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Film Reviews, by F.A.J.

THE GENTLE COWBOY

MANHUNT

(20th Century-Fox)

G Cert.

THE dedicated man of peace—or the woman of peace—driven to the point where he seeks to defend the right with a gun has been an important character in several films in recent years. The Quaker wife in *High Noon* was one, the farmer with a pitchfork in *Violent Saturday* was another. Taken seriously, their presence argues that ultimately even the best men must rely on force—at which I protest a little, even though I think *High Noon* one of the best pieces of cinema I have seen.

In *Manhunt* the theme is used again, but here the conflicting impulses are so balanced within the hero that looking back you'll find his internal battle as interesting as the one he fights for his life against armed pursuers. Don't let me give you the impression, though, that *Manhunt* is not primarily good entertainment. One of the best Westerns I have seen for a long time, it has all the required elements, with good pace and plenty of excitement, without being predictable in the detail of its action as the inferior Western sometimes is.

Played by Don Murray with a fine feeling for the part, the man of peace is a young cowboy who has been blamed for killing the son of a wealthy rancher. From the ranch a party sets out to seek revenge, Western style. "I don't think I could kill a man even if I had to," the young cowboy tells a friendly rancher who helps him. Well I'm afraid that—something of a crack shot, incidentally—he turns and stands and has blood on his hands before the final fade-out; but his reverence for life is also strikingly demonstrated.

Manhunt, which Henry Hathaway directed, is always easy to look at, and beside such dramatic highlights as a horse stampede, a running fight with Comanches and two gun battles, it has some well-played quieter scenes, with Diane Varsi in a leading part as The Girl. Of several good supporting players, I specially liked Jay C. Flippen as a wagon driver who speaks some agreeably dry lines while giving the hero a lift through Comanche country.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

(Rank)

G Cert.

SINCE I have not read *A Tale of Two Cities*, and so many people have, I say my little piece about the new film version with even more diffidence than usual. I'm assured it is a faithful translation of the main events of the book, but whether it preserves the *spirit* in which Dickens wrote is, of course, another matter. Approaching it with only a slight knowledge of the plot, I found it always interesting, but—apart from a few moments here and there—really exciting only towards the end, from the time Sydney Carton, Darnay and the rest arrive in Paris until the scene at the guillotine. All this is very well done. My impression of the rest is that it is very competent—the period atmosphere is

BAROMETER

FINE: "*Manhunt*."
FAIR: "*A Tale of Two Cities*."
FAIR: "*The Young Don't Cry*."

well caught, for instance, and the source of the dissatisfaction of the French people is adequately suggested in contrasting scenes of riches and poverty. On the other hand, this early part of the film is not likely to carry you away, though I think the film as a whole is rather better than some others that Ralph Thomas has directed.

What of the players? Dirk Bogarde has been too decent too long to convince us easily that he's always drunk, but he works hard at the part and captures something of Sydney Carton's despair. Of the women Rosalie Crutchley plays the bloodthirsty wife of Ernest Defarge with considerable relish, and Dorothy Tutin and Athene Seyler are quite adequate as the more restrained Lucie and Miss Pross. Among a strong supporting cast I was particularly pleased to see such less-often-seen players as Duncan Lamont, Alfie Bass and Donald Pleasence.

THE YOUNG DON'T CRY

(Columbia)

A Cert.

TO put it baldly, *The Young Don't Cry* is about an adolescent's journey, in a few climactic days, from adolescence to manhood, and it is the film's only considerable fault that it does put it baldly. This is a pity, for what it has to say was worth saying, and for much of the distance its fresh, attractive settings and the best of its players create a quite remarkable feeling of reality.

Sal Mineo is the adolescent for whom temptation is the proposition that only a sucker sticks out his neck to help other people, and for whom home is an orphanage to which an old boy returns with proof of a substantial kind that the proposition works in the workaday world. Some of young Mr Mineo's early scenes are a bit self-conscious, but the best of the film, in which he gradually becomes involved in a jail break, is very well done. So are the scenes of the prison work gang and in the prison itself, with J. Carol Naish as a bullying superintendent and James Whitmore and Leigh Whipper oddly moving as the escapees.

A film I would have liked to praise unservedly, *The Young Don't Cry* might have survived its self-conscious preoccupation with a theme if it had not been marred again by this flaw right at the end. Even so, it is well worth seeing. Alfred L. Werker directed.



DON MURRAY, DIANE VARSI

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 25, 1958.