

## Film festival for everyone

by Sean Sunderland

From the tragic to the hilarious, the passionate to the analytical, and the controversial to the sublime, the 9th annual Third World Film Festival has it all.

Sponsored by the Edmonton Learner Centre, this dynamic three day event, starting the evening of March 3rd in the Tory Lecture Theatres, offers over 60 films and videos on a wide ranging scope of international events, peoples and places.

Unlike the typical Hollywood fare that normally pervades our cinematic consciousness, the Third World Film Festival presents an eclectic array of challenging and educational features which cover a number of broad categories. These range from films on Central America, Peace and Disarmament, South Africa and the Middle East to the Environment, Aboriginal Rights, Labour and Women's Issues. Typically, the problem is not finding a film that intrigues you, but rather being swamped by too many choices that run simultaneously.

According to Sara Berger, the publicity coordinator for the Festival, the acquisition and making of these films is often an ordeal unto itself. Many are the product of adventurous and concerned independent filmmakers operating worldwide on shoestring budgets. They are striving to capture that "particular story" which is often ignored by the Western media giants. Case in point, she cites the daring work of local Edmonton filmmaker Lorne Wallace, who recently produced a bold feature on the murdering of teachers in El Salvador called *Where Teachers are Targets*.

Other films tend to be the product of that venerable bastion of unique Canadian filmmaking, the N.F.B. It has financed what will surely be one of the most thought-provoking features of the festival *The World is Watching*. This film goes behind the scenes in Nicaragua in order to show how the large multinational media outlets distort, sterilize, and ultimately program what it is we see on our sanitized nightly news clips. However, if this sounds too Orwellian for you, there are also many examples of the whimsical or humorous to choose from, such as the dryly satirical flick *Nuclear Follies*, which paints an irreverent portrait of life in the "nuclear

age."

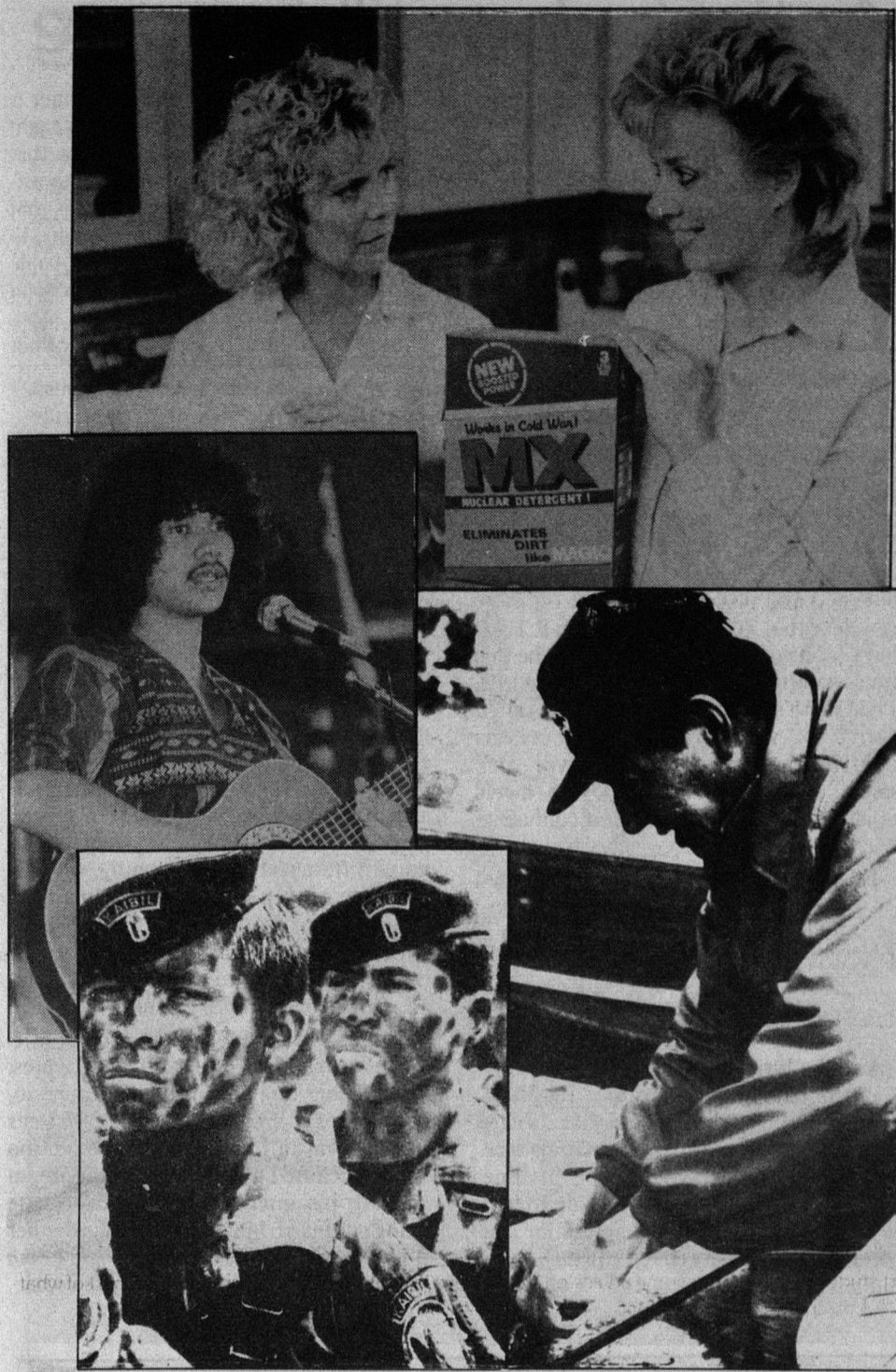
For those who are left speechless at the end of some shows, or just simply want to jaw-around ideas, the Festival has also organized a series of workshops to follow these probing themes. They are open to anyone interested, and will be presided over by various organizations such as Project Ploughshares, CARA, the Alberta Federation of Labour, the Environmental Resource Centre, etc. Furthermore, Phil Esmonde of the South Pacific People's Foundation in Victoria will also be on hand to lead a workshop as a special guest of the Festival.

However, besides the main pursuit of cinematic indulgence, the Festival also offers a number of non-motion picture refreshers too. There will be an International Expo of ethnic arts, crafts and displays, as well as a Third World Photo Exhibit, and an International Food Fair (always a popular item!). For those more activist-minded, various community and developmental organizations such as CUSO, Tools for Peace and Canada World Youth (amongst others) will have booths set up for people to peruse and inquire into.

If music is your game or you want to rest the eyeballs awhile, the acapella group JUBA will be performing throughout the Festival with their haunting mix of South African freedom songs, as well as the Andean folk group Raymihuara. However, the highlight of the weekend for all the party-going souls will surely be the "World Beat Boogie Dance" in the Hub Mall lounge Saturday night.

With such a plethora of exciting activities taking place, the Festival might seem somewhat overwhelming. However, as Kevin Flaherty, the program co-ordinator pointed out to me, "The Festival is a unique entry point for people to get involved in the issues of global justice and international development in a very non-threatening manner. It provides the basis for understanding some of the questions being raised in the headlines that people are not finding satisfactory answers to."

Well, there you have it. For a measly \$12, students can purchase an entire weekend pass to this eclectic event. (Available at all info booths, the Edmonton Learner Centre, or at the door.)



Stills from the Third World Film Festival, clockwise from bottom left: *Under the Gun: Democracy in Guatemala*, *Children of War*, *Nuclear Follies* and *Neguagon — Lac La Croix*. The festival runs this Friday through Sunday.

## Fly sequel just mediocre

*The Fly II* ★★  
Cineplex Eaton Centre

review by Paul Sparrow-Clarke

I know of people who thought that *The Fly*, David Cronenberg's 1986 horror film, was nothing but a parade of slimy, disgusting special effects. In fact, I remember when I was lining up at the box office to buy my ticket, two women, who had obviously just seen the film, stood in front of the poster and loudly exclaimed something to the effect of "...how can they put out that GARBAGE?" It was at that point that I, familiar with David Cronenberg movies as I was, knew that I was in for a good movie. *The Fly* was no mere showcase for makeup effects; it evoked great sympathy for its main character, Seth Brundle, and unfolded with the doomed atmosphere of a classic tragedy. The effects were explicit, certainly, but they were presented within a film of great intelligence and artistic integrity. Cronenberg fanatics had an added bonus, because it fit thematically with his other films, and they could therefore refer to them to better understand what *The Fly* was really about. I doubt that more than 10% of the audiences who saw the film understood what the movie really dealt with ("But the effects were REALLY GROSS, MAN...").

I don't wish to belabour the point here, neither do I want to plunge into a long discussion of what Harlan Ellison terms "the illiterate audience," but the fact is that *The Fly II* proves that I was right about Cronenberg's original (at least I'm convinced, even if you're not). Here we have a

film that is directed by the special effects supervisor for the original (Chris Walas), and has many of the elements of the original film.

There is the doomed hero (Martin Brundle, played by Eric Stoltz), a tragic romance in which the heroine is absolutely helpless to stop her lover's horrible physical transformation, and of course there are excellent, slimy special effects. But it doesn't work. This film doesn't really add anything to the saga, or expand any of the concepts introduced in the original. It's another corporate sequel.

To be perfectly fair to this film, however, it does try very, very hard to be faithful to the original idea. I get the impression that Chris Walas wanted desperately to make a decent film from the mostly mediocre script. In fact, the main reason that I have given *The Fly II* two stars is because it tries so hard. The story is set amidst the sterile technological surroundings of the research facility of Bartok Industries (who, you may recall, were the backers of Seth Brundle's invention). Seth's son is brought up in a controlled environment, being constantly monitored. He exhibits an amazingly accelerated growth rate. When he reaches his teens he falls in love with a young computer programmer. Then the insect part of his genetic makeup activates and the fun begins.

There is a message here, I suppose, about human emotions triumphing amongst the sterile wasteland of the research facility. Eric Stoltz gives a fairly decent performance in the lead role, as does Daphne Zuniga, who plays his love interest. There are



Is it a man or is it a fly? Ann Marie Lee, Frank C. Turner and Lee Richardson witness a strange transformation in *The Fly II*.

many scenes designed to set up sympathy for the couple, but they are mostly just manipulative. Also, when Brundle is eventually transformed into a half human-half insect type thing, there is a horrendous scene where he/it compassionately strokes the head of a "savage" guard dog sent by security guards to maim. This sequence is utterly ludicrous as well as blatant in its attempt to gain our sympathy.

Overall, the best you can say about *The Fly II* is that it really tries to be good. Ultimately, though, it falls far short of its

goals. As with most sequels, one has to question the reasons behind making it all. Well, money obviously. The special effects are great, but so what? I don't pay \$6.50 to see a few good effects scattered in a movie that isn't very good otherwise. In one scene early in the film, a copy of the book *The Shape of Rage: The Films of David Cronenberg* is displayed prominently in the foreground. The writers of the film should have read that book, and maybe they would have learned how to make a decent horror film.