Detroit music dominates Toronto's film festival

BY MARTIN BANDYKE AND KIM SILARSKI

Quick - name the Detroit musicians whose back catalog contains more number one records than The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys and Elvis Presley combined. Yep, combined.

and Erris Pressey Comonned. rep, combined.

The Plank Brothers, the session musicians who provided the instrumental backdrop on dezens of Mctown hits during the 1960's, claim that title in the new film Standing in the Shadows of Motown, just one of several movies with Detroit and Michigan ties being featured at this year's Dronot International Film Festival, which continues through Standay, Sept. 14.
Shadows will have its Detroit debut in November, but will likely reach Motown fans around the word as a result of its Tronto presentation.

Several of the Funk Brothers, including the incredible bassist James Jamerson, have passed away, but filmmaker Paul Justman was bucky enough to interview drummer Richard "Pistof" Allen shortly before his death this year for this long overdue documentary.

Detroit music history is also spotlighted in MCS'A True Testimonial, the story of the seminal 1960s rock gred occumentary.

Detroit music history is also spotlighted in MCS'A True Testimonial, the story of the seminal 1960s rock gred sound as well as its banned records, arrest records and its ability to attent the interest of the FBI.

Fillmunker David A. Thomas combined.
The Funk Brothers, the ses-

was too late to interview lead vocalist Rob Tyner and guitarist Field Smith (husband of rocker Pattl Smith), both deceased, but former manager John Sinclair, surviving band members and others including the See Pistols John Gohnny Rotten Lydon offer their recollections in this highly anticipated work.

8 Mile, the big sereen acting debut of Detroit's infamous and incredibly successful rapper Eminem, gets a screening at Toronto this year as a work in progress. Though shot largely in the Detroit area, the film has a true Hollywood pedigree. Curtis Hanson (LA. Confidential) directs, Oscar winner Brian directs, Oscar winner Brian Grazer (A Beautiful Mind) pro-duces and actress Kim Basinger is featured as Eminem's derelict

omer. Expect to see familiar settings a Warren trailer park located on the title roadway, the long-shuttered Chin Tiki Polynesian snutered Chin Tirk Polynesian restaurant on Cass downtown and a residential neighborhood in Highland Park, complete with burning houses - when this loosely autobiographical film is released nationwide by year's

end.

Flint's Michael Moore returns to Turnto, where he earned his initial acclaim with the anti-General Motors film Roger and Me. to present Bowling for Columbia a accumentary on America's fascination with gun and violence. Penturing shock rocker Martijan Kimson as the voice of reason, this film is likely

to spur strong reactions, if not a new level of insight, among American audiences. Audiences at this year's Cannes Film Festival gave it a standing ova-

tion.

Ann Arbor-based experimental filmmaker Travis Wilkerson hopes to follow in Moore's footsteps by generating some buzz at Toronto this year with his two short films - An Injury To One and National Archive V.I. Injury is a decumentary about the and National Arenive V.I. Injury is a documentary about the lynching of early 20th century union organizer Frank Little, while Archive, based on film materials in the public domain, attempts to find connections between pure form and pure politics.

attempts to nat connections between pure form and pure politics.

The Toronto festival, now in its 27th year, is the leading film market in North America and a rival to Cannes in the competition for most important film festival or the planet. More than 300 films are screened for industry types, international media and the movice loving public on screens throughout the city. This year's fest will also introduce Frida, the story of Mexican painter Frida Rahlo (wife of Detroit Institute of Arts muralist Diego Rivera) starring Salma

Detroit Institute of Arts muralist Diego Rivera) starring Salma Hayek in a role once coveted by yet another Detroiter-Madonna David Cronenberg returns with Spider, a psychological thriller starring Ralph Fiennes.
For screening schedules and ticket information, call (416) 968-FILM or visit www.e.bell.ca/filmfest.

BOOKS FROM PAGE B3

The author's paternal grand-mother, Merija, was a respect-ed schoolteacher and a single mother—after Peter Birkets, a writer and political dissident, deserted his wife and young son, Gunnar, leaving them to lead a rather stark existence in Riga. The author's mother, Splvin, also grew up in Riga, but in more prosperous surround-ings. Her father, Mike, was a successful photographer and painter, while her mother, Emilia, ran a milling shop. They and their family fled war-torn Latvia in 1944 for America, and Mike would America, and Mike would America, and Mike would eventually serve as a curator at the Cranbrook Art Academy for many years. (Gunnar and Sylvia met in the United States after he came here as an adult refuser.)

after the came here as an adult refugee.)
The main story on these pages is of Sven Birkerts, though, and a revealing and enthralling story it is, its "plot" often unfolded piecemeal (in what he calls "a cluster of priceder"), it can also and so the episodes"), is sparked and con-sistently moved forward by

Birkerts' insight and brilliant way with a language that was not the principal language of his childhood home.

Many of us can almost relive some of our own childhood days through these pages and, thus, identify closely with Birkerts.

thus, identify closely with Birkers.
Here's that dorky kid whose shirt was buttoned all the way to the top, and whose panis were always pulled up too high. Here is a group of rowdy boys, whooping it up as they massarer frogs in a pond. Here are Sunday walks, fishing adventures, reading, school competitions, "Detroit Symphony brondeasts at low volume on the upstairs radio," the shadowy exploration of pincy woods.

(Remember the Susie-Q? Birkerts paints it as "a bright,

Birkerts paints it as "a bright, aggressively middlebrow restaurant somewhere on Woodward Avenue.")

Here is first love recalled so vividly many years after the fact: "I remember driving home in the near dark...pierced by the feeling of fall—that melancholy light...feeling behind all the mortality some counterbalanc-ing joy that I had never

thought possible." (It is inter-esting to note that this grand-son of a photographer/painter and son of an architect displays

son ot a photographer/painter, and son of an architect displays such a strong sense of the visual in his writing.)

And later, here is Ann Arboi the 60%, animated with political conflict, redolent with marijuans smoke, populated with 'feral,' hirsuie characters like Sven Birkerts himself.

This is a book with super-special appeal for anyone who has ever dreamed of becoming a writer. The frustrations, the failures, the self-doubt, the sheer desperation that can arise when faced with the terror of the blank page, plus the giddy, almost silly exhilaration that comes, at last, with seeing one's words in print—its all here, proof positive that Birkerts has been there, done that.

How remarkable, how nearly unbelievable that he kept at it, despite the odds, and despite the upheavals in his own per-sonal life.

And how lucky for us readers that he did.

Vicki Diaz is a Livonia resident who reviews books for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.



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