

Hungarian films finally surfacing

Despite acquiring acclaim at recent, major international film festivals, Hungarian films have been difficult, if not impossible to view in North America. This year however, festivals in New York and Chicago have offered, for the first time, retrospectives of Hungarian cinema. Now, Edmonton joins these cities as the Varscona Theatre presents its own Hungarian retrospective film festival.

From the 23 to the 30, the Varscona, with the aid of its distributor (New Cinema Enterprises of Toronto), is showing eight films from Hungary. The films are from the last seven years (most of them from 1977 and 1978), and are reflective of the healthy artistic climate of the East European countries, as well as the burgeoning film industry of Hungary.

Hungary's film industry seems to be an effective alliance between filmmakers and the state bureaucracy. Film school graduates gain practical experience within the Bela Balazs Studio system. The studio is funded by the Ministry of Culture whose influence is felt primarily at the time of distribution. The Ministry can prevent a film from being distributed but they exercise very little control over what kinds of films are made. This provides the young filmmaker with the freedom to work at and develop his



The Hungarians

literary adaptations, or with contemporary life. The latter is becoming more popular as old taboos are gradually relaxed and Hungarian filmmakers are free to cautiously explore subjects such as the disintegration of the nuclear family, housing shortages and the oppression of women.

The diversity of Hungarian cinema is revealed in the eight films to be shown at the Varscona. *The Hungarians*, nominated in 1979 for best foreign film, is divided into four movements, each one corresponding to a season. Within this framework is told the story of Hungarian peasant-farmers who leave Hungary to work on a large German estate during the second world war. Eventually they must make a moral decision about whether to remain in Germany and eventually acquire land, or to return to Hungary.

A Quite Ordinary Life is the story of an old peasant woman whose life turns out to be anything but ordinary as she journeys to London to see her son one last time before she dies. Another film, *Happy New Year* is a comedy about a New Year's celebration that turns an old friendship sour.

As with all the foreign films shown at the Varscona, these films will be sub-titled. This Hungarian Film Retrospective is an excellent opportunity to view films that, until recently, were unobtainable in North America.



Happy New Year

skills.

Once a film director has gained experience at BBS, he may go on to work for any (or all) of Hungary's four feature film studios, none of which is very different from any other. Each has an advisory committee of film-experienced members, and each receives a sufficient budget to allow them to produce about four feature films a year. At all times there is ongoing consultation between the advisory committee and the filmmaker over approval of ideas and so the process of making a film is one of constant negotiation.

There have traditionally been three trends in Hungarian cinema: documentary, fictional and experimental. A recent development has been the combination of cinema verite (hand-held cameras, natural lighting, location shootings) and narrative story lines.

Hungarian cinema tends to be humanistic in theme: dealing with aspects of Hungarian history, with



A Quite Ordinary Life

Major Canadian poet coming to read

It's clear that Susan Musgrave is being heard and that people like what they hear. English poet Ted Hughes calls her "one of Canada's most authentic and accomplished voices." George Woodcock says her "poems are clearly worth the effort they demand."

At noon, on Monday the 26th, interested persons will get a chance to judge for themselves when Musgrave reads her poetry in AV-L3 of the

Humanities Centre.

Musgrave is the author of six books of poetry (one of these a book for children, *Gullband*). Her latest collection is *A Man to Marry, A Man to Bury* (M & S).

Ms. Musgrave is a practised reader of her own poetry who has given many readings across the country during the past nine years. Her reading is sponsored by The League of Canadian Poets, the Students' Union and The Department of English at the U of A.

Rough Cuts

by Diane Young

I heard a Christmas story the other day.

There is a house in Edmonton with 25 foot high ceilings, and every year the woman who lives in this house goes out and buys a 20 foot high Christmas tree. I don't know how she manages to get it home, but she does. Her husband puts it up, and the wife gets a ladder and decorates the whole thing with tinsel and lights and glass and silver balls.

The punch line is that every year, when the husband is confronted with the chore of raising this monster of a tree, he asks his wife if she doesn't think it is time they moved. To a house, I assume, where the ceilings are lower.

I wrote a whole column on this story, a whole column about men and women, and by the time it was finished all I knew was that this was perhaps the murkiest topic I could have chosen.

It's funny how everything that seems simple gets horribly complicated. The Christmas story, for example, was told to prove the point that men — are just little boys. Underneath.

Now, I could take that story and pull it to pieces. Does the wife have to take care of a lot of children at Christmas, or have they all left home? If they have all left, do they bring *their* children to visit? Does the wife, then, have to clean the house, bake three Christmas cakes and six dozen cookies, and get up early every morning to cook breakfast? Who buys all the presents? Who wraps them? Does the husband have a bad back? Does the tree stand in a big, solid base, or does the Christmas-tree-holder have two legs that are relatively stable and one that wobbles? Does the wife nag about needles falling on the carpet, or does the husband vacuum them up himself?

The story concerns not merely a man and a woman, but a man and a woman *at Christmas*, which is one more complication. Somehow, holidays bring out the worst in people.

Finally, the point. Men and women are first of all human beings. As such, they share certain characteristics: they get hurt, they feel pain, they laugh, they wonder, they try to understand.

But, even though I am a person, and men are people, I don't understand men. Women, on the other hand, I find pretty easy to understand.

I like talking to women; I don't have to explain everything to them; they know what I'm talking about. For example, last year I was reading poetry that spoke of the *power of woman*.

You know the stuff I mean. We catch men in our amorous nets and they are lost. Drained of their strength. (We laughed ourselves silly.)

I feel uncomfortable being the object of all this imputed power. As far as I can see, I'm just struggling along with my multitude of failings like everyone else.

But I talked to men about the idea.

I don't know how to make you believe, but they said (not just suggested, not merely implied) that it was true.

I don't know what to say about this.

We'll talk about it next week.

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