

FILM

Dirty Harry, lawless defender of order

THE ENFORCER

Starring Clint Eastwood
Directed by James Fargo for Malpas
Productions

The Enforcer is a very, very popular film. On the basis of current *Variety* figures, it should gross between \$35 and \$40 million worldwide. Its impact on its public? Sitting in a local bar after I had watched the film, I heard a comment from a woman graduate student that summed it up.

"It makes me want to go out and shoot someone," she said.

This is the third film constructed around Clint Eastwood's characterization of Harry Callahan, the ultra-reactionary anti-hero of the San Francisco police department. Like its two predecessors (*Dirty Harry* and *Magnum Force*), it is a well-paced melodrama that gives plenty of room for Eastwood to showcase his persona: the tall, cool, soft-spoken man of action, the 20th century cowboy, dealing out frontier justice with his huge .44 Magnum.

The role of the savage hero fits Eastwood's stony visage as perfectly as it fit the male stars in whose tradition he belongs: William S. Hart, Gary Cooper, John Wayne, et al. The character type,

as much as his own charisma, is responsible for Eastwood's fabulous success, which started with his role as the "man with no name" in the Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns of the '60s.

Popularity breeds formula, and *The Enforcer* is an example of giving the audience more of what they seem to want. In all three of the Dirty Harry films, the mythic structure is the same: the hero's town is besieged by forces so violent that only matching violence—the ability and will to kill ruthlessly—can eliminate them and restore "law and order." The citizens need the hero's ruthless skill, but they also fear him for it. He is forced to live a life of solitude, balancing precariously between civilization and savagery.

There is nothing wrong with Harry Callahan. But there is something seriously wrong with the world in which he lives and acts. That is the city of the reactionary imagination, populated by thugs, cops and liberal (weak) government officials. In this world it is right and just to be brutal in order to eliminate the most uncomplicated stereotypical villains seen on the screen since the Apaches of John Ford's *Stagecoach*.



The villains of *The Enforcer* kill purely for pleasure and profit. No other motives are asked for or supplied. They are ripped out of the pages of an urban daily like the *Chicago Tribune*, that is running scared.

Citizens in this nightmare world have no function except the passive one of victim. They are there to be kidnapped, shot, stabbed or blown to jelly. People who live in a state of perpetual fear identify with the objects of this senseless violence and give emotional support to a hero acting within that elemental moral context. They cheer for Dirty Harry as he blows

all the bad men up and away.

It does not seem important that his violence offers no real solution to the problem. He has fulfilled the audience's need for reassurance that there is somewhere—if not a solution to the problems of their daily lives—at least a champion who will defend and protect them. That is what makes Dirty Harry films so popular.

And dangerous.

While the audience is caught up in slick production values, it has no time to question the moral values of the film or their validity in the real world. We watch

the gun battles, the chases, the hero fighting for respect in a world that doesn't understand his ethic, or we get caught up in the relationship between Harry and his female partner, whose allegiance to his philosophy gives her stature as it leads her toward martyrdom—and forget the contradictions and complexities of real life.

What we don't stop to question inside the theater, we may end up dismissing when we step outside.

—Joe Heumann

Joe Heumann teaches media-related subjects at Eastern Illinois University.

Portuguese defection poisonous propaganda

MALKO: Spymaster, Number 14—The Portuguese Defection
By Gerard de Villiers
Pinnacle Books, 166 pp, \$1.25

At the height of the recent turmoil in Portugal, I was a dinner guest of the Chief of Staff to Mario Soares, now Prime Minister. While we were eating our main course, my socialist host told me about his contacts with the CIA.

Perhaps he was so loose about it because he assumed that all Americans share the same perspective. What he most admired about the CIA was their analysis of the Portuguese situation. He had no interest in the gadgetry of espionage, feats of physical daring, or the beauty of female spies.

The reality of CIA covert activity is often too prosaic for the writers of pulp fiction, who prefer to present agents as omnipotent, karate-chop killers, rather than mild-mannered Ivy League graduates who impress foreign politicians by their perspicacity. (Or by bribes.)

The Malko series is the most widely-read fictionalization of CIA activities. Its author, who writes under a pseudonym, is reputed to be a French journalist working on a conservative Paris daily. His hero, Prince Malko, is of Austrian royal lineage and a CIA special agent.

In *The Portuguese Defection*, Malko discovers that the Soviet KGB controls every move of the Portuguese Communist Party and groups to its left. The wife of a high-ranking KGB operative wants to defect because her husband is a boor and because she likes the luxuries of the West. (She is, incidentally, a nymphomaniac.)

As the story unfolds, there are numerous soft-core sexual esca-

pades and several grisly deaths. The murders committed by the CIA's heavies are particularly affecting because they are so bizarre, because the Agency's hired hands always find their work humorous. In the end, Malko rescues the distressed KGB wife and proves once again that good guys—in the CIA—always triumph.

The "analysis" of the Portuguese political scene would not have impressed my socialist host. Virtually everything in *The Portuguese Defection* is either confused or mistaken, although some of this misinformation resembles actual American reportage on Portugal. General readers, of course, have no way of knowing that, along with their usual dose of sex and violence they are being fed explicit (pro-CIA) propaganda.

In earlier Malko books, the CIA's prince has, among other things, saved Henry Kissinger from assassination and has dispatched American guerillas to oblivion. Economically written, the books are intended for an international mass audience. It is not surprising to hear that a film version of this one is in the works.

The flavor of the books is decidedly European. The stress on the virtues of aristocrats and the cult of blood practiced by Malko's CIA thugs seem more in tune with European fascism than with anything American. American pulp fans desire violence, but they have usually preferred a less ideological brand.

Nevertheless, Malko does sell well in this country, which proves that there is an audience willing to accept politics with its pornography.

—Sidney Blumenthal

Sidney Blumenthal is the editor of *Government by Gunplay* (New American Library).

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FILM

Thieves needs more than stars and one-liners to stay afloat

THIEVES
 Directed by John Berry
 Screenplay by Herb Gardner from his original play
 Starring Marlo Thomas and Charles Grodin, distributed by Paramount

If one-liners did a movie make, then gagwriters could make movies.

Thieves is a collection of one-liners, perpetrated by writer Herb Gardner and director John Berry. (Can't imagine what happened to Berry who did such a tender, funny job with *Claudine* last year!) The poor stars, Marlo Thomas and Charles Grodin, work very hard. They bail and bail, trying to keep the leaky vessel afloat. But it's all too baleful.

Everything remains soggy. The opening moments of the film hold a promise never fulfilled. The camera pans up the face of a 38 story luxury apartment house on New York's swank East Side. As you pass each jutting terrace, tantalizing snatches of conversation float out from the apartment behind the balcony. A visual demonstration of monumental NO privacy in crowded urban living. It's worth a snicker.

Now for the plot! Sally and Marty Cramer (Marlo Thomas and Charles Grodin) live in the luxury apartment, see, with no furniture, see, because she lost it all while they were moving, see? Lost it? Marty is beginning to think his swinging wife and childhood sweetheart isn't as cute as she once was. You have to agree, seeing as how she didn't really

lose \$55,000 worth of antique furniture (how could young school teachers afford that much stuff?). She sent it to Grand Street (their darling old slum neighborhood) to be kept by a nice old man for a \$2 tip—the idea being to entice her upwardly mobile husband back to their "roots."

Marty is the principal of the Bluebell School for blue-blazered French-speaking rich kids, having started his own life as a member of a battling street gang on the Lower East Side. Upward mobility? Unbelievable culture vaulting! Marty, incidentally, shows emotional distress, when he feels it, by failing to shave (which also saves acting). Things get pretty grizzly before he feels better.

Also featured in the film is

night-club comedian Irwin Corey, as Sally's 78-year-old, maniac, cab-driver father who shouts homespun wisdom and bad jokes. Decibel for decibel, Corey can get more laughs out of his routines as the "World's Foremost Authority." And then there's the doorman of the fancy building where the Cramers live who is totally unresponsive to the tenants' comings and goings. Turns out he's dead. Nobody noticed till he falls off his chair onto the street. Hilarious!

Mercedes McCambridge is wasted as an old "shopping bag lady" who hangs around the apartment house ripping off everything that's loose and repossessing what has been consigned to the trash cans.

There is a lot of talk about how



Father Irwin Corey and daughter Marlo Thomas

living in the city is a rip-off anyway. (One of Sally's younger students helps her furnish the empty apartment with things he steals from other tenants in the build-

ing.) But the talk never says anything.

Thieves and the thieves in it are all too bitterly cute.

—Mavis Lyons



ADDITIONS & CORRECTIONS

In the article on *Brothel 8* in last week's issue, the *Chicago* critic quoted on the film was improperly identified. Christine Nieland is the regular film critic of the *Chicago Daily News*.

Too late for publication with the article, IN THESE TIMES received news of the death, in Japan of Kinuyo Tanaka, the award-winning actress who played the veneral Osaki. She was 70 years old.

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