

An end to great white hype?

It is a sad fact of liberal filmmaking that cinematic critiques of racial oppression usually have an inappropriately coloured focus. The heroes of *Mississippi Burning* were not the dark-skinned vanguard of the U.S. civil-rights movement, but a couple of palefaced cops from J. Edgar Hoover's famously racist FBI. In films about South Africa, this is, if anything, even more prevalent. Richard Attenborough devoted twice as much screen time in *Cry Freedom* to Donald Woods, the progressive journalist who championed the cause of Steve Biko, as he did to the famed freedom fighter himself. Even Euzhan Palcy, a black woman from Martinique, put a white liberal at the heart of her 1989 feature, *A Dry White Season*.

Movie Notes

In such movies, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold centre stage at the expense of, well, Hamlet. Up until now, just about the only Caucasian-centred South African drama that seemed morally justified was Chris Menges's underappreciated *A*

World Apart, which went with some depth into the family of African National Congress leader Joe Slovo. Some may now make a similar claim on behalf of *The Man Who Drove With Mandela*, which shows Friday to Monday (July 2 to 5) at the Pacific Cinémathèque. Greta Schiller's fascinating documentary—an award winner at this year's Berlin fest—retraces the life of ANC activist, Communist militant, and theatrical director Cecil Williams. Arrested in the early 1960s with the man who was to become the first black president of the Republic of South Africa, Williams ended his days as an exile in London. He was also, it is strongly suggested, the primary reason behind the ANC's uniquely tolerant position vis-à-vis same-sex relations: how Williams's gay lifestyle coexisted with his political activities and artistic pursuits is the fulcrum upon which this documentary pivots. With the aid of Corin Redgrave—the most radical member of the feisty Redgrave clan, and thus an ideal choice to portray this British-born hero—Schiller does a fine job of letting us know just how extraordinary and unusual Williams's life really was. More white bias? Perhaps, but it doesn't really matter. When push comes to shove, people like Cecil Williams are

always singular entities.

DROP SHORTS HERE

Having helped bring such comic items as "Mosquito Creek Slaughter" and "Attack of the 50-Foot Chihuahua From Outer Space" (which had nothing to do with Taco Bell, thank God) to last year's Vancouver International Comedy Festival, our favourite film cooperative, Cineworks, is looking for some more funny shorts to show at the 1999 edition. Later this month, films in two categories—all-ages and X-rated—will be shown. Filmmakers should fish around in their drawers and submit any oddball stuff they can find. Tapes must be sent to Cineworks programming chief Caroline Coutts (300-1131 Howe Street V6Z 2L7) by July 5. Or call her at 685-3841 for more information.

MONSTERS LOOSE IN TOKYO! Remember when everyone thought the Japanese were taking over Hollywood? Well, despite their heavy Tinseltown investment during the 1980s, Tokyo bigwigs have seen the show-biz monster turn around and stalk their own streets—in the form of big American movies showing in big American-built multiplexes. Now they are ready to fight back. Fittingly, Toho, one of Japan's top film studios—and the creator of Godzilla—is leading the charge.

Working with movie producer Toei Co. and distributor Shochiku, Toho will develop and manage a new batch of theatre complexes in Japan, the business daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* recently reported.

• MARK HARRIS AND KEN EISNER