

MOVIE REVIEW

"THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND"

John Tanner, host of the popular TV interview show "Face to Face," wields considerable power and enjoys using it. As a muckraking television journalist, he whittles down his prominent guests before millions of viewers.

Tanner wants to corner CIA head Maxwell Danforth, a man with presidential aspirations, on his program. In order to get him, Tanner must cooperate with a dangerous CIA agent who convinces him, with evidence, that his three closest friends are Soviet spies. Deluded into thinking that he can control the forces actually manipulating him, Tanner must ultimately face these men and their wives throughout a long, tense and terror filled weekend during which he and the others must fight for their lives.

Who is threatening them? Who can be trusted? Who will survive?

It is indeed through incriminating video tapes that Fassett (John Hurt), a volatile CIA agent working with Danforth (Burt Lancaster), ostensibly proves to Tanner that his friends are traitors. Tanner wants to know more, but Fassett won't reveal anything else until Tanner is a righteous zealot about truth and justice, Fassett persuades him to try and turn his friends over to their side.

Although Tanner's wife Ali (Meg Foster) is not aware of her husband's involvement in this covert scheme, she is not looking forward to the upcoming reunion with their old friends, an annual affair called "The Osterman Weekend." She is disappointed with how their friends have turned out: Joe Cardone (Chris Sarandon) is a financier who worships money and uses women, Dick Tremayne (Dennis Hopper) is henpecked by his cocaine addicted wife (Helen Shaver) and isn't the good doctor he used to be, and Bernie Osterman (Craig T. Nelson) has become a hack writer.

Cardone's less-than-fulfilled wife Betty (Cassie Yates) rounds out his suspicious gathering.

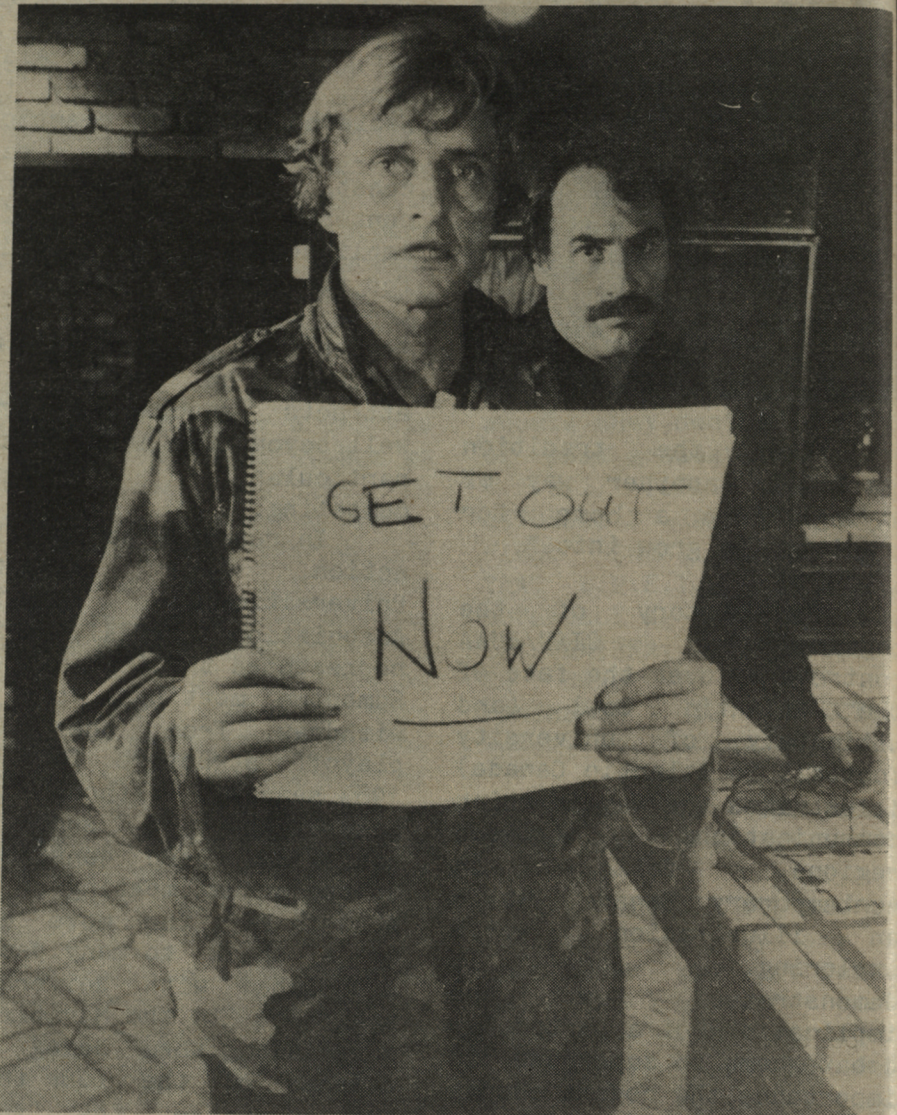
Craig T. Nelson, who describes his character of screenwriter Bernie Osterman as "dangerous and disarming, a survivor with intellect," recounts his experiences with Peckinpah: "We were encouraged to be spontaneous, to go out on a limb. I'm convinced that is how great things happen."

Despite their interpretive freedom, Peckinpah's cast had to perform as an ensemble within the confines of a tightly constructed thriller, bringing believability to their characters without the luxury of drawn-out dialogue sequences. But they rose to the occasion and all enjoyed the communal sense of inspiration.

"Ensemble acting is always the most interesting because it is truly creative," says Nelson. "You're dealing with other characters, other actors -- you have to find a position within that group. It's challenging. It requires you to be precise."

Chris Sarandon adds: "Most people you work with are competent professionals, who know what they're doing, but it's not always the case that everybody's pulling together, especially when working with people of such disparate backgrounds. Here, everyone was working for the same thing -- not just showing up but also providing insight into the characters. I ended up with the greatest admiration and respect for both Sam and the other actors. That's very rare."

Dennis Hopper, who plays the harried Dr. Tremayne, concurs: "The cast is really out there -- all so intelligent and different. We all worked in different ways. Just the three of us, Craig, Chris and myself, to think that we're in any kind of venture together is bizarre, and yet it works."



Trapped in a lethal game of double-espionage, John Tanner (HUTGER HAUER) tries to warn his friends that their lives are in danger as Bernie Osterman (CRAIG T. NELSON) looks on.

Panther

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