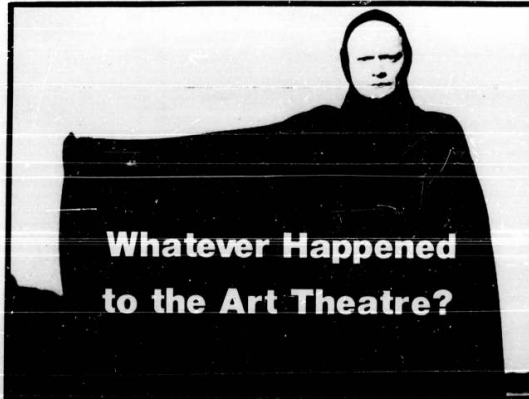


# READER

Volume 3, Number 45 SAN DIEGO'S WEEKLY November 28 • December 4



## Whatever Happened to the Art Theatre?

—John Martin—

There used to be only one Art Theatre in San Diego, the Ken Theatre in Kensington. Under the ownership of Robert Berkun, who bought the building and the land in 1944, the Ken showed foreign language films from the mid-fifties through the late sixties. By the late 1960's, there were five such theatres in town—the Ken, the Academy in East San Diego, the Unicorn in La Jolla, the Fine Arts in Pacific Beach, and the Guild in Hillcrest. There were also several who have tried Art Theatre status intermittently—the Capri on Park Boulevard, the La Paloma in Encinitas, the short-lived Kinema I and II on Balboa Avenue. By this winter of 1974, however, the number has narrowed down to barely more than two. And the explanations of the past of these theatres are as tricky as the predictions of their future.

Marie Maher, the present manager of the Ken, though confidently a movie person in her glittery jacket and long black skirt, doesn't seem any older than her age (26). But she has been around local movie houses for a while. When she went to Poway High she was an usher at the Loma Theatre ("That was when they were showing *Sound of Music*"); she went to UCSD and says that the infamous critic Duncan Shepherd was in some of her classes. She sold tickets at the Strand for \$1.65 an hour ("I just love the movie business"), she was assistant manager of the Loma, general manager of the Ken and the Strand, helped open the Parkway Theatres in El Cajon for the Sterling Recreation Organization, and managed the Linda in Linda Vista.

She feels very bad about the Linda moving into a porno house. There she was managing a deteriorating theatre in a run-down neighborhood. "The theatre was a new when I took

over. Lots of racial problems. Though Linda Vista was only 20 per cent black, the theatre's clientele was 70 to 80 per cent black. When I came, there were riots, balloons full of paint thrown against the screen. I remember having to go into the women's restroom and take on a few of the girls myself. We never called the police, we threw out the trouble-makers ourselves and dealt with all the customers on a person to person basis. Once we had a little riot, a kid who was thrown out went out and got a bunch of his friends and broke the glass in the door. The funny thing was the police came and the crowd—mostly white students watching *Yellow Submarine* and *Easy Rider*—thought it was a raid and swallowed their joints and flushed them... That community needs a family theatre, even if it's black exploitation or violence flicks. The Balboa and the California show them and a lot of people get it out of their system that way. But the Linda's owner would never show black films. He tried to make it on Barbra Streisand. How could you win over a black audience with a white heroine like that? Now the Linda is just for the rubber raincoat crowd. That's why I quit."

Though Marie Maher feels bad about the Linda, her job at the new Ken almost makes up for the experience. In 1969 Mr. Berkun sold the lease on the Ken to the Strand Amusement Corporation and during the early 70's the Ken showed second- and third-run domestics (American-made films) like *Strawberry Statement* and *What's Up Doc?* Then, last summer, the lease was sold to Great Western Theatres, a chain of art theatres run out of Los Angeles by a bunch of movie buff-businessmen in their early twenties. Great Western also owns theatres in El Centro, Fullerton and Santa Barbara. Though the Ken re-opened with the Beatles' youth-culture *Magic Mystery Tour* in June

the repertory style (fillings change on Wednesdays and Sundays) has been mostly full of foreign language, several first-run films. The biggest premiere, *Going Places* did not do as well as expected, but theatre manager Maher claims that business has been very good. "When we took over, the Ken was grossing about \$300 a week. Now, well, take a look at *A Very Natural Thing*, the homosexual film that we thought would bomb here in San Diego. It grossed \$6000 a week. It took about five weeks after the new management took over and we steadily began to triple and quadruple the earnings. They haven't all been winners. *The White House Films*, for example, did poorly, but that was bad timing."

Maher, in our conversation, seemed to want to translate the Ken's success into a general increase in foreign film interest. But she then seemed to admit that it was very tough for an independent theatre to survive, especially on foreign films. It is even hard for an independent theatre to survive on domestics because the film distributors want to give the big first-run films to the strongest theatres (those with the most seats, best parking, and strongest credit), and those are the chain theatres, like Pacific Theatres or Mann Theatres. Part of the Ken's success with foreign films lies in the fact that Great Western is right up there in L.A. and with its booking power has a relatively easy time getting the films they want. Marie says she thinks the student activism was the biggest reason foreign films fell out of favor in the late 60's and early 70's. "Young people wanted to see movies like *Joe*, or *Soldier Blue*, or *The Strawberry Statement*, ones with social and political comment. Did you ever go to the Strand in those days? The crowd was always emotionally caught up with the political sentiments in the movies." Also, she thinks the showing of lots of films in college classes may have dissipated the demand.

But after the present run of *That'll Be The Day*, the Ken plans to return to its repertory of foreign films. And there's even the chance that Great Western may open another similar theatre. "We looked at the Cinema Leo when we heard it was closing down in September, but it's built all backwards, and it's just too small, only 110 seats."

Bob Woodford is the manager of the three Art Theatre Guild movie houses in San Diego, the Academy, the Guild, and the Fine Arts. The Art Theatre Guild is a national theatre chain run out of New York and Phoenix, with 35 theatres all of which used to show foreign language films, all of which are now porno or close to it. They hired Woodford when he was going to college in Phoenix. That was the early 60's when they were doing well with lots of Bergman and Fellini. They served free coffee and coca cola and did not have concessions in their houses. In 1969 when the Guild was faltering as an art theatre, and they decided to go porno, the local manager, Ted Seelander, wouldn't go along with it, so Woodford was sent here. Then, the Fine Arts in Pacific Beach, which had been making money showing youth/rock culture stuff and surf films began to lose money. The last art film there was *El Topo*. "Then we probed around with a mish-mash. *Conorship in Denmark* was the first porno I can remember. We were having legal problems—the police arrested us for *A Man and His Wife* and David Reuben testified on our behalf—and violence problems—the Secret Army Organization bombed the Guild and was supposed to bomb the Academy. But the Guild was charging \$5 a head, and was doing well. *The Stewardesses*, for example, which showed for 24 weeks at the Fine Arts and the Academy grossed more for us in that time than the theatres grossed in the entire previous two years.

*The Grove Tube*, a sort of

hip-comedy, has been a good draw, but it seems the company would turn the Academy, too, into a strickly porno house if it weren't for Woodford. "This is their concession to me—keeping at least one from being strictly porno. We plan to get back into art things—probably *Love and Anarchy* and *The Seduction of Mimi*—after the first of the year."

It will be interesting to see if the East San Diego/State College area will support both the Ken and the Academy. The Ken has been doing well, but it got its start while the Academy was in the middle of its 6 month run of the *Groove Tube*, a movie not likely to compete with Truffaut or Bertolucci films.

Woodford says he has two theories on the decline of the independent foreign film theatre. One is that big commercial theatres saw the value in foreign films and began showing them themselves—that's why *Day for Night* (Truffaut) was at the State, *Craz and Whispers* (Bergman) was at the Center 3, and both of the new Warhol movies (traditionally lumped with foreign films because of their kinkiness) were at Center 3. His other theory is that the people who used to be interested in foreign directors like Bergman and Fellini have transferred their attention to American directors like Mike Nichols or Robert Aldrich. Much like the American public which has shifted its loyalty from French wines to California wines.

Harold Darling and Harold Leigh, co-owners of the Unicorn Cinema and the adjacent Miritas Bookstore, don't even like the thought of being lumped in with the other art theatres in San Diego. They see, for example, a lot of significance in the name Unicorn. "We like to think of this like the animal, unique and beautiful. The only one of its kind." Before the opening 10 years ago (the Unicorn celebrates its 10th Anniversary next week), Mr. Darling had a

(Continued on page 11)



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# Stevie Wonder: Mixed Feelings

Steve Esmedina—  
Stevie Wonder is pop music's sacred cow of the hour. He is one of the few rock artists to unite both critics and the record buying public. Wonder occupies a strange position in the rock pantheon because he is not arrogant, condescending or snobbish; those qualities which have kept other candidates like Van Morrison, Frank Zappa and Todd Rundgren from commercial success. Wonder is closer in temperament to Rod Stewart because he actually seems to enjoy performing before his audience, and would not put on a deliberately bad show because "they don't deserve better."

Unfortunately, while this nice-guy attitude has endeared everyone, it has also undermined his importance as an artist. His concert at the Sports Arena last week was a curious mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous. It would be unfair to say that Stevie Wonder climbed mountains and plummeted into the ocean at different intervals throughout the evening. His performance was a good example of how "giving everything you got" to an audience is sometimes just euphemism for stylistic overkill.

As far as I can see, Wonder's problem is that he appears unsure about his primary role as an artist. He kept juggling personalities for almost three hours. At one point he was the sensitive tortured balladeer, next the avant-grade pianist, next the distiller of social profundities, and finally the "get-down-funky" showman. Apparently he believes that selectiveness is the spice of life. Theoretically, this would get no argument from me. However, I felt uncomfortable because Wonder failed to sustain those moments when he brilliantly truly shone. It was like trying to watch a Renoir film on television while someone keeps switching the channel into that *American Bandstand* or *Apple's Way*. The effect, to say the least, was disconcerting.

The logic of going from a song as evocative and spine-tingling as "Visions" to a tired, worn-out melody of "Earth Angel," "Ain't Too Proud To Beg," "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" and "She Loves Me" escapes me. The whole notion of rock and roll music smacks of Las Vegas anyway. Just as dubious was the man's mixture of past and present hits. His bumping and grunting during "Fingertips" might have been more enjoyable if it had not seemed so pre-packaged. All "greatest hits" checks lack spontaneity and

flavor, and Stevie Wonder's was no exception.

The worst offense Wonder committed was the blatantly gimmicky use of a new device. When employing the instrument to maximum, serious effect, Wonder creates extraordinarily dramatic music, as on "Living For The City." When using it to grind out "Pop Goes The Weasel" and "Auld Lang Syne," he looks dumb, and the audience looks dumber for lapping it up so readily.

If my criticism sounds so vehement it is because I believe Wonder is doing a disservice to his audience and himself by subordinating his great talent to jive, show-biz antics, even if they are only 30 percent of the show. Especially when you consider just how good Stevie Wonder can be. He has one of the most dynamic, soaring voices in the pop world. Even the atrocious non-acoustics of the Sports Arena could not distort the pure beauty of Wonder's singing on "Too Shy To Love" and "All Is Fair In Joy." During the latter number, he employed a tricky phrasing technique with the microphone which proved that his adroit manipulation of voices over an album comes from more than just studio facility. On "Too High," his jazz leanings were evident in a deliciously nasty scat solo.

On "Visions," all of the magnificence of this man's art came together in a completely successful whole that was not even marred by his corny philosophical interjections. Stark, sensuous pauses, lyric twists, and dramatic silences gave the piece a chilling effect. The sense of drama was also present on "Bird of Beauty" and a new song, "The Future," in which Wonder extended the coda on a bizarre, oblique manner that showed the influence of Chick Corea. It would be to Wonder's ultimate benefit to delve deeper into this kind of experimentation. He could maintain his audience. As Corea proved here recently, it is possible to be danceable, entertaining, and edifying at the same time.

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# PASTA, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Eleanor Widmer  
Sophia Loren, according to legend, responded to a childhood of poverty and the disasters of war by never traveling anywhere without a sheaf of spaghetti noodles in her suitcase. But that was in another country and alas, the proverbial story is now outdated. Though not forgotten, it reinforces the culinary myth that spaghetti is the staple of the Italian diet, whereas any sojourner to Italy will report that you can try one restaurant after another there for weeks on end without encountering spaghetti.

Cooking, regardless of country, is regional. This is true even in America which is linked, state by state, by hamburger and fries, as much as by the continuous asphalt highway. In Italy, where the *autostrada* has happily not achieved its American extensiveness, cultural and culinary differences remain distinct. And this article attempts to answer the many inquiries about the role of spaghetti in Italian cooking.

Spaghetti, in this country, is the handy way of referring to *pasta*—that wide variety of noodle products used by Italian-Americans. *Pasta* comes from wheat flour that is dried in various forms and shapes. To mention just a few pastas that are available at any supermarket as well as Italian groceries, we have *conchiglie* (shells), *farfalle* (butterflies) *lagane* (wide noodles) *linguini* (narrow noodles), *mastaccioli* (hollow pasta cut in 2 1/2 inch lengths), *spaghetti*, *spaghettini* (very thin spaghetti) and *vermicelli* ("angel hair" or thinnest spaghetti, sometimes twisted to resemble a corkscrew). These may be served with a variety of sauces, from clam to oyster, and cheeses. Amalfi claims a chef who tosses his spaghetti in a hot paper bag filled with oyster sauce, and in many areas the pasta is served boiled, without any sauce. It is rarely a main course, but a side dish—this is an American innovation—and is eaten either before or with the meat, the way in which we eat vegetables.

A great many Americans have experienced no wider exposure to Italian cooking than pizza and spaghetti: a considerable loss. *Classica cucina Italiana* (classical Italian cooking) can rival any French delight, and these dishes will rarely be accompanied by pasta. The Italians do wonders with lamb (*agnello*) and most especially with veal (*vitello*) *pollo* (chicken) and shrimp (scampi).

A classical Italian chef, John Maione, has just acquired the venerable Clark-Hansen Tearoom at 7825 Ivanhoe Ave., in La Jolla, and he is in the process of converting the menu to Italian cuisine. At present, the place is

open for luncheon every weekday, and for dinner Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The American dinners contain one item only, leg of lamb or chicken, and are served with large portions of real mashed potatoes, squash, string beans etc. and range from \$3.95 (chicken) to \$4.50 (lamb). However, if you phone the chef he will prepare an Italian dinner for you and your party, which may consist of either your favorite or what Senor Maione will deem pleasing to your palate.

Last week I allowed the chef to decide on the menu, and my party was not disappointed. We were served a boned chicken-ham-spinach dish covered with an excellent cheese sauce, and cannelloni stuffed with ground veal, (\$4.50, plus dessert & salad) The crepes for the cannelloni were made from scratch. Chef Maione prepares all of his own pasta and on January 1, when the place will be open for dinners every night of the week, you will be able to obtain *fettuccini alfredo*, *saltimbocca*, or any Italian dish that you may desire.

I can recommend the Italian food at Maione's as authentic, fresh, and pleasing to the taste. The atmosphere is another matter—my youngest son advised that it was "convalescent home modern." The restaurant is located in an alcove off Ivanhoe St., and the main dining room has the intimacy of a public institution. It is brightly lit by overhead fixtures and the glare bounces off the sprightly "parisian" wallpaper, on to the white paper placemats, the white paper napkins, the too-small chunky white plates. At present, it has the air of a senior citizen's establishment that has benefited from market research on kitchen liveliness. But I doubt whether anyone needs that much unyielding light by which to dine. Senor Maione, who spoke to our party in Italian only,



informed us that he intends to transform the dining room in slow stages. If you can put up with the tearoom decor and lighting as it now exists, and if you phone 24 hours in advance, you will sample fine Italian dishes whose emphasis on pasta is kept to a minimum. It is perhaps unfair to review Maione's Restaurant in its intermediate stage, but you can find this place for future Italian references.

Incidentally, I would like to take this opportunity to explain how the Underground Gourmet goes about its work. Contrary to the view expressed in the rate letter by Martha Stuck, I do NOT get free dinners. To the contrary, I have often had to express regrets at not being able to sample desserts or other goodies because the Reader cannot afford them. I enter the restaurant anonymously, select the place at my own discretion, *pay the bill in full*, and then speak to the owner or chef. It is the aim of this column to be objective and impartial, and to try restaurants that have not, as yet, made the Guide Books. In the months that I have sampled restaurants, I have NEVER sent the column to the restaurant reviewed—in other words, these reviews are not the veiled advertising that pass as so-called informed criticism. In San Francisco the food reviewers have to affect various disguises to insure their anonymity; in the San Diego area I have yet to enter a restaurant where the waiter, waitress or proprietor looks up and identifies me. Way of the fragmented world. I do receive mail and many phone calls, some from heavy breathers—usually the result of over-eating.

N.B. If you have any holiday recipes, or any simple to prepare and don't require a bank loan, please send them to me for our Christmas issue.

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# MOVIES

## READER'S GUIDE TO SAN DIEGO MOVIES

### DUNCAN SHEPHERD

Airport 1975 - Jack Smight's encore to George Seaton's AIRPORT is tighter in construction, with all eyes on the crowd of big-name actors turned toward the central crisis for no time but substantial diversions. It is tighter at the belt, too; and it conspicuously lacks the other way wherever there is a need for production value; if there is a shortage of copiousness on view, there is nevertheless a comfortable feeling of freedom and spaciousness in the camera's smooth wheeled around in the corridors, in the full composition inside of the room 747, and in the exhilarating shots of the married airliner sailing low through Rocky Mountain valleys. In this sort of light-headed project, even the idiosyncrasies can be counted as pleasures-Linda Bille's misguided mimicry of bumpy rabbits with her cute button nose; the notion of how nuts talk and how they act ("I believe that is one of those Hornywood persons, or worse"); Karen Black acts terrified when she must assume command of the jumbo jet, and she should certainly be terrified about having to carry the movie alone almost for most of the way; she performs, more or less, of Charles Heston, "the words over the plane and the movie, he begins immediately to crab about how difficult his job is in an effort to salvage a little self-importance in the waning moments. (Grossmont)

Broken Blossoms - The interracial romance between Richard Burtness's Chinese immigrant and Lilian Gish's poor English girl, abused by a brutal father, probably does not make one of D. W. Griffith's best films; but it does enough to manage to reach the bold beauty of sentiments and image and performance, that is striven for throughout 1919. (UJA Cinema 1; Century Twin 2; North Park)

Benji - A dog story made in Texas, independently written, produced and directed by Joe Camp. (UJA Cinema 1; Century Twin 2; North Park)

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Midnight Friday Dec 13

### The Odesa File -

Fredric Forsyth's novel about the hunt for a Fritz Lang Cigarette for smoking, that you can't get into the U.S. because you're not a U.S. citizen, and placed to strategically in the New York Times. It's not an official investigation and also to be passed over for a revealing purpose. During the credits, Perry Como's "Christmas Prayers" and the holiday lights of Hamburg provide practically the only vignette in this grayed-out, simmering suspense movie. Photographed by David Morris and edited by Ronald Neame. Attention is held throughout, but it's surest in hand through the freetance reporter (John Voight) keeps one single strand of information dense and deeper into the tangled quarry; some of the attention operates into neo-homs and head-shakes as the reporter to infiltrate the secret organization, acquires a new identity, with the usual muscle and eye-glass alterations in pistol practice and the usual training program of memorization drills, discipline, jogging. All this training is still not an adequate explanation for how the reporter manages to get into the office, to do it in the first scene is left exclusively on his wits, while the Maxmillian Shell has to snout while carrying a pillow underneath his coat. (Cinema 21)

### The Patriot of Joan of Arc -

The old-fashioned revival of Joan of Arc, a chivalry, severe, expressive classic, composed largely of close-up, of caricatures, of pompous, bustling, scolding, puffing, over the head of the Maid (played by Falconetti). The close-ups, long, and rapid cuts lay out a basic course for paranoiac cinema. (UJA Cinema, 12/2 & 3)

### My Darling Clementine -

The feud between the Earps and the Clantons is treated by John Ford in his prettiest, artistiest frontier manner. Ford's American history, here, it rather like a commemorative, more than a dramatization, as the slow, justifiably Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) glides through perfectly tailored, heavily weighted scenes. (UJA Cinema, 12/14 through 8)

### The Night Porter -

With Dirk Bogarde, Charlotte Rampling, Gabriel Byrne: directed by Liliana Cavani. (UJA Cinema, 11/30 & 12/1)

### 99 and 44/100% Dead -

The teenage punk of this end-of-the-world, nuclear war movie, and director Frankenhauser, exercising himself in the genre of the repeatedly device, painstakingly and painfully, through some what is the opportunity for comedy remain entirely out of sight. Still, it is a notably handsome movie, and there are good, malicious bits in it that point to the genre. These movie, these movie, these movie, seem to have observed the film-clip of the point where they lost sight of what they were working toward. Richard Harris (George Raft) appears, particularly appear to be attracted to the character, who would have been better dissatisfied from their tasks and sent on a slow Caribbean cruise. (California; Parkway 2)

### The Trial of Billy Jack -

The roaring Freedom School has bloomed into a leading force of reform; commanding sermons, a television station and newspaper to make "Justice" a slogan. Billy Jack has served a four-year prison term on searching for his spiritual center in the mountains. He is joined by a phantom Indian maiden who reveals to him the true high of the white man, skipping from Augustine to Richard LaRoche to Earl Warren. The sequel to BILLY JACK offers a country far more than the Story of America, with several facts and figures in support of it, from the country's first greatest, to "unlovable Thomas Jefferson" to first and the section by Henry Hathaway, who is never pretentious and seldom perfect; may be too casual at times. But the movie works, all the same, as a tribute to its star, for whom the affection ranges from losing ribbons to admiring his efforts. And once the plucky hero falls into the clutches of a screwy group of bad guys who sport names like Lucky Ned Pepper and The Original Bad Bob, the movie's twist, once becomes torrid; through the final scene, the director, Glen Campbell, Robert Duvall, Dennis Hooper, 1969. (Cabrillo, through 11/30)

### The War Wagon -

Hesse scheme, to be performed at a police, and to be constructed against an ironclad and fearlessly-armed battalion of the western plains, captures the stoicism of Burt Lancaster, in a direction on the strength of his boisterous joviality. A somewhat men-only movie in which John Wayne's hard-earned cockiness is set off by the obliging femininity, and fashion-consciousness of his partner, Glan Campbell. Robert Duvall, Dennis Hooper, 1969. (Cabrillo, through 11/30)

### White Dawn -

Marooned in the Arctic by a snowstorm, three American whalers, circa 1900, nursed and adopted by Eskimos, who take the peculiar newcomers to be "Dog Children". The ensuing discoveries, through Western eye, of Eskimo culture are assumed, with justification, to be appealing to the audience's curiosity, for their documentary value alone. Little splotch on, on this level, quite well, quite a way. But there is too little sketching-in of the characters for the story to work on the levels of personal drama-political-ideology which it claims to, ultimately. (UJA Cinema; Parkway 2)





