

ROM's Italian film festival: from fluff to Fellini

Wertmuller, Visconti, de Sica reacted against "white telephone films"

By S.D. GOLDSTEIN

Coming to the Royal Ontario Museum's (ROM) Repertory Cinema this month will be an Italian Neo-Realist film festival, the ROM's inaugural event of the season.

The series, entitled *Italy: A Country Shaped by Man*, covers a wide variety of known and unknown Italian films, as well as featuring such founding masters as Fellini, Visconti and de Sica.

The Neo-Realist movement began in Italy after World War II; a reaction against the "white telephone films" of the established film industry under the political direction of Mussolini's brother. The films were labelled "white telephone films" because an ornate, white telephone appeared in just about every movie.

The films were generally colossal epics and empty upper-class melodramas. The filmmakers never ventured outside the Cincetta studios to document the real suffering that the war was inflicting on the Italian people. Although the Neo-Realist movement is no longer active, its influence can be found in the works of contemporary Italian directors like Antonioni, Bertolucci and Wertmuller. These directors will also be well-represented at the ROM screenings.



Federico Fellini

The festival will open with the Fellini classic *La Strada* which captured the Academy award for best foreign film in 1954. It stars Anthony Quinn and Fellini's wife.

For those who are interested in good dramatic comedy there are a few noteworthy films. Stand outs include *Love and Anarchy*, by Wertmuller, and Rossellini's *Voyage in Italy*. This film stars Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders as a reserved English couple travelling through Italy.

In *Love and Anarchy*, Wertmuller uses her favorite male star, Giancarlo Giannini, as a poor Italian peasant who sets out to assassinate Mussolini.

If that's not suspenseful enough, Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and *Passenger* (with Jack Nicholson) are both on the festival's list.

Some of the films will be accompanied by lectures by Anthony Vicari, a professor of film studies at the University of Toronto.

Peter Harcourt, a former York film Professor, will also give a slide presentation entitled "Surrealist elements in the work of Fellini." This will take place at the ROM on October 14 at 4 p.m.

The films will be shown on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and twice on Sundays at 4 and 7 p.m. between September 20 and October 28.

Novelist Roch Carrier, author of *La Guerre*, *Yes, Sir* and *Floralie*, *Where Are You*, read at Founders College on Tuesday.

On Release

Last week we saw releases from Canadian playwright and journalist Rick Saultin, and Chalmer's award winner Erika Ritter. Ritter's book *Urban Serawl* (MacMillan), is a collection of humorous pieces on the Canadian social scene, while Saultin's *Marginal Notes* (Lester and Orpen Dennys) is a collection, with commentary, of the best of his journalism over the past decade.

This week, look for the release of Governor General award winner John Gray's first novel *Dazzled* (Irwin Publishing). Gray is best known for his celebrated play, *Billy Bishop Goes To War*.

MoreStuff

Sept. 20 8 p.m.

Margie Gillis' new dance show *New Dreams* is performed tonight through Saturday only, at the Music Hall Theatre, 147 Danforth Ave. Tickets at Bass: \$10 and \$12.50. Further information: 862-7267.

Sept. 22

Toronto Early Music Centre, an organization devoted to the promotion and performance of early Renaissance and Baroque music, makes its debut with an afternoon fund-raising fair and evening concert. The Centre is located at 519 Church St. (at Wellesley). Tickets for the 8 p.m. concert are \$12, (\$8 for students), while the afternoon fair, which includes workshops and instrument demonstrations, costs \$5.

Musical instrument designer Gayle Young presents a talk on Canadian Electronic Music pioneer Hugh LeCaine at the Ontario Science Centre. The lecture is free with admission to the Centre.

Sept. 25 8:30 p.m.

Three playwrights read at York Quay Centre. John Gray, author of *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, and Erika Ritter, author of *Automatic Pilot* will both read from their latest prose offerings. Also on hand will be American playwright Wendy Wasserstein, author of the current off-Broadway hit *Isn't It Romantic*.

Sept. 26 8:30 p.m.

Toronto Free Theatre presents the Toronto premiere of *DOC*, the Sharon Pollock play, directed by Guy Sprung. *DOC* is the story of a small town doctor who has sacrificed the happiness of his family in the service of his profession, and of the ghosts which arise with the return home of his daughter. Previews begin tonight. Opens Oct. 3 through to Nov. 4. Tickets: \$6-\$12. 26 Berkeley Street. 368-2858.

David French's *Salt-Water Moon* opens Tarragon Theatre's new season. A lyrical romance set in the enclosed world of the outpost, the play is directed by Bill Glassco. Previews begin tonight. Opens Oct. 2 through to Nov. 4. Tickets: \$6-\$12. 30 Bridgman Ave. 531-1827.



records



Spandau Ballet—*Parade* (MCA)

This band is one which has experienced a radical transformation in the last two years. One of the pioneers of the 'blitz' movement in the U.K., Spandau Ballet is now a fledgling member of pop music's glamorous establishment, and their music seems to suffer for it.

The aggressive bass lines and sparse instrumentation of the band's earlier albums has given way to the glitter and flash of the '80's formula, complete with slick, echoed vocals, a prominent horn section, and Bee Gees' style vocal harmonies.

Any attempt at musical statement seems to have gone right out the

window. Though some of the tracks are first rate for dancing, they leave much to be desired in just about every other category.

Spandau Ballet now play blatant formula pop, while enjoying the somewhat dubious distinction of drawing up the blue prints so many other bands are following to success.

Still, there are some songs here that are so infectious you can almost forgive their vacuous lyrics. 'Only When You Leave' is a joyous piece of nonsense, and while the lyrics are nothing short of ridiculous, we should remember that many 'classic' pop songs don't mean a hell of a lot either. Just try writing down the words to 'Twist and Shout' if you don't believe me.

The whole of side one, in fact, is as enjoyable as it is meaningless, though one wonders about the sanity of whoever decided to print the words to the songs on the inside sleeve. Last year's *True* had a similar effect on the listener, though it was able to sustain the energy for the full eight tracks. *Parade*, unfortunately, does not.

The second side is a complete dud and makes the record sound like a rush job calculated to capitalize on Spandau Ballet's growing popularity.

And while it will probably do just that, it is just as likely to nail down the lid on whatever artistic potential this band once had.

—Kevin Connolly

Sacred Cowboys—*Sacred Cowboys* Fringe Records

When will this Jim Morrison fixation end? First we have Ian McCulloch doing his Rich Little versions of 'the Lizard King,' and now lead vocalist Gary Gray's less successful attempts with Sacred Cowboys. Someone should tell these guys, slowly and deliberately IT'S BEEN DONE, and 20 years ago at that.

While many Morrison songs remain relevant today, and the so-called British 'Cold Wave' has contributed some intriguing and innovative variations on late '60s psychedelia, Sacred Cowboys fall into a considerably less laudable crowd of 'copy cats'. They pass off sensationalist lyrics about dark holes, twisted nerves, and various other mental hobgoblins as some sort of prophetic social statement.

What this album amounts to is sheer nonsense with only current musical fashion affording it any greater dignity than the vapid drivel of heavy metal bands.

Most of the songs are a cacophonous junkheap of bass and drums with Gray sounding like he recorded the vocals in a storm drain with a mouth full of toothpaste. Only on *Nothing grows in Texas* and *Nailed to the Cross*, two rip offs in the *Rank and File* country-punk vein, does the band become even moderately listenable.

The lyrics are just more of the clichéd wailings about doom and

destruction we've all heard 20 times too often, but perhaps never quite as foolishly as on *Pay for it*:

"That rope pulls tighter
Kick a chair out from under your feet
Feel the angels wing
Beating against your face

Pay for it in the next life
Pay for it in the next life . . ."

I guess the 'deep' message here is that we've got to live for the moment in this zany, brink-of-the-apocalypse world of ours. Here today, gone tomorrow, eh guys?

In the case of Sacred Cowboys, we can always hope.

—Kevin Connolly



Black Flag
My War
(SST Records)

Part of the novelty of punk music was the shock and revulsion it

generated. But ever since punk culture was absorbed by the bourgeois fashion industry, it has failed to shock.

No so with Black Flag. Their latest album, *My War*, is hard-core punk—ugly and obscene.

My War has all the trademarks of razor blade 'n' dog collar music: loud, blurry guitar strumming and sado-masochistic lyrics accompanied by screaming. At times vocalist Henry Rollins' screams sound like cries of demonic possession.

However, what is most frightening about Black Flag is their sincerity. This group is not in the music business for profit, and the self-mutilation is not a gimmick. This is a band which encourages the audience to shower spit on the stage.

The lyrics in *My War* are spattered with violence and perversion. Yet Black Flag does not exploit these elements, as does pornography, for the purpose of titillation. For Black Flag, violence and perversion are simply part of life. Their tortured screams are the screams of a decaying society:

When I touch my knife, I feel the power.
I look in the mirror and I wanna destroy her.
I love you.

I gave you my life, but what did I get back?
Now it's time to take it back.
I love you.

—Paul Pivato