

# 'Boy and His Dog' lacked depth, effect

By PAUL SINGER

There is a class of films that has a peculiar lack of impact on me. Even when films of this type successfully hold my attention and keep me awake for their duration, I find their most noticeable effect to be absence of effect.

A **Boy and His Dog** was such a film. It simply offers nothing deeper than what is at its surface. It provides around an hour and a half of trivial amusement, a story that interesting only in its off-beat presentation.

The cinematography of John Arthur Morrill was adequate. L.Q. Jones' screenplay of the story by Harlan Ellison (undoubtedly was inferior to that science-fiction masters' original) in terms of the film was adequate Mr. (or is it Ms.?) Jones' directing was what provided the off-beat flavor of the film. This was done by using some

impress "dog-eye-view" camera angles in long shots and close ups. But "impressive" camera angles are necessarily "Intelligent" camera angles. And I don't believe this film pretended to an "Intelligent" film.

While I'm speaking about adequacies, I should mention the adequate acting—well, let's say performances of Don Johnson as the Boy, Susanny Benton as the Girl, and the combined talents of Tim MacIntire and Blood in creating the Dog. But all these adequacies combine to form a somewhat less than adequate film, a film whose only pretense at a message would be 'it's a dog's world.'

There's one more important thing I think we all should be aware of. Apparently this film angered a number of women in and around the University community. Their opinion (unlike mine) was that the

film was important enough to warrant action against it and other films which they see as degrading to women. A film about a woman-hunting team of Boy and Dog understandably leaves women something to complain about. But it's my opinion that a world of films like **A Boy and His Dog** (which as I've said has that peculiar characteristic of absence of effect) would do women less harm than one single Doris Day/Rock Hudson romance, which subtly shapes and distorts so much of male and female views of themselves and each other.

In any case, my sympathy with and respect for the Women's Movement demands, whatever my opinion on this particular issue, that I support them by two paragraphs from a leaflet handed out prior to the showing by members of the Women's Caucus:



"A Boy & His Dog."

The film you are about to see exhibits a content and language that are demeaning and insulting to women. Under the guise of science fiction, the producers have promoted a misogynistic and paranoid view of women to its fullest extent. Women are seen as objects of plunder to be raped and murdered at will, or else they are represented as mere mechanistic beings useful only for their reproductive capabilities. The script refers to them as "chicks," "broads," and "scum bags."

We urge you to consider when viewing this film that many women suffer each day at the hands of men who have been taught to regard them in just such a context.

# Campus Times Features

April 11, 1977

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## HARLAN ELLISON, A FIRST RATE STORYTELER

Now, everybody on this campus knows Harlan Ellison as the guy who wrote *A Boy and His Dog*. Most of us know nothing more about the man. But *A Boy and His Dog* is only the most easily accessible work from a writer who could possibly be one of the greatest American writers living today.

The *London Times* has called him "a first rate storyteller." The *New York Times* has said "He is the bete noir of science fiction." Indeed, Mr. Ellison had written a large amount of Science Fiction stories, but he is by no means limited to that field. Ellison himself states "I'm not science fiction writer, I'm a writer. I use some of the rocco furniture of science fiction... but I write my own fantasies."

In addition to the hundreds of Science Fiction short stories he has written, Ellison has also contributed episodes for *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, *The Untouchables*, *Route 66*, and *Burke's Law*, as well as the award winning *Star Trek* episode *The City on the Edge of Forever*.

Some of Mr. Ellisons most striking stories take place far off from the sci-fi genre he has become so associated with. His novel, *Memos From Pergatory* (which later became a *Alfred Hitchcock* episode starring James Cann in his first role) concerns the lives of gang members living in the Red Hook section of New York. Ellison actually joined the group,

in order to get as realistic material as possible. In his attempt to show the public the way of life these gangs lead. Also on the "urban drama" level was his book of short stories *Gentleman Junkie*, and other stories of the hung up generation. This book exists as the only paperback reviewed in the history of *Esquire* magazine by Dorothy Parker. Of the story entitled *Daniel White For The Greater Good*, a story about the consequences of racism in the south, Mrs Parker said, "It is without exception the best presentation I have ever seen of present racial conditions in the South and of those who try to alleviate them. I cannot recommend it more vehemently, and if you can steal yourself to ask for *Gentleman Junkie* I do not think you will be mad at me.

His reflections on the media have been reprinted in two volumes, entitled *The Glass Teat*, and *The Other Glass Teat*. Some of his criticisms of network policy, as well as observations on commercial products, TV programming, and the Nixon Administration have become classics of media criticism, and now these collections have been used as texts for many communication courses.

As far as eccentricity goes, Ellison cannot be surpassed. Recently, he visited various bookshops around the world, actually writing a story a day while

sitting in the bookstore showcase windows. From these sittings have emerged stories subsequently printed in *Penthouse*, and other magazines.

His writing credits are not confined to television or printed matter, for, in addition to scripting the motion picture *A Boy and His Dog*, Ellison has written many film scripts, *The Oscar*, only one among many.

Perhaps even more interesting than his prolificness as a writer, are his stories that attempt to maintain his integrity in the dog-eat-dog writers world. One of his more eccentric tales concerns his walking away from thousands of royalty dollars for his work on the short lived TV series *kThe Starlost*, because the quality of the show did not live up to his own standards.

Obviously, Mr. Ellison can not be termed your run-of-the-mill, cut and dried writer. His own past is as interesting as any of his stories, and indeed, some of them directly reflect incidents in his own life. Raised in Painsville, Ohio, Ellison ran away from home at an early age to work in a circus. By the age of 18, he had been a body guard, deep sea fisherman, logger, and traveling salesman to name only a few. His past is as event filled as any of his books

The only thing more enjoyable than reading Mr. Ellison's books, is to see him talk. His appearance and rantings dorm

science fiction conventions, as well as on the NBC *Tomorrow* show are never to be forgotten examples of irreverence,

along with side pointed commentary. Tommorrow night in Strong will offer much the same.



Harlan Ellison making a point.

# Harlan Ellison to debate UR students

By LINDA KETCHUM

A long running controversy on the UR campus should reach a climax tonight when individuals representing several diametrically opposed viewpoints will come together in an organized debate with science fiction writer Harlan Ellison.

Since the movie *A Boy and His Dog*, based on Ellison's novel, was screened by UR Cinema Group on January 28, the *Campus Times* editorial page has served as a forum for numerous opinions, accusations, and counteraccusations concerning that movie. Brett Gold, Programmer for the Cinema Group, and one of the debaters, described it as "an expanding controversy."

Gold summarized the dispute: "It began with the film itself, then to the methods of criticism of literature, then to the ramifications of what the radical feminists were proposing." The other student debaters will be Marcia Craig, John Kirk, Dorothy Nixon, Beth Redlin, and Kathy Scarborough.

A review of *A Boy and His Dog* by Paul Singer was printed in the *CT* on January 31 in which he judged the movie to be "a somewhat less than adequate film." Singer also mentioned that several feminists had distributed leaflets in an attempt to make the audience aware of its sexist content.

The next day Gold's critique of the film based on the premise that it was acutely anti-sexist, appeared in the *CT*. "As a matter of fact, the film is not sexist at all," he wrote, rather it is profoundly anti-sexist in a manner that any woman who wants to be treated as a person should welcome."

This statement elicited a reply from Redlin and Scarborough (CT 2/17/77) in which they described the "five static images of women" present in the film, interpreting the ending as "Woman (being fed) to a dog."

Craig also responded to Gold with a letter (CT 2/17/77) that compared the forces that control the image of women in the media to "the propaganda ministry in Nazi Germany."

Gold said he will stand by his position in the letter tomorrow night. Craig said she will stand by hers and that "I believe that Brett Gold is a little confused."

Redlin, Business Manager of UR Women's Caucus, said that "Possibly the movie was an attempt to be anti-sexist, a farce on sexism. Whatever its intentions, though, it didn't come off that way." She

added that the "author, writer, and director are not aware of their own sexist views coming out in the film."

Chris Brown stated in his letter (CT 2/1/77) that men, not women, suffer degradation in the movie: "The film's action is actually about the entrapment of a male by a female and the ruthless and dehumanizing exploitation of his sexuality." Nixon admitted that "she (Quilla June) exploits him (Vic) back, but dramatic justice is not done in that movie."

Scarborough responded to Ellison's implication that the feminist letter writers are "uninformed or jingoistic assholes" (CT 4/6/77) by saying that Ellison is the uninformed party and that "He doesn't have anything to base that statement on." She said she hopes to keep Ellison "to the facts" tomorrow night, and "away from his catchy phrases."

The *CT* Editorial Board (CT 2/1/77) stated that the major issues was censorship, not sexism, citing "the freedom to determine policy by members of an organization" as an unalienable right.

This statement was made in reference to a pamphlet distributed by Sara Kolb, Maria Roche, and Luvonne Swearington (who are not members of the UR Women's Caucus) which called upon "Women (to) Unite to Control Film Choice at the University of Rochester."

Censorship of art is what Ellison wants to debate — eagerly enough to waive his usual speaker's fee. Most of the panel, however, feel that censorship is a

secondary issue.

Scarborough, referring to censorship, said, "he'll have no debate from me." She added that it should be a good debate "once we get off that topic."

Craig declared, "I don't advocate any form of censorship. If anything, women are censored. They are prevented from making films."

Redlin said she believes that censorship of art is "his (Ellison's) main concern, so we will be forced to deal with the issue, even though that's not the main point of discussion."

Kirk, however, sees censorship as an important issue: "The Women's Caucus and the Women's Lib Movement are very much for censorship, but I doubt if they'll come out and admit it."

Nixon, while believing that "writers, producers, and showers of movies have a (social) responsibility," is "against rules and regulations" to ensure that his responsibility is met. Redlin said that the Women's Caucus was only "advocating awareness." Scarborough felt that others wanted to "censor our right to state opinions."

Gold stated that some women had asked Cinema Group to cancel the film. "That is censorship," he said. The Women's Caucus, to my knowledge, did not support them, they (Women's Caucus) advocated discussion."

Redlin judged the movie itself as "a poor film—anything but art." Scarborough was of the opinion that it offered "no great social comment."

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Harlan Ellison, author of "A Boy and his Dog", will debate UR students tonight in Strong Auditorium.

# 'Boy and His Dog' debate covered sexism, censorship

By MIRIAM LAHAGE

A two hour inconclusive and raucous debate on *A Boy and His Dog* arrived at its central theme only when Sylvia Barker, a member of the audience, stated, "The question of the film is, 'What are we as human beings going to do to change our world? What is our future?'" Barker, a 42-year-old Rochesterian poet and actress, received a standing ovation for her comments.

Harlan Ellison, noted science fiction author and creator of the short story on which the film was based, spoke to a full house and debated the issues of sexism, and censorship of the movie last night in Strong Auditorium.

In a debate with students and one member of various women's groups, author Ellison explained his reasons for writing *A Boy and His Dog* and his reactions to the apparent attempt by women's organizations to control the film's screening by adding opinionated discussion and by calling for boycotts of the movie.

The debate proved inconclusive, as the issue of censorship was discussed by Ellison, John Kirk, and Cinema Group Programmer Brett Gold, while Marcia Craig, Dorothy Nixon, Beth Redlin, and Kathy Scarborough charged the film with sexism.

*A Boy and His Dog* was written as a political statement triggered by the Kent State incident in the late 1960's, said Ellison. He saw a gap between "crazy revolutionaries with bestial urges" and a conservative middle-class America, with "neither polarity having light or love" for society, he said.

Ellison explained that he found the film "pretty true to the story" on which the movie was based; however, he said, he didn't like some of the film's tone.

"You inhibit creative spirit by censoring," he said, receiving thunderous applause. "Nobody should stop any piece of art." Ellison said he saw people in media making an effort regarding the unfortunate depiction of stereotypes, offensive images, and unrealistic situations.

Ellison asserted that he is a supporter of the women's movement, adding that it's unfortunate that "stupid people are associated with it."

## Marcia Craig concerned with sexual politics

Craig, affiliated with Rochester women's organizations, stated that she is concerned with the sexual politics of the movie, not any artistic points.

Craig said the film depicted women as machines and manipulators with no free will or individual spirit. She charged that in contemporary cinema women are mainly viewed only as they relate to men.

"Every garden needs a little manure in order to grow," she said, regarding the right to present the film *A Boy and His Dog*.

Due to economic and political power, men dominate American communication and art, Craig stated. Thus, she said, women's ideas are excluded from the public view.

She noted that in the movie the dog was depicted as loyal, "as a good wife should be like a good servant." She added that she didn't see anything funny about the film.

Craig walked out of the debate later on in the evening, calling the situation "a farce." Supporters of Craig fromn Rochester Women's Union, Lesbian Resource Center, and Women's Caucus of Youth Against War and Facism left the auditorium with her.

## Dorothy Nixon sees sexism as "status quo"

Nixon said that while she is against any form of regulatory censorship, she found *A Boy and His Dog* to be sexist. She added that other movies demean women just as badly, though "this one is easier to pick on." The "other films" have considerably more merit, she added.

"The status quo is difficult to change, but that doesn't make it all right," Nixon claimed. She said she objects to the entire entertainment field that insists upon presenting rape and other violent acts against women on the screen.

"The overwhelming preponderance of films such as this must be cutdown, she asserted. People can't be expected, according to Nixon, to realize this sexism for themselves.

## Beth Redlin finds film "demeaning"

Redlin opened her statements by noting that in every other theater, the film is screened exclusive of any open forum discussion on the sexism issue.

No female in the short story or movie is portrayed positively, Redlin said. She said she found the female characters "illogical and irrational."

Redlin inferred that the audience sympathized with Vic, the leading male, and that they found the last scene, in which the dog eats the woman, "amusing."

"All women in the film come out as stereotypes, and as such represent all  
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J.L. Oster/CAMPUS TIMES

## 'Boy and His Dog'...

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women." She said she found the film sexist and demeaning to women.

### Brett Gold argues against censorship

Gold termed the situation one of a "book-burning mentality." After talking to members of the Women's Caucus that same day, Gold said it seemed they were advocating censorship.

"We at the UR should be able to tolerate anything," he said. "I can't believe anyone would want to control films at UR."

Gold said he defended the right to show *Pink Flamingo*, *Deep Throat*, and *Mary Poppins*.

Cinema Group's Film Selection Board is open to any student previously involved in Cinema Group, he added.

### Kathy Scarborough defends right to discussion

Scarborough contended that, while Cinema Group has the right to screen anything, sexism was the main issue of the debate.

Scarborough said she saw a "blatant line of violent exploitation of women all through the film." The movie's only purpose, she added, was enjoyment.

She stated that it's "safer" to discuss the censorship issue. "We have the right to ask for discussion," she added. "This is not censorship."

### John Kirk sees censorship

Kirk claimed that what the women's groups advocate is, indeed, censorship. He stated that by attempting to stop the screening of "sexist" movies, these organizations planned to censor other people's viewpoints.

Kirk called the women's coalitions "splinter groups" of the population. He questioned whether the sexism controversy is an issue at all.

### Panelists open debate

Ellison responded to charges of machine-like women characters by explaining that only Vic was treated as a machine. He added that violence was directed toward both sexes, and mainly toward men explicitly on the screen.

Craig commented, "that's the big adventure, isn't it?"

Redlin defended her right to discuss with Cinema Group as an SA member the negative aspects of the film and a "possible film substitution."

"Don't say, 'This film shouldn't be shown,'" replied Gold. "Say, 'People shouldn't see this film.' Don't censor the product, but educate the audience."

Ellison wrote the sexism and the violence in *A Boy and His Dog* to provide examples of a repulsive human behavior after a "dessimating war," he said. The people are reduced to barbarism, he said, and only the dog is wise or likeable. Ellison termed the movie "misanthropic" and hateful to both men and women.

A student asked if he could be denied the right to see this film, calling it an "educational experience."

Dan Lichtin, Cinema Group chairperson, related that someone called him asking about the procedure to talk about cancelling the film. The caller, Lavonne Swearingen, a UR staff member, said she only wanted to discuss the film. Lichtin told the student his access to the film would not be denied.

Swearingen passed out leaflets prior to the film on both the January 28 screening and last night. The leaflet, a collective action by Sarah Kolb, Mauria Roche, and Swearingen, called for women to "unite to control film choice at University of Rochester."

Rochester's Women's Union also passed a sheet, asking for audiences to "refuse to provide viable markets for this type of film." They added that they do not advocate censorship.

## Research Symposium today

students to do more independent study, said Gail Young, professor of Mathematics and chairman of the Faculty Steering Council of the Rochester Plan, said the UR is one of the few U.S. schools that gives undergraduates the opportunity to present research. "MIT has an undergraduate program for presenting research but, as far as I know, very few universities allow students to do as much individual research as the UR does," he added.

All applications submitted to the program were accepted. Lucy Reay, organizer of the program and secretary to the Rochester Plan, worked with Dean Harper, Professor of sociology, in reviewing the applications.

"There was no limit to the number of presentations a student could do," said Reay. She emphasized the diversity of the program by pointing out that one student

is giving five presentations on various topics divided among both sections of the program.

The program for the symposium contains the times at which each student is speaking and individual abstracts of the submitted papers. Young said that there will be a publication printed specifically for undergraduate research. There will be reviewing process for all papers being considered for the publication which will appear sometime next fall.

The Journal of Undergraduate Research, published in November, 1976, includes only papers for summer projects, and Young said he would like to see other undergraduate independent projects in print. "I don't know if another university publishes undergraduate research. We may be unique," he said.

# ATTENTION !

## DENTAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS

### SEEKING ENTRANCE FOR FALL 1978

The Dental Aptitude Test (DAT) Fee is \$20, not \$15.  
(Some application booklets were misprinted.)

If you paid a \$15 fee, you must send an additional \$5, with  
an explanatory note to the DAT service.

The DAT people will notify you of the error, but you  
should not wait for such notice to send your additional  
fee.