

CINEMA

Attack, the best form of D-fens

Anne Billson

Cynics need not apply for *Map of the Human Heart*, a sprawling, epic love story spanning four decades and as – and all this cross-cultural pollination is the result, appropriately enough, of a mighty Anglo-Franco-Australian-Canadian co-production.

Director, co-producer and storywriter was Vincent Ward, the visionary Zealander who wanted to set *Alien 3* on a planet made entirely of wood and populated by monks. *Map of the Human Heart* begins with the broken-down Eskimo

(Jason Scott Lee) buttonholing a reluctant listener and launching into the story of his life: Eskimo meets girl (Anne Parillaud), Eskimo loses girl, joins the RAF, meets girl again and so on. Patrick Bergin gets in the way of true love as a dashing cartographer who decides to flatten Dresden because once upon a time a girl there gave him the run around.



Ward's special genius is to bombard the viewer with breathtaking images which ultimately link together with a logic that is emotional rather than intellectual. There are recurring motifs of light, of flight, and of falling. Eskimos trampolining on stretched seal skin, a bi-plane touching down on the snow, the night sky swarming with droning Lancasters, the lovers dazzling each other with beams reflected from mirrors, or sending coded messages via X-rays and aerial photographs.

There is the best cinematic use of Albert Hall since *The Man Who Knew Too*

Much, and a depiction of the Dresden firestorm that is both

awe-inspiring and sickening. You get the impression that the director is not a Bomber Harris fan, though there are plenty of aeroplanes on show to keep *Biggles* readers happy. There is also a heartrending ending which had me hunting for my hanky.

I love it, but for all the film's multi-cultural sweep it is a delicate thing that needs protecting from all the crude sceptics who will see it and sneer. But let them sneer! The rest of us know there's nothing wrong with a bit of mystic romanticism, especially when it's as beautifully turned out as this.