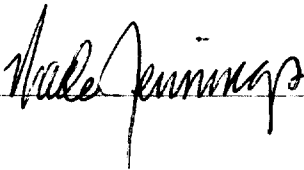


Norman Jewison:
Commercial Success, Critical Failure

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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February, 1987

Expected date of graduation: May 1987

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Introduction

The films of Norman Jewison are a study in contrasts. While almost all of the films in a directing career which began in 1962 have been commercially successful, they have also been the subject of negative, sometimes very negative, reviews from film critics. Even the two films which earned him Oscar nominations for Best Director, In the Heat of the Night and Fiddler on the Roof, did not go unscathed. (Finler, 207-208) (Moritz, 188-191)

In the sections on Norman Jewison in the 1979 edition of Current Biography edited by Charles Moritz, Joel Finler's The Movie Director's Story, and in the film reviews in the bibliography at the end of this paper, one theme surfaces again and again: Norman Jewison is technically proficient, at times brilliant, but his films oversimplify their subject matter, reducing their social significance.

Bearing this in mind I set out on my own to "discover" the significance of Norman Jewison and four of his most recent films. I make no claims of possessing technical expertise in the area of film, I am simply a frequent movie-goer.

Norman Jewison, a native Canadian, was born sixty years ago in Toronto. He began his career as a script writer and actor with the BBC. Within a few years he returned to his native land to produce variety shows for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His prowess as a director landed him a contract with CBS where he worked on Your Hit Parade, the Andy Williams Show, and several variety shows with such stars as Harry Belafonte, Judy

Garland, Danny Kaye, and Jackie Gleason.

In 1962 Jewison directed his first theatrical film, 40 Pounds of Trouble. From there he has gone on to direct fifteen more films including: The Cincinnati Kid, The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming, The Thomas Crown Affair, Jesus Christ Superstar, Agnes of God, and the four films which are the subject of this paper.

(Finler, 207-208) (Moritz, 188-191)

Rollerball

Rollerball is a postulation of a future world with style, but no substance. A world run not by multi-national corporations, for there are no nations, but by an all-powerful coalition of corporations known as the "Majors:" transportation, food, energy, etc. The future world is a Utopia. War, poverty, sickness, all ills of society have been eliminated, but at the cost of individual freedom. "All it (the majors) asks of anyone... is not to interfere with management decisions." Thus, when the game's greatest star, Johnathon E., refuses to retire and begins questioning management's decision making process, a showdown is set up between the corporation and the individual.

As the film progresses the dark underside of the corporation is revealed. For example, it is discovered that Johnathon's first wife was taken from him by a jealous executive. In another example an executive at a party given in Johnathon's honor whispers to another executive that "Evans is out." This offhand remark further illustrates the ability of the corporation to crush individuals. It is never revealed what Evans' crime was, or what he did wrong (if anything at all), the point is clear, individuals do not matter in this totalitarian regime. Utopian pleasure is purchased for the cost of individual freedom.

At the party mentioned earlier an odd assortment of revelers leave the party in search of excitement. In what I consider the film's best scene, the decadent mob descends on a row of pine trees (a symbol of liberty) and jubilantly attack the trees with

a flame-throwing pistol. The mob is clearly representative of the corporation, destroying everything in their path, anything natural, singular, or individually beautiful.

The film's focal point and central metaphor is the game of rollerball itself. The corporate leaders have designed the game not merely for amusement, but to continually reinforce the message of the futility of individual effort. The players are meant only to represent cogs in a machine, cogs that are very easily replaced. Nevertheless, Johnathon E. emerges as a "star," an unanticipated symbol of the possibility of individual success.

To further accentuate the unimportance of the individual theme, director Norman Jewison shot the film against a sleek, ultramodern backdrop. All of the corporate offices look the same; spacious and clearly lit with straight lines and gently sloping curves. The buildings are stately and magnificent, yet they are permeated with an odd dehumanizing aura.

Norman Jewison also uses various, more subtle, directing skills to create the proper mood for the film. Jewison's choice of architecture has already been mentioned, but his choice of lighting coincides with the architecture to create the overall effect. For instance, the office buildings and interiors are all extremely well lit. Combined with the smooth architecture, the lighting creates a cold, foreboding atmosphere. Mr. Bartholomew's office, as an example, is very bright, but not the least bit cheerful. As a contrast the rollerball track and arena are very dark with lots of shadows. The track takes on a very

primitive appearance. It is literally a pit.

Most of the film is not quite sharp or clearly focused. This tends to give the film a dreamlike quality emphasizing the film's nightmare vision of the future.

In the end individualism triumphs. Johnathon, with the ball raised high, poised to strike and kill a final opponent, realizes how insane the situation has become. What he was about to do was not part of anything resembling sport. He leaves his counterpart behind and uses the ball for its intended purpose, to score a goal. The champion then skates around the track to the chorus of fans chanting his name. In the final frames, he is shown out of focus, an individual blurred beyond recognition, which is the film's theme and warning.

One of the major criticisms of the film Rollerball is that the film glorifies violence. Obviously, this is not what Norman Jewison had in mind. The problem is not that the film contains violence, but the sports context in which the violence was filmed and the desensitization to violence that contaminates contemporary filmgoers.

As a sports fan I have witnessed literally thousands of incidents of violence in sporting events. Some of them have been quite severe. In addition, I grew up in a generation which saw the rise of the most violent television programs in the history of the medium; Mannix, Hawaii 5-0, Kojak, etc. Deaths in these shows were routine and the overall effect is a numbing towards the death of a "video" character.

What Jewison attempted to do as a director was to create the visual image of a sport so sickeningly violent that the audience would be turned off. Also, the audience was meant to be infuriated at the crassness of a futuristic society that would watch such a sport and keep track of statistics on the number of deaths caused by a particular player.

This is where the film fails. If anything the film is not violent enough, or rather not horrifyingly violent enough. Given the amount of violence in sports and "video" deaths a modern filmgoer is exposed to, the violence in Rollerball is somewhat tame. To be truly effective, the film needed to be more horrifying.

Nevertheless I liked this film very much. The main reason is the central conflict between the individual and the corporate sense of "common good." Jewison is effective in drawing the audience into the dilemma of the main character. Johnathon E. is a simple man who lives in a society that he intuitively knows is wrong. It is his search, both in the corporate world and inside himself, that gives the film its power.

F.I.S.T.

In F.I.S.T. Norman Jewison shifts his camera to the growth and struggles of the American labor movement. This film is not a glamorized account of pure heroism, but by no means is it sympathetic to management's view. It is a personal film, and in many ways is less concerned with the overall issue of unionism

than it is with the relationship of two friends who play an important role in the history of a union very similar to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The film's theme centers around a question of ethics and morality, or do the ends justify the means? This question is the foundation upon which this film builds its story.

The main character, Johnny Kovak is portrayed as a man who cares deeply about his fellow workers. When a dock worker drops some crates, Kovak is there to help pick up the produce. When the men are pushed too far, Kovak takes their grievances to management. Eventually Kovak finds work as a union organizer for the mythical Federation of Interstate Truckers, F.I.S.T. After an aborted strike ends in the death of a friend and fellow union man, Kovak decides that in order to defeat the tyrannical management of the local trucking firm and gain decent working conditions for his men, the union needs "push." He gets this push, or power, from an unsavory character named Vince Doyle and his gang of mafia thugs. In exchange, Kovak and F.I.S.T. become indebted to Doyle's superior, Babe Milano.

This "pact with the devil" creates a rift between Kovak and his best friend, Abe Belkin. Belkin is an interesting contrast to Kovak. They both yearn for better treatment for the truckers, but whereas Kovak will use any means necessary, Belkin remains staunchly idealistic.

Unlike Rollerball, F.I.S.T. is shot in sharp focus to emphasize, particularly early in the film, a stark realism. Color

is used to enhance this effect, also. Brown seems to be the primary color used and this symbolizes the dreariness of the of the working conditions faced by the men. Even the actors seem to wear almost exclusively brown and shades of brown in their clothing. There is, however, one vivid exception. In the scene in which Kovak angrily leaves the senate hearings on union/ mob activities, he is bathed in bright sunlight and is greeted by a huge contingent of cheering truckers who are wearing slightly lighter clothing. A tribute through symbolic use of light and color to the triumph of the union.

Jewison makes frequent use of positioning of actors and their relative importance. For instance, in Rollerball the executive sit in a section that is above both the regular crowd and pit-like track. This lends itself to several shots looking up at the ruling class. Jewison uses the same technique in F.I.S.T. Management occupies a second story office where managers can literally look down on the common workers.

As the film ends Jewison shows a series of still shots of the truckers jubilantly cheering as they had been at the Senate hearings. Whatever the cost, Kovak had championed these people.

On a more personal level, I did not like F.I.S.T. as well as Rollerball. From what I have read about this movie there were several heated arguments among Jewison, actor Sylvester Stallone and co-writer Joe Ezterhas. It is not difficult to imagine what those arguments were about. Stallone, perhaps in the interests of his career, seems to be pushing in this film for a completely

sympathetic character in Kovak. Jewison and Ezterhas were probably shooting for a character closer to the real-life of Jimmy Hoffa. Like Kovak, Jimmy Hoffa did have the interests of his fellow workers at heart, but his well-documented underworld ties and less-than-admirable personal behavior bears no resemblance to the character brought to the screen by Stallone. What F.I.S.T. really needed was a better actor for the starring role, or at least someone who would be willing to sacrifice personal popularity for greater character depth. Hoffa was a much more interesting character than Johnny Kovak.

Another aspect of the film that is weak is the length. Again, outside forces played a significant impact on the final product. The film as it is now is much shorter than the film Jewison originally made. The studio heads felt that the original version of the film was less marketable because of its length. The studio was probably right; nevertheless, the jump from the 30s to the 50s is too complete, too sudden. Too many questions are left unanswered: What happened to Abe Belkin in California? How did Max Graham gain power in the union? What was the relationship between Kovak and the mafia in the intervening years? Despite these inadequacies Jewison once again shows his concern for individual rights and the dignity of the common man. One of Jewison's strengths is his ability to film the common people in action and elicit an emotional response. In F.I.S.T. there is a strong sense of common values and sensitivity. For instance, there is a wonderful courtship scene in which the Kovak

character tries to make a good impression on the mother of a young lady. There is also a very poignant funeral for one of the early union organizers who is killed by a mob of strikebreakers.

...And Justice for All

...And Justice for All is an exploration of our current legal system and its inadequacies. The central figure in the story is a young idealistic lawyer named Arthur Kirkland. In addition to his regular law practice he is a court appointed public defender. He defends both his paying clients and his less fortunate court appointees with equal vigor.

The theme of ...And Justice for All may be stated in the form of a question. Are we living up to our stated, lofty ideals? Is there Justice for All? The answer is a resounding "no!" The screenplay by Valerie Curtin and Barry Levinson makes it clear that, according to common folk, Justice is not "for all," but for the fortunate few.

The story centers on two of Kirkland's cases. The first involves a young man who is originally stopped on the highway for having a broken taillight. Because he fits the description of a murderer, the young man is arrested and due to faulty legal advice (not by Kirkland) he plea bargains his way right to prison.

When Kirkland is finally brought into the case, the evidence which proves the young man's innocence is ruled inadmissible by a certain judge named Fleming because it is brought in three days

late.

Judge Fleming is Kirkland's other significant client. Accused in a vicious rape incident, Fleming forces Kirkland to act his defense for political reasons. The tension caused by these and other injustices is brought to the boiling point when Kirkland discovers that Fleming is guilty and will, quite probably, get away with it. At the end of the film Kirkland explodes in fury and wrath because of what he has seen and experienced, crying out that "the trial (and the entire judicial system) is out of order!"

For this film Jewison uses mostly natural lighting and color. There are two significant symbols in this film. One is a huge, almost cartoon-like, bench where Judge Fleming literally sits above the law. Jewison uses another symbolic scene when Fleming gives his views on prison. "Prison should be scary, let the prisoners create their own Hell." The scene is shot inside a plastic enclosed swimming pool on Fleming's estate. It is Fleming's own views from his own microcosm.

As the credits roll through the final scene, Kirkland stares bewildered into the camera. He is amazed at what has happened and what we have seen.

...And Justice for All is a good example of Jewison's common man approach to life quite well. For instance, there is a scene in which Billy, one of Kirkland's unfortunate clients, states that the system is crazy for putting an innocent man in an already overcrowded prison. There are intellectual and legal answers for

this situation, but that does not matter to the average person. As children we are taught that the system works, and we go on believing that way until we are proven wrong. Therefore, the plea bargaining, the injustices, and the ability of the rich to hire expensive lawyers who can practically guarantee an acquittal for any crime just does not make sense to the average person.

The problem I have with this film is the comedy element. Some critics have described this film as a black comedy. I have to disagree. The film is not that cynical. In fact, the comedy is almost playful. As an example, one of Kirkland's associates experiences a nervous breakdown, shaves his head, and ends up throwing dishes at people. He is not really crazy, just sort of silly. Along these same lines a friend of Kirkland's is a suicidal judge. A true black comedy would have portrayed this character as violently self-destructive. In this film he is merely a curiosity. This is just a mild criticism. I believe Jewison adequately made his point with strong social satire, but this film may have had a greater impact on audiences if it would have been a more cynical, black comedy.

A Soldier's Story

The most critically acclaimed of the four Jewison films I am examining is A Soldier's Story. Thematically, A Soldier's Story is an examination of the destructive power of prejudice. Charles Fuller's excellent screenplay expounds on this theme by showing not the overt violence of white racism, but the less obvious

psychological effects of prejudice.

The story centers on the investigation of the murder of Sergeant Waters, the manager of a black baseball team/platoon in the rural south of World War II America. Assigned to the investigation is Captain Davenport, a Howard University trained military lawyer who is sent from Washington to find the truth.

Along the way Captain Davenport faces his share of obstacles from white soldiers and officers, his presence is particularly contested by Colonel Nivens who remarks, "the worst thing you can do in this part of the country is to pay too much attention to the death of a negro under mysterious circumstances." Most of the prejudice is more subtle; consisting mostly of reluctant salutes and condescending stares.

The investigation ultimately leads Davenport to discover that the murder of Sergeant Waters was not committed by the Klan, nor was the crime carried out by two white officers who were present the night of Water's slaying. The murderer was a member of Water's own platoon and was in retaliation for Water's heinous involvement in the suicide of another black soldier. It turns out that Water's himself was extremely prejudiced towards southern, rural blacks and meant to exercise their kind from the black race. This is eerily ironic when considered in the context of World War II Naziism that was taking place in Germany.

Sergeant Water's prejudice was not merely for spite. A painful incident in World War I and a strong desire to elevate the black race in white society provided strong motivational

reasons for his actions. Yet the tears that Captain Davenport sheds towards the end of the film are not shed for Sergeant Water's cruelty, nor are they shed for the black race. The tears are shed for all peoples who have succumbed to, and been victimized by, prejudice.

For A Soldier's Story Norman Jewison uses mostly natural lighting. The rural southern atmosphere was captured by "on location" filming in the south. But as in other films, Jewison uses darkness and bold colors to emphasize a point. The heavy shadows and bold colors are particularly effective in creating an eerie atmosphere for a scene in which Sergeant Waters describes a murder he was involved in during World War I. Another scene in which Jewison makes effective use of lighting is scene in which Captain Davenport stares remorsefully out of a window when the awful truth is fully revealed. Jewison uses a soft blue light that when combined with a gently falling rain, reflects the sadness on Captain Davenport's face.

As the film ends and the credits scroll up the screen, Jewison shows a company of black soldiers marching over a hill. One of Sergeant Water's ambitions had been for the black soldiers to be allowed to join in the war in Europe. Although his methods for improving the black man's position were wrong, his dream was admirable. The hill is a symbol of prejudice. When the soldiers march over the crest they are not only integrating the army, but also American society.

One of the reasons this film was so critically successful

was its illumination of a basic truth: prejudice is wrong. The storyline and subject matter of this film are more complex than the other three films, but Jewison is able to bring the basic truth out. I harken back, again, to the scene in which the mystery has fully unraveled to Colonel Davenport. The scene is charged with powerful emotional appeal.

Perhaps the most significant difference between this film and the other three is the screenplay. Quite simply, it is of a higher quality and, thus, A Soldier's Story is the best recent Jewison film.

The four films in comparison

The attribute that most openly bonds these four films together is the inclusion of a strong, highly individualistic main character. Through each of these central figures Jewison is able to impart a basic message of optimism; one person can make a difference. In A Soldier's Story Captain Davenport overcomes all obstacles through dogged determination to get to the truth. Though Johnny Kovak dies in the end of F.I.S.T., his efforts have lead to better pay and working conditions for his fellow workers. Arthur Kirkland may be disbarred after the action in ...And Justice for All, but he literally has his day in court to air his contempt for what the "system" of justice in this country has become. Finally, there is the character of Johnathon E. in Rollerball. This character, more than any other, best epitomizes the spirit of individualism and Man's indomitable spirit.

On the subject of style all four films share other common traits. For instance, all of the films use bold colors to emphasize an atmosphere of danger and foreboding. I am thinking in particular of the Rollerball arena and Big Mary's saloon in A Soldier's Story.

Jewison frequently has two opposing viewpoints argued by two people in a "one on one" confrontation in the four films. This works well when used in the context of individual versus group situations. In their frequent clashes Johnathon E. defies Mr. Bartholomew's orders, but these orders represent more than Bartholomew's personal wishes. He represents the entire corporation. Similarly, Abe Belkin represents idealism in F.I.S.T., Judge Fleming stands for a pragmatic view of justice in ...And Justice for All, and Colonel Nivens represents racial prejudice in A Soldier's Story.

Another device Jewison uses is symbolic placement of authority above the common people. As I have mentioned earlier, examples of this can clearly be found in the first three films.

I have included a sentence or two concerning the ending of each film because the way Jewison has chosen to end these four films re-amplifies the points made in the respective films: the obscuring of the individual, the importance of the common worker, the insanity of our judicial system, and the triumph of the black race over prejudice.

Jewison as a director

Though Norman Jewison is one of Hollywood's most prolific directors; nevertheless he remains one of the least written about. This can be attributed, at least in part, to his low-key style. In watching a Jewison film, the directing does not grab one's attention. Unlike more notable contemporaries, Jewison does not use film as a showcase for his own talents. Instead, he allows the actors and screenwriters determine the worth of his films. Thus, A Soldier's Story is the best film of the four, not because Jewison suddenly became a better director, but because of superior acting and a fine screenplay.

Also, Jewison does not list his name prominently in the credits. Nor does he live a flamboyant lifestyle. All of this leads to the fact that there is very little written about the man and his films.

Conclusion

Perhaps, it is not Norman Jewison's competence as a director that makes him an important filmmaker. It is not his choice of lighting, sets, casts, screenplays, locations, or anything technical in nature that sets him apart. Although he is a fine filmmaker, he may never be recognized as a master. But the attribute that does set him apart, the quality that shows through in all of his films and cements his importance in not only contemporary cinema, but also contemporary society, is his concern for people. Norman Jewison cares deeply about the dignity of people... and that is important.

Bibliography

Rollerball

Alpert, Hollis. "Future Jock." Saturday Review 9 Aug. 1975:54

Hollis neither recommends the film, nor discredits it, he merely points to the "game" as the film's major flaw. The audience he saw the film with disappointed him greatly by cheering the violent action in the film as if they were watching an actual sporting event.

Canby, Vincent. "Sci-Fi: From Sports to Sharks." New York Times 29 June 1975, sec. 2:62

In addition to his regular review, Canby wrote a scathing, satirical editorial on this film in which he accuses Norman Jewison of having an imagination "the size of a six-pack of beer and a large bag of pretzels." Jewison responded in the form of a letter (New York Times, 13 July, 1975, sec. 2:11) in which he refuted Canby's argument that Rollerball was not realistically violent and accused Canby of possessing the same mentality as the "Corporation" depicted in the film.

Cocks, Jay. "No Score." Time 7 July 1975:46

This reviewer gives the film a poor grade. He refers to the script as "confusing."

Forbes, Cheryl. "Rollerball: Who Will Follow?" Christianity Today 8 Aug. 1975:18

This article merely outlines the plot.

Gammon, Clive. "Rollerball." Sports Illustrated 21 Apr. 1975:44-48

This interesting article details the technical aspect of creating the fictitious sport of Rollerball for the film.

Gilliatt, Penelope. "Skates, Bikes, Sharks." New Yorker 7 July 1975:67-68

Gilliatt bemoans the film's lack of explained rules, "politically infant ego," and lack of intelligent female roles.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "Dog Days." The New Republic 26 July 1975:20

This review pans the film as being a standard science fiction cliché. Kauffmann also refers to Jewison's directing as being mediocre.

Moses, Sam. "Movie Talk." Sports Illustrated 7 July 1975:11

Overall, Moses gives a poor review to the film. He states, "Few people will care what happens between the whomps anyhow."

Siskel, Gene. "Rollerball's Points Dull the Mind." Chicago Tribune 27 June 1975, sec. 3:3

Siskel delivers another scathing review in which he attacks the film as being too solemn and reverential. He also describes the point of the film as being too obvious and moralizing.

Sterritt, David. "Rollerball--Violent, Moralistic Tale of the Future." Christian Science Monitor 7 July 1975:22

One of the few positive reviews of the film, Sterritt lauds the fine acting.

Sterritt, David. "Movies as 'an Art Locked up Inside an Industry.'" Christian Science Monitor 25 Aug. 1975:22

Sterritt interviews Jewison and discusses the film.

F.I.S.T.

Ansen, David. "Sylvester Hoffa's Story." Newsweek 1 May 1978:89

This intelligent review points to the film's "staginess" as its fatal flaw. "Jewison directs...as if he were re-creating an old movie, not life."

Blake, Richard A. "Carbon Copies." America 20 May 1978:408

Blake accuses the film of merely being a clone of The Godfather with a few plot variations and dislikes the lack of character exploration.

Brill, Steven. "The Facts Behind 'F.I.S.T.'" Esquire 23 May 1978:85

Brill is an expert on the Teamsters and is disappointed in the film. Not because it is historically inaccurate, but because the film trivializes a much more complex story.

Canby, Vincent. "'F.I.S.T.' Delivers." New York Times 14 May 1978:210-211

The same Vincent Canby who so viciously attacked Rollerball, writes a quite good review for this film. Canby praises the emotional power projected in the film.

Gilliatt, Penelope. "Warlords." New Yorker 8 May 1978:121-123

Gilliatt accuses the film of being overtly "right-wing" with a somewhat xenophobic streak in which unions are considered nothing but Bolshevik agitators.

Haskell, Molly. "Camera Obscura." New York 8 May 1978:74-78

Haskell states that she enjoyed this film's simple charm, but nevertheless derides its lack of authenticity.

Hatch, Robert. "Films." The Nation 3 June 1978:675-676

The reviewer praises Rod Steiger's small role, but pans Stallone's performance.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "Onward to the Past!" The New Republic 20 May 1978:24-25

Kauffmann praises Stallone's performance and the film's 30s style. Kauffmann also finds other critics' penchant for lambasting this film's old-fashioned romanticism amusing. He states, "what was...holy in 1938 is sin in 1978, even among those who mourn the changes of time."

Lownsbough, John. "M.I.S.S.E.D." MacLean's 15 May 1978:86-87

This review complains that the film never makes "connection" with the audience and describes the main problem as being lack of character depth in the starring role.

Schickel, Richard. "J.U.N.K." Time 1 May 1978:74

The title of this article explains the reviewer's attitude. Schickel found the film boring and a complete failure. He states that Stallone's acting is utterly wrong for the Hoffa-like character and tabs Jewison's directing as being "vague and distant."

Siskel, Gene. "Repetition KO's 'F.I.S.T.' Message." Chicago Tribune 28 Apr. 1978, sec. 3:3

Siskel is impressed with the second half of the film and its depiction of a 50s Senate hearing. Yet overall he found the film "lifeless" and believes a re-editing might help the film.

Stein, M.L. "Norman Jewison: 'I Want F.I.S.T. to Grip People.'" New York Times 7 May 1978, sec. 2:17,28

In this interview Jewison expounds on filmmaking and F.I.S.T. specifically. The film director also discusses the dilemma of making quality films that, at the same time, succeed at the box-office. He also talks about his upcoming film (...And Justice for All) which he calls "a black comedy about lawyers."

Sterritt, David. "Stallone's Latest Proves He's a Genuine Star." Christian Science Monitor 24 Apr. 1978:18

Sterritt has nothing but kind words for Stallone and the film. In the review Stallone is praised for his "professionalism" and Jewison for his "social awareness."

Valley, Jean. "Stallone's Latest Fight." Esquire 9 May 1978:78-82

This article chronicles the trials and tribulations involved with the making of the film. Included is the story of how Stallone rewrote the script and remade the Kovak character.

...And Justice for All

Adler, Renata. "Exasperation." New Yorker 22 Oct. 1979:179-181

This reviewer finds lack of authenticity everywhere in the film and points out several legal flaws in the plot.

Ansen, David. "Disorder in the Court." Newsweek 22 Oct. 1979:102,104

Ansen calls the film "the most interesting film Jewison has made in years" and although he finds parts of the film straining credibility, overall he is impressed with the sincere feelings expressed by the actors.

Canby, Vincent. "Film Reviews." New York Times 19 Oct. 1979:119

Canby states that the film is hysterical. Not hysterically funny, just hysterical. He contends that this "satirizes nothing, having no direction and no point of view."

Crist, Judith. "Disorder in the Court." 50 Plus dec. 1979:56-59

Crist writes an extremely positive review in which she praises Pacino's sincerity as an actor and Jewison's attention to "everyday detail."

Denby, David. "Abbott and Costello Meet Felix Frankfurter." New York 29 Oct. 1979:85

This reviewer finds fault (as others have) with the film's credibility and also its use of such wide extremes of comedy and tragedy.

Hatch, Richard. "Movies." The Nation 27 Oct. 1979:412

Hatch calls the film "powerful" and finds no loss of credibility in any one of the subplots, but admits a lack of knowledge concerning legal questions.

Rich, Frank. "Kangaroo Court." Time 22 Oct. 1979: 84-85

Rich contends that by exaggerating the legal system to such an incredible degree, the satire is ineffective. He also finds fault with the film's wild emotional swings.

Schlesinger, Arthur Jr. "And Justice for None." Saturday Review Dec. 1979:48

This review states that the film is out of control and lacks the artistry of a good satire such as Paddy Chayefsky's Network.

However, Schlesinger did enjoy Pacino's performance and believes the film makes an important point about the Judicial system.

Siskel, Gene. "'Justice' Perpetrates a Travesty." Chicago Tribune 19 Oct. 1979, sec. 3:3

Siskel finds everything in the film overdone and accuses Jewison of taking a superior stance and moralizing to a fault. He also found Pacino to be boring in the lead role.

A Soldier's Story

Bailey, Peter. "Introducing: Adolph Caesar." Ebony Dec. 1984:60,62

In this article the impact of the Sergeant Waters role is explored by the man who played him on stage and in the film.

Beale, Lewis. "The Struggle, Sacrifice and Hope Behind 'Soldier's Story.'" Chicago Tribune 7 Oct. 1984, sec. 13:5-6

This article concerns the making of the film and, in particular, the difficulty Jewison had in getting financial backing for the film. Interestingly, Jewison was so eager to make the film, he was willing to direct the film for no pay. The Director's Guild forced him to charge \$150,000. (His normal fee is \$1.25 million.)

Bemrose, John. "Murderous Rage in the Ranks." Maclean's 17 Sept. 1984:75

Bemrose applauds the fine screenplay and excellent acting.

Billingsley, Lloyd. "A Soldier's Story." Christianity Today 5 Oct. 1984:112

The reviewer finds special pleasure in this film about "people" in a year so dominated by science fiction and special effects.

Cooper, Carol. "'Soldier's Story' Salute." Film Comment Dec. 1984:17-19,76

Cooper comments on the lack of quality films for black actors.

Kael, Pauline. "Three Cheers." New Yorker 26 Nov. 1984:117-119

Kael expounds on the difficulties of bringing a play to the big screen and applauds Jewison's efforts. She liked his pacing of the film and its occasional humor. The actors are also praised for their work.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "Fall Roundup." The New Republic 15 Oct. 1984:24

The reviewer likes the film, but felt the flashback scenes were somewhat poorly handled. The reviewer also felt that Howard Rollins was not nearly as good as Sidney Poitier was in In the Heat of the Night.

Kroll, Jack. "Black Vs. Black Vs. White." Newsweek 10 Sept. 1984:75

Kroll gives the film a good review, but with the reservation that he did not like the changed ending (the play ends tragically) and felt the style was too reminiscent of In the Heat of the Night.

O'Brien, Tom. "Mozart & Murder." Commonweal 19 Oct. 1984:558

This reviewer finds fault with the use of flashbacks. O'Brien found them overly long and destructive in terms of the film's continuity.

Siskel, Gene. "Black Roles Help Enrich 'A Soldier's Story'" Chicago Tribune 28 Sept. 1984, sec. 7:5

Siskel praises the quality and variety of performances in this film, especially the Adolph Caesar performance as Sergeant Waters.

Slater, Jack. "Hollywood's New Black Men." Essence Nov. 1984:82-84,138,141

Slater's article is a chronology of black male roles in film from Paul Roberson in Emperor Jones to the actors in this film.

Van Gelder, Lawrence. "Film: 'Soldier's Story.'" New York Times 14 Sept. 1984, sec. 3:5

A positive review, Van Gelder praises the acting and Jewison's part in expanding the play to the screen.

General reference material

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