



Melvin Van Peebles at Yale

Wednesday . December 3 . 7pm

Whitney Humanities Center, 53 Wall Street

with a 35mm screening of

Story of a Three Day Pass (1968)

New York Times Review . July 9, 1968

**Screen: A Black G.I. and a French Girl:
Story of a 3 Day Pass' Bows at Baronet
First Feature Directed by American Negro**

By RENATA ADLER

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ACCUSATIONS of square-dom have become so lethal now and the spirit of the redneck has spread so deep into the left that I am not sure there is anybody who can see and just plain like the good parts of "The Story of a Three Day Pass," a flawed, talented little movie about an affair between a black American soldier and a white French girl. The Negro, who keeps wrinkling his nose and being ashamed of being black, is played by Harry Baird. The girl, not very pretty, with lifeless hair that makes the top of her head look pointed and flat, is played by Nicole Berger. This is not the historical moment when anyone cares to think they might like to go to bed together.



But they do, and the movie, directed by Melvin Van Peebles, the first American Negro director of a film of feature length, is just as attractive, shaky and awkward as one might expect the affair to be. Harry Baird speaks with a slight West Indian accent, and some scenes in which he splits away from his alter ego, or in which Miss Berger imagines him among savages in warpaint, are awfully hard to take. But there are nice things: three cool Negroes in a Paris bar (the film is set in France), not so much dancing as moving a little with their backs to the camera; Mr. Baird imagining himself a squire returning to his chateau (a black 19th-century French squire looks incredibly in place and elegant); some very rapid documentary news footage spliced into their bedroom scene; their first encounter with a Normandy resort concierge.

The film, which opened yesterday at the Baronet Theater, is a kind of gentle cross between "Hiroshima Mon Amour" and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner"—a little hard to imagine, it is true, but less pretentious than the first and less false than the second. If you like one of them I think you are obliged to like all three.

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