

Ninotchka : Garbo laughs

This coming Thursday, Feb. 13, the GSEA will continue its "Great Directors" film series with a showing of Ernst Lubitsch's **Ninotchka**, starring Greta Garbo and Melvyn Douglas.

Lubitsch is not as well-known as he should be; he doesn't have the kind of publicity shared by other Hollywood directors like Welles, Hitchcock, Ford, and Sternberg. The main reason for this lack of fame probably lies in Lubitsch's technique, which attempted to make itself as unobtrusive as possible. No obvious directorial intrusions spoil the smooth, witty and elegant surface of his films.

But Lubitsch wasn't always neglected. He was perhaps the most widely-admired director in Hollywood during the 30's, and the "Lubitsch touch" was a phrase well known to movie fans. Lubitsch's credits in the 30's are very impressive. After beginning his career during the silent era in Germany, he moved over to Hollywood with a reputation for polished comedy, and immediately embarked on a series of elegant farces whose immense stylishness still

sparkles today.

Such films as *The Love Parade*, *The Merry Widow*, *Trouble in Paradise*, *Design for Living* and *Angel* established Lubitsch's reputation in the early 30's, and his maturer masterpieces (**Ninotchka**, *The Shop Around the Corner*, *To Be or Not To Be*.) add an extra dimension of warmth and tenderness in characterization.

Ninotchka, made in 1939, is more widely famed nowadays for being one of Garbo's best films than for being one of Lubitsch's. This is not unnatural: surely Garbo is the most hauntingly beautiful woman ever to grace the screen. From the mid-1920's (still in the silent era) Garbo ravished audiences with a series of *femmes fatales* and doomed lovers, exhibiting a startlingly wide range of moods, from frail to enraptures to overpowering.

In 1930, when she made her first talkie, *Anna Christie*, her studio screamed out the publicity phrase "GARBO TALKS!" With **Ninotchka** Garbo showed for the first time that she could play comedy as well as anything else, and Paramount repeated the publicity *coup* of



Anna Christie with the new phrase "GARBO LAUGHS!" It worked.

Ninotchka's plot is a bit silly (but then Lubitsch often did his best work in the borderline area between comedy and farce). Comrade Ninotchka (Garbo) is sent by the Kremlin to check up

on the activities of other Russian agents in Paris, who are suspected of having given way to decadent capitalist luxury. Ninotchka travels to Paris, discovers this to be indeed the case, and begins to take measures. But then she comes in contact with a man of refined

bourgeois manners and cultivated bourgeois taste (played by a beautifully suave Melvyn Douglas and

Ninotchka will be shown Thursday at 4:00, 6:30 and 8:45 in Room LT-1 of the Audio-Visual Centre of the Humanities Building. Admission is \$1.00.

Wednesday's Child on Monday

WEDNESDAY'S CHILD (Edmonton Film Society, Feb. 17, SUB Theatre, 8 p.m.)

Student season tickets now \$3.50.

Oh, no, you say... not ANOTHER semi-documentary study of the hopelessly depressing plight of contemporary urban society, not ANOTHER attack on blind conformity and sheep-like acceptance, not ANOTHER in-depth examination of the gray lives of the gray masses, not ANOTHER one of those kitchen-sink films bulging with social significance.

Well, *Wednesday's Child* is all of these things, but thankfully it's a great deal more besides. Director Ken Loach has

built a fascinatingly fragmentary, yet complete picture of total personality breakdown as it digresses in frighteningly logical stages from temporary behavioral outbursts into total mental derangement.

Janice, a beautiful but simple young girl, is first seen as a classic but not extraordinary case suffering from autistic withdrawals; hemmed in by her well-meaning but horrendous parents, dominated by routine and convention, unable to cope with the mundane, everyday pressures and stresses of getting on with life, and basically misunderstood by all and sundry.

She's not normal in a world

where abnormality is a crime, her rebellion and indifference are classified as wickedness, she's different from the rest and must be put right; and in an effort to cure her schizophrenia and eliminate her symptoms, she is driven into her own deep and private world.

Wednesday's Child is not a pretty picture in any sense of the word - sparse, uncompromising, unhopeful and earnest, it manages to be both hypnotic and boring at the same time, which is quite an achievement. It is totally honest, brilliantly made with its heart on its sleeve and its head going in two ways at once.

R. Horak

Canada Council Grants

The Canada Council offers grants for a wide variety of projects involving Canadian situations:

- explorations of various forms of expression, communication and participation in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

- interdisciplinary research and experiments in both art and science.

- experiments in and studies of popular culture.

- research in any medium into the historical and cultural heritage of Canada.

The grants are available to persons or groups who have a worthwhile project and the ability to carry it out.

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- Canadian citizens or landed immigrants who have lived in Canada for at least three years

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The closing dates for applications are:

- March 1 for announce-

ment in June

- June 1 for announcement in September

- December 1 for announcement in March.

Further information can be obtained by writing to Explorations The Canada Council P.O. Box 1047 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8.

To find out if a project qualifies for a grant, send a brief description. Application forms will be forwarded to persons with eligible projects.

Latitude 53 Gallery

Latitude 53 Gallery currently presents *Landscape*, an exhibition of watercolours, acrylics and oils by Kerr, Duma, Graff, Voyer, and Savage. The exhibition will be shown until February 14.

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