

# Off York

Those were days of roses, poetry and proses...  
There was no tomorrow, packed away our sorrows,  
And we saved them for a rainy day.

—Tom Waits, "Martha"

When the 1980's are recalled, remember that **Heartbeat** was the first great film of the decade. A peek at a crucial scene in **Heartbeat**, partially about Jack "On the Road" Kerouac recalls why.

The scene involves Neal Cassady, the protagonist for Kerouac's prose. Leaving a bar, he is befriended by a man who asks for a ride to another club. While driving there, Neal pulls out a joint and they both begin smoking it. Neal makes a statement that many whites want to be black. The man, who was black, said he couldn't understand why. To him, it was a drag being black, and further it was a drag being a cop and having to bust him. Neal doesn't hesitate, he takes a few more good tokes, and passes the narc the joint. This scene demonstrates the elements of irony, humour, pathos, and casual brotherhood that swell **Heartbeat**.

A personal friend of Kerouac's, David Amram, in a recent *Excalibur* interview, said that Kerouac's story had to be told by people with their hearts in it. John Byrum, whose previous film, **Inserts**, starred Richard Dreyfuss as a porno filmmaker, has made **Heartbeat** a believable, multi-dimensional portrait of a crazy era.

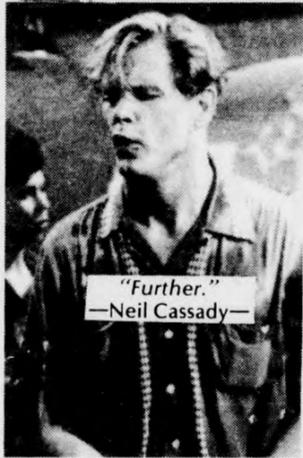
Byrum's biggest credit in the film is his adherence to a basic non-fictionalized biography of three friends and the circles in which they moved. **Heartbeat** mythologizes Kerouac, Cassady, and Carolyn Cassady, long-celebrated in hippie, drug, and Rolling Stone cultures.

Post-Hiroshima is the backdrop to the story. The American dream: dreary house, two kids, and a barbecue. Of course, **Heartbeat** satirizes this society, but it also pumps with a belief in it. America was Dagwood Bumstead, goofy but lovable.

Nick Nolte's nervous portrayal of the speedy Cassady is as legitimate an acting job as I've seen. Consistently keeping attune to invisible blaring saxophones, his ear to their mouths, he commands the audience's respect and rapt attention. Nolte is a leading man with both physical and emotional depth.

Within the last few years, we've seen **Bound for Glory**, **The Buddy Holly Story** and **Heartbeat**. These films are convincing portraits of American pioneers told by filmmaker with a careful eye on the balancing of the intellect and the entertainment. Hopefully with **Heartbeat**, the spirit of Kerouac and co. may reach a large filmgoing public.

Elliott Lefko



# Entertainment

—Sid Vicious, 1957-Feb. 2, 1979—  
—Lest we forget—

## Jack's back

Lydia Pawlenko

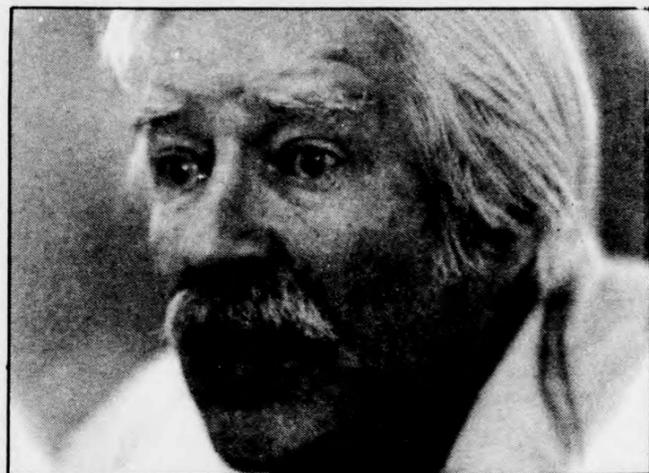
Jack Bush painted the way he knew he had to paint, and in the retrospective film, **Jack Bush**, it comes across as simple as the gut feeling the artist learned to trust. It celebrates Bush as a direct, warm and witty person who emerged as a leading innovative force behind Toronto's move into abstract art during the 50's and 60's.

Produced by Rudy Buttignol and directed by Murray Battle, two former York film students, **Jack Bush** was screened in Vanier College last Monday.

Jack Bush died in January of 1977, after the film had been begun. At this time, Buttignol and Battle approached the Toronto office of the National Film Board for funding to continue their project. Eight months later, they received a narrow vote of confidence from the Program committee in Montreal. "It was then we realized the hard part was making the film," said Buttignol. "Jack was dead, and we only had so much footing about him."

He and Battle spent the next 15 months in the painstaking process of contacting everyone who had known Bush—various relatives, friends and critics.

The result is an artful combination of film segments in the form of a collage. In a black-and-white videotape interview with Bush, conducted by John Newton in 1975, the artist is relaxing in a lawn chair, wearing paint-splattered denim. He



speaks of his days at Rapid Grip, where he worked as a commercial artist...of enlightening artistic influences from New York, Paris...the formation of the Painters Eleven. There is little elaboration on the subjects, little mention of family.

We catch glimpses of Bush as a young man through photographs, newspaper clippings and early paintings, set to music by Don Thompson and Jack "Prince of the Bone" Teagarden.

Another fragment, this time in colour, features Bush and American art critic Clement Greenberg strolling around the Bush retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario. As the camera confronts the dynamically-coloured paintings, we hear mutterings like, "You know, I

can't remember painting this thing."

At one point, the pair pause to study Bush's incredible "School Tie" and laugh at the fact that it had been hanging for three days on its side.

Murray Battle had promised Bush to shoot the paintings head-on with no close-ups. Thus the boldly-coloured abstracts are flashed before us, in the way Bush had intended them to be, one enough that we may grasp their aggressiveness, oddness and enjoy their fantastic colour.

The film successfully approaches Jack Bush in an informal way. It focuses on the painter's artistic search and places him within the context of Canadian art history.

## Books in heat

Stuart Ross

Charlie Huisken sits grinning behind his cash register. William Burroughs grins over his shoulder from an 8x10 frame. A life-size Spiderman looms over the whole scene, his spider sense tingling, and Gottlieb's Baseball pinball machine clangs and boings from the front of the store.

The phone rings. Charlie picks up the receiver. "Hello, *This Ain't The Rosedale Library*." His eyes roll back in his head. "Sorry, we don't have the new Harold Robbins. Maybe you'd be interested in some Charles Bukowski." From another wall, Charles Bukowski grins down drunkenly, a gangly arm wrapped around the shoulder of a drag-clad friend.

*This Ain't The Rosedale Library* opened on November 3, 1979 at 115 Queen St. E. to provide the city with an alternative bookstore with fresh ideas. Charlie doesn't carry the Blockbusters. "It's just not interesting to me. I'm not even going to take the time to see what the new Judith Krantz is like. I don't care. I don't care if she has a pipeline to Homer," he explains, his hands gesturing towards his fiction section. He's got Harry Crews and James Cain. And Crad Kilodney and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I couldn't for the life of me find an Arthur Hailey anywhere. But then, who'd want to?

He specializes in Canadian small press books and other small press imports from the U.S. and Great Britain. Of these, Patti Smith and Bukowski have been



the biggest sellers. He also carries a large selection of baseball books and books about rock (the store is located directly beside The Record Peddler, a punky record shop). Literary magazines: *Konkret* (concrete poetry), *The Hat Issue*, *Samsdat*...and for the "trendies": *File*, *Frizz*, etc. And then there's the art postcards. Charlie's commissioned a friend to do a sign for him: IF IT'S IN STOCK, IT'S GREAT LIT.

He hasn't exactly had immediate success with this philosophy, though. But, he says, "I really don't know how else to do it. So, if this doesn't work out, I'm screwed." I turn around and look again at the Bukowski poster. My god, maybe that actually is a woman he's got his arm around! "This kind of store is a good solid idea, and maybe a

success, but there'll be just one of them. I'm not going to open in Square One and advertise on TV: 'C'mon, we got Bill Burroughs.'"

And who shops at *This Ain't The Rosedale Library*? Mostly working-class rockers, says Huisken, and free-lance writers. Some authentic literary types even wander in now and then. People feel comfortable there. The atmosphere is anything but stuffy. There is an upside-down bicycle on the floor in the middle of the store. The back wheel is spinning. There is no front wheel.

Basically, Charlie's store is full of ideas. In fact, beside the cash register is a fishbowl full of handwritten "Stupid Ideas—5¢." You pays your money, you takes your chances. A regular feature of *This Ain't The Rosedale Library* is readings and signings by off-beat authors. Recently,

## Off the road

Lisa McCabe

*The Kanner Aliyah* by Mark Gordon, Groundhog Press, 1979, 509 pp., \$6.95.

Written in the stream-of-consciousness of adolescents, **The Kanner Aliyah** does much to promote and perhaps glorify the restless creative and sexual energies of youth. Bold and often poetically raw, it is a faithful rendition of the exuberant maturation process of Martin Kanner, a Canadian boy turning 20 in his homeland of Israel.

After a strenuous but unfulfilling stay in a kibbutz, Kanner moves back to his parents' home in Tel Aviv where he immediately takes a job as a poetry tutor for 27-year-old Josephine, who subsequently becomes his lover. After the

playwright-poet-novelist Tom Walmsley was "Writer-in-Residence-for-a-Day." Sound poets Steve McCaffery and bp nichol have read there and **Class Struggle** creator Bertell Ollman was in for an afternoon. Coming up will be a photo exhibition by innovative Toronto photographer Mike Duquette. And tomorrow night at 8, poet Victor Coleman will read. (You can call Charlie at 368-1538 for more details.)

Before I left the store, passing the book review-covered east wall (some clippings from *Excalibur* even!), I remembered that I hadn't asked him the obvious question: why *This Ain't The Rosedale Library*?

"I think it's a really rich image. There isn't such a thing as The Rosedale Library. And if there were, this wouldn't be it."

dissolvement of his rather sexually-prolific relationship with his student, it's a long string of affairs for Martin, plagued with childish disputes and lusty reconciliations.

Amidst all his physical and spiritual triumphs, Kanner emerges as a well-formed if not overly-developed character. While we are bombarded with all his whims and desires, all his insecurities and half-baked speculations, the other characters of the novel lapse into obscurity. Jesse, Peter and Britta, Kanner's lover and friends, are pale stereo-types that could be readily cast into the roles of a guru, an Adonis and a Swedish fly-girl, respectively.

Written in a genre similar to that used by James Michener's **The Drifters**, the characters in **The Kanner Aliyah** lack the crisis-confrontation moment in their lives that elevated Michener's cast to the status of heroes and anti-heroes. They emerge, rather, as translucent foils to the protagonist, bullied and overshadowed by Kanner's myopic self-interest. That is the greatest fault of **The Kanner Aliyah**. Gordon's stylistic merits do little to accommodate for the pitfalls of the story.

## Son of Aw shit!

In last week's **Schlock Tock with Gary Cohen**, due to a proofreading slip-up, actor Troy Donahue was said to have talent. In fact, Troy Donahue has no talent. The Ent. Eds. regret any embarrassment or grief this might have caused Mr. Cohen.