

# Society presents Japanese film

Film Society presents (Ncibi) *Fires on the Plain*, February 3 and 4, Tilley Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.

This is a Japanese film directed by Kon Ichikawa (b. 1915) in 1959. Like Frank Capra the director began his career as a cartoonist. As I am not familiar with Ichikawa's work I do not know if the comparison goes any further. He is quite well-known in the West for at least two films: *The Burmese Harp* (1956) and *Tokyo Olympiad* (1965).

*Fires on the Plain* was adapted by Ichikawa's wife, Natto Wada, from the novel by Shahei Ooka that is said to be the greatest piece of Japanese fiction to come out of World War 2. Western audiences have frequently found the film risible despite (or possibly because of) its stark subject matter which includes cannibalism. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* found it "horrible" and "repulsive" so I am inclined to expect it to be delightful and

attractive. Pauline Kael, whom I respect, calls it a masterpiece. She continues: "It has the disturbing power of great art: it doesn't leave you quite the same. A few hours after seeing it, or a few days or weeks, it rushes up and overwhelms you. If Dostoyevsky had been a film maker telling his Grand Inquisitor story with a camera, it might have been much like this great visual demonstration that men are not brothers. *Fires on the Plain*, this subject

does not seem at all strange or bizarre: it seems, rather, to be basic. When violence is carried to the extremes of modern war, cannibalism may appear to the ultimate truth.

The setting is Leyte. Tamura, the hero, is one of the stragglers of the disintegrating retreating Japanese army - terrified of the Americans, the Filipinos, and each other. Tamura walks across the plain unharmed because he is already a dead man; he is tubercular, no one wants his flesh. In the middle of this desolation, there are bonfires - ambiguous flames in the distance that kindle hope. (Perhaps they are signal fires? Perhaps Filipino farmers are burning corn husks? Perhaps there is still some normal life going on?) At the end Tamura approaches the flames and the last illusion is dispelled.

It is not merely about World War II, or the experiences on Leyte; it is not an anti-war film in the usual sense. We see no causes, no cures, no enemy; it goes beyond nationalism or patriotism. All men are enemies. It is a post-nuclear-war film - a vision of the end, the final inferno. And oddly, when survival is the only driving force, when men live only to live, survival comes to seem irrelevant.

There is a fiendish irony involved in the physical condition of the hero: he alone can be a

hero - act human - because he can't save his own life anyway. He can be human because he is beyond self-interest; he becomes a Japanese Christ-figure. Tamura, so close to death, is passionately - instinctively and intellectually - committed to the amenities of humanity and civilization. He shares his potatoes with another man because this is how men behave; he refuses to eat human flesh because this practice is a destruction of human behavior. It is the only place left to draw the line: Tamura has been degraded in every way; he has murdered a helpless, terrified girl, but cannibalism is the final degradation. It is the line he will not cross: it becomes the only remaining dividing line, not between man and beast but between beast and beast who clings to the memory, the idea of man. Tamura's rejection of cannibalism is the only morality left. Yet, in the circumstances, his behavior - obsessed with the image of man - is what is called "unrealistic"; that is to say, in total war, man preserves himself (if he is lucky) only by destroying his humanity. Nothing is left."

Next Presentation: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Feb. 10 and 11) *A Must for World War One buffs* - Lewis Milestone's classic 1930 version of Remarque's famous novel.

## CBC seeks Canadian talent

CBC Radio's Music Department has launched National Auditions to discover new Canadian concert talent and rediscover seldom heard established professional musicians.

Auditions for serious music solo performers or ensembles up to and including quintets will be held in various CBC regions in the spring and fall of this year. Brochures outlining Auditions rules may be obtained from CBC stations or by writing Ms. Heather Wood Smith, Festivals and Special Events, CBC Radio Music, Box 500, Station A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1E6.

"The growth of professional music-making in Canada has been phenomenal in the last 10 years," says Robert Sunter, Head of CBC Radio Music. "CBC Radio Music has

tried to keep pace with this development, but at the same time it has been extremely difficult to expose all the young Canadian talent. Some of our young artists have been around for years, but have not been broadcast on CBC Radio as often as we would like.

"With the National Auditions, we intend to keep abreast of the development of young musicians, and to showcase them on our CBC Radio networks."

The CBC's National Auditions are open to Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. Entrants must have proof of a minimum of three professional engagements. Artists who have been broadcast nationally by the CBC within the past three years are not eligible.

Candidates in each audition centre are judged before a three-member panel comprising two CBC producers and one external juror of national stature. Their program, which must last from 20 to 30 minutes, should be varied, and must include at least one Canadian composition.

Successful applicants will be recorded for broadcast on the CBC Stereo network. Unsuccessful applicants may re-apply after 12 months.

Deadlines for CBC Radio Music's National Auditions are March 1 for spring 1978, and October 15 for fall 1978.

Applicants under 30 are also eligible to enter the CBC Radio Talent Competition.

## Is Lord Byron a writer?

Two experimental programs examining the creative process from interesting angles will be presented in the next Signature broadcast, on CBC Stereo Thursday, Feb. 23, at 9:04 p.m. (9:34 nst). It will be repeated on CBC-AM Radio Sunday, Feb. 26, at 1:05 p.m. est, cst, 2:05 ast, 2:35 nst, 4:05 pst. Executive producer: Digby Peers.

The first hour is entitled *Who Did It Then?* A 30-minute drama focuses realistically on the lives and conflicts of today's youth. The action takes place in a high school where an incident touches off a series of interactions between administration and students. In the second half-hour, students, the writer, and one of the actors examine the drama's incidents

and relationships in the light of day-to-day experience, and look at radio as a vehicle for social commentary. Production: Pat MacFarlane. Script: Lili Barnes.

The second hour is *The Trial of Lord Byron*, a fascinating BBC experiment in biography by Laurence Kitchin. Hugh Burden is heard as Counsel for the Prosecution, James McKechnie as Counsel for the Defence, and Rachel Gurney as Lady Byron.

"Is Lord Byron a writer also?" asks the Greek witness in this investigation of Byron's character in the form of a legal enquiry. And it is a fair question, for Byron owed and owes his fame as much to his life as to his writings. He won and broke innumerable hearts, exercised an enormous personal fascination, and died in Greece for the cause of liberty. His shadow lies across the whole of European literature in the first half of the 19th century.

When Byron died, Jane Welsh wrote to Thomas Carlyle, her future husband: "If they had said the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens, it could not have struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words: Byron is dead." When he heard the tragic news about Byron, the boy Tennyson rushed grief-stricken into a wood and carved those same three words on a stone.

Yet Byron was vain, capricious and spiteful. He was supremely egocentric, and his sexual life was unconventional in the extreme. Calling witnesses who knew Byron and others from the 20th century, *The Trial of Lord Byron* asks history for its verdict on this extraordinarily gifted man.

## Bee Gees 12/76

Here's a review of yet another of the double albums on the market, this one, by the Bee Gees, was recorded live at the Los Angeles Forum (for you trivia freaks, the recording date was Dec. 20, 1976.)

Side one opens with "I've gotta get a message to you", one of their older hits. Next is the more recent "Love So Right". After this is close to a minute of applause, followed by a short welcome to the crowd by one of the Gibb Brothers (I believe it is Barry but I'm not really sure.) The next song is "Edge of the Universe" which did very well as a single at about the same time as the album was being released "Come on Over", a song which most people would credit to Olivia Newton-John, but it was written by the Gibb Brothers and they do an excellent job of it here. "Can't Keep a Good Man Down" closes out this side.

Side two is a medley of their older material which includes "New York Mining Disaster 1941", "Run to Me", "World", "Holiday", "I can't see Nobody", "I started a Joke", "Massachusetts", "How can you mend a broken heart", and "To Love Somebody". All these make for an excellent side of music that will really be appreciated by older Bee Gees fans.

Side three starts with the upbeat, stretched out (9:20) "You Should be Dancing", which, along with the next song, "Boogie Child", crossed over to the disco

(ugh!) market although they aren't really disco songs. Next is the not so well known "Down the Road", which is a good middle of the road song. Another of the Bee Gees golden oldies, "Words", closes out this side.

Side four begins with the upbeat "Wind of Change", followed by more of their newer material in the form of "Nights on Broadway" and "Jive Talking" which suffered the same fate as the first two songs on side three. The side (and album) closes out with that old favorite "Lonely Days" which is really well done.

All in all, this is an excellent album with about a 50-50 split in the material (older and newer and/or fast or slow). An album to be appreciated by all Bee Gees fans, both old and new. Sorry, the 11.98 suggested list price doesn't include a poster but the inside of the album has an interesting photo.

More trivia - Bee Gees band - Barry Gibb (Guitar & Vocals), Robin Gibb (vocals), Maurice Gibb (bass guitar & vocals), Dennis Byron (drums), Blue Weaver (Keyboards) and Alan Kendall (lead Steel Guitars).

Guest Musicians - Geoff Westley (keyboards), Joe Lala (percussion) Joey Murcia (guitar) and the "B-neroo Horns".

Next week's review will be - Billy Joel - "The Stranger".

Well until next week, remember ... "DISCO SUCKS".

### CHSR TOP 30

- 1) Slip Slidin' Away - Paul Simon - Columbia (6)
- 2) You're In My Heart - Rod Stewart - Warner Bros. (2)
- 3) You Make Loving Fun - Fleetwood Mac - Warner Bros (8)
- 4) We're All Alone - Rita Coolidge - A & M (5)
- 5) Baby What A Big Surprise - Chicago - Columbia (1)
- 6) Blue Bayou - Linda Ronstadt - Asylum (3)
- 7) Your Smiling Face - James Taylor - Columbia (7)
- 8) Come Sail Away - Styx - A & M (12)
- 9) You Light Up My Life - Debby Boone - Warner Bros (4)
- 10) As - Stevie Wonder - Mowtown - (15)
- 11) Money Money Money - Abba - Atlantic (10)
- 12) Desiree - Neil Diamond - Columbia (17)
- 13) Hey Deanie - Shaun Cassidy - Warner Bros (13)
- 14) Short People - Randy Newman - Warner Bros (-)
- 15) Gettin' Ready For Love - Dianna Ross - Mowtown (19)
- 16) Calling Occupants - Carpenters - A & M (9)
- 17) Turn to Stone - ELO - United Artists (18)
- 18) Nobody Does It Better - Carly Simon - Elektra (11)
- 19) Wrap Your Arms Around Me - KC & The Sunshine Band - TK (26)
- 20) We Are The Champions - Queen - Elektra (37)
- 21) We're Off You Know - Klaatu - Daffodil (27)
- 22) Grandmother's Song - Steve Martin - Warner Bros (-)
- 23) She's Not There - Santana - Columbia (40)
- 24) Thunder In My Heart - Leo Sayer - Warner Bros. (14)
- 25) Drowning In The Sea Of Love - Ringo Starr - Atlantic (28)
- 26) Closer To The Heart - Rush - Anthem (22)
- 27) Your Backyard - Burton Cummings - Portrait (31)
- 28) Love At Your Convenience - Alice Cooper - Warner Bros (29)
- 29) So You Win Again - Hot Chocolate - Big Tree (25)
- 30) Tried To Love - Peter Frampton - A&M (30)

—Compiled by MARC PEPIN

