

DRUMMER REVIEW

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DRUMMER views the Flicks

THE NORSEMAN: Hell's Angels on a Boat by Jack Fritscher

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AUTHOR'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT INTRODUCTION



DRAFT VERSION



Written November 8, 1978, and published in *Drummer* 25, December 1978.

Page 70 in *Drummer* shows immediately that movie reviewer, Ed Franklin, was again withholding his reviews demanding payment for his past reviews, which I really didn't mind considering how virulent his opinions often were, even in this issue, in his review of Malcolm Boyd's book *Take Off the Masks*. To fill the page, I dropped in a photo of Brad Davis announcing that his film *Midnight Express* would be reviewed in the next issue, and I wrote a *Drummer*-driven review of the beefcake movie, *The Norseman*.

This satiric review played with the camp image of producer Farrah Fawcett's marriage to TV's bionic *Six Million Dollar Man*, Lee Majors, who, as a former football star, reflected Farrah's role in Gore Vidal's movie *Myra Breckenridge* (1970) which was also about a "former football star." The best-selling pop culture poster of the 1970s was of Farrah Fawcett displaying blond hair and white teeth without any irony. She was to women what he was to men.

Drive-in movies were still popular in the '70s, and in San Francisco these films—including *Mad Max* and *Mandingo*—played the grind houses on Market Street where butch men appeared in action movies on screen while gay sex was available in the front rows, the balcony, and the toilets. If San Francisco seemed to have fewer street people in the '70s, it was because there were twenty movie theaters where for fifty cents people (including gay men cruising) could get off the street, off their feet, and hang out twenty-four hours a day. The *Norseman* review points out the blond beefcake beariness of this American-International movie. I thought the essential manliness of the cast to be of interest to *Drummer* readers. Because this movie was about the Vikings discovering America, the review is illustrated with a Viking drawing by Tom of Finland. —Jack Fritscher, February 17, 1998

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT, FARRAH'S GONE AND DONE IT in a Fawcett-Majors production, *The Norseman*. Farrah is never seen on screen. Instead, she serves up bionic husband Lee Majors as the greatest tax-write-off since *The Producers* almost didn't make it.

The Norseman is the movie that has everything: a John-Boy Norse-boy narrator; dialog such as, "Begone!"; a Wizard out of Lerner-Lowe's *Camelot*; and Amer-indians meeting the first blond gods to hit Martha's Vineyard 500 years before Columbus.

American-International distributes this motorcycle pic in Viking drag. Wonderful: a dozen blond bodybuilders in black leather and tin vests. They look more like heavyweight Hell's Angels rowing their boat muscularly down the stream. Inexplicably, Lee Majors and the entire cast speak with Southern accents.

The Indians are handsomely dark and well-built. Just so you can savor the flex of muscle, bone, and blood, the battles are in perfect Peckinpah slow-motion. The plot is in even slower motion. The battles are staged somewhere between football scrimmages and soccer formations. Lots of legs and ass. You can fill in the blank plot with a good hit of popper.

An Affirmative Action movie, *The Norseman* features the first Black Viking—without any explanation. Another Vike is blond bodybuilder and former Tarzan Denny Miller who flexes his biceps as subtly as he can. Cornell Wilde and Jose Ferrer, both of whom are still alive, make general fools of themselves as well as their past careers. If good old Gig Young had to face shit like this, it's no wonder he went into the bathroom and shot himself, playing out for real his greatest role in *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

Movie mayhem fans will get off on one so-so torture scene where the Indians blind several hunky, bound Norsemen with hot sticks. (Is this Farrah's fantasy? Eyeballs, from *Oedipus* to Freud, have always been polite society's symbols for gonads.)

The real reason to see this Viking Berserker movie lies only in eating popcorn, drinking Coke, sniffing popper, and watching sunlight glisten through the blond hair on thick forearms. If you're into football-biker types, catch *The Norseman* at your local jerkoff drive-in.

Except for the heavy blond beefcake, this *Man-Called-Norse* plot is the shits. The extras, all chests and biceps, are the real meat of the story.

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