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## AFTENDARK

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Apocalypse Now
Produced and directed by Francis Coppola
United Artists

Movie of the Month:

Francis Coppola is the greatest creative film-maker in America. His stunning Apocalypse Now is not merely a recounting of the Vietnam experience: it is a supremely focused pore-shot of the face of war in all its ugliness. Yet the other side of the coin is lovingly featured in its frames: the deep comradeship and willingness to sacrifice oneself for another that the closeness to one another in the most horrendous circumstances always engenders in men. Though Coppola's vision and philosophy are apparent in every frame, he has generously given of his film to its actors. Martin Sheen excells as Captain Willard, an Intelligence Department hit-man on a mission to Cambodia to liquidate the mad, homicidal Colonel Kurtz. Willard's every reaction is mirrored on Sheen's tired, questioning, embittered face with admirable economy. As Kurtz, Marlon Brando, however, envelops his role with a pretentious symbolism. It's perhaps not entirely his fault, but may stem from Coppola's obvious (and well-founded) respect for Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, on which the film is more or less based, and on which Kurtz' character is completely based. As Willard's ship-mates on his mission, Frederic Forrest as Chef, a saucier from New Orleans, Larry Fishburne as Clean, a happy young innocent, Sam Bottoms as Lance, a surfer whose reactions to reality are bizarre and fascinating, and Albert Hall as Chief, a stalwart man who runs the boat, are convincing, heartbreaking, and immeasurably true to their roles. Robert Duvall as Lt. Colonel Kilgore, a Patton-McArthur style officer of bravado and flair, has made the relatively short time he's in the film memorable. He rises to extraordinary heights, and it's hard to imagine anyone who could top him in the Best Supporting Actor category of the

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Academy Awards. Even small roles stand out as performed by G. D. Spradlin, Harrison Ford, and Dennis Hopper. Strangely, the scene which, to me, best exemplified the cruelty and obscenity of war was the elaborate Playmate USO sequence, which appalled me. The flaws in this two-and-a-half hour epic are few: the narration by Michael Herr (too much explication); the rather dense surrealism and pomposity towards the end of the film; the Busby Berkeley quality of Kurtz' kingdom. But its faults slip easily from the memory, while the tremendous virtues of this greatest of war movies remain, and will remain programmed (I hope forever) in the computers of the viewers' minds as a warning against future wars. Richard Marks' editing, Dean Tavoularis' production design, Vittorio Storaro's photography, and Carmine Coppola and Francis Coppola's music are superb, and the D film's sound and look are explosively superior. Apocalypse Now is a great and important movie, an American masterpiece that is a shoo-in for the distinction of the Best Picture Oscar.

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