

**"THE STUNT MAN"**

Structural Notes

By Richard Rush

06-16-71

23 pgs.

"THE STUNT MAN"  
Theme - Ideas

We know we are all going to die some day...of nothing more important than wrinkles - and that makes us so scared and crazy that we invent all kinds of magic to protect ourselves...king, country, mother, freedom, God, don't step on the cracks or the boogey-man'll get ya...the burning truths that we learned from our early bathroom training - that we read on bumper stickers, that our grandmothers crocheted on pillowcases. Like the thousand tiny blood spots in a rash that merge into a monstrous scab, this network of ritual madness becomes our view of truth - an illusion of morality. And in the name of these, we fight our battles with our invented enemies to prove our strength in case there is no God, and to prove our worth in case there is. This is the fragile fabric from which our reality is cut and why it is sometimes difficult to tell truth from illusion.

"THE STUNT MAN"  
Theme - Ideas

Frightened by forces beyond our understanding...the inevitability of death, the duality of good and evil...Terrified, by the vast psychological armament of mechanized society, depersonalized, lost in the immense hostile universe...Each of us is allowed one instant of life to extend the passing moment of the human species. (Is it by accident or by divine grace?)

So, we search, we question and we invent in a desperate hunt for some kind of identity and meaning...We look for a way to beat the system which seems to conspire against us. We invent Gods to protect us. We invent enemies to test our strength against, as if by prevailing we can prove our invincibility to ourselves. We whistle in the dark.

We proclaim that we are the masters of our own fates...and yet continually we organize events of the past into patterns, which we then call "the inevitable course of history." The billions of random daily occurrences, which make up our lives - paths crossing, colliding, like marbles bounding in a pinball machine, we arrange and rationalize and then call 'destiny.' We seem to believe in destiny while proclaiming 'free will'.

Are the events of our lives unavoidable, inescapable? Is there a guiding force? We want to believe that the sky above is not indifferent to the outcome of our personal dramas...and so we create a God to control our destinies and we say that God is benevolent in the hopes that he will be, and we grow more paranoid in the fear that he will not. We dedicate our lives to a series of learned homilies and arbitrary rituals of good - bad, right - wrong, and these we substitute for morality. Like the thousand tiny blood spots in a rash that merge into a monstrous scab, that network of ritual becomes our 'view of truth'. And, for those truths, we fight our battles with our

invented enemies to prove our strength, in case there is not God...and to prove our worth in case there is.

This is how; we build our network of learned, man-made rituals into an illusion of morality, and illusion of purpose and truth. This is the fragile fabric from which our reality is cut and why it is sometimes difficult to tell...truth from illusion.

And so we write our own stories and our own histories in a very neurotic way. We seem to find our private pits of quicksand in which to wallow. The limited area in which we become ensnared and wage the fight for our survival. Whether it's in our domestic lives or our professional lives, we hang in there with blinders and circumspect vision thrashing about within the confinement of the tight little problems we've cut out for ourselves...if we had the perspective to step aside and look, we might say this is not for me and walk away, but we don't. We stay and fight for life or death.

Unable to discover truth, we have a tendency to accept system and to stay as long as we can work within the system. Your marriage works as long as the system works. You come home, she comes home. You do your things. You might have forgotten why you married her but the system works. The same with war. You go out to kill or die but as long as you do it within a system, you manage to do it without losing your sanity. In all the parts of our lives, these things are true and that is the allegory of the story, THE STUNT MAN.

A young man is torn away from the normal progress of his life, thrown into a life and death situation where his destiny is beyond his control. His nightmare adventure is like the nightmare uncertainty of our lives. Try as we may to avoid the thought, there is always the strong suspicion we're playing with a stacked deck.

ANALYSIS

THE STUNT MAN is a strange existential allegory that deals with the universal panic born of man's inability to control his own destiny, his failure to understand the ground rules he must play by - his ineptness at distinguishing what he chooses to call - truth from illusion. This is a story of high adventure and incredible action.

A young man is riding in a bus full of new recruits on their way to an army camp for induction. The bus breaks down and our hero, Cameron, is sent to find help. Random events and indecision move him in a course toward escape. An old limousine nearly runs him down - then plunges off a bridge and disappears beneath the water. He doesn't know if he was responsible or not. Seeing the events of the story in subjective reality through the hero's eyes - the story has a nightmare quality that seems like a distorted reality from which there is no escape.

He wanders to a beach resort, applies for a job and finds out the town has been taken over by a motion picture company. The event with the car on the bridge had been the filming of a movie stunt in which the stunt man was killed. A credible answer to what had seemed unexplainable.

Cameron is allowed to replace the dead stunt man, providing a mask, which will hide his identity from the authorities searching for him.

He has a sexual encounter with the make-up girl, and a love affair with the leading lady, while he performs a succession of death defying stunts for the film.

Gottschalk, the director, is improvising a story about a fugitive and Cameron comes to believe that if Gottschalk decides the fugitive in his film will die, that Cameron too will be killed. He also believes that Nina, the leading lady, with whom

he is in love, is also in great jeopardy. And so they plan their escape, which is a replay of the stunt in which the other stunt man was killed. It backfires and Cameron goes into the river.

---

CRITICISM OF NOVEL -  
NEW STRUCTURE & STORY IDEAS FOR  
THE SCREENPLAY

---

The novel unfortunately has enormous intellectual and artistic aspirations which fail. The author seems hopelessly hooked on his allegory and constantly bends the characters and action to fit the allegory. The director is an Eric Von Stroheim who rants a convenient and inane philosophy about 'life imitating art'. It is guilty of that literary cop-out, 'when in doubt, make your villain insane' - then you don't have to worry about motivations - anything he does is legit.

Since a hero is really defined by the villain he is willing to do battle with and conquer, Cameron becomes equally hopeless because Gottschalk, the director, is a pretentious ass and not at all formidable.

The cameraman is a grotesque giant who makes porno movies. The actress is fading. Her neuroses are much stronger than her appeal. Throughout the course of the story, Brodeur desperately tries to scotch tape the avenues for Cameron's escape shut, in order to keep him contained in this nightmare...He surrounds him with policemen and search bulletins, a physical surrounding from which it is difficult to escape. Unfortunately, his efforts seem futile. At no time does one feel that Cameron, considering the physical jeopardy he believes he is in, couldn't legitimately escape. Perhaps it's because the events of the story are slightly beyond reality that we feel Cameron would be entitled to an escape, which is slightly beyond reality.

It seems that the only way one could convincingly keep him in that locale is to hook him there by his own compulsion to stay and therein would also lie the theme of our story.

In that event we would even have him try to escape, succeed, and then turn back, because he is compelled to play out

the situation. Cameron is like all of us who find our own quicksand pits in which to wallow, in which to wage our life's battles on a limited scale of our own design against our real or imaginary adversaries. Had we the perspective to step back, we might say this is not for me and leave, but we rarely do. In our domestic lives, even in our work we fight the life and death battle against coronary on a daily basis intent on the life and death struggle.

Brodeur's choice of having Cameron start as a draftee seems appropriate. A man who has been torn from his daily life, hopes and aspirations, and thrown into a life and death situation beyond his control. The story is almost a clinically accurate nightmare anxiety dream, which might be had by a man who just learned he was drafted. Although that is certainly not the way we will play the story.

First, regarding atmosphere, Gottschalk and his cameraman will be replaced by a young contemporary filmmaking group, who are extremely capable, dedicated, effective, appealing and interesting, not malevolent, but working against the clock at the frantic pace which contemporary filmmaking demands.

To make a quality film is not unlike World War II. It's a life and death battle of total commitment to which everything else but success must be subordinate. And yet there is a general lightness and levity to disguise one's earnestness and to retain sanity.

If this kind of director were to be Cameron's enemy, he would be a formidable antagonist. Now, how to make it believable that this sane man with good intentions can create the necessary sense of jeopardy for Cameron? In several ways. First, a natural paranoia that builds on a motion picture set. Any actor worth the name feels the script is written about the character, which he is playing. Even if he only plays the

doorman. From the first day, he's desperate to talk with the director, to understand how the script and characterizations will work. Usually the director is unavailable and the paranoia begins to grow until the actor is almost sure that there is a conspiracy against him and he never should have taken the assignment. Then, that critical moment, there is an arm about his shoulder, the director explains everything with warmth and understanding, and suddenly the director is gone and there was something that actor forgot to ask, and the paranoia starts up again. This is true with Cameron. He is doing dangerous death defying stunts, which must be explained. Yet, he cannot get to Gottschalk.

Secondly, there are a wealth of stories about directors and the things that happen under pressure of production. John Mills tells of David Lean on "Ryan's Daughter". Mill's rowboat overturned. He was knocked unconscious and nearly drowned. When they dragged him to shore and brought him back to consciousness, the first thing he heard was Lean screaming, "Will you watch those fucking footprints on the sand?" Mills is Lean's best friend. They've worked together for 30 years and Lean is a sane man. Yet, that experience would make one doubt it.

Third, the hints of a past relationship between Gottschalk and Nina with whom Cameron is not intensely involved, suggest a triangle, jealousy or anger. More strongly, third party information such as the story from a malcontent technician that when the first stuntman died in the crash, there was a camera and a television unit in the car, the technician panicked and stopped shooting. Gottschalk, he says, almost strangled him in a rage. He was intent only on getting the shot of the stuntman's dying.

Once hearing that kind of macabre story about Gottschalk, it would be very difficult to have confidence in his motives.

The main thing is to tell the story at a strictly realistic level without 'bending' the melodrama to fit the existential nightmare quality. If the story holds as melodrama then we can play the other side of the coin with subtlety and with effectiveness.

We intend to create a plot structure involving Cameron, Nina (the actress), the director, and the leading man, a quartet relationship that plays across the surface of the story as a main line conflict with the rest of the events playing beneath.

First the character of Nina will not be a woman doing her last picture, but a girl doing her first picture, a young actress. In dealing with the truth and reality, there is certainly no more appropriate theme than the fantasy dream girl, which we have all pursued since the age of four, and misspend our lives expecting to meet around every corner. If there is one quality that leading ladies seem to have in common, that we could call star quality, it would be a tendency towards a special kind of schizophrenia which compels them to play the other half of your dream girl fantasy. Something, which a romantic like Cameron (and the rest of us) will be extremely vulnerable to. It's not hypocrisy on her part. It's quite real.

Supposing the events of their drama played somewhat as follows: The relationship begins between Cameron and Nina - a quick, passionate realization on both their parts that they have now found in each other, what they have always been looking for - too good to be true. They consummate the affair.

The next time Cameron sees Nina, she is cool. The reason turns out to be because Cameron had had a quarrel with the director. She tells him the director is the kindest, most

deeply sensitive man she has ever met, a genius, and not to be treated or spoken to as Cameron had. He yields to her knowledge of the director and reverses his position. She is pleased and they make up.

The next day Cameron learns that she (Nina) had an affair with Gottschalk (a little something she forgot to mention). It seems to invalidate her whole story. Cameron confronts her with it. She confesses, "It's true". It's not like he thinks. Neither of them had ever thought they were in love. They never made the mistake of believing they were each other's romantic fantasies come true. It was a deep friendship, a bid against loneliness. It was long ago, and it is over. Cameron accepts this.

The next day finds Nina, in bed with her leading man. A pretty clear-cut disaster - no defense against that one. He's destroyed. She is enraged...tells him to go to hell and refuses to talk about it. Cameron knows their love affair is over but at least he wants to sort out the pieces with some kind of explanation. He forces a confrontation.

Nina says, "Yes, it's true. We've been having an affair for months, four months. We thought we were in love. It was before I met you. How unforgivable. I wasn't a virgin when we met. Even Gottschalk knew about it. We had his blessing - that should prove what I told you about him was true - and then I met you! I've known you for three days! And it changed my lie. The leading man saw what was happening. He knew he had lost me and I went to explain and to say goodbye. It got out of hand, unfortunately, and for that I am sorry, but that's all I am sorry for."

A reasonable position for Cameron to accept. That's the pattern of the story. Something, which may seem very clear - one conclusion, no alternative, is flipped over, explained and

accepted in an opposite way. The same will be true of Cameron's relationship with Gottschalk, a man who seems kind, correct, and in no way malevolent one day, then seems a plotting, scheming villain the next. All this going on until Cameron is afraid to walk into a room for fear of what he will find.

There are ways of handling the story, once the structure is built which could be quite interesting. For example, a confrontation scene between the leading man and Nina, a violent quarrel about their love affair which ends in violence toward Nina by the leading man. At that point the camera continues off the set and we realize that it was only a scene in the picture they were shooting.

The pornography in the film should be kept as a theme but not with the artistic pretense it has in the novel, but rather because a movie set is a very sexy place. And there is always someone who will want to take those pictures and cut them into the dailies to shock everyone during the evening viewings.

The stunts themselves are really the anchor posts of the picture. Most movie stunts are extremely well designed and carefully planned: explosive charges, plywood walls, rigged structures - all combine to create the illusion - and if Cameron doesn't know this he will constantly feel that he is barely escaping with his life when perhaps the danger was not as great as he suspects.

To suggest scenes which tie in with the theme of learning to operate within the system, (even though it is at first contrary to your nature, we begin to buy the system and live within it.) The making of a movie has a very definite set of goals and systems which people are subservient to.

Picture the first stunt in which Cameron goes through a series of harrowing close calls to find himself sailing through the air toward a brick wall and inevitable destruction. But the

brick wall is made of balsa wood and he goes through it and is saved. He's in a rage - ready to get up and kill the director. Though when he steps out, there is applause from everyone - congratulations and backslapping and Nina is there to throw her arms around him. Suddenly he is wallowing in the glory and is tremendously confused over the face he's lost and regained and the rage, which has turned to a kind of involvement. This is a level at which he also becomes hooked.

Which brings up the serious problem of getting 'Alice through the looking glass'. We must get Cameron into this unique situation believably. No sane director would hire an unqualified stunt man. The beach is full of kids who are dying to kill themselves. Usually you have to stop a stunt man from killing himself rather than encouraging him to.

First, Cameron must be qualified in some way by a background, athletic or otherwise that he should demonstrate on his first encounter with Gottschalk rather than a conversation over a hotel desk.

Supposing when he comes to the pier, the helicopter lands, there's an accident - an old lady falls in the water. He's right there, jumps in, gets her out. It shows his physical ability and obligates Gottschalk enough to stop and chat with him, say thanks and make inquiries. When Gottschalk finds that Cameron is a fugitive, he says to Cameron, "No kidding, when did you decide to run?" and Cameron says, "I didn't. I never did decide."

Gottschalk, who has been struggling with a scene in which his fugitive makes the big decision to escape suddenly, realizes that he's heard a moment of truth. And on impulse says, "No kidding, what do you do? How would you like a job?" And it's with that kind of feeling, the impulse, "I wouldn't mind having

this guy around, " ("and he's qualified"), that he offers Cameron a job. And Cameron takes it.

That little old lady that fell in the water, interesting if she were to pull off her mask and be Nina who he had rescued. And what is her response to him? "Gee, I always wanted to be rescued from a burning stake and thanks." And that's all that's said until they meet again and he only watches her from afar. All little boys like to walk picket fences and she's a girl who likes to have them walked.

Meanwhile, a paranoia builds. The dichotomy in Cameron's mind, throughout the story with the back and forth movement - until at the end when he finally convinces Nina that she is in jeopardy, draws her away from the picture to escape with him in the car. He can't be sure that she's really in the trunk that she's decided to stay there and he wants to look. When the leading man comes up and says, "Hey no need to look, if she loves you, she's still there. If she doesn't then it doesn't matter, does it?" He knows he's been discovered but he doesn't know whether Gottschalk has been told. He goes through with it anyway. And at the critical moment there's an explosion. All stunts are rigged. The thing again which he didn't think about. And it goes off into the water and as the car is sinking and the water is rising on the window, he looks out, the last fleeting glimpse of Gottschalk standing on the bank as Nina walks up beside him and puts her arm around him and smiles at Cameron and then they disappear from view as the car goes under. The door handles, as he tries to escape, break off. No conclusion left but the desperate one that it was all part of a plot to put him in the position he is now in, so it could be photographed.

And yet later even that inescapable conclusion can be contradicted. Nina who had been told: "We know about the escape -- Cameron's decided to go through with the stunt - we're

going to help you escape afterwards," Nina was taken out of the trunk, and that wasn't a malevolent smile. It was a happy wave of good luck as she stood on the bank waiting for him to come up successfully - and when he does come up he's struggling through the underbrush with the policemen closing in - his last ounce of strength gone - finally, he lays there as they approach and suddenly a whistle blows and the policemen all sit down to have lunch. It was just another well-executed scene in the film that they were shooting. And Cameron starts to laugh hysterically for all the malevolence, which he had suspected - for all the enemies - the "they" which are always against us, turned out to be his own paranoia - the Jack story. The fears and anxieties that pursue all of us. We write our own stories after all and we frequently write them to tragic endings because of the nature of our own neurosis in a frightened neurotic world.

The background of color, conversation, incident, philosophies that can be sprinkled through if the pace is fast and the action correct - give great opportunities.

Gottschalk's self-serving protests about the number of men who have been killed in other pictures - they lost 3 on "Wings" - Huston lost 2 on "African Queen," and it wasn't even an action picture - one of the prices we pay.

Adam Roarke to play the cameraman with that insane constant patter and chatter - the daily chuckles - pantomimes which they devise - obscene pantomimes to amuse everyone. "He's got the greatest blow-job going. She's the champ and when he got so and so fixed up - he turned out to be quite German not Hungarian after all." "Ver are my shoes - the vons vit the wolves heads on the toes?"

Two additional elements to investigate. One: When Cameron escapes he goes to a crossroad. At the end of one is a telephone and his future in the army - at the end of the other

is his future as a fugitive. And don't we wonder what would have happened had he been in the army? Perhaps the picture that they are shooting is a war picture, a WWI picture where the action starts when Cameron goes through our movie battlefield facing real life and death jeopardy. The kind of thing he would have been doing had he gone the other way. Two: Cameron may be a returning vet rather than a draftee.

BREAKDOWN OF NOVEL STRUCTURE

Chap. I	Page 3-11	Escape from the bus.
Chap. II	Page 12-18	Sentry Post - Toll Keeper Encounter
Chap. III	Page 19-32	Care on Causeway
Chap. IV & V	Page 33-51	Gottschalk hears Cameron's story and hires him.
Chap. VI	Page 52-59	Make-up and screwing Denise
Chap. VII	Page 60-74	Police inquiry - stunt explained to Cameron by Gottschalk (first question of improvisation and survival).
Chap. VIII	Page 75-88	<u>First stunt</u> - diving off pier and swim, (Meets De Fe) (also meet leading man)
Chap. IX	Page 89-106	<u>Meets Nina</u> . Police lay plot to hire gateman. De Fe describes porny.
Chap. X	Page 107-122	A.M. Denise makes Cameron up - meets Roth screenwriter and learns about next stunt - Ferris Wheel - also about end stunt. <u>Watches Nina do love scene with Jordan</u> . (Good idea). Then meets Nina and makes date for lunch in banter against Jordan - First love scene.
Chap. XI	Page 123-130	Nina and Cameron drive to rock on water to eat and talk.
Chap. XII	Page 131-148	Tells Nina to meet him in room. <u>Rehearse Ferris Wheel stunt</u> . Discussion with the cop about 2 <sup>nd</sup> witness. MP's close in - Discussion with Jordan about getting Nina hot for Cameron "Old Double". In Nina's room, they make it.

- Chap. XIII            Page 149-161    Roth/Cameron dialogue - Film is now about a deserter. They view Bridge accident footage with FBI, cast and crew. He explained jump from passenger side. They show wanted footage. Denise recognizes him - Later, on the wheel, he feels free and powerful. Shouts: "I am Cameron, the one you're looking for," but finds out that the director was above him in the helicopter.
- Chap. XIV            Page 162-172    Cameron invited to the orgy, declines, later Denise and Cameron make it while watching orgy through keyhole.
- Chap. XV            Page 173-185    Cameron and Roth talk. "Gottschalk plans to have fugitive kill someone -" Cameron has insight that this means fugitive will die. Confronts Gottschalk and Nina - Gottschalk tells him to study Dutch survival manual for final stunt. He studies and finds out they had aqua-lung, he is expendable. \*\*(Possibly do this scene with Nina as ally in film)\*\* He watches "Holy Baptism" scene on beach (planted earlier) panics when they lose child, runs to rescue and saves "doll" - another wrong assumption.

- Chap. XVI            Page 186-198    Cameron throws sand in Bruno's eyes - decides to cut out - finds chambermaid with toll keeper in orgy - he is recognized - Hides on roof - sun stroke and rain storm - finally collapses in Nina's room
- Chap. XVII           Page 199-209    Reveals himself to Nina and convinces her that "they can write their own happy ending to Gottschalk's story." She brings flippers and mask, he goes down in dumb-waiter - meets her at car.
- Chap. XVIII          Page 210-225    Goes to bridge with Nina - nearly murders cop at barricade - Broussard comes and stops him from testing car out or escaping. More conversation about movie paralleling fugitive's escape.
- Chap. XIX            Page 226-238    Cameron returns from bridge with Nina - sees the old car he will use for stunt tomorrow - meets Nina in Gottschalk's room. Confrontation about his plan to use them and let them die - denials.
- Chap. XX             Page 239-253    Returns to room finds Roth's book. Sleeps. Finds Nina there when he awakens. She agreed to escape with him - hides in trunk - Bruno comes. Cat and mouse about cheating stunt - Bruno will put camera in car.

***These notes relate to later solo re-write by Rush dated 8-10-75.***

08-10-75 R.Rush  
Notes on "Stunt Man"  
Update story to post-Vietnam

In order to make the screenplay a currently valid piece of work, one additional element will have to be woven into the fabric. It will add humor, a sour irony and immediacy.

When Sam and Eli did the screenplay, a couple of years ago, the Viet Nam War was still on, now the studio is finally letting him do it, after all since the war is over it's less controversial. (He's earned the credential, his pictures make money, he's agreed to do a highly commercial cop story in exchange for them letting him do this). The goddam trouble is that his burning passion to do the definitive anti-war story is somehow dampened by the fact that there is no war going on which gives a certain naiveté to his film statement. This is a good part of the reason for his desperate struggle to change the material and his dissatisfaction with the way it's coming out. He tries to find some way to give it more general thematic validity. Sam tells him: "Hey look I'm sorry it's not working out right. I know you want to make the ultimate anti-war statement. I'm sorry Vietnam's over. We've had Watergate, the energy crisis, women's liberation, ecology; you want to talk about burning issues? There is arsenic in the glue on the back of food stamps." Stop violence on television, stop it in the movies. Let's have the family hour, Mickey Mouse from 8 to 10, you can only kill after 10 o'clock, that's a new one for the rule book, meanwhile presidential candidates are lining up in the shooting gallery, we are committing acts of total violence and destruction against our dearest and nearest in our daily lives. That's the point: Violence is the symptom not the

crime. The crime is our incredible talent for self-justification; we can rationalize anything and change the rules to feed our needs because there is no basic foundation of morality. There are a few hundred snappy sayings that we respond to like Pavlovian' dogs: We'll believe anything as long as it's in a jingle or a rhymed couplet. We're not doing a picture about Viet Nam, we're doing a picture about World War One, it's not a picture about war and violence it's a picture about paranoia, artificial causes, about man's life and death struggle against windmills, about the fact that he is going to die, and it makes him so scared and crazy that he'll do anything to beat the system including driving off bridges and fighting wars. Sam's view is we're dying of food poisoning, water poisoning, air poisoning, leaky atomic waste cylinders, not of misguided moral commitment; Eli says: "That's the point, the price of gas went up 20 cents and suddenly you're skidding out on the oil slick on the coast highway from offshore drilling, the strip miners are digging and the smog mufflers are off the cars, 20 cents was the exact extent of the American commitment to ecology, and 15 minutes from now we might do a quick little moral shuffle and go to war with Israel if it keeps oil prices down." Sam says: "It's great, I'll put all of that in the 5 page scene, all I've got to do is set it in World War One, right?"

That's the basis of Eli's frustration, he is making the statement too late, the war is over and it's killing him.

Right now our screenplay has a certain naiveté, for example in Eli's speech about sitting in the john and reading about "five dollars for peace". His cynicism, has become outdated by the actual madness that's going on around us (in the world now) and that must be included in the screenplay and played against his dilemma of trying to make a statement, which, if it's a pure

anti-war statement, is obsolete in terms of currency both which he is trying to make current by going one step behind it. Back in ecology area, Eli can say: "Don't tell me about poisoned air, on the front page today there was a big story about the great ecological threat of golf balls, sailors are teeing off the decks of battle ships and there are supposedly millions of golf balls in the ocean threatening our ecology and, man, if it's what you want to become paranoid about, then do a sequel to "Jaws" and just when the shark is about to swallow the Gulf of California whole, Sam Sneed nails him between the eyes with a four-iron. Golf balls are definitely one of the burning issues of our time. Add to Eli speech of what the picture is all about, World War One etc..."About not being able to control our destinies, about not understanding the dangers around us".

**NOTES ON 11-13-76**

Man lives in a vast, hostile universe. He doesn't understand why he is here or why he has to die. He is frightened by his inability to control his destiny, to understand the dangers around him and even understand the ground rules he is supposed to play by. And so in a search for some kind of truth he invents enemies to do battle with and prove his strength against. He invents Gods to protect him from the enemies; he invents rituals: good and bad, right and wrong to live by. He substitutes those rituals for morality and in regard to sex, killing in regard for one another and yet, we go through our lives feeling we are playing the game with a stacked deck. The panic and the paranoia remain. So we spend our lives with blinders on, our feet stuck in the quicksand, fighting our life and death battle against windmills. The enemies are our own invention because we cannot perceive the real ones.

NOTES FROM DICK RUSH OCTOBER 12, 1970

1. Primitive man was designed to survive in the jungle...He was equipped to battle an extremely hostile society. His entire emotional, mental, and chemical design is keenly tuned to overcoming adversity - no fucking wonder that he cannot function smoothly in a tranquil friendly social structure. There is nothing to push against. It's like a powerful engine racing in neutral.
2. Our contemporary generation is a society searching for a maypole and the rituals to perform around it. The puritan Protestant ethic has made all American ritual hollow emotionless mockeries...a paper mache Christmas, a chocolate Easter etc...

The initial purpose of rituals were a tacit moratorium on society's behavioral patterns. They were the escape valve where one could emotionally release primitive sexual and emotional instincts at an agreed upon time...safe from censure...a catharsis against over-civilization. Now they have vanished and a young society is inventing new ones. Find them their maypole.

3. Ecology - Fantastic self-deceiving bullshit. We have created the madness as a secondary irritation on which to concentrate in order to keep our minds off the fact that underwater, on the land, in the atmosphere and outer space is enough total armament to destroy the world a thousand times over. The absurdity of facing this insane concept is too overwhelming and so we have retreated down to the problem the size of which we can deal with. The fucking shame of it is that it's a very feminizing act - a nation of domestics, of housecleaners. No longer a tribe of hunters on the frontiers of knowledge, but of squaws tidying the teepee.
4. Life is all we have got and with man's compulsion to invent sacraments, it is certainly the most sacred, but it is understandable how in the politician's or scientist's broader view, death can be viewed with more objectivity and even a casual eye. We all die...the only question are the details of where and when. The revolutionary martyr for a cause, the 20,000 soldiers who are sent to capture a hill, the accident of turning your head left instead of right and catching a sneeze and contracting a disease, are merely rearranging the arithmetic slightly to determine the where and when.