

Film

Emil Bacilla

1966

The other night the ACLU presented the premiere of Paul Stookey's film THE CULVERT, along with RELAX YOUR MIND by Tom Berman and Chris Frayne, and FIVE SHORT FILMS and L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT by George Manupelli. The program was very enjoyable, in fact it was an intriguing way to spend an hour plus.

The first film shown was FIVE SHORT FILMS, which was a collection of experiments with abstract flashes with a soundtrack comprised of various sounds synchronized to the images. The five films were titled: FILM FOR HOODED PROJECTOR: I LOVE YOU, DO NOT BE AFRAID; SAY NOTHING ABOUT THIS TO ANYONE; I MUST SEE YOU CONCERNING A MATTER OF THE UTMOST URGENCY; and IF YOU LEAVE ME I WILL KILL MYSELF. The audience as usually happens with films of this type, tended to become uneasy, but I found that if you just kind of sit there and let the thing overpower you, it can be kind of a strange trip. Although, I'll have to admit that I too got tired of it after a while. But then maybe I missed the point.

RELAX YOUR MIND was a beautiful little film. I saw it before at Ann Arbor and must say that I thought it was even better this time. It was a simply made little film, with very few pretensions, and was a fine example of what can be done if people want to make a film inexpensively and go about it realistically; not trying for an epic.

L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT was also a good film, but obviously suffered for lack of budget. Some of the cutting was very sloppy, but that is one of the minor things one has to put up with in the underground because of a lack of money can make it impossible to re-shoot so that things will flow completely right. But the defects weren't that noticeable, and the film as a whole more than made up for any minor technical failings. Some things, in fact, the cutting in of old newsreel footage for example, worked out better than in professional films (such as MORGAN) where they have been tried.

But now for the gist of the evening: THE CULVERT which was co-written and produced by N. Paul Stookey (Stookey didn't direct the film, and being the slipshod reporter that I am, I'll have to admit that I don't remember the name of the director). The film was excellent. The opening and closing made very good use of stop action, and the cutting and photography were superb. Since the majority of the film takes place in a culvert, it was fascinating to watch all of the camera angles that they employed in such a confining area. Of course they had the advantage of a bit more money than most underground films and were able to set up their shots perfectly and re-take if necessary.

You know it would be interesting to see what would have happened if Manupelli had had as much bread to make L' HISTOIRE.

For those who read this column regularly, you'll recall mention of starting a film group in Detroit. Things are progressing as well as can be expected when someone as lethargic as myself is running the show. I hope that by the next issue we'll have a time set up for the first meeting, which will consist of as many interested people as possible getting together and deciding just what the hell we should do.

If we do have the date set, I'll announce it so people will know to come. Also, if there is anyone out there who would be interested and haven't contacted me yet, I would really appreciate hearing from them. They can get in touch with me by writing or calling THE FIFTH ESTATE and leaving a phone number or address, or zip code or something so that I can get in touch with them.

I was really happy to find out that the University of Detroit is presenting a program of films on Wednesday nights. One reason that I was so happy was that I work on Friday and Saturday nights, when everyone else seems to be doing their programs, and I can't make them.

Another reason I was so happy was the list of films, which includes SUNDAYS AND CYBELLE and HALLELUJAH THE HILLS. The third reason for my overflowing joy was that they're only charging fifty cents. The exact dates and times of the showings will be listed in the calendar page, which is buried somewhere in this and forthcoming issues of the Fifth Estate.

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