

Documentary tells it like it is

BY KAVERI GUPTA

On Sunday evening, with my mother at my side to offer an occasional translation, I previewed *The Selling of Innocents*, an hour long documentary following the sex trade in India.

The Selling of Innocents is a behind-the-scenes look at the buying and selling of child prostitutes in India and Nepal. Produced by Simcha Jacobovici, Elliott Halpern, and William Cobban of the Associated Producers, the film is the first Western documentary to have actual footage from inside brothels in the centre of an extensive prostitution ring in Bombay, India.

I was anticipating a fast-paced film cluttered with shocking images of young female slaves with the usual "brave camera crew in the thick of danger" undertones. Instead, the film was considerably calm, making the documentary more hard-hitting. This approach cut out the glamorized "corruption-uncovering" junk we've grown used to and simply showed things as they are.

And the truth will shock you enough.

With scenes of remote villages against a beautiful Himalayan backdrop contrasting with Falkland Street, Bombay — teeming with its thugs and prostitutes — the director chose a kitchen table to conduct interviews with girls once belonging to the sex trade. Under falsified names, the girls matter-of-factly recount the days when they first arrived in Bombay under the impression that they would be domestic servants. Instead, they were put in cages without food or water, beaten,

raped, burned, and drugged until they gave in to this initiation process and agreed to sell their bodies.

Under a layer of cheap makeup, girls as young as 9 or 10 years old would be forced to have sex with clients, getting only a portion of the money they earned. These girls would have been bought for around 50,000 rupees (\$1,700) by the brothel, and in return for their freedom, have to pay back the money. But the tiny portion they receive is completely insufficient since they need to pay their madam for food and electricity. It takes roughly 15 years for a woman to save enough money, if she hasn't already succumbed to AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, or the beatings she receives.

About one third of the way through the movie, the scene switches to a shelter for women who have escaped. The woman who runs it tells tales of their rescues. But just as you are beginning to feel hopeful about the situation, the film once again plunges you into the nighttime streets of Bombay and the horrifying conditions these young girls live in.

With scenes of social workers trying desperately, and rather unsuccessfully, to pass out condoms to scared girls on the street intermingled with a nerve-racking raid to rescue prostitutes from a brothel, the film strikes an excellent balance between hope and horror.

The scary thing is that these women and children are enduring this horror as you watch their story. The film's award-winning producers have revealed a truth that will make you think and keep you real.



The French get their kind of movie

BY DAVID LEES

After more than a hundred years of cinema, it is tough to find a film which is unique. Films must rely, at least in part, on others. This is made blatantly obvious in the film *The Horsemen On the Roof* where the subtitles are not the only thing burrowed from classic French films. The film starts Friday at Wormwoods.

Although the names are different, the characters have been before. A handsome, idealistic, and confident young man, Angelo Pardi (Oliver Martinez), is the leading male. The woman, Pauline de Theus (Juliette Binoche), is outwardly strong and weathered, but still incredibly beautiful. The supporting cast is filled with the Who's Who of French Film in cameo roles which seem to elevate the magnitude of the film. The similarities only start here.

Typically, the setting is rooted in French Romanticism — as is the book by Jean Giono. By placing the story in the midst of the Austrian Empire's domination of Europe in the 19th century, a



mark is established by the popularity of that era to the French. Engraving further into the psyche of the French are the numerous colours, images and motifs of the lush Provence countryside in France. And, luckily, we get a peak at the French aristocracy.

The setting has another side. Chaos is necessary to keep the unspoken love of the heroes painful and arduous. Angelo is an Italian freedom fighter running from the Austrians. Pauline is struggling to meet up with her husband, whom she loves. All the while, the lovers must run from the Cholera epidemic laying towns to waste all around them.

One of the only aspects of the film not passionately French is the feel of the Western. Stark con-

trasts in the glorious scenic and chaotic settings provide equivalents to the conflicting worlds of the home and the range. Angelo fills the boots of many Western heroes by being always on the run from the authorities, having a strong sense of his own morals, and being effectively homeless. The

theme is warmly accepted into the film grabbing our attention early on with exciting bursts of playful action.

The Horseman On the Roof preforms up to and even beyond expectation in every atmosphere. The outdoors is as colourful and rich as life. Importance and absurdity show through in the hierarchal aristocracy of the time. I felt like washing my hands clean every time Cholera impaled a body. Most importantly, the love is not just told to us, it is felt. This clearly demonstrates the excellent work done by everyone from director Jean-Paul Rappeneau, through the actors, and all the way to the Costume Designer.

If this sounds as though you might like it, you will.

Atlantic Film Festival Wrap-up

Well, all the scores are in and here are your big winners (although we still don't trust the Russian judge) from the 1996 Atlantic Film Festival.

—The Best of the Festival Awards:

Breaking the Waves
Award of Excellence for Best Film or Video over 60 Minutes

Lilies
Special Citation for a Film or Video over 60 Minutes

Cold Fever
Special Citation for a Film or Video over 60 Minutes

Lodola and Thirty Five Aside
Tied for the Award of Excellence for Best Film or Video under 60 Minutes

Not Kokura
Special Citation for a Film or Video under 60 Minutes

The Atlantic
Special Citation for Best Documentary

Jude
The Peoples Choice Award

—Atlantic Award Winners

Liquor Store
Best Atlantic Short, Best Director — Mike Clattenburg

Gullage's
Best Male Acting — Michael Wade, Best Female Acting — Brenda Devine, Best Art Design — Stephen Britton Osler

The Water's Tale
Best Nova Scotia Produced Film, Best Cinematography — Chuck Clark, Best Editing — Ann Verrall

Place of the Boss-Utshimassits
Best Atlantic Documentary, Best Sound — Allan Scarth

La Memorie de l'eau
Best Writing for an Atlantic Film, Most Promising New Director — Roderigue Jean