

The Right Stuff

BY TERRY DUPUIS

One of this season's most important movies is the screen version of the 1979 book by Tom Wolfe called *The Right Stuff*.

Both the book and the film deal with the American space program, most specifically the Mercury Seven astronauts—who they were, how they came to be chosen, and the events of some of their space flights.

The movie begins with an air force base event in 1947 which made history. This was when pilot Chuck Yeagre broke the sound barrier.

For the remainder of the movie Yeagre is put forward as a prototype of a peculiar breed of American hero who has "the right stuff", an individual man who has an exceptional combination of courage and common sense, daring and impulse.

This rare combination is also seen as dwelling in the seven men who later qualified as America's astronauts: Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter, Wally Schirra, Gordon Cooper and Donald Slayton. *The Right Stuff* portrays these men as exemplifying the pioneer tradition in the new frontier of outer space.

Fortunately, the movie is saved from being overpompous by a well-balanced script. *The Right Stuff* is careful to present these men as human beings, real human beings with failings and weaknesses.

These seven heroes are not presented as icons or paragons of virtue. They make mistakes, have internal disagreements among themselves and family problems.

This brought the movie to a more realistic level, and I was able to appreciate for the first time just who the Mercury astronauts were: hand-picked, dedicated men, but individuals who shared a common bond with the rest of the human race. I think a lot of people have tended to look upon astronauts as being somehow more than human in some ways, and less than human in others. *The Right Stuff* presents the astronauts as a group of men who have some special qualities, but nevertheless are very normal human beings.

The individuality of each astronaut is well-interpreted by each of the actors: by Scott Glenn who plays Shepard, Fred Ward who plays Grissom, Ed Harris who plays Glenn, Charles Frank as Carpenter, Lance Henriksen as Schirra, Dennis Quaid as Cooper, and Scott Paulin as Slayton. And unifying the whole movie and standing as a sort of a hero model for these seven

well-balanced script saves movie

is playwright turned actor Sam Shepard in the role of Chuck Yeagre.

The Right Stuff is a big advancement for director Phil Kaufman, who began his career in a low-budget superhero spoof called *Fearless Frank*, made back in the mid-60's. His more recent films have included the popular Donald Sutherland remake of *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. But *The Right Stuff* is the San Francisco based film maker's most ambitious movie.

I must admit that it was not a movie which was high on my priority list to see, so sitting through it I was surprised to find that it was engrossing enough to hold my attention for most of its three hour running time.

The fitness program and testing which the men who enlisted in this program had to endure is compellingly portrayed, and the awesomeness of space flight is well-conveyed in a number of re-enactments of historic space flights.

Dec. 3
The German-Canadian Club is having its annual Christmas Bazaar at St. Paul's Church, Basement from 1-5 p.m. Sit down and warm up after the Parade with a cup of coffee and some cake! Bake Table, Handicrafts and other Gift Items for Sale.

Nov. 24
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A shaky win
BY G. ALLEN
Ken Graham (Shaky), centre for the Moreau Farm Equipment Juniors, methodically hammered the Coldwater goaltender in the 13-4 Sunday night, Nov. 13, win. Not only did Ken humiliate the defence and goalie to the tune of five goals and three assists, but he walked away from a vicious cross-check to the back of the neck that left the Coldwater player suspended for several games.
Sandy Clarke, playing right wing on the Graham line, slipped in two goals and neatly set up two more. Sandy displayed an admirable toughness as he played with his usual aggressiveness, but showed no tendency to retaliate when others tried to leave their marks on him.
The Lord (Bill) played well in goal, particularly in the early minutes when a close game seemed to be in store.

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