

'Enchilada western' lacks code of ethics

I always look forward to a movie like *The Deadly Trackers*, mainly because I love a good western. This one doesn't make the grade, though. It has an excellent beginning and a good ending, but nearly everything in between is messed up to the point of absurdity.

The Deadly Trackers is a dirty "dirty Western". This Mexican-American production reminds one of the Clint Eastwood "spaghetti" Westerns, but it goes beyond the silent, brooding no-nonsense style of those movies. It is brutal, bloody (a quality the Eastwood films had surprisingly little of) and sadistic.

It begins with a series of gritty, burlap-textured stills with dialog heard over them. The action starts with the sound of the first gunshot in a small-town bank robbery by an outlaw band whose leader is Rod Taylor. Fine touches so far.

Sean Kilpatrick (Richard Harris) is the town's Irish sheriff who has built a reputation for keeping law and order without using a gun. But after his wife and son are killed, he conveniently forgets all that as he follows the outlaws alone into Mexico, and one by one, butchers and blasts them into a well-deserved oblivion.

greg lukow / key grip

The script best can be described as ridiculous, its high points being lines like "He shot the roses from her cheeks". Harris seems to whisper half of his dialog, because he's either seething with anger or is weak from being beaten, shot or even hanged.

The badmen (Taylor, Neville Brand, et al.) are really bad men. Except for a gentlemanly black (Paul Benjamin), who always manages to retain some dignity but, in the end, gets blown to bits, they are ignorant, disgusting stereotypes. They slobber and drool as they eat with their fingers, and they carouse with the ever-present sloppy Mexican woman. One man has a mutilated face and Brand has a piece of railroad iron instead of a hand (a ridiculous replacement for the old, standard hook).

The ending, like the beginning, is one of the film's few redeeming qualities. After Kilpatrick has taken vengeance on the last of the outlaws, he is killed by a naive Mexican sheriff (Al Lettieri) who runs things by the book. It is a somewhat unexpected ending, and one that shoots many old western movie cliches in the back.

Director Barry Shear (*Wild In The Streets*) apparently has tried to make this a troubling psychological story. Kilpatrick's mind and motivations are often hard to understand. He slits the throat of one villain then looks at the blood on his clothes and throws up.

The trouble, though, is that Kilpatrick is not even an anti-hero, let alone a hero. He becomes as revolting as the men he is tracking. He doesn't hesitate to rough up anyone who gets in his way and he loses control over his emotions. There is no balance between his violent and peaceful instincts. He seems to be psychopathic. The film and its characters lack the code of ethics that was present even in a film like Peckinpah's masterpiece of western violence, *The Wild Bunch*.

Kilpatrick is reminiscent of Joe Don Baker's role in a similar film, *Walking Tall*. Both have violent non-heroes who are so brutal and indestructible that one wonders what the bad guys did to deserve them.

And while *Walking Tall* seems to be in many ways a bad movie, it is still an important one. Unlike *The Deadly Trackers* it is successful in manipulating the audience to root for a guy who deserves no cheers at all.

Speaking of Joe Don Baker, all those who thought him impervious to death in *Walking Tall* can see Walter Matthau turn the trick in Don Siegel's newest film, *Charley Varrick*.

Siegel is one of the last of the old Hollywood contract directors, and this film, in which Matthau always keeps one step ahead of the group trying to get rid of him, is a first-rate action picture.

Many small signs have been posted recently around the campus telling of attempts to form a Lincoln Silent Film Society by the first of the year. Interested students would do well to look into it further.

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Author's skill makes love story sentimental, not tear-jerker

A Thousand Summers by Garson Kanin.

Shakespeare used a plot like this once: (1) boy meets girl; (2) boy and girl fall in love; (3) boy and girl die. He called it *Romeo and Juliet*. Erich Segal changed step (3) to the girl dying and called it *Love Story*. Garson Kanin now has made the girl and boy a man and woman in their 30s and 40s and he calls his book *A Thousand Summers*.

Freeman Osborn is a druggist in the small town of Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. One summer morning during the '20s Sheila Van Anda, the wife of an American diplomat, walks into Osborn's pharmacy and within five minutes they're madly in love.

Unfortunately, Osborn's French war bride refuses him a divorce while Sheila, not wanting to hurt her husband's career (yes, careers were hurt by divorces in "them old days"), decides against divorcing him. So Osborn and Sheila spend the next 20 years in a secret love affair which leads them all over the world.

Sheila, however, dies abruptly of a heart attack midway through the book and Kanin continues the story of Osborn until his retirement to a nursing home.

The book is sentimental, but not sloppy. The factor which prevents the story from deteriorating into a cheap tear-jerker is the book's structure. The story is told through Osborn's memory as he sits, Ryan O'Neal-like, on the porch of Falmouth Sunset House, a home for the elderly. Kanin purposely alternates the chapters between the past and present, enabling the reader to view passionate embraces as fond memories.

'Prankster' weaves spell

Review by Diane Wanek
John Fahey - *After the Ball*

A friend recently turned me on to John Fahey and I have been thankful ever since.

Fahey has long been a legend on college campuses. A little research brought to light his unusual recording career. His first album had an initial run of 95 (the other five were broken in shipment), and he recorded with Takoma records, a story in itself.

Fahey's fifth album for Takoma had a set of liner notes that was really a science fiction story in calligraphy, using the song titles as characters and casting Fahey as the

Neither the plot nor the technique is original but, as always, the writer makes the difference, and Kanin is a good one.

Sheila's abrupt death leaves Osborn with the agonizing realities of loss, loneliness (his wife finally divorces him) and creeping old age coupled with the inevitability of his own death. Kanin's handling of these not-so-popular topics is superb.

For example, "Old people weep at many things: a sudden pang of memory, a severe pain, a wisp of an itch, a sense of being bereft, anger at the body's unwillingness to respond to an order, frustration, loneliness, disappointment in the undone or loose ends or lost opportunities, the irritation of muddled memory; above all, at the inevitability of what lies so close ahead, or

bruce nelson ex libra

at the immutable permanence of what has gone before."

Time is omnipresent throughout the book as the fabric upon which Osborn's and Sheila's lives are sewn. Upon finishing the book, it is difficult to forget the lines from which the title is taken:

— Upon those who love,
Ungenerous time bestows
A thousand summers.

A Thousand Summers is one of the books between Shakespeare and drugstore trash that constitutes good reading.

dragon-slayer of centuries past.

In addition to this, a story was being circulated that since Fahey never did any live performances or sang on any of his albums, they were probably done by a computer.

Since then, Fahey has experimented in new areas. *After the Ball* is one of these experiments. His truly superb guitar playing weaves in and out of Dixieland tunes and old folk songs and riverboat-sounding tunes with tradition and charm.

I am convinced that Fahey, besides being a master of guitar, is a prankster. But what a delightful way to pull pranks.