

ENTERTAINMENT

Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?

Depression movie is "ominously relevant"

By BILL GLADSTONE

Hold onto your hats everybody; happy days will be here again. Or so it would seem, after seeing *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?*, an artfully arranged documentary of the American depression years.

Like *That's Entertainment*, *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?* is a nostalgia trip. It is a compilation of a wide assortment of film-clips, held together without narration, taken from the period in American life that began with the stock market crash of 1929 and ended with the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima in 1945.

The film approaches the depression years from three angles. Primarily: Hollywood and the field of entertainment; Roosevelt and the state of

American politics; and a sort of social-historical overview of the man in the street.

Without manipulating the material, writer-director Phillippe Mora has been able to smoothly blend these themes so that they allow the film to flow freely and loosely, at a pace quick enough to ensure that even those viewers who are too young to remember what they are seeing do not lose interest.

The film is virtually crammed with an array of radio and movie personalities from the period. Indeed, the film is an enormous grab-bag of campy bits of Hollywood trivia that compositely provide much insight into the times.

We see bits of films from the era: King Kong topples a train as if it were a toy, Shirley Temple emanates her overpowering cuteness, and Clark Gable smiles between takes of *Gone With The Wind*.

There is Bogart being initiated into the Ku Klux Klan, Cagney being continually chased by his perpetual creditors, and Orson Welles surrounded by reporters the day after the Martians landed (his famous *War of The Worlds* broadcast).

From these clips, we get a sense of the despondency and paranoia



Money, depression and politics are some of the fun things on view in *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?*

of the people, of their need to lead vicarious lives on the screen, and of their eagerness to see the American Dream revitalized on film and be thereby persuaded into a sort of oblivious cinematic happiness.

The film explores the politics of the era to an unexpected depth as well. From the street-corner socialist rallies to Roosevelt's fireside chats, the film presents a well-rounded view of the desperation of the nation as it struggles to get back to its feet.

Although the film does not handle the transition from the depression years to the war years in nearly as much depth, it still succeeds in throwing some light on the political disposition of America in the early and mid-thirties.

We are also given glimpses of other aspects of life during the thirties. For example, there is footage of the intense dust storms of the mid-West, and of the equally intense flooding of the Mississippi basin, both of which did nothing at all to ease hard times.

Although the film is structured

for entertainment and not for history, it is informative, as well as entertaining.

It is significant that *Brother*, should be released at the present

moment, when the mounting economic crises our society is facing tend to make the film, to a wary public fearful of the future, only too ominously relevant.

Express murder

Agatha Christie's sophisticated whodunit, *Murder on the Orient Express*, will be screened at York this Friday at 8:30 p.m., courtesy of Bethune films, in CLH-L. This Saturday and Sunday, also at 8:30 p.m., Dustin Hoffman and Valerie Perrine render an account of Lenny Bruce's life in *Lenny*. Admission is \$1.50 for people with university I.D., \$1.25 with Bethune I.D.

Sex dies boring death

By BILL PERRY

There is a new film replete with exploitation at the Towne cinema called *Charlotte*. A French film with English subtitles, it's about a nymphomaniac (Sirpa Lane) who meets a madman and about an author who throughout the movie is trying to decide whether or not to write about the shallow and uninteresting events that happen between them.

The film seems to attempt to capitalize on the success of *Last Tango in Paris* by trying to live up to the images portrayed in that film.

But where *Tango* had good dialogue and an attention-catching storyline, *Charlotte* has dry lines

and a mismatched story. Where *Tango* shed new light on old ideas, *Charlotte* casts no new light on anything except on the fact that "cinematic - tits and ass" don't sell like they used to in the days of the sexual revolution.

Not only is this film, written by Roger Vadim, repetitious, it is also rendered tiresome by a good idea worn to its limits: that of a soundtrack composed of Michael Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*.

Devout fans of European films will like this one, as will all interested in 100 minutes of staccato eroticism. A moving *Viva* magazine, however, is not this writer's favourite form of entertainment.

Dawn energizes dance

By STEVE HAIN

Winter's College servery was given a treat last Thursday evening. Instead of housing yet another college council dance that is boring and destined to lose money because of the inadequate band that is booked, the walls came alive with the sound of music.

The high octane energy was supplied by Crack of Dawn, who replaced Joust for the evening. I have yet to hear a guitar player perform at York with his hands as well as this lead guitarist played with his teeth.

Drawing from their West Indian background, the band molded a sound that was tight, while at the same time allowing for the free-form flavouring of the individual members. Winter's council should

count themselves as one of the lucky for being able to book the band at \$650.

Which is not to say that the evening was without fault. As at any other dance, there simply was not enough room to move on the dance floor. This is not the college's fault but it is still a basic problem with all York dances. Also, the sound was almost intolerably loud. Subsequent investigation revealed that the band's monitor speakers were not working and, as a result, the overall volume was cranked up to allow the group to hear what was going on. Which is only fair.

But the old adage still applies. You can't have your cake and eat it, too.

Performers question everything, Graduate theatre near PEAK

By AGNES KRUCHIO

"What we do is unique in the world for any training programme in theatre in a university context," said John Juliani in an interview early this week.

What he was talking about was his own special blend of "theatre, therapy, product, process, art and life" — that is, the graduate programme in theatre at York. P.E.A.K., as the programme is called, (Performance Experience, Animation, and Katharsis) is now entering into the second phase of its 22-month duration.

"Although we haven't set out deliberately to prove it, it is obvious that the work that is done is valuable at a fundamental level," said the 35-year old director of the year-old programme.

The 15 member troupe that has been together for most of the past year has gone through "a lot" together, according to their leader. He provides a learning ex-

perience, a byproduct of which is the training of performers. He basically asks his students to question everything, and especially to question their preconceptions about the theatre.

"I set up rigours, ordeals. They question everything; they question me as their 'Fuhrer', and we fight a lot.

"It's trial by fire.

"The fact is that working in the theatre is a very special occupation. It has serious obligations and one just doesn't assume that he is better than the people in front of whom one performs.

"I ask students to think of themselves as people, not just as actors. The more in tune they are with themselves as people, the better they can communicate as actors. We make little differentiation between person and actor."

Talking about the success of the programme, Juliani said: "It's

miraculous what's happened. People have been incredible; I have put them through fire, and they came through with flying colours." As part of the 11-month session, the group performed in British Columbia, and California (Esalen), as well as in Ottawa, over the summer months.

International recognition has come faster than they have expected. Not only do they receive applications from all over the world, but this fall they have been invited as the representatives of the Canadian theatre (and York), to the Fifth International Festival of the Open Theatre in Wroclaw, Poland.

"We are trying to enable performers to step onto the conveyor-belt of the profession, and become agents of change in the world's most retrograde profession, if necessary. It's an undertaking that only the hardest will survive."



John Juliani: a history of pain and growth.