

Shorts festival showcases originality

By JOHN MONAGHAN
Special Writer

At their best, short films are satisfying works unto themselves. Short and to the point, they provide us with intimate character sketches in a startling economy of vision.

At their worst, they're 10 minutes of fancy camera tricks intended to open doors in Hollywood. Often accomplished technically, they project the sincerity and slickness of a Nike commercial.

"The First International Festival of Short Films," screening this weekend at the Magic Bag Theatre in Ferndale, offers a little bit of both. Consistently entertaining but not overly experimental, the package of 10 films from five countries tries hard to offer something for everyone.



British short: Alun Armstrong and Lucy Rivers star in the British short film, "The Childreater," part of the First International Festival of Short Films.

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters throughout metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 833-2323 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Time Indefinite" (USA — 1992). 7 and 9:30 p.m. Oct. 8-9, and 7 p.m. Oct. 10. From the creator of "Sherman's March," an autobiographical account of everyday life peppered by the unique perspective of director Ross McElwaine.

MAQIC 860 THEATRE CAFE
22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale.

val of Short Films," screening this weekend at the Magic Bag Theatre in Ferndale, offers a little bit of both. Consistently entertaining but not overly experimental, the package of 10 films from five countries tries hard to offer something for everyone.

The opening entry, New Zealand's "Lounge Bar," finds a man walking into a bar circa 1975 wearing a clumsy head brace. The bartender and a female customer think they've seen him somewhere before, but, as the ball-bolted lounge singer notes, "he

could be almost anyone." While we probably don't need yet another "Twilight Zone" take-off, the color short is cleverly edited and does set the mood for the eclectic mix that follows.

Next comes an intriguing American-made documentary in black-and-white called "Stealing Altitude," about a daredevil parachutist who leaps from the tops of tall buildings. The diver calls it "Base Jumping" and supposedly it occurs almost daily in downtown Los Angeles.

The hyperactive "Urban Tragedy" forces laughs as a henpecked man and his "motorcycle mama" wife battle cockroaches in their seedy apartment. In Great Britain's "The Childreater," gorgeous pastoral scenery serves as backdrop for a dull story of a little girl forced to stay with her mysterious uncle.

Black-and-white cinematography by Yuri Neyman ("Liquid Sky," "D.O.A.") highlights "Tom Goes to the Bar," a surreal monologue about life from the perspective of the title character, who hangs upside down at the local saloon. It's a bizarre idea well-executed.

For me, the cleverest offering was "Safari Holiday" from the U.S., about a nerdy teenage boy and the sexy college girl he picks

MOVIES

up while on vacation with his parents. You can almost see the hormones raging as he tries to make small talk with her at the pool, then coaxes her back to his hotel room.

His parents and kid sister are supposed to be on route to Sea World, but they've forgotten the camera. What follows could only happen in the confines of a short film. It's an engaging and hilarious little piece of fluff, all the more real for its low budget.

The two-hour program, which played across the country earlier this year, recently added "Omnibus," the 1993 Oscar winner from France. Here a man's love affair with the railcar that brings him back and forth to work ends when the timetable changes and he can't get off at his usual stop.

"Omnibus" not only marks the end of the show but also the end of a long-standing tradition, since the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has recently decided to drop the short subjects category from next year's Oscar ceremony.

For now, anyway, it's a pleasure to see short films given their due on the big screen.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch-tone phone, or write him care of Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

groom's parents arrive from China.

REDFORD THEATER
17360 Lahser, Detroit. Call 537-2560 for information. (\$2.50)

"San Francisco" (USA — 1936), 8 p.m. Oct. 8, 2 and 8 p.m. Oct. 9. Around the time of the town's famous earthquake, opera singer Jeanette MacDonald works for Clark Gable on San Francisco's tough Barbary Coast. Spencer Tracy co-stars.

STAR JOHN R
John R (at 14 Mile), Madison Heights. Call 585-2070 for show times. (\$5.75; \$2.95 twilight)

"Boxing Helena" (USA — 1993). The admittedly sick story — about a surgeon who ampu-

tates a woman's arms and legs in the hopes that she will become dependent on him — might have worked as a short story. The feature film, the first by David Lynch's 25-year-old daughter Jennifer, is so badly done, it's almost funny.

STATE THEATER
2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 961-5450 for information. (\$1)

"Slacker" (USA — 1991), 9 p.m. Oct. 4. For his first film, director Richard Linklater follows blazé characters around the college town of Austin, Texas. The camera will pick up on one oddball for awhile and then veer off with someone else.

Toddler's effort to dress self is normal behavior

STREET SENSE



BARBARA SCHIFF

Voice mail message: Barbara,

My toddler is two years old. I believe he should be beginning to dress himself and care for himself. He is, but the process is going very unevenly.

Sometimes he is eager to help; sometimes he wants to do it entirely himself; sometimes he insists that I do it, and sometimes he won't let either one of us do it. If he does it, he insists that I watch. I don't know what to expect.

This is my first child, so I admit I am somewhat insecure about how I handle things. Should I insist that he do it himself or is his refusal appropriate, and should I go along with it? I sometimes get tired of sitting and watching him when he is so obviously capable of putting on his own shirt. Is he manipulating me?

Dear Caller,
Your son's erratic behavior is normal and appropriate. He is manipulating you, but that, too, is normal and appropriate at his stage of development.

During the toddler stage, the child learns to own his body and to care for it; physical self-care is the toddler's life responsibility. As he learns to wash, go to the bathroom, feed, and dress himself, mother learns graciously to relinquish control to him, and thus to encourage his independence. It is during this time that the child becomes autonomous by mastering bodily care and control.

The progression is: (1) mother does for child; (2) mother and child do it together; (3) mother watches and ad-

miras as child does it by himself; and (4) child does it alone, without mother's admiration.

Usually, as you describe in your call, this is not a smooth process, but a jerky ride, starting, stopping, moving forward and moving backward. Often, it is a complicated power struggle between mother and child, not simply a physical changing of the guard. Your son may no longer need your physical help, but he does need your emotional support. Your gift to him of power and authority over himself must be continually reinforced by your appreciation of his ability to do the things you used to do for him.

In this relationship, as in any relationship, compromises must be made. What is best for one person is often not best for the other. That is true of your relationship with your toddler.

Sometimes you will be able to go along with your toddler's needs, then you will both feel great. At other times that won't be possible and often you will both feel frustrated. Handling the frustrating times without blame, guilt or anger will enable you to gain confidence in your mothering abilities. The goal is to respect his needs while understanding they cannot always be satisfied.

Practically, educating yourself by attending lectures, reading books, and learning from other mothers, are possible ways of overcoming insecurity.

Barbara

If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You can also leave a message by calling 953-2047, mail box 1877, on a touch-tone phone.

SCREEN SCENE

Music notes from page 6A

East Lansing's The Verve Pipe was the grand prize winner of the national finals of "Soundcheck — The Ticketmaster Yamaha Music Showcase." The Verve Pipe was awarded their choice of \$25,000 in cash or Yamaha Musical Pro Audio Equipment. As part of the Grand Prize, they will have the opportunity to consult with booking agents, managers, record company representatives, public relations professionals and music publishers.

The band will also receive an all-expense paid trip to Japan where they will represent the United States at MusicQuest, an international showcase to be held Oct. 11. The winning band was selected by a judging panel of noted industry executives that included Michael Ostin, senior vice president of A&R, Warner Bros. and Reprise Records and Danny

Goldberg, Atlantic Records president.

Country singer Martin Delray will perform at a leukemia society benefit at the Hoover Roadhouse, 24300 Hoover, Warren, at 7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 11. Dubbed the "Country Hoodlum and Auction," people will have the opportunity to win a Nashville trip, souvenirs from favorite country stars, western clothing, hayrides and horseback riding lessons along with many other items. Tickets are \$15 and are available by calling 778-6800.

Don't fret. The Jim Rose Circus Sideshow will still appear on Oct. 30 at the State Theatre, 2115 Woodward, Detroit. During his sold-out tour of Europe, Rose collapsed in his Amsterdam hotel room after eating too many light bulbs. He was rushed to the hospital and treated for severe stom-

ach cramps and bleeding bowels.

Upon his return home to Seattle and a subsequent examination by his personal physician, Rose was cautioned that his intestinal wounds completely heal before eating anymore light bulbs, swallowing swords or ingesting razor blades.

The incident occurred when he overexerted himself in an attempt to please television and radio journalists by recreating one of his most popular circus feats — eating a light bulb. In one day, he consumed five bulbs; his system

is used to one every 24 hours.

John Cassidy of Southfield was the grand prize winner of a 1993 four-door Suzuki Sidekick in a promotion by Hollywood Markets, Detroit-area Suzuki Dealers, AMC Theaters and WRIF. Metro Detroiters were asked to visit Hollywood Markets, check out a Suzuki Sidekick filled with groceries and guess the dollar amount of goods in the vehicle. Cassidy came within three cents. Liz Schurz of Royal Oak took second prize winning a Hollywood, Calif., movie premier trip.

Fiction from page 6A

harbors a true moody and melodic blend of alternative rock. Influenced by late '60s-early '70s rock, Masak's bass and Thompson's poetic vocals gave the way intensified by free-flowing guitar overtones and driving percussion.

To perfect that sound, Fiction practiced for a year before booking any gigs.

"We just wanted to make sure that we were polished enough... comfortable enough," Thompson said.

Recently, the band captured

that sound on a three-song demo recorded at the Tempermill studio in Ferndale. Fiction also is planning to start production of their first CD, also at Tempermill. In late October, it will film a video for the song "Crooked Man" with local producer Steve Carr.

"Dedication to musicianship (is the top priority)... We're not up there screwing around," he said.

Fiction will perform Saturday, Nov. 13, at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For more information, call 934-9292.

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