2.50 single, \$3.50 double feature).

Touched in the Head" (France — 1974) 7 and 9 p.m. Sept. 16. From under-rated French director Jacques Dillou, the story of a young man who invites a Swedish hippie to come and stay.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 833-2730 for information. (RS).

"Let's Get Lost" (USA — 1989), 7 and 9:30 p.m. Sept. 15. Photographer Bruce Weber's non-narrated documentary portrait of brilliant jazz trumpeter and singer Chet Baker.

"Bye Bye Birdie" (USA — 1958), 7 and 9:30 p.m. Sept. 16. The film version of the popular Broadway musical about an Elvis Presley-like rock'n'roll singer who is drafted into the Army. A fun way to kick off the DFT's excellent tribute to wide screen films.

"Heathers" (USA — 1989), 5 and 7 p.m. Sept. 17. Though critically acclaimed, this biting look at high school hell only played a couple of weeks in area theaters. Winona Ryder stars as an attractive and intelligent high school junior who becomes an unwilling participant in the murder of the school's most popular clique.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (free).

"Sons of the Desert" (USA 1935), 7 p.m. Sept. 11. The best of Laurel and Hardy's short features, this one follows the boys as they sneak away from their typically shrewish wives for a weekend lodge convention. With Charley Chase.

VIDEO VIEWING

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Random House Home Video recently acquired Crown Video and their combined fall list includes a wide array of educational and entertainment videos, all in color.

Some are available for rental, but most are pitched for sales in the \$10-30 range, probably on the assumption that the kids will watch Dr. Seuss over and over while mom is leeching off the money. Stewart's Secret for Entertaining" for all four of which are 60 minutes and retail for \$19.95.

Meantime, dad better install a VCR in his workshop to watch "The Victor Carpenters," "Last Chance Garage" and "This Old House" (also 60 minutes and \$19.95). In less traditional homes, of course, this may be reversed with dad in the kitchen and mom in the garage.

These and other Crown titles have been available for about a year while Random's children programs — all closed captioned — are new this fall. They'll appear on the stands this month.

The Crown titles include a "Living Language Video Series" — French, German, Spanish and Signing (60 to 90 minutes each, \$29.95) — as well as "Fodor's Travel Guides" on video (30 min. each, \$19.95).

Martha Stewart's entertainment series consists of four tapes — "An Antipasto Party," "A Holiday Feast," "A Formal Dinner Party" and "A Buffet Party for Family and



Christian Slater and Winona Ryder star in the black comedy, "Heathers," being shown at the Detroit Film Theatre Sept. 17.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free).

"All This and Heaven Too" (USA — 1940), 10 a.m. Sept. 12. Charles Boyer teams with Bette Davis in this lurid story of a French artist who murders his wife to run off with the governess. As part of the mall's ambitious month-long tribute to Bette Davis.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens).

"Broken Blossoms" (USA — 1919), 7 p.m. Sept. 17. D.W. Griffith's memorable silent film feature will be shown for free.

TELE-ARTS, 1540 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 963-3918 for information and show times. (\$3.25 adults, \$2 students and senior citizens).

"Exquisite Corpse" (USA — 1989). Sept. 13-17 (call for show times). This cultish film, Tele-Arts style. In a twist on "Midnight Cowboy," a corn pony (Lakshmi) played by musician Gary Knott arrives in New York with dream of stardom. After some bizarre twists in the Big Apple, he grows into a cynical, bisexual sophisticate.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN, Recreation Center, 4901 Evergreen, Dearborn. Call 593-5330 for information. (free).

"Eight Men Out" (USA — 1988). Sept. 13-14. John Sayles' inspired filming of the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, where the Chicago White Sox threw the World Series. Perhaps the film's greatest strength is the vivid characterization achieved through each of the players as well as the managers, promoters, sports writers and fans.

As with most animated films for the younger set, "The Berenstain Bears" include moral lessons along with the entertainment. This three-tape series (each 30 minutes, \$14.95) features six stories. They are entertaining although the art work is limited and conventional. All the bears look alike but then I suppose they think people all do, too.

DR. SEUSS in any form is entertaining and educational as well — although the educational goes beyond simple lessons of morality and the alphabet. These four video cassettes are an excellent opportunity to view Dr. Seuss's favorites: "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish," "Hop on Pop," "Dr. Seuss's ABC" and "The Cat in the Hat Comes Back" are the lead titles on each of the four tapes, which include a number of other Dr. Seuss stories.

Most parents are familiar with Dr. Seuss's unique cartoon style and his very special and unusual world. It is a very special and unusual world that every child should experience as they grow and develop.

The translation of these books to tape has been accomplished with good style. The camera moves over the pages — and from page to page — in a visually attractive way. The voices are varied and distinctive to avoid the trap of one-voice monotony. All-in-all, these four tapes are well done and should be attractive to the youthful spirit in us all, no matter what our chronological age.

While mom and dad are busy building, repairing, cooking and entertaining, kids can learn while being entertained. Richard Scarry's "Beat the Clock Video Series" (Beat Counting Video Ever" (both 30 minutes, \$14.95) are fairly conventional but attractive cartoons which teach counting and the alphabet by repetition within an entertaining story framework.

These tapes include 20 car repairs and 14 home maintenance projects. While they range in complexity from checking tire pressure to replacing alternators and constructing brick walks and building decks, all assume the viewer has basic mechanical knowledge and experience handling power tools.

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