

# arts & entertainment

## Latest movies are bloody fun for lovers of violence

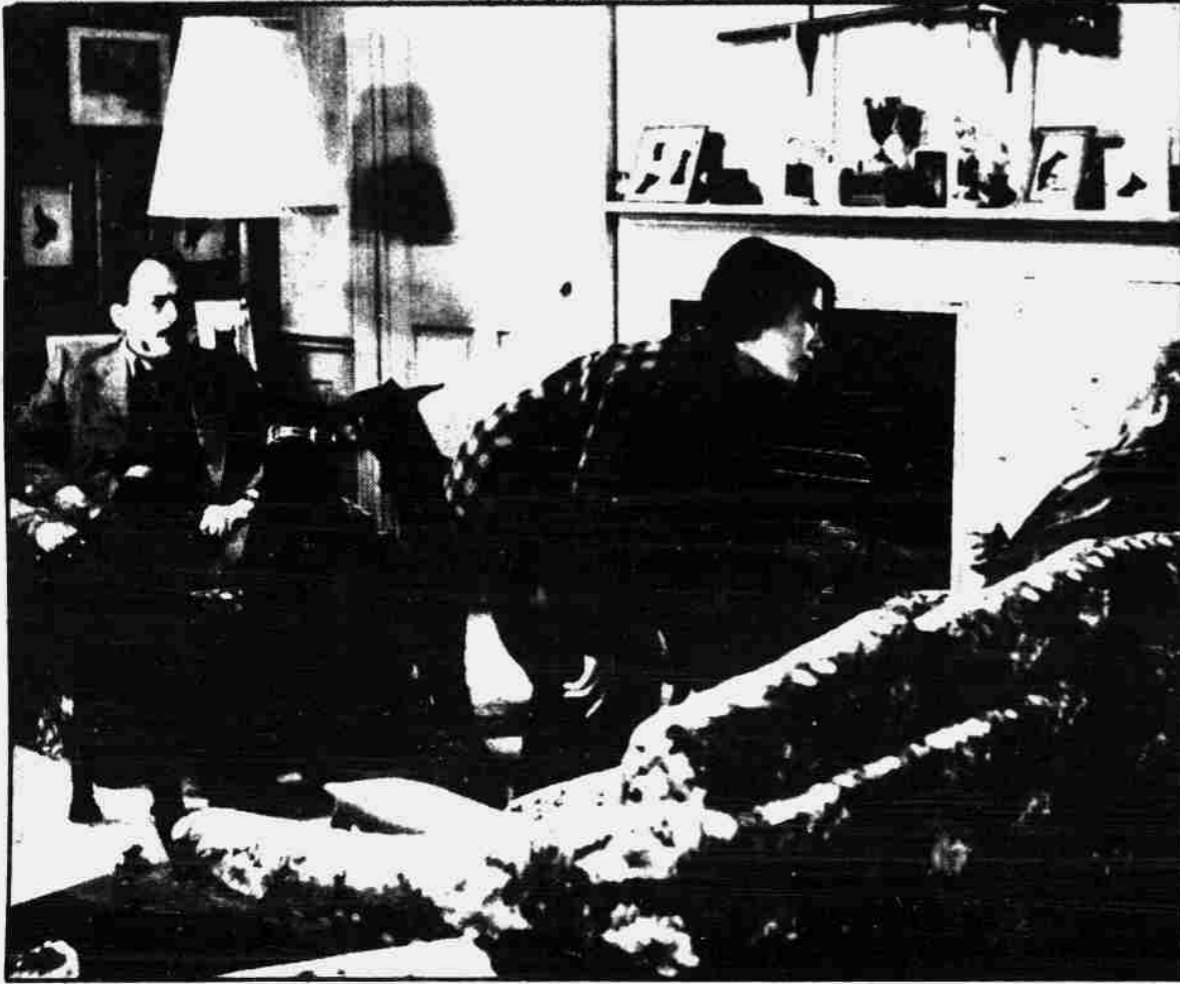


Photo courtesy of 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation

*The Boys from Brazil* is not, as the title might suggest, a South American musical comedy. It is the story of the Nazi party and the efforts to thwart them.

By Peg Sheldrick

Hollywood has evidently decided that red is a good color for the season, because there certainly is quite a bit of it in the recent releases. The big grosses come from grossing people out, it seems. Blood is thicker than water and commoner in many of the newest films playing around town.

*The Boys from Brazil* and *Death on the Nile* are two arrivals that combine shock and schlock to tell grisly tales of murder. *Death on the Nile* is a who done it, while *The Boys from Brazil* is more of a why done it. Both movies are well done but incredible, and both are graphically violent.

assassinations of 94 65-year-old men?

### Silly story

Really, it's a remarkably silly story, the stuff of B-movies, but it works. The plot is complex, but the characters aren't: Mengele is very, very bad and Leiberman is very, very good. In case you can't keep them straight, Mengele has black hair and a black mustache while Leiberman has white hair and a white mustache. In the cold light of day, it's all pretty incredible. But somehow, at least while you're in the theatre, you can go along with it. The high power cast and strong script allow director Franklin J. Schaffner to make this far-fetched tale almost believable.

### movie review

*The Boys from Brazil* is not, as the title might suggest, a South American musical comedy. The story concerns the nefarious activities of what's left of the Nazi party, and the efforts of a few hardy souls to thwart them. Dr. Josef Mengele, a war criminal who committed atrocities in the name of "science," now living on his own South American fantasy island, has a bizarre plan that involves the scheduled

Sir Laurence Olivier plays nice old Mr. Leiberman while Gregory Peck is the snarling arch villain Mengele. Olivier is utterly lovable. Some of that is written into the character, but Olivier adds a charm all his own. Peck turns in a fine performance as the fiendish doctor who tenderly pats the heads of children he intends to maim and murder. James Mason drops in now and then as Seibert. Mengele's liaison with the Nazi commanders. Like some others in the film, he seems uncomfortable with the German accent but manages the best he can.

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## Author contends human love is a genetic adaptation

By David Wood

*On Human Nature* by Edward O. Wilson, Harvard, \$12.50

Edward O. Wilson is an entomologist at Harvard who has excited more debate than anyone who has ever studied bugs.

In 1971 he wrote *The Insect Societies*. Wilson explained class-structure and the organically determined roles of members of ant-hills and hives as showing a survival advantage that can be seen among insects in various stages of evolution.

Then he published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* in 1975. In it he coined the controversial science.

He reviewed the growing body of work by ethologists. Ethology is another recent field in biology, the study of entire behavior patterns of animals. Wilson combined that data with biochemical analysis and comparison, with population and ecobiology, and evolutionary premises, to derive methods and models for interpreting the behavior of all animals which live with any sense of community.

His technique, however, was somewhat mistaken as is his conclusion. Many debated sociobiology from the argument that it denies human freedom by taking life as just a playing out of characters already written in our genes. And if identities and responses are said to be biological, then this science might be used to justify sexism or racism, color and gender clearly being decided by genes, or to justify elitism.

Aware that he approached some big questions which in the past were accessible only by philosophic leaps, Wilson wrote in a chapter called "Man: From Sociobiology to Sociology", that natural forms should be discovered that will scientifically render human ethics more realistically.

Last month his latest book came out. Titled *On Human Nature*; Wilson has tried the vast step up from ants and bees.

"The elements of human nature," says Wilson, "are the learning rules, emotional reinforcers, and hormonal feedback loops that guide the development of social behavior into certain channels as opposed to others. Primary mental abilities and perceptual and motor skills are most influenced by heredity, while personality factors are most influenced."

The learning rules are like those which Piaget described in his theory of "cognitive development." A personal understanding of the world is not innate, it is learned. What is genetic is not a blueprint for response; it is a set of parameters which can be modified by "psychological

ment largely vanished," writes Wilson. "We can be fairly certain that most genetic evolution of human social behavior occurred over 5 million years prior to civilization, otherwise surviving hunter-gatherer people would differ genetically to a significant degree from people in advanced industrial nations. Modern life is only a mosaic of cultural hypertrophies of the archaic behavioral adaptations."

Hypertrophy, "the cultural inflation of

### book review

innate human properties", is a concept Wilson uses widely. A characteristic which was evolved for better fitness against some adversity may, in cases where the same trait is neutral to survival, develop to extremes because it is disposed to respond and is not checked by natural selection.

The social behavior of man is obviously more difficult to cipher than an animal's; man is the only creature with culture. It is only man who has evolved an extensive language and the talent of inscribing it. A person is able to take character from heritages of centuries ago or continents away; a great person can bequeath to millions.

Cultural evolution is much more rapid than simple Darwinian. And much of what characterizes human nature is our intuitive capacity to keep pace with an environment which man changes faster than we change, by hypertrophic questing and the plasticity of our genetic personality. It is not biological legacy which gives us our fine details and our civilization.

"Almost all differences between human societies are based on learning and social conditioning rather than heredity," says Wilson, guarding himself against accusations of racism.

And about the genetic differences between the sexes Wilson says they exist.

"It pays males to be aggressive, hasty, fickle, and discriminating," he writes in view of Darwinistic cost-efficiency and gene propagation.

"In general, girls are predisposed to be more intimately sociable and less physically venturesome." Yet he thinks sex roles are mostly culturally evolved.

Love, however, is a genetic adaptation, says Wilson. "The pleasures of human sex constitute primary reinforcers to facilitate bonding." Love is not a cultural convention, vogue though the notion is.

Also, Wilson interprets homosexuality as natural. "Homosexuals may be the carriers of mankind's rare altruistic impulses."

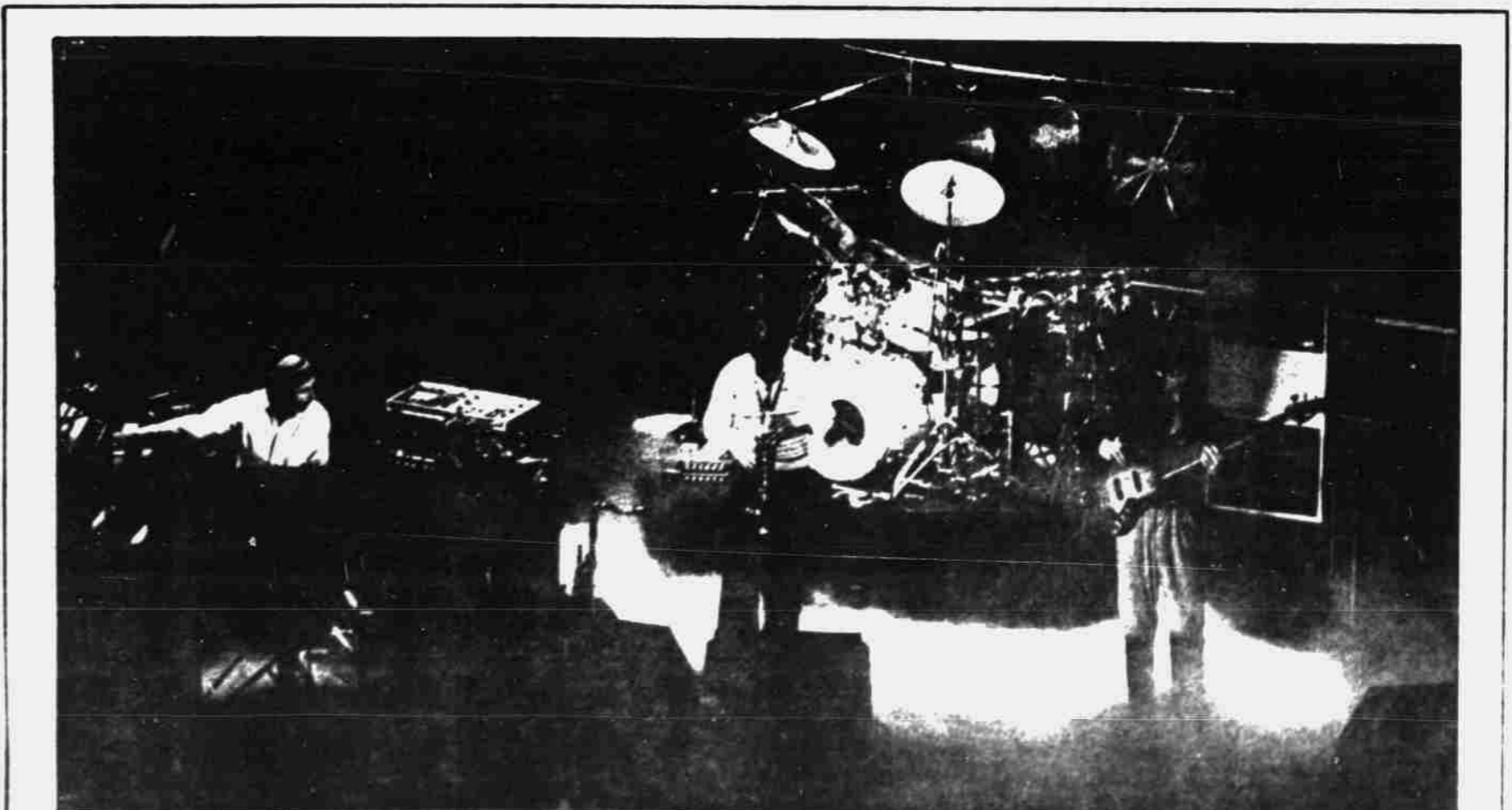
And altruism, a common social behavior

among animals, is in man often "ultimately self-serving. Compassion is flexible and eminently adaptable to political reality." It is, like aggression, not so much what has been called "a drive" as it is a hypertrophy of an instinctual option.

Likewise religion in Wilson's analysis is hypertrophic. "The mind fights to retain a certain level of order and emotional reward. Human beings require simple rules that solve complex problems. If the cerebral cortex is rigidly trained in the techniques of critical analysis and packed with tested information, it will reorder all that into some form of morality, religion, and mythology."

Edward O. Wilson's *On Human Nature* is only a preliminary survey of basic broad elements of man's inherited personality; it is mostly just to suggest that natural science can be applied to transcendental questions like why are we like this and what do we do now?

Although the substance is heavy the book is readably light. Despite all its modern science the book does not bog down and is not bogging. It is written for laymen because it is aimed at laymen as a plea for empirical enlightenment. Yet even this strong intention Wilson states cautiously, now that he has been conditioned to fear over-reaction and being blanketly dismissed.



Jazz fusion group Weather Report entertained an appreciative crowd at Omaha's Music Hall last Tuesday night.

Photo by Mary Anne Golon