



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 looks like Gandhi. He walks like Gandhi. He has the enigmatic smile, the toughness, the humanity of Gandhi. Kingsley's real name is Krishna Rhanji — he's half Indian. He's the same height as Gandhi and, after losing 17 pounds for the film was the same weight.

Two weeks into production, Kingsley played the old Gandhi in a setting 30 miles south of Delhi. Make-up and authentic stepped out of his car and was confronted by an elderly peasant who knelt to touch his feet in the traditional gesture of profound respect. Embarrassed and deeply touched, Kingsley explained that he was merely an actor in the guise of the beloved Mahatma. "We 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.



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My friend Chuck Van Antwerp, who is a philosopher at Malaspina College, was puzzling over Newton's description of gravity recently and said that what Newton and Galileo were interested in was not why apples fell to the ground but why the moon does not.

Now Newton did not explain exactly how the apple's fall led him to think of universal gravitation, but we might imagine the process going something like this: Suppose a tree grew taller and taller until it reached to the moon, and suppose the moon were attached to one of the branches like an apple. If the moon were then released, it, too, would fall to the earth. This is, in fact, just what happened. The moon, because it is revolving (i.e. moving in the horizontal as well as the vertical), does not hit the earth.

Of course it takes the genius of a Newton to make all of this quantitative and mathematical, but the anecdote about the apple falling sets one to wondering about conceptual and theoretical discoveries.

It was a Dr. Stukeley who first related the apple incident. He said that while drinking tea with Newton in the garden: "Among other discourse, he told me he was just in the same situation, as when formerly the notion of gravitation came into his mind. It was occasioned by the fall of an apple, as he sat in a contemplative mood."

It seems to me that in trying to reconstruct how great discoveries came about we learn something about the marvellous abilities of the human mind. Contemplation, wrote Aristotle, was the highest form of life.

And what he meant was when we are wondering, puzzling, comparing ideas and images we, on occasion, discover new patterns, have what we call "insights."

Now, I want to argue that the artist and the scientist are not different in kind, are not even using different hemispheres of the brain, but are involved in precisely the same enterprise.

Poets and physicists working at the edge of human knowledge present us with models of experience; with, if you will, metaphors to order the raw materials of existence.

It seems to me wrong to concentrate on the differences between the sciences and humanities when at bottom they are very similar human activities. Metaphor, which brings together dissimilar items to show a new level of similarity is at work in both disciplines.

As Konrad Lorenz puts it: "Every study undertaken by man was the genuine outcome of curiosity, a kind of game. All the data of curiosity, a game. All the data of natural science, which are responsible for man's domination of the world, originated from activities that were indulged in exclusively for the sake of amusement."

Bob Lane's ARTSWORLD

By BOB LANE

"We are made of star stuff." That claim opened the unusual series of 13 segments called simply *Cosmos*.

Produced by Carl Sagan, KCET in Los Angeles and the BBC, *Cosmos* brings together the best of special effects, imaginative use of the medium of television, and the intelligent script delivered by host Carl Sagan.

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 catching.

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 to 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.



Bob Lane's Artsworld

"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. Pallettes 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 . . ."

Bob Lane's ARTSWORLD

Mother is ironing. She is ironing the teapot. The cat. She 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 chesterfield 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 Juddrell family wins again. Lady Organ announces the winners and we cut to another family watching the results on tellie. A cat sticks through the wall by the door. The car is the doorbell. The doorbell meows. 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. 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.

Artsworld

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. Surrealist 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.



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First, I should admit that I am hopelessly addicted to Star Trek. Like thousands of others I was upset years ago when the network cancelled the show after about three years of innovative television drama. Oh yes, we trekkies wept and yelled, wrote letters, asked the Klingons to attack the network bosses, but all to no avail. Caught somewhere in the middle of the ratings, a much more dangerous and life-threatening situation than being caught in a parallel universe, Captain Kirk and his crew were simply dropped.

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 many rebroadcasts of those 74 scripts. They are still being shown all over the world. Here, Channel 13 is broadcasting them every day at 4 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 otherworldly 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 knowledge will save them, if they are smart enough and quick enough to respond. Responding to the threat brings out the particular characteristics of the main players. Spock's logic, Scottie's engineering skills, Kirk's quickness of mind and poker-playing skills are all revealed to us.

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!

Bob Lane's ARTSWORLD

The Elephant Man is a movie you should see. Produced by Jonathan Sanger and Mel Brooks, this version of the true story of John Merrick, a 19th century Englishman so hideously disfigured by disease that he had to wear a sack over his head in public, is a first-rate movie.

Starring Anthony Hopkins, John Hurt, Anne Bancroft and John Gielgud, the film is directed by David Lynch, known for his underground classic, Eraserhead. This is his first "mainstream" movie and my guess is we will see more of the work of this 34-year-old director.

At present there is a book out on John Merrick, the Lynch movie and a Broadway play of the same name. The elephant man was a freak — a man too ugly, too deformed to be accepted by Victorian society.

The movie opens with a surrealistic rape of a woman by an elephant, a totally offensive bit of nonsense. In fact, my friend and I almost left the theatre after the first three minutes, but Puritan sense of the dollar prevented the exit (after all, cinema tickets are expensive) and I'm glad for that Puritan background.

Only the opening and the closing (a kind of mystic, mushy, bit of cosmic togetherness) are bad, the balance of the film is intelligent, thought-provoking and, at times, absolutely brilliant.

Dr. Treves, played by Anthony Hopkins, is a surgeon at a London hospital specializing in anatomical disorders. He hears about and seeks out the Elephant Man who is being shown at a carnival and kept as a slave by his "owner" Mr. Bytes (Freddie Jones). Bytes lives off the deformity by exhibiting the freak to the public. The doctor talks Bytes into (for a few pounds) letting him examine the Elephant Man at his hospital. He assumes the deformed monster (John Hurt) is an idiot and cannot talk or think like a human being. The doctor displays his hideous find as a medical phenomenon to the annual meeting of fellow surgeons.

But John Merrick is no idiot. Inside the deformed hulk of gross and twisted physicality is a sensitive and intelligent human being. Dr. Treves realizes he may be no different from the "carny" slave-owner who is getting money by exploiting the misery of the deformed half-man.

The black and white film is perfect at shocking the audience with the ugliness of John Merrick. Seeing him is held off for several minutes, building a fair amount of anticipation and excitement. We see him first as a silhouette when he is displayed to the applauding surgeons. But finally we see him (form is creating and fulfilling an appetite in the minds of the audience) and he is ugly!

Anne Bancroft plays Mrs. Kendal, a popular actress of the time who comes to discover under the ugliness the soul of a human being. She brings him a present at his hospital room (his first home) and it is a copy of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

He opens it up at random and begins to read the lines of Romeo when he first meets Juliet. Mrs. Kendal responds, since she knows Juliet's part, and we are given the most heart-wrenching Romeo and Juliet scene that you will ever see. The beautiful London actress and the ugly deformed freak deliver the beautiful Shakespeare lines to each other, concluding with a gentle kiss on the deformed face by Mrs. Kendal.

We begin to see the humanity in John Merrick. He turns out to be a romantic and a bit of a dandy.

He likes nice clothes and fine things around him. He is exploited by hospital guards who sell tickets to show him off, but his gentle humanity shines through his ugly exterior.