

# 'Last Detail' Reflects America

In the recent era of the Draft, before the "New Action Army" got *with it* and decided it wants to join us, the slogan it used to lure recruits was "The Army Builds Men." For the Navy, it was something about how you could see the world.

Well, now that we're in the post-Vietnam era, along comes a movie that debunks the myth by showing how an 18-year-old sailor gets shafted by his commanding officer and in a strange development, quickly matures under the influence of the two lifers who are escorting him to prison.

Actually, though, *The Last Detail* is not just a movie with a message. It has a touching and humorous story line supported by strong performances by Jack Nicholson and Otis Young as the career sailors in the Shore Patrol, and Randy Quaid as their kleptomaniac prisoner.

It would have been very easy for them to fall into stereotypes and curse their way through the movie without too much difficulty. But Nicholson especially makes his character so believable that the premise of *The Last Detail* stands up.

Nicholson is Billy "Bad Ass" Buddusky, a loner who once tried marriage and has now found his haven in the Navy, for better or worse. He is surly and sure of himself, but always aching for a good fight, the kind of a guy who can't go to sleep without polishing off a few six-packs of beer and then wakes up in the morning to rinse his mouth out with another can. He is the "honcho" on this mission, a fact he will let no one forget, as he takes full advantage of his off-the-base assignment.

For Nicholson, this role represents a broadening of his screen personality, which has been developed in his portrayals of a lovably, philosophic, alcoholic lawyer in *Easy Rider*, and of a hard-hearted, use-'em-and-leave-'em male chauvinist in *Five Easy Pieces* and *Carnal Knowledge*.

In *The Last Detail*, you can love him and hate him at the same time as you laugh with him and at him—which is precisely the attitude that his partner on



Randy Quaid (left) is the prisoner, and Otis Young and Jack Nicholson are taking him to jail.

the detail, Mulhall, played by Otis Young, seems to adopt. Mulhall at first agrees to Buddusky's plan to run Meadows, their prisoner, up to the Portsmouth Navy Yard brig at top speed so that they can have time off for their own jaunts.

Reluctantly, he also goes along when Buddusky switches tracks and decides to show the prisoner "a good time" before he starts an eight-year term for trying to lift \$40 from a charity collection sponsored by the base commander's wife.

Buddusky is so taken with the helpless character he has on his hands—or at least with the possibilities this situation gives him for being a warm and paternal "bad ass"—that he insists on teaching the kid how to get drunk-sick on beer, getting him into a fistfight, taking him to visit his mother, letting him ice skate at Rockefeller Center, and introducing him to "the wonderful world of pussy" at a whorehouse, among other things. By the time Buddusky is through with him, Meadows may still be helpless, but he is no longer an innocent.

One of the key signs of his newfound maturity turns out to come when he defies a waiter and sends back an order of eggs-over-easy when he doesn't like the way it

was fried. Meadows is growing up, and Buddusky beams like a proud father.

The film manages to work in some other scenes which are gems, and which need not be singled out. They all seem to contribute to the overall impression of this film, allowing the three characters room to establish themselves as real people stuck in a system which they cannot control.

As the movie progresses, and Buddusky seems to become more playful, the hope builds that he will just let the prisoner escape before they reach the brig. In a few days' time, he has given Meadows his first glimpse at life, but he is just as much a prisoner of the system as the petty thief. In the end, Buddusky does his job, and they go their separate ways, without exchanging a word.

There is no romance in this movie, no views of exotic foreign ports or civilians impressed by the men in uniform. These men were not "built" by the Navy, they were stultified. While in one sense, *The Last Detail* may seem to be another in the vogue of movies about men in groups, it also reflects the current American character very well.

—Steve Simon

## Mitchell and Stills Bomb in NY

I guess it has to happen when you run in the same crowd as Neil Young. Almost exactly one year ago, Neil Young gave an absolutely horrible performance to a sell-out house at the Garden. He no doubt made a lot of money.

Last Wednesday, Joni Mitchell gave an uninspired, boring performance to a packed house at Radio City Music Hall, many of whom stood in the bitter cold for six hours to get a good seat. (It was general admission seating only.)

Joni's new back-up band, Tom Scott and the LA Express, debuted for the first half hour of the show. Scott is a cool one. When he wasn't swaying to the music, he was conducting the LA Express, Mitch Miller style. He did not seem to realize people were laughing at him.

Then Joni came on to do a couple of songs and this was followed by intermission.

The second half was an uninspired hour and ten minutes, with the LA Express backing Mitchell up on a couple of numbers. There were no string ensembles this time as she had at Avery Fisher the night before. If I counted correctly, she presented the amazingly subdued crowd with seven of her old favorites. The rest of the time she spent singing every cut on her new album. Whenever someone would yell out a request, they would be shushed.

The only appropriate song of the night was "For Free." It contains the lyric, "Me I play for fortune." I'm compelled to agree with her. She sang "Both Sides Now" and pretended to forget the lyrics. Did she really expect the crowd to believe this?

The Joni Mitchell concert was not the place to be after an afternoon of textbook shopping. Those fucking Canadian rip-off artists.

Speaking of people who hang out with Neil Young, the performance Steve Stills gave at Carnegie Hall last Friday night was the kind of thing that can make you never want to go to a concert again. The tragedy of it was that it could have been a great concert, if Stills wasn't such a

prick. Instead, he managed to alienate himself from the 4000 plus ex-fans who booed him off the stage.

Things started off just fine as Stills came out on stage and launched into a hard rocking version of "Love The One You're With." His new back up band was sounding really good. Then, in the early part of the set, his organ went out and Stills never recovered from the shock as he stormed off the stage after only three songs.

He came back 20 minutes later without the band and began apologizing for the organ. "If you're wondering why I'm acting so uptight," he said, "it's because the organ went out in the middle of the set. I've seen a lot of bands fall apart over a lot less. If you think I'm making excuses, I'm not."

Stills then sat down and surrounded himself with various guitars and banjos. He began what could have been a great acoustic set. Unfortunately, when he wasn't busy taking a drag on his cigarette, he was blowing the lyrics on songs like "4 and 20" and "Blackbird." When he did a

song that wasn't greeted with enthusiastic applause he said, "I liked that song. I'm sorry if I bored you."

When the band came back, Stills would do a number with them and then start wandering around on the stage like the proverbial lost sheep. He seemed exceptionally nervous. Finally, midway through the set, Stills appeared to be really getting into the music and it seemed as though he would redeem himself for earlier sins.

But he blew it. Just when it looked like the crowd had forgotten about what happened at the beginning, he waved goodbye and walked off stage.

Of course he returned for the mandatory encore, but proceeded to do an incredibly half-hearted version of "49 Bye-Byes." The crowd gave him a standing ovation anyway, obviously hoping to coax a few more songs out of him. He turned to the crowd, gave them an indescribable fucked-up look and marched off the stage for the last time. The cheers immediately turned to boos.

—Bob Rosen

## Poignant 'Black Girl'

The Finley Program Agency will resume its weekly film presentations this Friday in the Grand Ballroom, Room 101 Finley.

One of the two films, scheduled for showing, at 2 and 6 PM, is *Black Girl*, a refreshing change from the Blaxploitation flicks which seem to dominate the Black film market. The other film is *Trouble Man*, starring Paul Winfield and Marvin Gaye, to be shown at 4 PM.

*Black Girl* is the disturbing and thought provoking account of the conflict-ridden existence of a suburban mother and her three illegitimate daughters by two different men. She makes no secret of her discontent with her daughters' failure to live up to her expectations, which is that they graduate high school and attend

college. She constantly praises her oldest adopted daughter who succeeded in doing so, and of whom she is very proud.

It may sound very complicated, but *Black Girl* is the most intelligent Black film I have seen in a long time. The film's most important asset is its merciless sincerity. The camera eye captures every emotional nuance and skillfully unmask the heavy pattern of hatred, jealousy, prejudice, and ignorance. But the film goes beyond merely photographing and recording reality. It actually reproduced and analyzes the behaviors and emotions that exist.

Although there are many witty and humorous sequences, *Black Girl* is a sad movie. Even while you are laughing you can't escape a sense of creeping misery.

—Fred Seaman

POP

## Dylan and De Bucks

Dylan, he pulled in de big bucks. Five million? Maybe more. A lot of people cry "ripoff." Maybe not. It's hard to believe anyone who saw the Dylan/Band concert in any of the 21 cities felt they were taken for a ride.

The most impressive thing about the show seemed to be that Dylan finally achieved his goal of becoming the world's greatest rock 'n' roller. The Hibbing (Minnesota) High School yearbook features a picture of Bobby Graduate with the caption: "I want to be like Little Richard." And it was his homecoming rocking, not the nostalgia, that provided the greatest momentum at the Garden that Thursday night.

The Dylan/Band combo is one of the greatest rock groups ever assembled. That's pretty heavy, but if the Garden's boys in blue hadn't been so uptight about letting people move about freely, there would have been mucho dancing in the aisles. But they didn't and there wasn't, and rock reporters will observe that the audience was "calm but polite." Polite, yes, but not calm. Spellbound, maybe, but not by the appearance of Dylan himself as much as the rock and roll music.

Another surprise was that the set was pretty much evenly divided between the Band and Dylan. Robbie Robertson



stepped up to sing a medley of the Band's greatest hits ("Stage Fright", "The Shape I'm In", "Cripple Creek", etc.) and it was pretty much like any one of a number of Band shows with one exception: an excellent rhythm guitar player named Dylan. For Bob proved he could really play the guitar, and that harmonica solo on "Lay Lady Lay" was just too.....

Enough with the raves—let's get down to basics. There's little doubt here that Dylan performed all those great songs of the past for purposes of sheer nostalgia, but why not? Those songs deserve a Dylan performance—he wrote them, so why shouldn't he sing them? And the audience wasn't in the least bit disoriented by the new Dylan singing the old Dylan. The "new Dylan" is not the "new Nixon." In fact, he's not new anything. That's just a cliché journalists use to capitalize on the drama of the Dylan revival. Superfluous, fancy.

"And though the rules of the road have been lodged/It's only people's game you got to dodge." Every song from "This Wheel's on Fire" to "All Along the Watchtower" was hard driven clear-direct hit on everybody. Some of his countrified treatments, like "Just Like a Woman," were almost tongue-in-cheek

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