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of the homosexual than it comments with wit and passion upon the desolation and waste that chill this way of life.

Director Friedkin has done a creditable job in opening up the first few minutes of the film by situating his characters in their everyday world. The claustrophobic atmosphere of the three-room apartment has been carried over well from the play, with the addition of a patio sequence which ends in a rainstorm that provides Friedkin with a symbolic correlative through the further constriction of the set and the tearful raindrops that form on the window panes. In the game segment, however, Friedkin overextends the shock value of the material with a camera that flits from face to face in search of reactions to the detriment of the film's forward motion.

Nonetheless, Friedkin has elicited strong performances from his actors (all of whom were in the original production). This version of *The Boys in the Band* is a gripping, frighteningly honest view of human relationships and the introverted psyche of the homosexual from his perspective, with all its anxiety, bitterness, depression and solitude. (A-IV)

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FELLINI SATYRICON. Directed by ~~Federico Fellini~~. Produced by Alberto Grimaldi. With Martin Potter, Hiram Keller, Max Born, Capucine, Fanfulla and Lucia Bose. Written by Fellini and Bernardino Zapponi. Photographed by Giuseppe Rotunno. Music by Nino Rota. Distributed by United Artists. 127 minutes.

Federico Fellini's development, according to the *auteur* critics, has involved a passage from sociological concerns, into the psychological, and now to what might best be described as the abstract, the non-intellectual and the irrational, in which narrative gives place to characterization, forms, colors and faces that are their own reason for being in a world of pure imagination. Such a creation is *Satyricon*. It opens itself to discussion on the level of execution rather more than of content, and calls for a viewer willing simply to immerse himself in Fellini's images—incredibly beautiful, sensuous, curious, amusing, horrifying, rich in detail.

The characters in this vision of ancient Rome are two friends, Encolpius (Martin Potter) and Ascyltus (Hiram Keller)—the names mean "embraced" and "untouched," respectively—and a slave boy, Giton (Max Born)—"neighbor"—over whose affections the two fight. Their adventures in Southern Italy take the form of a journey. Encolpius finds Giton and loses him to Ascyltus just before their tenanted cliff-dwelling and its inhabitants are destroyed by earthquake. Encolpius discovers himself next at the orgiastic banquet of Trimalchio, a crass *nouveau riche*, where he is protected by the poet Eumolpus (Salvo Randone), the only other recurring figure in the film. The scene then changes to a fantastic slave ship in which the young men are briefly united and the ship's mistress (Capucine) weds Encolpius to her husband, Lichas (Alain Cuny). Caesar's forces invade the boat and Encolpius and Ascyltus find refuge in a deserted villa where an aristocratic Roman couple has committed suicide rather than endure the decadent collapse of their civilization.

The next segment involves an abduction by Encolpius and Ascyltus of a "divine" albino hermaphrodite, at the climax of which Encolpius is thrust into a labyrinth where he must confront the Minotaur. He is spared, but the experience leaves him impotent. He is directed by Eumolpus to the Garden of Delight where his virility is restored by the Sorceress Oenothea. Later he sadly discovers that Ascyltus has been killed, and along the seashore he comes upon the corpse of the poet who, in accordance with his will, is being cannibalized by his heirs. Encolpius and a crew of young men set sail for Africa in search of a new land of promise.

The film's various sequences are juxtaposed frequently with little or no cause and effect relationship. This episodic structure is due in part to the fragmented remains of the original *Satyricon* by Petronius, from which Fellini has taken the basic situations and his cast (not, however, the film's

violence, the shipboard animal sacrifice, the suicide, nor the Romans' fascination for foreign women), but the essential rationale for the film's organization stems primarily from Fellini's choice of technique, his free-form reliance on imagination to flesh out and carry forward the film's action. And Fellini's imaginative vision in *Satyricon* is enormous.

All of his latter-day hallmarks cascade by: the grotesquerie of exaggeration, the quick, sharp character touches, the editing that lets us see the image just long enough for the after-image to touch the next shot, the whirling motion, the scenes which are lighted like stages and surrounded by darkness, the profiles that are cut out of blackness, the eerie landscapes, the orgiastic gatherings, and the inimitable collection of Fellini faces. Specifically, the cliff-dwellers' home, the banquet, the ship with no superstructure, and the Minotaur's ampitheater are extraordinary feats of creative design and execution. (The sets and costumes were designed by Danilo Donati.) Even the Fellini buffs, however, may be left gasping at this onrushing array of the master's images—their sensuousness, opulence and incredible lushness.

The charge of overabundance is particularly intrusive because, as ever, one feels beneath these magnificent visuals a meaning is struggling to come forth. And indeed, Fellini is speaking, through this sort of pagan's progress before Christianity, about the search of youth for identity and promise, the destruction of the artist by his wealthy patrons, and frequently, in quite Freudian terms, of the general collapse of a society brought about by riches and excess. And while it may be an easy exercise to read this unique recreation of the Neronian Age (probably less Nero than Fellini) as an analogy of our own, Fellini's world is too self-contained, too closed within his own imagination run wild, to draw such comfortable parallels.

As such the film puts itself outside any traditional evaluation. People kill and maim, commit gluttony, perverse sexual acts, suicide, and even devour human flesh—without horror, a hint of guilt, or fear of punishment. Such a display of subject matter, not to say its treatment, is accessible without offense only to a limited audience. And yet, over all this mayhem reigns a benign Fellini, compassionate as always, yet not taking sides, not manipulating his audience, nor moralizing.

This detachment creates its own problems, for while the audience is mesmerized by the sights and sounds on the screen it is totally removed from the characters and what is happening to them. As a virtuoso performance the film is utterly stunning, but this world *in vacuo* holds no meaningful conflicts nor audience involvement of any sort.

Perhaps the key to *Satyricon* is found in the closing scene where the face of Encolpius fades (together with the other leading figures in the film) into a similar face on a crumbling mural set against the backdrop of the sea, as the soundtrack ends in mid-sentence, "A young Greek told us that in the years . . ." At the film's outset Encolpius was seen delivering a soliloquy on Giton's infidelity while facing a blank graffiti-defiled wall. It is as though Fellini found in the murals of Pompeii an objective correlative for his own fragmen-

Fellini Satyricon, United Artists

tary art—a finely etched series of panels fashioned with more beauty than logic. Thus the film is an exercise in iconography rather than a treatise on morality or a dissectable semantic structure. To one who can forsake logic for two hours of color and iconography, *Satyricon* will be one of the extraordinary visual experiences in recent cinema; to those weaned on *La Dolce Vita* and *8 1/2*, however, Fellini's newest opus will be regretted as a disappointing *tour-de-force*. (A-IV)

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HUNTING SCENES. Directed by Peter Fleischmann. Produced by Rob Houwer. With Martin Sperr, Angela Winkler, Erika Wackernagel, and Else Quecke. Written by Peter Fleischmann. Photography by Alain Derobe. Distributed by Radim Films, Inc. 86 minutes.

Our century is marked by a kind of collective schizophrenia in which scientific "progress" is invariably used as a self-destructive and irrational force. Faced with the contemporary reality of total warfare, internecine revolt, and ecological suicide, sociologists and anthropologists are trying to discover whether the causes of violence are to be found in our social structures or in human nature itself.

Hunting Scenes answers this question by describing a small German community as one great chain of persecution of the weak by the strong. The operative force is that everyone takes part in this struggle, sometimes as hunter and sometimes as prey.

The film's motivation is simple, almost elemental. A young man returns to his village and soon becomes the object of ridicule when a rumor starts that he is a homosexual. The rumor is taken as fact. When he is seen alone with a small boy, the police are called and he kills in a vain attempt to escape his persecutors.

Hunting Scenes is, of course, not the story of a misunderstood homosexual (it is important only that he is *thought* to be one). Nor is it that of the other victims who make up the cast of characters. It is about an entire village and the fear of those who are different which unites its inhabitants. It is microcosmic.

This is not an easy condemnation of social prejudice. The film attempts more than this by showing that each of the victims (the homosexual, the village prostitute, the retarded child, the cripple, and so on) is also by turn one of the persecutors. There are no heroes to elicit audience sympathy; the viewer is forced to an objective contemplation of everyday intolerance escalating into ever more harmful forms of aggression.

The film would be an unrelieved horror if it were not paced with robust scenes of farming life and strong rustic humor. The cast (partly professional, the rest local Bavarian farmers) is perfectly marvelous, for if the film has no heroes, it has no villains either. Each character is a clearly observed human being; they are all average people who are basically decent, and it is precisely this which makes the film so frightening and significant.

No film has ever gotten so close to explaining how millions of average Germans accepted the suppression of democracy by the Third Reich. But if viewers think that this is all that *Hunting Scenes* is about, they will be exhibiting the same intolerance that is depicted. The Germans here are only the model for the rest of mankind.

Hunting Scenes is the first commercial feature of writer-director Peter Fleischmann. It is based upon the play of another young German, Martin Sperr (who himself plays the difficult role of the homosexual). Fleischmann has used an almost *cinema verité* technique in describing the life of his farming community. Urban audiences might find these rural scenes (such as the butchering of a pig) too graphic for their tastes and yet, like the crude and earthy humor that runs through the film, it is precisely these scenes which give the film its documentary honesty and sense of reality.

The black and white photography by Alain Derobe is brilliant, ranging from simple, straightforward camera shots to almost surreal compositions. The music is entirely indigenous to the region (filled with sentimentality and *gemüt-*