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Censors Immoral

James P. Boyle

The freedom of an individual to determine personal moral standards was the theme of an anti-censorship meeting at the Festival Theatre Saturday afternoon. A panel of five speakers presented a series of coercive arguments against censorship before a receptive, packed house. Protest organizer Robin Wood, chairman of Atkinson's Department of Fine Arts, said the meeting was "to demonstrate to the censor board how out of touch they are with the public opinion they profess to serve."

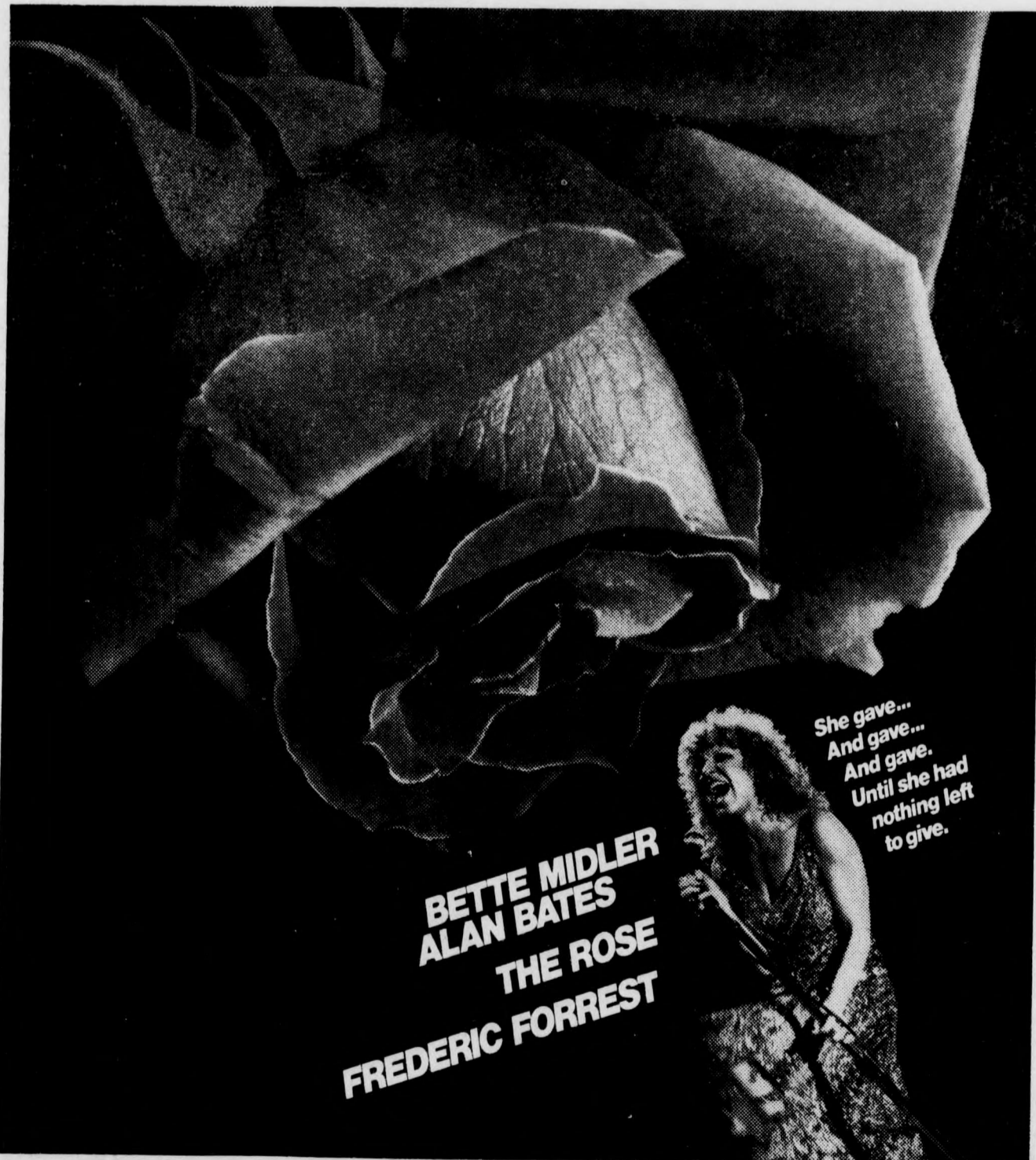
In the past year the censor board has requested eliminations in 146 films and banned those which would not comply. Public controversy over eliminations arises only when filmmakers such as Bertolucci refuse to cut their films, as he did in the case of "Luna." Independent distributor Linda Beath said distributors are "forced to sign a confidentiality agreement so that we can't reveal to the public what's been cut."

Lawyer Chalmers Adams described provincial censorship as protection for distributors and theatre owners against federal obscenity prosecution. Citing three obscenity charges laid in Manitoba involving films passed by that province's classification—only board he said, "Provincial censorship is meant to keep the police out of the theatres."

Chalmers also raised the issue of community standard describing the ludicrous situation of censored footage being shown on City-TV with no public reaction. Robin Wood described the censor board's arbitrary definition of community acceptability as "the difference between an erect cock and a limp cock."

Two major proposals that panelists and crowd agreed upon were the publication of censor board eliminations and the establishment of a classification-only system. Methods of implementing these ideas ranged from Robin Wood's suggestion of a letter campaign directed at MPP's, Bill Davis, and the censor board to an NDP spokesman's offer to organize bus charters to Buffalo to see "Luna". U of T professor John Lee closed the meeting with an offer to organize "civil disobedience" to protest against the censor board.

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