Bob Lane's
Artsworld

"No man's life can be encompassed in one telling. There is no way to give each year its allotted weight, to include each event, each person who helped to shape a lifetime. What can be done is to be faithful in spirit to the record and try to find one's way to the heart of the man."

These are producer-director Sir Richard Attenborough's introductory words to his movie Gandhi. Given these limitations inherent in transferring a long life to a just over three-hour screen version, Attenborough has been successful in his 20-year obsession to produce a movie about one of our century's most talented and powerful men of peace.

I choose those adjectives carefully because Gandhi has always been enigmatic and difficult for the West to understand. His fight for justice and equality, launched originally in South Africa where, because he was an Indian of dark complexion, he was insulted, forced to ride in the rear of the train, and generally treated as a second class citizen, was a fight using weapons unfamiliar to most of us in the West. The main weapon was satyagraha or non-violent civil disobedience.

Gandhi acknowledged his intellectual debt to Jesus and to Thoreau. He was a talented lawyer, but a genius at timing and use of the press. His non-violence will not work in countries where there is no freedom of the press, for its power comes from awakening the moral sense of the world. The movie is excellent at showing Gandhi changing from an innocent, inexperienced young man into the most powerful man in India who takes on and defeats the British Empire.

The marches, the fasts unto death are all here in the film, and we see Gandhi become the moral centre of the Indian nationalist movement. This is heavy stuff and one possibility would have been to defy Gandhi.

But Attenborough has given us a human and complex Gandhi, one with a sense of humor as well as a sense of dedication, a passion for his wife as well as a passion for freedom and justice.

Ben Kingsley is the reason this film works. Attenborough says he spent 20 years of careful searching to find the actor to play Gandhi. The search paid off, for Kingsley, a star for the past 15 years with the Royal Shakespeare company, is superb in the title role. He's the same height as Gandhi and after losing 17 pounds for the film was the same weight: half Indian. He's the same height as Gandhi and after losing 17 pounds for the film was the same weight.

'Ve know,' replied the old villager, 'but through you, he will surely live again.

And he does in this film. Rich with the clutter and beauty of India, filled with the "important" public movements of Gandhi's struggle against imperialism, the film opens a window to the past allowing us to walk with Gandhi on the salt march, to overhear strategy sessions, and to see him slowly, inevitably, painfully, win his case in court.
On the next part of the journey we were in Alexandria, the universe to our own home planet—earth. The trip was Dr. Sagan is well-known to many people as an astronomer from Cornell University, as an author—his Dragons of Eden is an excellent and readable book about human consciousness and its dim beginnings back there in Eden—and as a popularizer of scientific concerns. He was also a NASA director involved in the Mars shuttle-craft operation. His credentials are impressive and his enthusiasm capturing.

Quasars, black holes, super novae, pulsars; we “saw” all of these phenomena on the first show as our imaginary space trip through the cosmos proceeded from the edge of the universe to our own home planet—earth. The trip was a marvel of sight and sound; a light show of color and order giving us some indication of the conceptual status of present theorizing. On the “space ship of imagination” we zipped through space-time at an impossible speed to gain a glimmer of the vastness of space. Zooming through clusters of galaxies the camera returned on occasion to the human head, to Sagan as pilot, to remind us the trip was speculative, was of the imagination.

“This is a world of wonders,” says Sagan, while reminding us that ours is but one sun in the 100 billion trillion stars in the sky. “Why should this modest planet be the only one with life?” he asks. “There must be other planets on which matter has grown consciousness” is his speculative answer.

On the next part of the journey we were in Alexandria in 300 B.C. at the then-largest library in the world. We watched the intellectual discovery of Eratosthenes who had speculated back then that the earth was round and had a circumference of about 25,000 miles. How he came to reason that way is one of the most exciting examples of how the intellect can work.

Cosmos is on Channel 9 Sunday night. It is worth watching. Get all the family together and watch television at its very best: intelligent, exciting and oh, yes, educational.

This show reminds us of the awe, the wonder of this world and of the excitement of the organizing human intellect. After watching it one wonders why anyone wastes time with key-bending magicians and the like, except as light entertainment.

“One is never tired of painting,” wrote William Hazlitt in The Pleasure of Painting, because you have to set down, not what you knew already, but what you have just discovered. There is a continual creation...

One gets a sense of “continual creation” when visiting the studio of Nanaimo artist Leo Kushino, and for a couple of reasons. First, the activity: Kushino is working on several large canvasses and small canvas boards all at once. Palettes are everywhere, cans of paint stacked on shelves, brushes, hunks of wood, knives, tubes—all the materials needed are stacked neatly around the studio/living room where the artist’s easel commands the room.

Kushino is an amazing man. He came to Nanaimo just over a year ago with his young wife. At 60 years most people are settling down; Leo Kushino was immigrating to Canada from his native Japan where he had painted and taught. He has been painting for about 40 years now and during that productive time has had several one-man shows in Japan. We are lucky to have him in Nanaimo where we will be able to see his first one-man show in Canada. About 60 pieces, mostly oil on canvas, will be presented at Rutherford Mall from May 2-7. The works on display have all been completed since October, 1982, while Kushino has been in Nanaimo.

With the able assistance of translator Noriko Van Antwerp, I was able to talk with Leo Kushino recently about his work. He told me that he used to be obsessed by abstract painting and produced works to show or try to show, what his interior feelings were. Lately he has been more interested in doing scenic works in a representational style. He told me that he chose Nanaimo because it offered a quiet and clean place with the opportunity for immersion in a new culture. He was drawn to Vancouver Island by the rugged beauty of the coastline and surrounding islands. Working from sketches, in his studio, he has already brought to life the house and barn from the Tamagawa University farm in Cedar. Leo said: “Since arriving I have been overpowered by the beauty of this Island and found myself returning to a scenic representational style to celebrate what is around me in my new country.”

Sitting in his studio I look up at a large abstract piece of Chinese characters (signs) in dark blue on a blue-green background next to a large oil showing water and rock. Both have lots of movement—the force of the water seems to be present in the painting eroding the rock, tossing a large log around.

The new subject matter includes structures, roads and other man-made objects as well as trees, water, rock—the natural images that catch the eye and display the power of nature.

Leo Kushino’s work has a steady craftsmanship and an interesting fusion of styles. Those of you who like your paintings to look like something recognizable will be pleased. And those who seek the painter who expresses an interior vision through the landscape will not be disappointed. “There is a continual creation..."
Mother is ironing. She is ironing the teapot. The cat is ironing everything that she can get her hands on. Young men are stuffing their faces: one shovelling cereal into his face; one lying on the chestfield shovelling beans into his face from a plate on his stomach.

"I want more beans. Beans, I said, I'm out of beans.

A knock at the door. The Liberal candidate for parliament is at the door.

This is the "most disgusting family" of the year contest, and the JuddreU family wins again. Lady Org!n in Iceland he explains. ‘

An Icelander selling honey is at the door. There is no honey in Iceland he explains.

What is all this nonsense? Why “Monty Python and the Flying Circus,” of course.

Remember the skit in the doctor's office? A patient stumbles into the doctor, blood all over his front: "Your nurse stabbed me," says the patient. "Fill out the form," says the doctor, "and we'll see if we can stop the bleeding." Patient on the floor mopping up his own blood while the doctor takes the nurse off to lunch saying "have another bash at the form, Mr. Williams, we're going out for a spot of lunch while we have the chance.

The satirical guns of Chapman, Gilliam, Jones were often levelled at doctors. And clergy. And professors. Politicians and generals also. They aimed at and usually hit the places where bureaucracy, pretentiousness and bombast reside. They were also crazy, charmingly crazy.

Men dressed as women, women as men, a mixture of cartoon visuals and actors folded together to maximize the visual jokes. Quick juxtaposition between Stonehenge and some talkative anthropologist in deepest Africa. Broad humor contrasted with subtlety. Quick humor contrasted with subtlety. Mix it all together with a big dose of silliness and you have "Monty Python."

Seattle’s Channel 9 gave us a whole day of "Monty Python and the Flying Circus" on the last day of 1980. It was their way of saying goodbye to the craziest show that BBC ever produced. Are there any Python fans out there? Did anyone watch all day?

Losing Monty Python will be like losing a good friend who is funny, irreverent, crazy, creative and wild.

Television will never be the same again.

Thanks to Channel 9 for the chance to O.D. on Python! It was as good a way as any to bid goodbye to 1980. At times the show was absolutely brilliant, particularly when deflating some cultural balloon of self-importance and pretence.

Satire is such a healthy and robust art form. We need it almost as much as we need fibre in our diet. It provides, essentially, the same much-needed catharsis.

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**Bob Lane's ARTSWORLD**

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By BOB LANE

Writing about television twice in a row may prove an embarrassing revelation of my real tastes in art forms. Oh well, I’m sure some of you always thought the Artsworld snob was really a closet television addict.

Actually my addiction is selective: I’m hooked on one-star westerns and M.A.S.H. plus CBC’s For The Record. M.A.S.H. has continued over the years to be a first rate show in part because of its changing cast of crazies. I remember getting all broken up when Col. Henry Blake was “killed” in a plane crash on the way home from the Korean war. The writing is usually good, though lately it seemed that syrup and sentimentality were creeping into the hard-boiled vision which started with the Altman movie.

Syrupy sentimentality was not the flavor of Monday night’s show. One of the clues of excellence came when one discovered the segment was written and directed by Alan Alda, who as everyone knows, also stars as Hawkeye Pierce, now senior surgeon in the outfit, and who directs some of the best segments in the series.

Monday’s show was Alda at his best: A tight script with a punch. Surrealism in its vision it showed the dreams of several main characters as they dropped off to sleep after working for 33 hours to patch up a steady stream of casualties.

Margaret is the first to dream. She imagines herself in virgin white marrying a prince charming who leads her to their wedding bed only to be taken away by a platoon of marching men in uniform. Her wedding bed is suddenly full of wounded soldiers; her wedding dress bloodied.

Father Mulcahy drops off while listening to a young soldier’s confession. He imagines himself as a cardinal, returning to the cheers of the camp to hold mass. He opens the Bible to begin and drops of blood fall on the pages from a statue of Christ which then changes into a crucified soldier bleeding on the altar. Heavy stuff!

Klinger dreams of returning home only to find to do so is to die; Hawkeye is back in medical school unable to remember procedures because he has fallen asleep during important lectures.

But perhaps the most moving dream was the one Major Winchester, the Boston blue blood, had. He dreamed he was a magician, complete with top hat and cape, performing for the M.A.S.H. crew. Suddenly a young man, badly hurt, is wheeled into the room. Winchester tries to perform tricks to keep him alive. He pulls flags out of his ears, does card tricks, and in more and more of a frenzy, tries to keep the boy alive by doing a soft shoe act while perspiring heavily from his combined efforts.

But none of it works. He hasn’t enough tricks. The young soldier dies in spite of all the tricks of the surgeon.

It was good television. Thought provoking and honest. It’s not often that the tube makes you think, but it sure did Monday.
In some ways that decision proved to be most salutary for the Star Trek enterprise. As everyone knows, its followers became a cult of fans who met yearly, swapped stories, bought the many books generated by the series, and provided the audience for the re-broadcasts of those 74 scripts. They are still being shown all over the world. Here, Channel 13 is broadcasting them every day at 4:00 p.m.

What was so unique about Star Trek? Was it the science fiction setting, the phasers, the transporter, the alien life forms? Probably not. The special effects were never very sophisticated, never overwhelming, but always used to support the story, not to compensate for a lack of old-fashioned plot and character.

I don't think it was the setting, the special effects, the other-worldly aspect of things, but the characters that we all responded to. Interesting characters uttering intelligent words in a situation that could have been anywhere and anytime. The stories are simple: the captain, his officers and crew are placed in a life-threatening situation, often an unknown but discoverable threatening situation, often an unknown but discoverable threatening situation, often an unknown but discoverable threatening situation, often an unknown but discoverable threatening situation, often an unknown but discoverable threatening situation.

After several years, a new generation of fans and the success of similar sci-fi movies we were given Star Trek — The Movie. It was boring. Gone was the emphasis on a cracking good story with believable characters and instead we had special effects and sophisticated technology but no interesting people, no good yarn.

With that in mind I hesitated to see part two — The Wrath of Khan. But see it I did, and it is on track again. A fine story with an emphasis on human beings and their motivations keeps this sequel from being at all boring. It does what the series did best — tells an exciting story using interesting characters.

It connects with the series by continuing the story of Khan, who was revived from a life-saving sleep by Kirk only to attempt to steal the Enterprise and conquer the galaxy. Subdued by Kirk, Khan has been exiled to a small planet where he has lived on revenge. This movie tells the story of that revenge, and Khan's attempt to destroy the hated Kirk.

It's good stuff — see it!