

Desert, hopelessness mark tale of 'good cop'

Electra Glide in Blue is the intelligent and well-crafted directorial debut of 27-year-old James William Guercio. It is also one of the better American films of the year.

Guercio's film is about the loneliness of a 5 ft-4 inch motorcycle cop named John Wintergreen on the long, empty stretches of the Arizona desert highways.

Robert Blake (you may remember him as the nifty little killer from *In Cold Blood*), as Wintergreen, and a fellow patrolman called Zipper (Billy Bush) work a desert beat where stopping overloaded trucks and vehicles without bumpers are often the most exciting things that happen.

Zipper spends most of his time sitting on his bike in the shade reading comic books. Wintergreen longs for the day when he can be promoted to a position as a homicide detective and thus escape a job where there simply "ain't no action."

Guercio maintains a fine sense of style throughout most of the film. He has a liking for extreme close-ups of various objects and the film's opening sequence is nothing less than brilliant.

The constant use of tight close-ups in a film can often become irritating but Guercio's shot selections are not only fascinating but they are edited so there's no difficulty in following the action.

They form an effective contrast to the long shots of the vast Arizona desert and miles of straight, endless highway. Veteran academy award winning cinematographer Conrad Hall (*Cool Hand Luke*, *In Cold Blood*, *Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid*) has done his usual masterful job.

I couldn't help seeing *Electra Glide* as a close, though unlikely, parallel to *Easy Rider*. Both deal with a similar form of lonely hopelessness, and the paranoia felt toward California America and Billy by the establishment in *Easy Rider* is now felt toward motorcycle policemen by hippies in *Electra Glide*.

We see Wintergreen on a shooting range early in the film taking pot shots at that classic poster of Hopper and Fonda on their cycles. And the endings of both films are nearly identical with the roles reversed. *Easy Rider* ends at the desegregation of Wyatt

and screenwriter Robert Boris.

We know he is a good cop and a nice guy, yet we see he still cannot escape the stereotyped role of an unpopular traffic cop.

Electra Glide is a well paced, reflective film, with biting, often bitter, contrasts between both the

dangerous jobs and the quiet moments in a motorcycle cop's life. It is only during the middle of the movie, when Wintergreen is promoted to assistant to a frustrated homicide detective that Guercio seems to let this control and quality slip through his grasp. Except for a well staged motorcycle chase scene, this section seems disjointed, tense and even uncomfortable.

I actually thought for a while that Guercio had lost it, but the latter part of the film finds Wintergreen back on his bike. Blake plays a good traffic cop, yet we realize his limitations. Even though he helped solve a murder case, he still was a terrible detective.

We would have liked to see him get a break from his world on the desert highways, but we realize that it is probably where he is at his best.

Guercio might have tried to be a bit too artistic at the film's end. A backward shot along an endless stretch of highway just keeps going on and one and on with nothing to back it up other than a song with the ironic refrain of the words "God Bless America." (Guercio also composed the music for the film.)

But despite its flaws, *Electra Glide in Blue* remains a worthy contribution from a new director.

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and Billy by ... the understanding establishment, while *Electra Glide* shows the destruction of one segment of the establishment by two scared, misundere...

Guercio uses two of the screen's greatest senior character actors in support roles. Royal Dano, as a stubborn, local coroner and Elisha Cook Jr. as a bug-eyed, slobbering wild timer give good performances. And Blake, appropriately both kind and hard-nosed in the role, does him by Guercio

Wesleyan to present Brodie

A young teacher at a girls' school works with her pupils in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* at Wesleyan University this week.

The story is set in Scotland in the 19th century. The teacher, in her prime as a woman, encourages young charges to approach their own maturity.

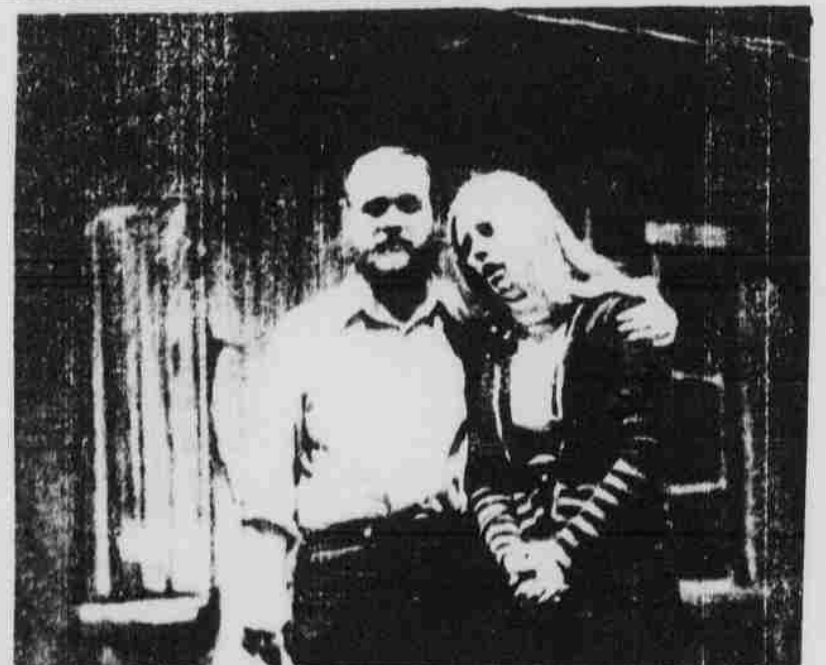
"Brodie really has some fantastic teaching techniques and uses them in the wrong way," said Henry Blanke, the Wesleyan production. She tells them the truth, goodness and beauty, but really she is shallow, Blanke said. Brodie convinces

them of her value, he said, and when they find out they aren't they become bitter and like...

The play is a woman's adaptation of Muriel Spark's novel of the same name. It consists of a series of flashbacks.

Wesleyan's production will move rapidly with a minimum of props. Blanke said the play extends into the audience and scenes will take place here and there as the actors move from set to set.

The play is at 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$1 and seats must be reserved through the box office, which is open from 2 to 5 p.m. at 466-2374. All performances are in the End Miller Theater on the south edge of the campus.



Fiddler on the roof

A big change is in store for opera goers this season. University opera students will be presenting the University's first musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, as their fall production.

Roger Stephens, director and choreographer for the musical and assistant voice professor, said that during his interview for the teaching position, both Melvin George, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and John Moran, director of the School of Music, expressed interest in his experience in acting and directing musicals.

"They were interested in getting away from doing only operas at the School of Music," he said.

Stephens said he thought some students, accustomed to performing in operas, might feel they are "lowering" themselves by being in a musical, but said he thought musicals could be artistic endeavors as well.

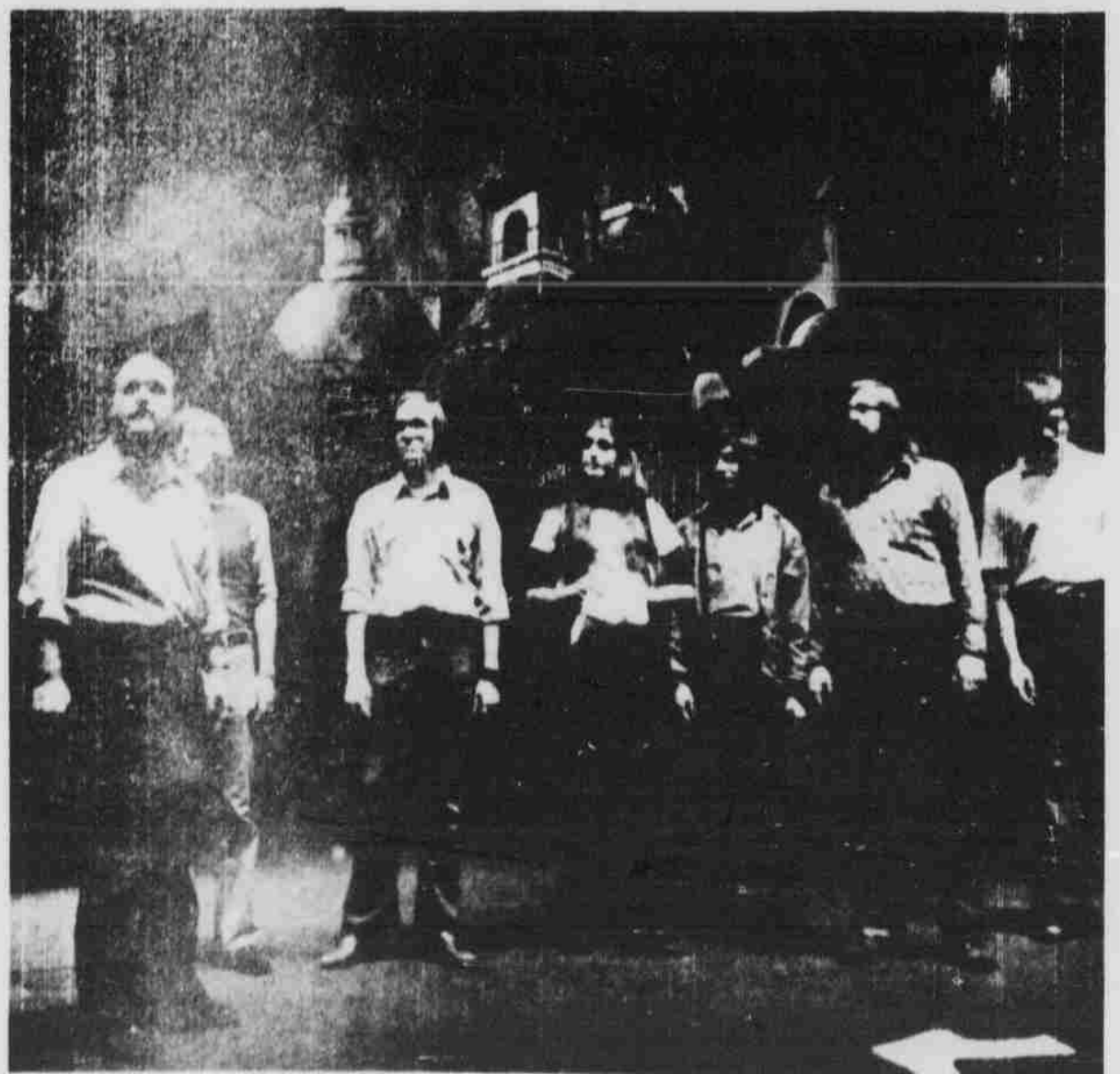
He said he questions how much easier a musical will be to stage. It will give the students a different type of production experience, he said.

"The singers not only have to have a good singing voice, but a good speaking voice and some acting talent," he said.

Fiddler on the Roof is the tale of the struggles of a family and community of Russian Jews at the turn of the century. The fiddler, a symbol of Jewish tradition, follows them even as they are forced from their Russian homeland.

The musical opens Thursday, Nov. 8 at 8 p.m. and plays through Dec. 4, when there will be an additional 3 p.m. matinee.

All seats must be reserved; for tickets call 472-2506.



Photos by Mike Theiler