

Brudnoy's Film Index

■ **Blazing Saddles:** Mel Brooks' spoof of western shoot-em-ups, starring Black Bart, the Negro sheriff (Cleavon Little), villain Hedley Lamarr (Harvey Korman), fast-gun Gene Wilder as the Kid, Brooks as a Yiddish-spouting Indian chief and a moronic governor (What? You say there are other kinds?), and assorted jokes as old as the hills, in a mostly flawed pastiche that at moments is incomparably hilarious. Madeline Kahn does the Dietrich put-down to end them all, as Lili von Shtupp the Teutonic Titwillow; Dom De Louise gives faggotry a bad name; and Frankie Laine vocalizes.

■ **Conrack:** Jon Voight as a hip modern Mr. Chips gone to a South Carolina sea island to teach "colored babies," as the fierce lady principal says. You can't hardly emerge with a dry eye, honey-chile, it's *that* maudlin, but Voight is vibrant, the youngsters are the promise of Afro-Americanism and absolutely wonderful, and the dilemma of the individual versus encrusted societal regimentation gets another go-around, not entirely witless.

■ **The Exorcist:** The *debbil* made her do it! Hanging in there, for the season, most likely.

■ **The Great Gatsby:** F. Scott Fitzgerald's works have never had it so good on the screen before. Robert Redford wrings every last drop of vitality out of his role as the Midwestern parvenu become West Egg (Long Island) Croesus; Mia Farrow delicate and chirpy as Daisy Buchanan; Lois Chiles incomparably gorgeous as Jordan Baker; Bruce Dern flexes his muscles and cheats on his wife Daisy—his Tom Buchanan is the best acted role in the film,

the cast of which is uniformly fine. I'm just about to run out and get *me* a pink rag of a suit too—and a cream-colored open car. *Gatsby* is lush, true to Fitzgerald's brilliant novel of 1920s decadence, and mark it well: we're in for at least a year of Gatsbymania.

■ **Mame:** Hm, let's see: first there was the book (1955), then the play *Auntie Mame* (1956), then Rosalind Russell in the *Auntie Mame* film (1958), then the stage musical *Mame* with Angela Lansberry, and now—they've juiced up Lucille Ball (age 62), shot her through enough gauze and fuzzy focus to reduce her to mush, and set her hopping through those tired old tunes for the umpteenth time. Bea Arthur zings as Mame's buddy Vera Charles, the sets are deliciously camp, but by now the tale has worn thin. Still and all, it is harmless froth and, damn it all, Ball makes it work, with no singing voice, the body of a gal half her age, and ain't *she* got fun.

■ **Serpico:** A bit rough around the edges, perhaps, but powerful in its delineation of the honest cop (a happy surprise) combating his unconscionably crooked peers. Al Pacino is super.

■ **The Spikes Gang:** Lee Marvin doing his grizzled old bandit number again, this time tying in with three innocent lads (Gary Grimes, Ron Howard, and Charlie Martin Smith, the last two out of *American Graffiti*) turning to crime for fun and profit. They all die in the end, and the film is dreadful, but compared to last month's *Billy Two Hats*, of the same general theme, it is princely.

■ **The Sting:** Newman, Redford, the thirties; lovable con men outwitting the bad-dies. Ho hum, it *does* become rather tedious, what with so many reincarnations

of this blue-eyed twosome at the same game, but this one is fun, the plot is juicy, and it beats Oral Roberts revival meetings on the tube.

■ **Sunseed:** Ever wonder what happened to Timothy Leary's pal Dick Alpert, the LSD-guru? He's now shaggy and beatific and reborn as Baba Ram Dass. He and a bowlful of new consciousness swamis doing their thing, lovely to see, but it won't replace wife-swapping among the masses.

■ **The Super Cops:** Are you ready for just one more? I mean, just one more about the copper duo (here called Batman and, uh huh, Robin) picking their way through police corruption? If so, o.k. As for me, I'll take:

■ **The Three Musketeers:** Whatshis-name's classic again, filmed here as high camp. Michael York, Oliver Reed, Richard Chamberlain, Simon Ward, Raquel Welch (Raquel Who?), Charlton Heston as Moses, er, um, that is, Richelieu, plus fabulous sets, moments of fun, but don't say that seventeenth-century France was *all* sport and frolic.

■ **Where the Lilies Bloom:** See, you take TV's *The Waltons*, by Earl Hamner, Jr. Then you clone from that *Apple's Way*, by Earl Hamner, Jr. Then, just to make sure that the Hamners eat right this year, you construct yet another, shall we say warming, heart-rending tale of just plain folks. This one is of kids making do after their mountain daddy dies. It'll get you, be forewarned, but the trend is already a crashing bore.

■ **Zardoz:** The Future, with Sean (Bond) Connery beefy and robotish. Pretty colors, stupid dialogue, preposterous throughout.

U.S. economy to reach its present size and strength.

The drug industry—another perennial punching bag—is also being charged with gouging the public. It should instead be praised for *reducing* the average unit price of prescription drugs over the past decade, in contrast with what has happened to the price of almost everything else.

Profitability in this industry is higher than in most other businesses. And because it is, drug companies are able to invest heavily in the research needed to develop health-benefiting and life-saving products. U.S. firms are responsible for two-thirds of the 868 major medicines brought out between 1940 and 1969 and to which millions of Americans owe their lives.

3) **Some Basic Economic Facts:** The profit-and-loss system is under attack as never before. Most of what the public hears is coming from one side. It must be given *all* the facts. But it won't get them unless more businessmen speak out on the economic issues that apply not just to their own fields but to the whole system. Here are some facts the public needs to know:

a) The profits of all U.S. companies together have gone up, on average, by less than 5 percent a year since 1947. This is a little slower than the typical paycheck has increased and it is only about half as

fast as total government spending has risen.

b) Unlike wages and taxes, profits often fluctuate widely from one year to another—both up and down. After the 1969-1970 recession, most companies' profit margins were the lowest since the 1930s. It was not until late 1972 that they began to move back to normal.

c) Profits and jobs tend to move together. When profits decline, companies are forced to cut back employment. When they increase, more hiring is done. The cyclical recovery in corporate earnings during 1972 and 1973 was largely responsible for the best kept economic secret of both years—the creation of a record *six million* new jobs.

d) Profits have the role of telling businessmen where to place their emphasis in converting labor, raw materials, and energy into useful products and services. In markets where profits are good, new producers are attracted and competition keeps prices in line. Where profits are poor or actual losses occur, competition stays away and directs its resources to more productive areas.

e) Over three out of every ten companies lose money each year. The ones that succeed in earning a profit receive an average net return of less than 5 percent on sales

and 10-11 percent on invested capital—hardly the "windfalls" people think.

f) Nearly half of all profits are collected and spent by the government. About 40 percent of what remains is paid out to 31 million shareholders. Another 100 million people also benefit from the dividends received by such stock-owning institutions as insurance companies, mutual funds, trust accounts, pensions, and profit-sharing plans.

g) Virtually everyone, including the government, is helped by the profits that are reinvested within the companies. These funds finance expansion, create more jobs, and develop new ways of providing goods and services as efficiently as possible. All this lifts the nation's standard of living.

4) **A Postscript:** Aside from inflation, the economy must cope with two big problems in the years ahead—building more capacity in energy and raw materials and making room for 1.5 million additional workers each year. Neither problem can be solved unless profits, as determined by free and competitive markets, are allowed to fulfill their curcial role of adjusting output to the ever-changing demands of society. □

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A Liberal Looks at Theodore H. White

Soon after *The Making of the President 1972* had come out Bill Kristol and I were having lunch with Ben Wattenberg who was then just finishing his own book, *The Real America*, which will appear in September. For dessert we all chewed on Mr. White's analysis. I felt that Mr. White misperceived the Republican Party's essential conservatism, and that his discussion of public policy's failures would have been improved had he cited the work of men like Edward Banfield and Milton Friedman. Mr. Wattenberg came at White from a totally different perspective. Because this perspective is again a matter of serious public debate, and because Mr. Wattenberg is always thoughtful and often right, I recently held a similar conversation with him in Washington, which—in keeping with local custom—we taped. What follows is the authentic transcript of that historic conversation, emended only by the customary deletion of vulgarities and expletives—that this eliminates every single utterance made by me is admittedly history's loss. It had to be done to preserve editorial confidentiality.

—RET

THE FIRST THING one has to say about *The Making of the President 1972* is that Theodore White is a master at what he does. He does it better than anybody else. He originated this form, and he is able as are very few people in American letters either in fiction or in nonfiction to write an interesting book. And seeing as that is really the pay-off skill for any kind of a writer, journalist or novelist, it is an excellent book. He spins an interesting yarn. He does a fantastic amount of legwork. He is a skilled writer, and he has a fine narrative sense, a sense which is lacking in most journalists who attempt to go to the book form. They write a lot of newspaper pieces and stitch them together and say "here is a book." That is not what White does, and there is no question about the fact that he is the consummate master of his form—the piecing together of a presidential campaign.

Nonetheless, he does something else, because he is an ambitious and a thinking man. In each of his books he tries to tell you what's happening in America. And that is the interesting thing about the book over and above the straight election stuff. So he is in his own way not just a political reporter, but also a commentator on the American social scene. And here is where I have problems with this book. After acknowledging that it is a finely wrought narrative, that it is good reading, that White knows his politics, that he has done his research, I still have two specific bones to pick with him.

First, about what happened to our politics and secondly, about what happened to America during the past ten or so years.

It really wraps up into the same issue. It is the same question and it is what I have just written a book about, and so I am anxious to talk about it. The essential social premise of White's book is, first, that American life in the dozen years from 1960

The Making of the President 1972

by Theodore H. White
Atheneum \$10.00

to 1972 was on a downhill slope and represented some form of American failure. Second, he specifically says that politically it was liberalism that failed, and that liberalism in its failure dead-ended into McGovernism, a logical outgrowth of this American failure. The American failure not only involved Vietnam, it involved crime, it involved race riots, it involved cities, it involved this whole feeling of "being fed up," "being alienated," and all those other wonderful clichés that we have been hearing about. And if you accept that notion of American failure during the 1960s and early 1970s, you can then very easily make the political transference to say therefore the logical outgrowth of a failed liberalism was McGovernism. And McGovernism is what led to Nixonism or to the election of Richard Nixon, in the landslide proportions by which he was elected. This, as I see it, is essentially the intellectual underpinning of *The Making of the President 1972*. I disagree.

The book I have written, *The Real America* (coming out in September), takes very strong issue with the bedrock notion that the dozen years between 1960 and 1972 were years of failure and years of despair and years of bankruptcy. I think that whether you look at it in terms of the hard objective data or whether you look at it through the lens of public opinion data and attitudinal data, it is very mistaken to describe these years as years of despair punctuated with a few exclamation points of success. Rather, it was the other way around, years of success punctuated by a few exclamation points of failure. I think it is very important both politically and socially in terms of viewing what happened in this country to look at it in terms of this sort of a progression. In the 1960s, starting with the election of John Kennedy, the so-called liberal wing of the Democratic Party first set up a new kind of rhetoric. And what Kennedy said was "let's get America moving again." We want to help the poor, we want to help the blacks, we want to do things in civil rights, we want to do things for the elderly, medicare, the environment, the cities." Secondly, in the mid-sixties, mostly after Kennedy's death, partly by accident and partly because Johnson was somewhat of a legislative wizard (he was an activist who knew very well when the iron was ready for striking), Democrats legislated a watershed of social and economic legislation.

So you have two steps in the progression. You have rhetoric and you have rhetoric that led to specific legislation. The legislation pretty closely followed the rhetoric. The third step in this progression is to analyze the results of this legislation. If you look carefully at the 1970 census, looking at the hard-objective data of the dozen years between 1960 and 1972, you

will see more social and economic progress in this country than has ever been seen before. We halved the poverty rate. The strides made in civil rights and in actual black economic progress and in black social progress in terms of integration, desegregation, jobs, housing, and education are impressive. Today, there are 726,000 black kids in college in America. About 9 percent of the college population in America is black, bearing in mind that blacks make up about 11 percent of the population, you are getting very close to parity. There are some cuts and passes in that that don't make it quite as good as it seems, but it is an astonishing story because ten years ago it was not 9 percent of the college population that was black; it was 2 or 3 percent. And you can go from income to housing, to the kinds of goods we own, to what kind of houses we live in, to where we live, to the number of washers, dryers, automobiles—all the things that have really come to represent middle-class life in America—and you find that in the last dozen years Americans have achieved in large measure what I have called this massive majority middle class.

Our present state has all the hallmarks of progress if you believe progress represents something better than what it replaces and if you believe that in a democratic society it is not up to elites to determine what constitutes truth, beauty, and progress, but up to the people themselves. If you were to catalogue the things people wanted in 1960, for instance, living in a suburb, owning a second automobile, owning a washer and a dryer, and sending their kids to college, and compare their 1960 aspirations with their situation today, you would have to conclude that in terms of what the people hoped for, this decade-or-so has been a success. The hard data indicates a tremendous amount of absolute progress in this country in the very terms of the Great Society rhetoric and the legislation that Teddy White considers so baleful.

Now, people say everyone feels lousy about it. If everything is so good, how come everything is so bad. They are fed up. They are alienated. There are some polls that support this, but it is interesting the way polls break down. First of all, if you ask people how they individually are doing, you get very high responses: "I'm okay, my kids are in good schools, my house is nice, my income is all right, my job is okay"—very high responses. It's not until you get to "What do you think of America," "How is the country going," that people start saying "We are in trouble."

There are a lot of problems in this country and around the world. Part of it, in my judgment, is exactly what I mentioned above. It is kind of a side effect of success. Some say it is the revolution of rising expectations. I would say that it is something a little different. It is the realization of realized expectations. In other words, if you take a man in 1960, making \$8,000 a year, living in an urban house, owning one car (an old one), not owning a washer or a dryer, and not sending his kids