Gas

A calculator embedded in its belly, a dead stuffed beaver ornaments an executive desk in Gas. Intended as a joke, the calculator is a foil for the film's many misfires, but it unwittingly provides a most selling image. If Gas is an example of a Canadian movie, the beaver probably died of long demurlement when he read the script. Given the crass intentions of the filmmakers (who, as the movie proves, are obviously not as easily embarrassed) they would use his corpse to build up to them. Groucho Marx outright in the restoration of their pretensions and humbled, at least for the present. But in Gas, with Duke believing the fuel seeped into the ground and the others just standing around, none of the lines of the plot are tided off. The unresolved problems prove, just evaporate — like gas. The only good jokes in this movie are on its title.

Anna Carlssdotter


Ron Mann’s

Imagine the Sound

Imagine the Sound is less a film than it is an art exposition brought to the screen. To be more specific, this is the music which they create and perform in the film, it is important to consider the historical context from which their sound has emerged. The sound world of the 1960s and 1970s was filled with the confines of late-forlies/early-fifties jazz music (bebop) and the ‘cool Jazz’ of the late fifties and early sixties, a spawling new breed of musicians which sought the purity of sound itself.

The unsung hope of every artist is that his work imitates, and thereby becomes life. Cecil Taylor expresses this desire in the opening sequence of the

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film, when he says, "Everything that you do is music." Director Ron Mann dramatically captures this belief, that music is everything and everywhere, as we see the musicians coaxing the music out of their instruments - Taylor on piano, Dixon on trumpet, Shapp on tenor and soprano saxophones, and Bley on piano. Bill Smith (co-producer with Mann) knowledgeably interviews the musicians, allowing each to speak about his music in a way which gives further credence to the basic idea.

Except for one scene, the film is shot in-studio. So as not to distract the viewer from the music, camera movement is kept to a minimum. The music is the figure, the ground. The film is the ground. Cinema legibility is enhanced by the camera's eye, the better to capture the performers. This interplay of art forms in voices which substitute for their instruments, is a book on a subject about which very little was known. "Sharks and Survival' comes from the music, camera movement is the figure, the film is the ground. Cinema legibility is enhanced by the camera's eye, the better to capture the performers. This interplay of art forms in voices which substitute for their instruments, is a book on a subject about which very little was known.

The rest of the film is devoted to what the shark is. A narrator explains something of the amazingly accurate senses of smell, sound, and vision. He also explores briefly two senses which have been a sense of outrage at the task of creating what can only be described as a magnificent documentary film about real sharks.

That task was incredibly difficult, not only because it was exceptionally dangerous, not only because the animals are truly unpredictable, erratic, and positively frustrating in their behaviour, but also because to achieve the balance of accuracy and drama Stoneman has in "Shark", required blending a deftly conceived and executed encyclopedia of information, with what seems like an unending wealth of spectacular underwater footage of sharks and rays.

The film begins with a shark's-eye view of a bathing beach, and although no shark appears in this scene, the impending disaster is unmistakable. Symbolically setting the scene in the style of the "horror" films, Stoneman proceeds to destroy that image completely in the rest of the film, replacing it with the impression of the sea running red with the blood of innumerable shark-attack victims.

What can the swimmer do to avoid a shark attack? What are the effective measures that beach authorities have used to minimize attacks? In one scene, a shark attacked the diver while they were filming it during a feeding encounter is destroyed using a water cannon, demonstrating that in the rare instances when the shark is "forced" to be a victim of man, it is possible for a cool diver to defend himself. Finally Stoneman attempts to put shark attacks into a true perspective. Of the last five years, on a worldwide scale, the number of attacks is fewer than one-hundred per year, and of these fewer than a third result in fatalities. This means many of the attacks are truly unpredictable, erratic, and terrifying. The film is an important contribution to the growing body of knowledge about sharks.