

# Wormwood's dog and monkey show

by Billy Dodge

"This is the only print of tonight's film distributed in Canada and for those of you who may be 'in to skin' tones, you will probably detect some inconsistency . . ." You are listening to the eclectic film buff Gordon Parsons introducing one of Wormwood's recent weekend screenings.

An ex-rock and roll drummer from Toronto on the road to psychic rehabilitation, Gordon came to the rescue of Halifax's dismal cinematographic art life three years ago. With the support of the Atlantic Film-Maker's Co-op which he is currently the director of, he rented out a small, rarely-used theatre in the National Film Board. Then with all the labour pains and devotion of a hard-core celluloid junkie, he gave birth to Wormwood's Repertoire Cinema. The rest is local history replete with political intrigue.

By hook or by crook Gordon kept the non-profit oriented, "alternative" cinema alive, despite threats of legal action by the N.S. Amusements Regulations Board (ARB) for violation of a provincial law. The bone of contention between the ARB and Wormwood arose in June of last year and closed the cinema for two months much to the dismay of local film fans.

The law prohibits the business operation of a 16mm film theatre anywhere within a five-mile radius of a large commercial 35mm cinema, unless it takes the form of a club, i.e. with memberships.



This conflict of interest has still not been completely resolved but the government has graciously left Wormwood's cinema to work its way "around" what appears to be a poorly defined area of the law.

What all this history amounts to is the freedom for local film enthusiasts to pick and choose whatever they fancy from Wormwood's monthly screen-menus. The charge for single admissions is usually \$1.50 but may vary slightly depending on the

rental cost of the film.

September's gala presentation of eastern European films is well worth the price of admission judging from the Polish and Hungarian films screened so far. All express political concerns in a rich, poetic film language. "The Wedding" written by Polish playwright Stanislaw Wyspianski and directed by Andrzej Wajda, centres around the wedding celebration of a poet and country girl who symbolically unite the intelligentsia and peasantry. The film leads the audience through a subject-

ive landscape of images and voices. Dizzying technical effects enhance the disordering of one's senses throughout this orgy of drinking, singing and dancing and help to make the transitions from reality to dream smooth and convincing.

The other Hungarian film, "The Falcons" directed by Istvan Gaal is an easy nominee for Wormwood's Best Film of the Month. This story about a camp of falconers under the authority of a head trainer,

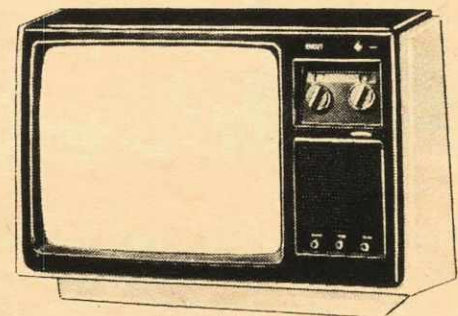
evolves into a poignant allegory about civilized society possessed by a cruel will. In a breakfast scene, Lilik the head trainer explains to his men that the death of one of his birds was a result of its continual brooding and crying over not having a long enough leash. Lilik had to finally silence the bird by giving it an extra-long leash. During the previous night a bad rain storm flooded the falcons' roost and the men had to work frantically to save the birds. All survived except for this one troublesome bird which slipped somehow in the down-pour and was strangled by its extra-long leash.

"The leash means a framework, order, security, the taming of anarchy," says Lilik, pacing methodically around the breakfast table while his subordinates clamour in agreement. Listening to Lilik's words it is easy to sympathize with the political messages of east European film-makers living under the shadow of Russian authority.

If these films sound enticing, you'll probably enjoy the rest of the September series. "The Story of Sin" by Polish director Walerian Borowczyk is a must-see for those of you familiar (or unfamiliar) with "Blanche". Wormwood's Repertoire Cinema is located at 1572 Barington Street. Screen-times are usually at 7:00 and 9:30, Friday and Saturday nights.

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