

Movie Monday--More Than Just a Free Movie!
BATMAN vs. MADISON COUNTY
May 1995



Been to a couple of movies this week, about as different as two movies can be. The first was Batman Forever - with my son Paul and a couple of his birthday party-goers (well not actually with him, but a row back and four seats to the left, so he would not be seen with a parent). The other was The Bridges of Madison County.

I gotta admit that Batman unsettled me some. It typified that action genre that's overwhelming the medium and audiences these days. A total blast from start to finish... special effects by the bucketful, mega production values, super slick, power editing, bazaar situations and even more bazaar characters, action, action, action... nothing on the screen for more than a few seconds. Amazing sets and fantastic inventions thrown away, literally blown away, to keep up the maniacal pace. The audience from 5 to 50 sitting for two hours with our mouths hanging open. Paul's buddies had both already seen it twice in its first two weeks of distribution. "Decadent" was a word that kept occurring if I let my mind slip into 'righteous/judgmental' mode.

NOW I MAY BE GETTING ON... being exactly in my mid forties, and maybe because I feature myself somewhat of a wiry, studly photographer... but Madison County is more my kind of a show. Straight up cinematography, no FX obvious, hardly ever more than two people in a scene. Batman had a bank of thirty or so stunt men - Madison County had two (! - now there's where my wife, Laurel, and I were stumped - the only stunts we could remember were maybe a couple of tricky rolls in the sack)

I was a little reluctant to be seen going into both movies. Still I can only justify attending Batman as fatherly duty and professional research. We saw M.C. in Saltspring's wonderful little theatre, a quaint brown-shingled building that doubles as a Pentecostal church on Sundays. I waited in the car across the road till the last minute. The book's reputation was so outrageous, being flamed by the Doonsbury strip, Monday Mag., and outrageous excerpts being quoted by Laurel. But it was a wonderful T.V. interview of clear-eyed Clint Eastwood about the project that made me curious to see it.

Once again, we got lucky at our (second) favourite little theatre. Laurel and I talked on into the night about the characters, why they did what they did, what might have happened, what's happening with us. We were talking about it again next morning ... to me the sign of a good movie.

Movie Monday will be showing The Bridges of Madison County - we'll probably save it for Valentine's Day '96. Batman Forever will be a pass. Half a billion dollars on a release weekend indicates 'Successful Hype' and 'Popularity' not the kind of quality cinema experience I'm looking for.

