Two recent "forgotten" films

With the exception of occasional "premieres" of British and European films not intended for US release, we have never before shown films at the society as new as "The Young Don't Cry," so good, that we decided to defy the exception. "The Young Don't Cry" was sold as a straight teen-age B thriller, and disappeared right after release; I deliberately avoided it, as I'm sure most of you did, and was quite bowled over by it when I finally ran it almost accidentally. "Pressure Point" may not even have had a NY release at all; if it did, it was hustled in and out so quickly that it was almost impossible to catch. (And advance write-ups in "Sight & Sound", Films & Filming, etc., had stirred up some interest). I think you'll agree that both of these films deserve something far better than the obscurity they have fallen into so quickly.

"The Young Don't Cry" (Columbia, 1957) Directed by Alfred Werker; produced by Philip A. Wexman; screenplay by Richard Jessup from his novel "The Cumin and the Haunted"; Camera: Ernie Haller; Music by George Antheil, conducted by Ernest Gold; Asst. Director, Sam Wurtzel; 8 reels

Coming a few months after Frankenheimer's "The Young Stranger" drew so much critical acclaim, it is perhaps not too surprising that "The Young Don't Cry" got lost in the critical shuffle; but it is surprising that it seems to have made no impression on the non-critics who write about film. Hardly an ignored masterpiece, it is yet tender, touching and quite unpredictable, a curious kind of (unintended) mosh of "The 400 Blows", "The Fallen Idol", "Intruder in the Dust", and "I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang". I deliberately want to say nothing about its context: For these little surprise films are best discovered by themselves, but it's a curious kind of film to have been made the way it was made. It's the kind of film that usually only gets such care and dedication when a director is translating material that he had written; or when a new, young director has a passionate personal statement to make. Alfred Werker, a competent veteran journeyman director, is hardly that; he is an old man now (and can seen as a grizzled extra in one scene) and hardly concerned about making personal statements or surviving a new image for himself. Yet the film is made with dedication and tenderness, and a great deal more care (extensive location work for example) than its potential returns would seem to justify. More power to it, and I suspect that, on its own level, this film will survive far longer than the dozens of better-known and more hysterical "youth" films of the 50's.

"PRESSURE POINT" (United Artists, 1962) Directed by Hubert Cornfield; produced by Stanley Kramer; screenplay by Cornfield & S.Lee Pogostin from a novel by Kurt Lundy, Ernest Gold; Camera: Ernie Haller; 9 reels

Kramer, normally a stoical and pretentious film-maker, redeems himself to a large extent with this quite exceptional little film, which can never have looked commercial, and doesn't even have the angles of controversy or star names that have helped to salvage many of his other dull if well-meaning works. Its racial angle is honest and outspoken but by now old-hat (in a sense of creating shock) and its story of Nazism in the US of the 30's likewise is hardly a red-hot exploitable theme. Cinematically there are flaws; talk does rather preclude, and sets and lighting seem almost designed for TV exposure, as though aware that its theatrical life would be brief. But concerning the wide exposure that so many films with NOTHING to say gets, it is criminal that this one has been so stifled. Pottier's performance is his best; Bobby Darin, however, has just made him to fall because of his personal ego, i.e. fine; and the aburded mannered performance of Peter Falk is fortunately too brief to cause damage. Clearly influenced by Bumil in its savagery and surrealistic dream scenes (the episode with the butcher is right out of "Los Olvidados") "Pressure Point" is the most interesting film (and possibly the climax) of Cornfield's brief and possibly now aborted career. Starting out like Lonesome, on efficient thrillers, he graduated to bigger budgets and film of statement and intellectual content. Apparently very difficult to work with, he was fired from "Angel Baby", and "Weekend" took over. Difficult or not, on a plateau somewhat below Kubrick, he is one of the most interesting of the newer American directors, and one hopes that he'll find his feet again - and soon.

--- Wm. K. Everson ---