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THE TEN BEST

THE SCREEN

Time to play the game again. And the selection of the Ten Best is indeed a game — for the reviewer, who can be as personal and arbitrary as he likes, and for the reader, who can object to the choices and make his own list which he frequently does. The Ten Best game can be both entertaining and instructive — for the reviewer, who must take stock of the year just finished and may have to squirm to find ten good films, and for the reader, who discovers the reviewer's preferences and gets some idea on evaluating future reviews.

The two largest trends in 1965 show up in the preponderance of war films and the unusual number of movies concerned with *La Dolce Vita*, the empty so-called sweet life in these our times. Since I am rather fed-up with war films, although they continue to reign in popularity, I found myself concentrating on the modern hollow-life pictures, several of which, fortunately, had up-beat endings. On the whole, there was a paucity of really good films in 1965; but the Ten Best are the ten *best*; and I had no difficulty selecting *my* ten. So without further palaver, here, not arranged in order of preference, is my list.

✓ *Juliet of the Spirits*. Although its plot is almost soap opera, its embellishments are in a class by themselves. Director Fellini's use of color makes this the most beautiful picture of the year in spite of the shocking scenes and grotesqueries that display the errors of modern living. Giulietta Masina is superb as the upper-middle-class housewife who, thrown for a loop by her husband's infidelity, sinks into daydreams and nightmares until she learns to live with reality.

✓ *Red Desert*. Director Antonioni also uses color expertly in describing today's wastelands and the moods of a neurotic wife (Monica Vitti) lost in this bleak world. This is pretty grim stuff, but scary and vivid enough to make us take its stern message seriously.

Darling. In telling the story of a self-centered, ambitious woman's rise to ironically-empty social heights, director John Schlesinger employs some brilliant cinema to expose our jet-age society. His cast, led by Julie Christie, Dirk Bogarde, and Laurence Harvey, are practically perfect, and the total effect, though unpleasant, is vastly entertaining.

The Knack. The year's funniest comedy is a sort of wacky lyrical poem satirizing modern youth and their tut-tutting elders. Charming directed by Richard

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Bingham and three beaming young London and spout the witty dialogue the time of their lives and except "the knack — and actress, Rita in the dy tells a grim story young people don't. Also outstanding in this bell as the groom and Dudley friend.

King Rat. An excellent cast, under Ryan Forbes who wrote the screenplay for James Lavell's novel, play out the disturbing story of the fight for survival in a Japanese P.O.W. camp. It's not a nice story; neither are the camp's living conditions, the prisoners-under-stress, or their fallen standards. But this portrait of the human jungle makes this the best war film of the year.

Doctor Zhivago. Carlo Ponti's handsome production, David Lean's thoughtful direction, Robert Bolt's admirable script (which condenses but retains the spirit of Pasternak's novel) have made this into a stirring, old-fashioned film in the Russian epic tradition. It moves slowly, but effectively captures the feel of place and period: Russia during World War I and the Revolution. Its sensitively played characters are engrossing — particularly the poetic doctor (Omar Sharif), his mistress (Julie Christie), and his half-brother (Alec Guinness).

Trial of Joan of Arc. Using dialogue from Joan's trial, director Robert Bresson has made an austere but haunting film about the saint, a film that deserves re-seeing again and again, and becomes more impressive with each seeing. Without being pedantic, it is history happening before your eyes and a worthy memorial to St. Joan.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Story. This documentary film, written by Archibald MacLeish and directed by Richard Kaplan, is another worthy memorial. It tells a moving story of ugly-duckling-into-swan; and, while the last part of the film is less interesting cinematically because of its familiar newsreel shots, the first part is a gem of cinematic biography. But perhaps because the early Eleanor Roosevelt story is so heartbreaking, the swan last half is all the more effective.

To Die in Madrid. Another documentary one about the Spanish Civil War, v reels and film clips so well c sif and accompanied by a w

RIZZOLI

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