

Dirty Little Billy—unbelievable and superficial

Review by Roy Baldwin

Why is "Dirty Little Billy," now in its last days at the Cinema I, such a superficial movie? After all, wasn't it supposed to tell the "real truth" about Billy the Kid—expose him once and for all for the grimy psychopath he really was?

Yes, and on a superficial level, the film does just that. Coffeerville, Billy's crazy parents (why do I want to call them Mr. and Mrs. Kid?), their wretched homestead, everything down to the real mud everyone trudges around in, is without a doubt authentic.

Even though some of the extras suspiciously resemble the types you meet at Casey's Bar on a bad evening, the viewer knows without a doubt that he's really back in the good old grubby days of the Golden West.

But I came expecting more than just authenticity from "Dirty Little Billy." I expected to be shown why his character developed in the unique way it did. I expected a sensitive treatment of Billy's inner self, but all I got was authentic scenery.

The movie's basic flaw lies in a lack of explanation of the motivation for the three main characters. Billy (Michael Pollard, who gets top marks for everything), kicked out by his crazy homesteader father, takes up with the crazy saloon keeper Goldie (Richard Evans) and his woman Berle (Lee Purcell), the town lady of ill repute.

Goldie is a true psychopath, who flies off on binges during which he attempts to wipe out the population of Coffeerville with his six-gun. Billy, being psychopathic himself, falls under Goldie's spell. By the movie's end he is gleefully mowing down legions of fellow outlaws with an ardor soon to make him famous.

Here's the problem, though: midway through the picture we suddenly realize that both Billy and Berle are supposed to owe their lives to Goldie—Berle because he took her in when the rest of her family

had died of disease, Billy because he befriended him when his father had turned him out. The burden of the psychological development of the entire film shifts onto Goldie's unsteady shoulders, and from there it falls flat.

It all happens much too fast to be believed. One minute Billy stumbles in the door of Goldie's saloon, the next minute Billy and Berle are telling each other how much they owe to Goldie.

This is not fair to us or to the characters. It's sloppy story telling. In the midst of all this technical authenticity, the actors have lost their believability—they become just another part of the scenery.

I left the theatre wondering whether the director intended this to be a movie about Billy or about Goldie or whether he really cared at all how it came out.

"Dirty Little Billy" is, because of his sloppiness, a very authentic castle built on thematic sand. It's a shame, because with just a little more believable plot, this could be a real fun movie.



With vacation come films, concerts

There's not much to mention this week.

Tuesday night's foreign film is "Mouchette" from France. Friday night in Omaha Rare Earth, Poco and Ballinjack will give a concert.

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The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra will give local concerts Nov. 28 and Nov. 30. On Monday evening, Nov. 27, the orchestra will break down into smaller groups for sessions in the dormitories and some Greek units.

Remember vacation's this weekend. Quick concert notes:

Nov. 20: America, St. Louis; Bo Diddley, Oklahoma City; Muddy Waters, Kansas City through the 30th; Nov. 21: Doc Watson, Boulder through the 25th; Chicago, St. Louis; Ten Years After, Wichita; Nov. 22: Hot Tuna, Kansas City, Mo; Ten Years after, St. Louis; Nov. 23: James Brown, Kansas City, Mo; Ten Years After, St. Louis; Nov. 23: James Brown, Kansas City, Mo; Chicago, Chicago through the 29th; Nov. 24: Hot Tuna, Chicago; James Brown, Wichita; Rate Earth, Poco, Ballinjack, Omaha Civic Auditorium.

A week from Tuesday, Robert Frank's films "Me and My Brother" and "Conversations in Vermont" will be shown at Sheldon. Frank is a very good film-maker and his movies are certain to be among the best shown in Lincoln this year, regardless of what else comes to town.

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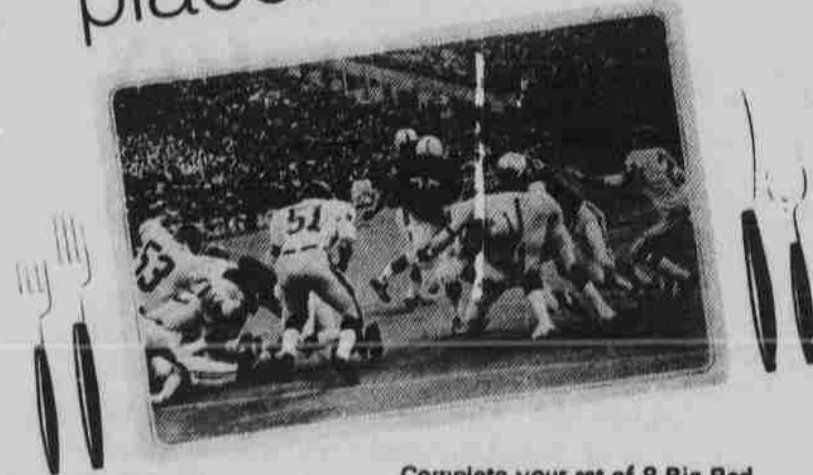
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Louisiana students' memorial Tuesday

A UNL memorial service for two students slain last week in an incident at Southern University in Louisiana has been scheduled for 11 a.m. Tuesday, according to Leroy Ramsey, director of minority affairs.

Ramsey said participants should meet at the Broyhill Fountain.

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