T7300  THE TRIAL OF BILLY JACK  (USA, 1974)

Credits:  director, Frank Laughlin ; writers, Frank Laughlin, Teresa Christina Laughlin (Delores Taylor)

Cast:  Tom Laughlin, Delores Taylor, Victor Izay, Teresa Laughlin.

Summary:  Melodrama set in contemporary Arizona. Billy Jack (Laughlin), the mixed-race Native American, ex-Green Beret, and Vietnam vet, is put on trial for two killings he committed in self-defense while protecting the Freedom School from small-town Arizona bigots. He is convicted and sent to prison, but the Freedom School thrives under Jean Roberts (Taylor). When Billy Jack is paroled for good behavior, he returns home to explore his tribal spiritual heritage. Meanwhile the Freedom School’s television station has broadcast exposés of America’s sociopolitical ills which have annoyed local officials. National Guard troops occupy the school’s campus, but the students resist. Billy Jack agrees to surrender to the Guard if they withdraw, but the Guard opens fire, killing many students and wounding Billy and Jean. The Guard is finally forced to withdraw from the reservation by the terms of an 1880 treaty, and Billy and Jean vow to rebuild the Freedom School. Includes flashbacks to atrocities committed by American troops in Vietnam.

Adair, Gilbert. Hollywood’s Vietnam [GB] (p. 61)
Albarino, Richard. “‘Billy’ sequel’s grand $11-mil preem” Variety 277 (Nov 20, 1974), p. 1+
“‘Billy Jack’ at $23-mil after 3 week playoff” Variety 277 (Dec 11, 1974), p. 1+
“‘Billy Jack’ sequel seeking bids on massive nationwide saturation” Independent film journal 74 (Sep 4, 1974), p. 15+
Cocks, Jay. “Bigots and bromides; black power; a star is born” Time 104 (Dec 16, 1974), p. 6+
Devine, Jeremy M. Vietnam at 24 frames a second [GB] (p. 80)
“Four-wall pioneer Laughlin stumbles on ‘Trial’ dates: Anti-critic angle a bore” Variety 279 (May 14, 1975), p. 3.
Holzl, Gebhard and Peipp, Matthias. Fahr zur Holle, Charlie! [GB] (p. 159, 312)
Lanning, Michael Lee. Vietnam at the movies [GB] (p. 333-4)
Muse, Eben J. The land of Nam : the Vietnam war in American film [GB] (p. 61, 64, 88, 271)
Peipp, Matthias (see under Holzl, Gebhard)
Zimmerman, Paul D. “Generation gulch” Newsweek 84 (Dec 2, 1974), p. 104+

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