

# Entertainment

"I just want to be pure."  
-Jim Carroll-

## Tin Drum: at last Oskar's Grass roots



Little Oskar and wife toast Tin Drum's belated opening.

### Reg Hunt

There are many reasons why one should see Volker Schlöndorff's film, *The Tin Drum*. Not the least of these is a sequence in which Oskar, the boy who won't grow up, reduces a Nazi rally to chaos simply by playing a toy drum.

It is appropriate that this film, adapted from Gunter Grass' absurdist novel, should be made by Germans. Like Oskar's growth, the arts in Germany were retarded during the Nazi era, part of the period covered by the film.

Though Schlöndorff's style is more conventional than his contemporaries, Herzog and Fassbinder, he is just as radical and his choice of subject matter more relevant to social concerns (e.g. *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*).

His technically excellent film recreates the international city of Danzig in the era between the wars, and during World War Two.

The photography is often visually stunning, the editing unobtrusive and the camera mainly objective except when portraying, from a low angle, Oskar's point of view (as for example, the subjective treatment of his emergence from the womb). The film is long (150 minutes, less in Ontario), and at times moves slowly, more concerned with characteristics and insight than with action.

It is also brutally realistic in its approach to life, including natural functions, sexuality, and man's cruelty to his fellows.

In the course of the film, Oskar's German-Polish family live through war, inflation, depression, occupation, and war. Though they are able to cope with a midgetson, death, and adultery, they fall victim to the dream of *liebenstraum* offered by Hitler, a dream that has no room for their Polish relatives and Jewish neighbours.

Says Oskar, "The German

people wished for Santa Claus. Santa Claus turned out to be the gasman." Oskar is a tiny witness to a pogrom, and is present when his Polish uncle (who may also be his father) draws a winning poker hand just as Polish independence dies under a hail of German bullets.

As his family pays a price for joining the Third Reich, Oskar pays for growing intellectually and emotionally while remaining trapped in a three-year old's body. Even his precious drum and his glass-shattering voice fail to shield him from the world. Midgets live, love, suffer, and die just like big people.

Though Schlöndorff's realism depicts people and events with a blend of comedy, pathos, and irony, he is not always able to approach Grass' sense of the absurd. This may be due, in part, to the difficulties of adapting the long and complex novel into film. The screenplay, written by French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière, was re-written by Schlöndorff and producer Franz Seitz; further dialogue and narration were added by Grass himself.

Despite the script problems, the film plays well, and the only disruptions in the continuity are those caused by cuts demanded by Mary Brown's chickens.

Ironically, the whole censorship controversy has been a waste of time. The people who find the realism and truths of this film offensive would be inclined to walk out long before the "offending" scenes are shown. In other words, neo-Nazis and other authoritarians won't like the film, anyway.



Jennifer Browne and Alan Scarfe after seeing *Excalibur* review.

## Oh, Enrico!

### Stuart Ross

Be an egg. Hop into a frying pan and slide around until your head has hit the sides so many times, you want to rip your brain out.

Or: go down to Theatre Plus and live through their production of Luigi Pirandello's *Enrico IV*. Though seriously flawed in direction and acting, Kurt Reis' adaptation of this plunge into the yolk is nonetheless gripping and effective.

*Enrico IV* is a study of madness and sanity, reality and illusion. Alan Scarfe plays a 20th century man living out his fantasy of being Enrico IV, an 11th century German king.

The extravagant set, designed by Murray Laufer, is fantastically moody—a vividly detailed, surrealized reconstruction of some 11th-century German chambers. It is, perhaps, too distracting and elaborate for the play's purposes. The 'music' (hollow Enoesque chanting and hum), which rises and fades away mysteriously throughout the play, seems contrived and obtrusive initially, but it earns its place by the play's stunning ending.

Much of the acting, unfortunately is quite underwhelming. Jennifer Browne as Frida is embarrassingly high schoolish. She squeals about rather frivolously, unlike the morose character Pirandello created. And much of the time characters seem

to be aimlessly leaping about the stage. And their shoes don't clunk enough.

Old pro Charles Palmer is wonderful as Giovanni, the aging-loyal-servant. His is a sincere and moving performance. Also admirable is Hardee T. Lineham as Landolph, one of Enrico's four young aide/sidekicks. Milton Selzer (you'd know his face) overdoes his role as Dr. Genoni, acting as if he's in a made-for-TV movie. But, he likeable and colourful.

Seasoned actor Alan Scarfe rises above the general level of this production's quality to give a powerful, roaring performance as Enrico. It is Scarfe's convincing wild raving and brilliantly evocative nuances and subtleties that pull this adaptation together and make it a success.

*Enrico IV* is not an easy play by any means. It is demanding of both the audience and the actors. If one can sit through the slow-moving and confusing first act, one will be rewarded (and even more confused, which is Pirandello's aim) with a startling, reeling second act. And the final awesome moment hurtles us into a frightening eternity of uncertainty.

Appearing through Jan. 24 at Theatre Plus (in the St. Lawrence Centre), 35 Front St. E. Phone 869-1255. Get down there, you!

## The angry East

### Suzanne Crough

The York Atlantic Canada Club will be kicking off its Film Series tonight with the controversial NFB film, *Empty Harbours, Empty Dreams*, hard-hitting Maritime vision of 113 years of Confederation. The film's theme is the destruction of the Maritime economy as a premeditated act by Central Canada. Barbara Yaffe of the *Globe and Mail* wrote of the film: "...an angry and one-sided portrayal, but quite on the mark in terms of sentiment prevailing in the region."

YACC president Michael Clow explains that the series was initiated to "let people know about our neck of the woods. We are not the 'Ozarks' of Canada." In addition to giving outsiders a better understanding of Newfoundland and the Maritimes, many of the films will be quite entertaining and will feature some fine shots of Maritime scenery.

Other films being shown in the series include Kent Martin's *Moses Coady*, about the 1920's and 30's social reformer, and the NFB's *Acadia, Acadia*, dealing with the uprising of Acadian students at the University of Moncton in the late 60's.

The YACC, in case you were wondering, is a club designed to provide a social link for Newfoundlanders and Maritimers on campus, and to allow them to "make their presence felt."

*Empty Harbours, Empty Dreams* will be screened tonight at 7 in S203 Ross. It's free, so put down your *Still More Newfie Jokes* and check it out. It will change your view, and it may even terrify you.

For more info, give Michael Clow a call at 638-7095. The sooner the schooner.

## Oops...

Re: "This ain't no disco", an article which appeared in last week's issue. It was incorrectly stated that East Indian dancer Menaka Thakkar teaches at York's Dept. of Dance. In fact, Ms. Thakkar is not, nor has she ever been, a member of York's Dept. of Dance. The date of her performance was also in error. The correct time and place: tonight at 8:00 at Burton Auditorium (and it's free!). The Entertainment Editors apologize for any inconveniences we may have caused Menaka Thakkar and/or our readers.

## Dreams so real

### Elliott Lefko

"Stop The World I Want To Get Off" was the name of an old Broadway musical, but it could easily be the subtitle for *Altered States*, the new Ken Russell film based on the novel by Paddy Chayefsky.

The plot of this fantasy film centres around a soul-searching young man who longs to escape the boundaries and chains of normal perception, and find an 'absolute truth'. The character represents an everyman; from the followers of Charles Darwin who tried to find man's place in the world, to the experiments done by scientists in the '60s with isolation water tanks in which the patient reverted to an infantile state and even re-experience the womb, to, finally, the experiences of the Yaqui Indians and their experiments with mind-expanding peyote.

Chayefsky has rolled all those experiences into the life of one man. We see him as a brilliant scientist who longs to crawl out of his skin and shake hands with God.

Director Russell puts us in his character's shoes as he experiences mind-boggling 'dreams'. Russell brings out every filmic trick to create the images. The special effects are awesome but not distracting from the theme of the film.

If it sounds like *Altered States* is some illustrated documentary, then I'm leaving out the magic of the screenplay which threads the

main character's experiences into a fascinating 'what-if' drama. Along the way he discovers a key to the mysteries he's been seeking. All of the sudden, all the clues that have been dropped begin to fall into place and we begin to slide to the edge of our seats, and our fingernails get shorter and shorter.

Chayefsky's original novel reminds one of *Network*, another of his works that became a film. He finds characters who are constantly being labelled 'crazy' by their neighbours, but the more we study these characters the more we wonder if they've grasped something that we with our normal lifestyles are missing.



ALTERED STATES