



THE AIR UP THERE: Actress Charlize Theron (second from left) in *Utah*

MOVIES

Nothing But The Truth At Sundance

EVERY BONE-CHILLED veteran of the Sundance Film Festival will tell you the same thing: *stick with the documentaries*. You can always count the decent movies in the dramatic competition on one hand; the nonfiction films are more likely to deliver. That was the case again this year.

"Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired" was the first movie sold here in Utah, and with good reason. Focusing on



ROMAN IS BURNING: *The film sheds new light on his 1977 trial*

the trial that convicted the brilliant filmmaker of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, director Marina Zenovich talks to people who've never spoken before (including Douglas Dalton, Polanski's lawyer), casting the case in a new light. Polanski isn't let off the hook, but the true villain of the piece is Judge Laurence J. Rittenband, a vain, publicity-

obsessed martinet who died in 1993 and whose manipulations of both the prosecution and the defense make Polanski's decision to flee the country seem justified.

Artfully blending the personal and the political, "Nerakhoon (The Betrayal)" is a wrenching and lyrical epic about a Laotian family forced to flee their country at the end of the war in Vietnam and resettle in the United States. Ellen Kuras's codirector, Thavisouk Phrasavath, is the main subject of the film, which documents the United States' brutal clandestine operations in Laos and the devastating repercussions for the Laotians who worked on our side. Arriving in New York, the family members are dumped in a crack house and left to fend for themselves in a completely alien culture. It's a chronicle of deracination and survival that packs an emotional wallop.

For sheer entertainment, few movies, fact or fiction, could match "Man on Wire." In 1974 the elfin French daredevil Philippe Petit stunned the world by wire-walking (illegally, with no net) between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Mixing recreations, old footage and interviews, British filmmaker James Marsh shows us how Petit pulled off his astonishing feat. Marsh wisely never mentions 9/11, but the fate of the towers gives this thrilling tale a ghostly undertone. —DAVID ANSEN