homosexuality, etc.). Of course, one’s sympathies go out for many of these men, as it does for their victims, but the true waste of the places comes home most searingly in listening to a brilliant jailhouse poet, Michael Beasley, recite his “Zombies in a House of Madness” or “Street Blues” bars amidst that maddening cacophony of noise. Later, in a fascinating segment, we watch the kindly black sergeant watching a film-clip of Beasley’s reading, and hear him comment on the waste of this man’s fantastic talent. The Jail has faults, usually in not telling us enough about the men inside, but these errors of omission are more than outweighed by the film’s ability to capture the institutional brutality visited daily by society upon its lower-class elements. It’s a jolting experience to watch, and helps us understand why jail and prison riots are occurring with increasing frequency.

—Bernard Weiner

San Francisco Good Times takes its name from a central institution of the counterculture—an underground newspaper which evolved from a radical political journal to a broadly cultural paper. The film, made by Allan Francovich and Eugene Rosow with help from a lot of friends, traces the paper’s trajectory as it reflected a changing era: it is a bold hour-long attempt to turn the usual devices of synch-sound documentary away from portraits of persons or crises, and toward the “writing” of history. From quiet sequences of talk and making up the paper, it moves out into the major themes of rock’s liberating effects, property, back-the-land, prisons. There is a moment during the struggle over People’s Park in Berkeley (which raised Proudhon’s cry, Property Is Theft, to a current political question about land) that looks like something out of Buñuel’s L’Age d’Or: a young couple nuzzle each other affectionately and sit down on a curb—while a few yards away the police fire a barrage of tear-gas shells and the streets are full of fleeing people. But the film is not your ordinary we-shall-overcome tract. It’s often funny; the radical raps it contains range from the high and manic to the glum; the practical problems of the paper are not skimmed; the film is inhabited by real people some of whom make idiotic pronouncements along with brave and stirring ones. And for those who don’t seem to know what has happened to the counterculture, the film will give at least some answers: it has emigrated to the country; it has become deeply cynical about the reform of institutions—which are all more or less prisons; and the good times are too often distinctly jumpy. (Source: 2104 Acton St., Berkeley, Ca. 94702.)

—E. C.

Soylent Green is an interesting bad film. Based on Harry Harrison’s science fiction novel Make Room! it depicts an environmental nightmare of the year 2022, when the population of New York City has exploded to 41 million. Of these, the wealthy few live in plush air-conditioned apartment buildings guarded like fortresses. The remaining millions sweat it out in crowded tenements or junked autos, existing on squares of processed food turned out by the powerful Soylent corporation—on Tuesdays, green squares purportedly made of plankton. One day a member of the Soylent board is assassinated, and detective Thorn (Charlton Heston) sets out to discover why . . . The badness of the film is obvious: gratuitous mayhem, perfunctory “romance,” the mystery preserved with clumsy artifice to the last possible moment, and more. The major interest arises indirectly, as Soylent Green demonstrates the pitfalls of extrapolating a future society. The film accepts the man’s world of Harrison’s novel (which antedated the women’s lib movement), and the fortresses of the apparently all-male Establishment come equipped with concubines known as Furniture. Although women might for some unforeseen reason slip back in the next fifty years, an SF prophet has to convince us here and now, and the man’s world of Soylent Green looks like yesterday’s future, not today’s. On the other hand, a prophet cannot stick too closely to today’s mores or his future will simply be the present in light disguise. Soylent Green rightly suggests that suicide could be socially approved in an overcrowded world, but it keeps our present tabu against anthropophagy as firm as ever. This is where the film’s central mystery comes in. Thorn discovers that Soylent Green is being made not from plankton (since life in the oceans has been killed off) but from the bodies of the human dead. He is horrified—a reaction which director Richard Fleischer underlines by his treatment of the “waste disposal” scenes, lingering on shrouded corpses and deep vats as if they belonged to Lionel Atwill’s wax museum. But would the film’s desperate society really be as shocked as we are at this kind of recycling? The horror strikes false, especially when Thorn’s elderly colleague (Edward G. Robinson in his last screen role) reacts to the news by dashing to a suicide center—thus inconsistently speeding his own body’s conversion to Soylent Green. Still, the film offers a somewhat more thoughtful picture of a grim future society than did A Clockwork Orange, in the making of which Stanley Kubrick apparently assumed that he could best portray a disintegrating society by ignoring all background consistency. The best scenes in Soylent Green are effective because simple: Thorn reveling in water from a faucet or in a dinner of genuine meat and vegetables—luxuries almost beyond imagining in his world. Though the film is only a routine thriller beneath its clothing of environmental