

Don Shebib's latest

## Between Friends is a homemade disappointment

By MICHAEL FORMAN

English Canada's most successful director. Generous budget, big Hollywood stars. Put them all together and what do you get? A homemade disappointment.

Donald Shebib's latest film, *Between Friends*, opened this week at the newly renovated Imperial theatre. Shebib's followers may wonder what happened to their home-town favorite after sampling this over-iced cupcake.

*Between Friends* tries its hardest with a script that has been tossed around in a dozen different versions during the last couple of years. Shebib assembles his regular cast of losers, the down and out east-end types, and puts them through the paces of a plot that suspensefully unravels in the first ten minutes.

The real losers in this movie are the

members of the audience who forked over an inflated admission charge in hopes of something better.

The opening finds Michael Parks arriving in Toronto for an awaited reunion with his old California surfing chum, played by Chuck Shamata. Parks dances through his new James Dean image, mumbling what little script is given to him.

Shamata's wife, played by Bonnie Bedelia, frowns upon the visitor and makes it clear that she looks forward to his quick departure.

Shamata has invited his chum to join in a payroll robbery, engineered by his father-in-law, fresh from prison. Bedelia's objections to her father's plan tip us off that for these losers, nothing but disaster lies ahead.

The plot thickens when Shamata is rudely confronted with the fact that

his wife has fallen deeply in love with the visitor she detested only days ago. If you can't have suspense, then how about a little fantasy?

*Between Friends* tries hard to rise above a script which fights it all the way. Parks and Bedelia handle their roles smoothly and make one wish that they had been given something meatier than this. How much can you do with a line like, "If you want a sandwich, make it yourself"?

Shebib has his better moments. Even with what little characterization the script allows, he is able to make his actors communicate a sense of desperation and futility.

One of the few scenes in which Shebib's directorial talent coincides with a high point in the inconsistent cinematography demonstrates that he deserves better material than this.

Bedelia's aging father groans in drunken anguish over the grave of his departed drinking buddy, as the wretched mist of the nearby Sudbury smelters hang behind him.

Shebib has done better stuff, and for

his sake *Between Friends* should be quickly forgotten. The pall over the desolate Sudbury quagmire sorely indicates there is enough pollution around without this overblown addition.

## Array of conductors never seen before

By VINCENT PAUL DORVAL

For the next two years or so, the Toronto Symphony will be presenting an array of conductors the likes of which have never been seen before in Canada.

Most of the conductors lined up will be considered for the position of Music Director for the Toronto Symphony, a vacancy created by the untimely death of Karel Ancerl this summer. The organization is giving this season a lot of publicity. What can we expect?

A lot. David Oistrakh has made quite a name for himself in Europe and the U.S.S.R. His principal instrument is the violin, and when he comes to Toronto in the first week of February, he'll also take up the baton. Brahms' Fourth will be the highlight of that evening.

A young conductor who has gained a

reputation over the past year is James Levine. Opera is his bag and the Metropolitan Opera is his home. To many he brings back memories of the showmanship of Wilhelm Furtwangler and the precision of Arturo Toscanini. He will perform the Jupiter Symphony by Mozart in the middle of February.

Another conductor from America, Donald Johanos of the Dallas Symphony, will visit in the middle of March. His understanding of American composers like Aaron Copland has won him many recording contracts on various labels. Earl Wild will be guest soloist on the piano and the rarely heard First Piano Concerto by Scharwenka will be performed.

The old pros will be back, of course, such as Mario Bernardi and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, an outfit which has been gathering much critical and public applause.

In the long run, the Toronto Symphony will suffer because of a lack of a steady guide. But meanwhile, Toronto concert-goers can enjoy themselves. Special rates are available for student programs. Call Massey Hall at 363-7301 for details.

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