

Film Texas

NEWS FROM THE THIRD COAST

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HELLO '80

With Santa breathing down our chimneys again, it's time to take stock of what Hollywood et al. hath wrought in Texas this past year, and to take a peak under the tree to see what the old bagman has in store for us in the year to come.

Starting back in February we had Universal's *RESURRECTION*, a theatrical starring Ellen Burstyn, shot in the vicinities of Shiner, San Marcos, and El Paso, for about five million. In March was *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN*, a sci-fi film for PBS produced by David Loxton and Fred Barzyk of WNET/13 in New York, for about one million. This piece, incidentally, is scheduled for national airing on PBS January 9, 1980. Alan Lansburg Productions did the theatrical *THE WHITE LIONS* (set in Africa, shot in Dallas!!) in April, for \$2.5 million. Paramount launched *URBAN COWBOY* in Houston in July, preceded by *MIDDLE AGE CRAZY* by Tormont Films in June. *U.C.* ran for four months plus, ended up costing about thirteen million. *CRAZY* was a five million independent effort, with Bruce Dern and Ann-Margret, shot in part in Toronto.

Also in June and beyond was production on eight new episodes of the "Dallas" television series. Warners began *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE* in Austin in October, and they're still shooting it at this writing, aiming for a mid-December wrap, with some additional scenes scheduled for the Corpus Christi area. Budget for the Willie Nelson vehicle is about eight million.



Amy Irving in *HONEYSUCKLE ROSE*



(Above) Kevin Conway and Bruce Davidson in *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN*. (Below) Bruce Dern in *MIDDLE AGE CRAZY*.



Two United Artists-backed projects were here in October-November: *THE LONG RIDERS*, an eight million feature by Huka Productions, filmed for a week or two at the Texas State Railroad; and *ROADIE*, Vivant Productions, filmed more-or-less in toto here in Austin, wrapping the last week of November. This was a five million dollar film.

In Houston, *HOTWIRE*, a Houston-based theatrical film (see story elsewhere this issue) finished in early November. Down in Bracketville at Alamo Village during October was *THE CODE OF JOSEY WALES*, an independent effort with star/director Michael Parks. Filmways did a one-hour TV pilot *THE TEXAS RANGERS* in Austin and Houston in November, with hopes of an eventual series pick-up by NBC and subsequent production here next year. And the *DALLAS COWBOYS CHEERLEADERS II* is presently in production in Dallas, produced by the same folks, Aubrey and Hamner, who did the original *DCC* for television last year. *JAILBIRDS*, also known as *PRISON RODEO*, a theatrical with Sidney Poitier, Gene Hackman, and Richard Pryor, did some second unit work during the Texas Prison Rodeo in the fall. This film is scheduled for principal photography sometime in the spring, possibly in Texas.

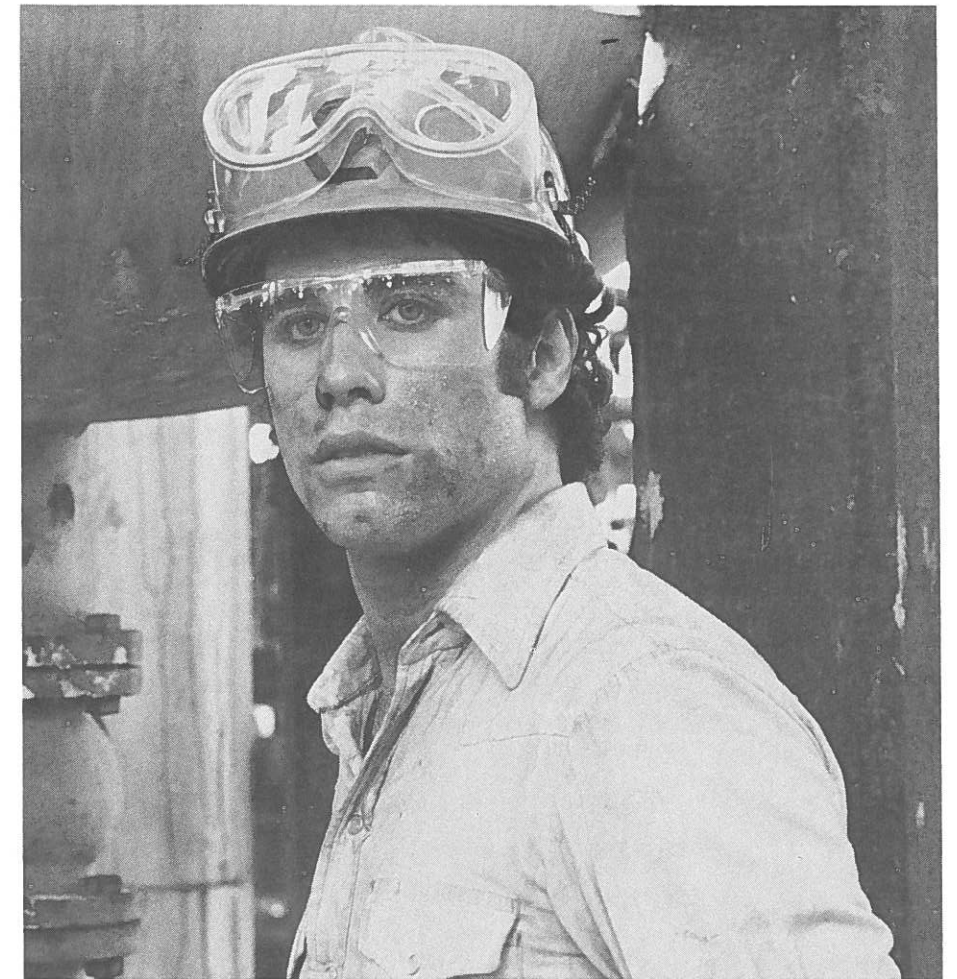
Running down the column quickly we get about fifty-eight million dollars in total production budgets. Taking into account the amount of time spent by each of these productions in the state, the percentage of Texas people and services they each used, specific information provided to us by some of the producers, one or two rules of thumb, and three flips of the coin, we estimate that a total of twenty-two million dollars was dropped into the Texas economy during 1979 through the production of theatrical and television films, give or take a few oilwells. This is about forty percent more than our estimated total of last year (derived through the same hard, fast, and fearless methods). We should also say that there were fewer films this year than

last year; but we will recover from that one quickly by pointing out that there also seems to have been a general drop in Hollywood-style "location" filming this year as opposed to last year. Many other states are having a very sad Christmas indeed.

The future, for Texas anyway, looks pretty sweet. In January Fred Weintraub Productions will shoot *BATTLECREEK BRAWL* in San Antonio and Floresville. Weintraub, along with Paul Heller, produced *OUTLAW BLUES* in Austin three years ago. He also, in earlier days, co-produced some of the early Bruce Lee films, in particular *ENTER THE DRAGON*, with Hong Kong producer Raymond Chow.

BATTLECREEK BRAWL is a return to that association, with Weintraub and Chow in this instance producing a film starring the "new Bruce Lee", Jackie Chan. Budget estimates on this one vary, so we will just say that the budget is "respectable".

Universal is still talking very seriously about *RAGGEDY MAN*, which is being produced by its writer (and native Austinite) Bill Wittliff.



Filming of *THE LONG RIDERS* on the Texas State Railroad.