

Klich's pix of student flix

By STAN KLICH

Student film productions have the reputation of ranging from bad to worse. However, last Wednesday this proved to be a misconception at the screening of the "Best of York Student Films" at Nat Taylor Cinema.

The documentaries were the second in a series of four weekly screenings of films being presented by the department of film and video. Two of the films, *You Could Be The One* and *State of Mind*, are award-winning productions from the CBC Telefest competition for radio, film and television students.

Focussing on the release of psychiatric patients from major mental health centres in Toronto, *State of Mind* investigates the personal crisis that the patients are faced with when they try to integrate themselves into the community.

Produced by Paul Sarrousy, *State of Mind* consists solely of interviews with former mental patients who are attempting to etch out lives in a vicious circle of shabby rooming houses, unemployment and broken dreams. Receiving an honourable mention for cinematography at Telefest '85, an honourable mention at the Tel Aviv Film Festival and having been shown at the CILECT International Student Festival in

Czechoslovakia, *State of Mind* lived up to its publicity, proving to be an excellent documentary.

You Can Be The One, produced by John De Corso, deals with the tragic consequences of drinking and driving. It was constructed in the same manner as most drinking and driving documentaries, showing the lives of both parties after an impaired driving accident.

The other documentaries, *Flying Light* and *Burning Bridges*, provided short but interesting insights into the world of ultralight flying and the cultural shock of Indian women as they move from India to Canada respectively.

The screenings are organized by the Chairman of the film department Ted Dancyger and his administrative assistant Etta Rutherford, who have planned one more screening to be held on Wednesday, October 29. *Welcome to the Parade*, produced by Stuart Clarfield and Peter Melvychuk, is a full length feature film that was shown in Toronto's Festival of Festivals and in Montreal's Film Festival.

When asked about the nature of the presentation of the "Best of York Student Films," Rutherford said, "We felt we would like to screen some of our best student productions," and later added that "they're terrific, entertaining films and anyone who sees them would really enjoy themselves."

York's film department has an impressive number of award-winning films. Winning awards in CBC's Telefest competition has been a consistent trait of the department since 1981 and from the films presented at the screening of October 15 it is easy to see why.



A BEER FOR SOME BE-BOP: Jazz great Dexter Gordon (left, with Francois Cluzet) gives a realistic performance in Bertrand Tavernier's *Round Midnight*. Martin Scorsese makes a cameo appearance as the clubowner of *The Birdland*.

Tavernier succeeds in tribute to America's "real geniuses"

By WYNDHAM PAUL WISE

Round Midnight is based on the life story of the great American be-bop pianist Bud Powell, who spent the last years of his life playing in the cabarets of Paris. Although burnt out and sometimes incapable of saying more than five or six words a week, Powell became a legendary jazz musician during the late '50s.

French director Bertrand Tavernier, responsible for the exquisitely beautiful *A Sunday in the Country*, has taken Powell's story and made what is possibly the best film to date about jazz and the demands this particular art form makes on its major players.

Round Midnight stars Dexter Gordon, an actual jazz musician, who gives an extraordinary performance as the fictional Dale Turner, a saxophonist who leaves the ghettos of New York for the relative freedom of Paris in 1959. He plays nightly in the Club Blue Note and drinks daily in his hotel room, bumming francs from whomever he can. His freedom is restricted by harsh immigration laws coupled with a more subtle form of racism than the kind he experienced in Harlem.

Dale is befriended by a worshipful graphic artist, Francis (Francois Cluzet), who eventually provides him with a warm apartment and some semblance of family life. After a number of lengthy bouts with alcohol and a great deal of outstanding jazz and be-bop at the Blue Note, Dale sobers up and returns to New York with Francis. There he plays the legendary club, *The Birdland*, but soon it is obvious that he will return to the same cycle of drugs and booze and Francis reluctantly leaves his friend in New York and returns to Paris.

The centrepiece of the film is, of course, the music. Jazz and be-bop was the music of slavery and revolt, and along with country and western, it is the only original musical form to emerge from America. Director Tavernier has said, "To me, be-bop musicians are the real geniuses of America, the continuation of the classical tradition of Debussy, Bartok and Ravel. They created the only music in America

that has never been co-opted or bastardized by the system. Thelonius Monk used to say that if you really understand the meaning of be-bop, you understand the meaning of freedom."

Herbie Hancock, who plays a cameo role as the pianist at the Blue Note, arranged and conducted the score which is interwoven with such standards as "As Time Goes By," "Autumn in New York" and Hancock's own "Watermelon Man," all beautifully performed by Gordon. Sandra Reaves-Phillips gives a rousing impromptu version of Bessie Smith's "Put It Right Here." Film director Martin Scorsese, whose *New York New York* essayed the same cultural territory with considerably less success, plays a small part as the manager of *The Birdland*.

Rarely has there been such an honest look at black culture on film. The mere fact that producer Irwin Winkler (*Rocky I-IV*) was able to sell such a difficult subject to Warner Bros. without the use of a major black star like Eddie Murphy or Whoopi Goldberg is a minor miracle in itself.

Round Midnight flows with the lyricism of *A Sunday in the Country*, and deals with similar concerns of the death of an artist. However, instead of the brilliant sunlight that characterized *A Sunday*, *Round Midnight* is shot in the dark blue hues of midnight. Art director Alexandre Trauer, whose previous credits include *The Children of Paradise*, has built a set that beautifully recreates the details and atmosphere of smoky bars and the streets of Paris.

Round Midnight is not an easy film, unless you are a jazz aficionado, nor is it a happy one. It is, nevertheless, an extraordinary piece of work. Dexter Gordon's performance is mesmerizing, and while it takes some time to adjust to his rhythms and speech patterns, once that's been achieved, the whole film takes on the same rhythm.

Dizzie Gillespie said of be-bop, "It is the most serious music ever made in America and a lot of people died for it." *Round Midnight* is a moving homage to those people and a landmark in the short history of jazz.

Theatre behind the Iron Curtain It's tough to get fired in Berlin

By KEN KEOBKE

Imagine graduating. Imagine getting a job. Imagine having that job until you retire at 65 on a fat pension. Now, imagine everyone else gets the same deal. Is it utopia? More importantly, does it produce good theatre? Last Friday, Rolf Rohmer discussed the idea with an overflow crowd of theatre students in Atkinson Auditorium.

Rohmer is another of the distinguished Brecht scholars in town for this month's Brecht Festival. He has balanced a professional career, running one of the largest of East Germany's theatres as director of a major theatre school. He has also made four trips to Canada, due partly to his duties as president of the World Encyclopedia of Theatre.

The development and structure of theatre in East Germany is quite different from other countries. By the 18th century, there was already a wide system of community created and financed theatres throughout the country.

Along with this view of theatre, came the idea of lifelong employment. As then, an actor now begins in his twenties playing in crowd scenes, plays Hamlet in his thirties, Macbeth in his middle age and King Lear before retiring to a government pension, all the while teaching and learning with others in a company which may include 90 actors and a support staff of 330.

Many Canadian actors spend 50 percent of their time preparing for or attending gruelling auditions and the thought of never having to worry about them again sent murmurs of awe through the crowd. Along with the murmurs came decisions to start learning German.

But there are problems and Rohmer was very frank in explaining them. Young people with

an interest in theatre and a state-assessed aptitude in the arts have a chance to audition once a year to the major schools that train them for four years (five years for musical theatre and dancing).

The schools then recommend each student, on basis of ability, to a theatre company where they must stay for three years. From here on in, it is virtually impossible to be fired. After the three years, an actor can apply to transfer to a more prestigious theatre, supposedly continuing the process until one reaches one of the theatres in Berlin.

Berlin is the place to work. Along with the large productions, there are (state approved) moonlighting jobs in radio and television and all the prestige and social and economic benefits that come from living in the big city.

But what happens when a worker assigned to a theatre in Berlin is lazy yet knows he can't be fired? Rohmer acknowledged that some actors have gone in each day collecting their salary although they have not acted in 15 years. Directors, also on salary, don't have to worry about the success of their shows affecting their future employment. Directors can also become disillusioned and frustrated with having to work with the same group of actors till death do them part.

Playwrights have a great range of opportunities. Some are attached to state theatre companies, others freelance and others are supported by the state controlled writer's union. However, most eventually run into trouble with East Germany's cultural policy which dictates what can be written and performed. Basically, nothing can be done if it seems politically critical of the state. Rohmer says it is a problem, but that the situation is improving.

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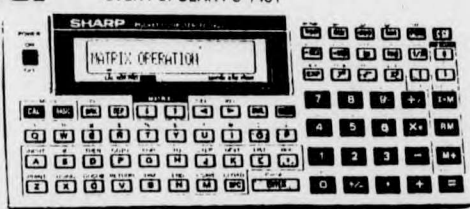
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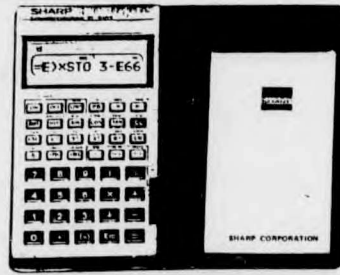
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