

arts and entertainment

Cynical, funny 'Angel City' is 'flawed but fascinating'

By J. Marc Mushkin

Angel City, which opens this weekend at the Sheldon Film Theater, is Jon Jost's flawed but fascinating look at Hollywood, the detective movie, capitalism and crime. It is a complex, cynical, and often very funny film.

Jost made *Angel City* for around \$6,000, a phenomenally low figure, which is indicative of the shoestring budgets Jost has been forced to work with throughout his career.

Jost was born 34 years ago in Chicago, and traveled extensively as an "army brat." He quit the Illinois School of Technology after two years and left the country for New Zealand and later Europe.

Twenty-seven months in prison for draft evasion changed the course of his film career.

movie review

"I learned about a lot of people I wouldn't have met otherwise. I was a die-hard rebellious brat about going to war," Jost said in a *Lincoln Journal* article during his 1975 visit to UNL.

Jost made some twenty short films during the '60s and shifted feature films in 1972. That year he made *Speaking Directly (Some American Notes)*. His two new features are *Last Chants For a Slow Dance (Dead End)* (1977) and *Angel City*.

Jost truly is an American independent filmmaker. He claims that he had seen only two movies when he started making them in 1963. This lack of influence is evident in the "experimental" nature of his films.

"I do endless things to try to disorient the viewer," Jost said in a *Sight and Sound* interview. This is abundantly clear in *Angel City* with its shifting between the skeleton of a detective story and Jost's didactic portrait of Hollywood and capitalism.

The story, such as it is, concerns the murder of a starlet, Gloria Franklin, played by Winifred Golden, and the question of whether her husband is implicated. Pierce del Rue plays the husband Pierce del Rue (that's right!), who is the president of the giant corporation Rexon.

Investigating the case is Frank Goya

("Just like the painter") portrayed by Robert Glaudini. His performance is sort of a cross between Bogart's Sam Spade and Gregg Allman.

It is an interesting synthesis of a classic Hollywood genre, the detective movie, with a 1977 "laid-back" and "spaced out" protagonist. Glaudini approaches Jost's script and the role with the wit necessary to carry off what could have been a frightfully dull part.

Goya isn't on screen very much, but he holds together the action with his narration and those silly SX-70 snapshots. But despite the humor of Glaudini's performance the sense and mind of the film is clearly Jost's.

Jost uses the detective story to stage his detailed picture of Los Angeles (the *Angel City* of the title). Extended shots from the air and on the city's freeways outline the huge metropolis that Jost's voice-overs describe. Jost lists the births, deaths, marriages, divorces, number of miles of highways, number of automobiles, etc. *ad infinitum*.

Unfortunately, Jost adds some more poetic descriptions of the city word pictures that come off rather sophomoric and tend to trivialize the visual images. Reality, Jost seems to be telling us, is subjugated to image in this complex city (he hints at this complexity in the titles when *Angel City* changes to *Angle City*).

The most important image Jost confronts is the corporate world in the form of del Rue. Rexon is, of course, Exxon, and Jost introduces del Rue with a parody of an Exxon commercial. Del Rue, in a smooth casual voice, explains that a big, complex world needs big, complex, multinational corporations.

Jost's message stumbles across; the connection between capitalism and crime is pounded through the frames. The problem is that Jost's film vocabulary has only superlatives and no discretion. An image is either a subliminal cut or a ten minute marathon. A visual that could stand by itself is fragmented by an unnecessary narration or vice versa.

But Jost's humor and Glaudini's performance succeed in this jumbled mass of ideas. After all, the Rexon commercial is funny, and Goya is disarmingly improbable.

Angel City is showing at the Sheldon Film Theater Sunday and Monday at 7 and 9 p.m. Admission is \$2.00.



Photo by Keren MacIntyre

Robert Glaudini is detective Frank Goya in Jon Jost's *Angel City*.

Movie schedule

Cinema 1: *The Boys In Company C*: 7:30, 9:45 p.m.; R

Cinema 2: *The Other Side of the Mountain Part 2*: 7:15, 9:10 p.m.; PG
Cinema X: call 474-9810 for titles; 24 hour; X

Cooper/Lincoln: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*: 7:15, 9:45 p.m.; PG
Douglas 1: *The Goodbye Girl*: 5:10, 7:15, 9:20 p.m.; PG

Douglas 2: *Coma*: 5:35, 7:40, 9:45 p.m.; PG

Douglas 3: *The One and Only*: 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

Embassy: call 432-6042 for titles; continuous from 11 a.m.; X

Joyo: *Oh God*: 7:20 p.m.; PG

Plaza 1: *The Turning Point*: 5:30, 7:45, 10 p.m.; PG

Plaza 2: *Saturday Night Fever*: 5:15, 7:30, 9:45 p.m.; R

Plaza 3: *Late Great Planet Earth*: 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

Plaza 4: *The Fury*: 5:30, 7:45, 10 p.m.; R

Roxy: *Singin' in the Rain*: 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; G

State: *Candlehoe*: 7:15, 9:10 p.m.; G

Stuart: *High Anxiety*: 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 p.m.; PG

Playwright Baldwin conquers defeats, wins competition

By Charlie Krig

Chalk up another success for Joseph Baldwin. One of the UNL theater instructor's plays won first place in a national play writing competition sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Baldwin said he was surprised and happy when he learned of his award.

"You're never too old to be a kid about these things," he said. "I got pretty excited. Maybe that's the good thing about theater—hoping for good things, like Christmas every day. It definitely isn't routine."

Baldwin estimated he has written 25 full-length and 31 one-act plays. Of these, 11 have been published, five have been produced in New York City and 13 have won national awards. *Lars and Emma*, his latest winner, is a three-act drama about Scandinavian-Americans living on the northern plains of the U.S. in the 19th century. Baldwin said his prize, \$2,000, is the largest award he has won.

There was a big of irony, though, because the same play was rejected in another contest, Baldwin said. The reason probably was due to technical limitations, he explained, because *Lars and Emma* wasn't adaptable to the contest's arena theater

time. After the war he wrote a play as his master's degree thesis.

But the rejections compel Baldwin to continue. He said he gets approximately nine rejections per one acceptance and that he tells his play-writing students that they must persevere. For example, he said, in the last two weeks he received rejections for three long plays and five short plays in contrast to his Wisconsin success. Still, he makes many copies of each play and mails them to every possible contest and publishing company.

And for extra impetus he reserves one bulletin board in his office specifically for posters and notes about his triumphs. "It reminds me that some do get accepted and are put on, so that I don't dive out the window on each rejection," he said.

"But there's not really rejections because it just means the play didn't match the judge's tastes. The judge isn't saying 'this isn't a good script.' He's saying 'this just doesn't appeal to our needs and our audience.'"

Baldwin said he started writing "seriously" in 1946. In school he had a variety of majors including journalism, English, teaching and theater, but his final choice was made while in the Air Force during World War I. He said while he was stationed in England he went to many London plays and did some writing during his free

time. After the war he wrote a play as his master's degree thesis.

The idea for *Lars and Emma* originated just after the second world war.

"I think I got my first notes for the play from a friend during the winter of 1949 in Iowa City," Baldwin said. "My friend told me how the people on isolated farms go crazy when they're snowbound. He said there was a rise in the number of murders and suicides each winter because the people were blocked in together."

After thinking about this for years, Baldwin finally wrote the play. *Lars and Emma* became the story of several "non-specific" Scandinavian-Americans and their conflict about land ownership.

Senior vocal, violin recitals today

Two UNL students have to finish some work today before they can leave for spring break. The students are a mezzo-soprano and violinist in the School of Music who will present their senior recitals in a free, public concert at 3:30 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall.

Karen Zrust will sing six songs: *Flow My Tears* by Dowland, *O Kuhler Wald* and *Feinsleichen* by Brahms, *Infidelite* by

"Someone might wonder how a person with a New York City, Tennessee, predominantly Texas and 20-year-in-Nebraska background would write a play about Scandinavian-Americans. What I wanted was a feel that isn't what you'd call exotic, but gives me some distance from that type of people."

"I gave the characters abstract backgrounds so that they could be more like legendary people, a little larger than life. I also made the location unspecific and never refer to their country of origin. It's only referred to as 'the old country.'"

The play will be part of a fine arts festival at the University of Wisconsin and Baldwin will attend the premiere. There he will receive the \$2,000 first prize.

Hahn, *Chansons du clair tamis* by Poulenc and *In the Morning*, a spiritual arranged by Esquivel and Zrust. Her accompanists will be Kathy Knebel on piano and Bob Esquivel on guitar.

Following Zrust will be violinist Marilyn O'Boyle. Her program includes *Sonata in G major Op. 30, No. 3* by Beethoven, *Partita No. II* by J.S. Bach and *Suite Populaire Espagnole* by Manuel de Falla. O'Boyle's pianist will be Robert Rhein.