

# A FRUIT IN THE WORKS

Besides all the stuff in the programme for the lesbian and gay film festival there are a few other items on the horizon worth keeping an eye out for. November sees a first screening of 'NOVEMBER MOON' which you may have seen on Channel Four. The film is a beautifully shot tale of two women lovers in WWII Germany, one of whom is Jewish. It is a fascinating but deeply depressing film, so it's not the thing to go to if you've just split up with your lover and are looking for ways to fill the long winter nights. It is nice to see an arthouse film that is actually directed by a woman, Alexandra Von Grote, call me old fashioned but I do like to see films about women being made by women!

Next up, a film about two women made by a man...still, I suppose you can't have everything (although I have yet to hear a convincing reason as to why but that's another article) and with buddy movies lurching in and out of fashion quicker than Acid House the cinema going masses (massettes?) could cope with the odd female example of the genre. This one 'BAGDAD CAFE' comes from the maker of the seriously weird 'SUGARBABY', and sees a welcome return to the screen by 'SUGARBABY' star, Marianne Saagebrecht as a housefrau abandoned by her husband on a holiday through Wild West America's Mojave Desert. With no transport, no money, and no English to speak of things aren't looking too good for her. And they don't seem to get much better when she finds her way to the run down motel owned by CCH Pounder, an actress I had never seen before but whose performance leaves you wanting to see everything else she has ever done. These two great performances are really what make 'BAGDAD CAFE', outshining the beautiful landscape, the stunning cinematography and the stylish direction. To be honest the story itself tends to float away on a sea of skill and style, but having said that I would rather see a film that was all skill and style and no content than vice versa. Anyway I liked it, and as usual all I really want to say is go and see it for yourself (although if I had said that to start with you'd now be staring at an empty page).

Last for this time round we have the review I didn't want to write. Let me start by saying that whoever wrote the press release for 'THE FRUIT MACHINE' certainly gets my 'DULUX WHITEWASH OF THE YEAR AWARD' for 1988.

This film seems to have raked up the embers of a few smouldering issues, particularly as to whether or not the big (sic), bad British film industry is ever going to get it right when it comes to gay and lesbian filmmaking.

On the evidence of 'THE FRUIT MACHINE' farrago Things aren't looking too hopeful kids! In the pink corner we have Frank Clarke (scally queen and scriptwriter) who wrote a film about gays, love, dolphins and dreams for post AIDS and section 28 Britain. In the shade corner we have the producers and the promoters who made a film about people who might be gay with no homosexuality and a strong heterosexual character, in other words

a nice family film about dolphins and 'things' (when are we going to get a nice pretend family film I sarcastically ask myself?). After seeing the film I tend towards the view that you get a bit of both sides, it feels like the script was never quite finished and they have all got to the rough edit stage. There is a genuinely scary chase/fight scene, several hilarious moments, and two loveable, moving performances from Emile Charles and Tony Forsyth as the runaways. But the whole thing left me eager to see the finished film (or Frank Clarke's film). The good news is that Clarke's next production is going to be a film that he is both writing and directing himself, here's hoping he gets a better PR Agency.

is not the real thing: the acting from the many characters is faultless and rarely has the painful, fearful passing of time been so well captured. An intelligent and moving film that deserves the widest release.

Donald Busby

## Hell Divin' Women

'TINY AND RUBY: HELL DIVIN WOMEN' is a follow up piece to the excellent 'INTERNATIONAL SWEETHEARTS OF RHYTHM'. The latter, for those of you unfortunate enough to have missed it, was about an all female, racially mixed big band that was very popular in Forties America. During the making of that film, directors Greta Schiller and Andrea

search and archive work that went into the film and documents the lives of lesbians and gay men in the states before the Stonewall riots that gave birth to the modern day gay liberation movement (and it has been a painful childhood thus far!). The search for our history, for role models, has never been easy for lesbians and gay men, but it's good to know that there are people like Greta and Andrea out there 'blazing the trail' Hell divin women indeed!

## BECAUSE ONE IN TEN SOUNDS SO LONELY...

The feast continues... If the first batch from the touring lesbian and gay film festival hasn't over loaded your entertainment circuits, then help is at hand. November at the Filmhouse sees the arrival of the worlds first lesbian soap opera. If you get pissed off by soaps only ever daring to speak the name of male gays then you are in for a good time, and a good laugh as well! 'TWO IN TWENTY' was conceived and produced by a gang of Boston dykes who spent three years making these first five episodes. The end result is such good fun that it is easy to forget the importance of what they have done. The soap opera genre is one of the most widely spread forms of mass entertainment; you just have to look at a copy of 'THE RADIO TIMES' to see that. Be it British, Australian, American, French, German or Brazilian (and whatever happened to 'DANCING DAYS'?) we've almost all seen one. They reach huge audiences and for that reason can be very influential in the spread of ideas and attitudes. Major storylines are debated in busses, pubs and homes throughout the land the following day. The producers of 'TWO IN TWENTY' were well aware of these issues when they started to make it. In the end they decided that they would focus on providing entertainment for lesbians, rather than some attempt at educating straights. It is hard to express my joy, when I first saw 'TWO IN TWENTY', at being able to sit down and watch lesbians of all varieties fight, laugh, love and generally get up to all the sorts of things that go on in 'EASTENDERS' et al. The actual soap opera bit of the show is contained within a spoof cable network format, anyone who has ever seen an American TV station announcement will enjoy the 'TWO IN TWENTY' version. Of course it has to be said that the production values of this show are not exactly of the highest order, but then neither are those of the real thing!

Given that following a feast there is likely to be a famine my advice is to catch all of this stuff while you can, it may be some time before we see anything like it again. The festival provides proof positive to those of you that were doubting it that there are films for us out there, it is just a shame that the power to bring them to us often rests in unwilling or uninterested hands. Still, if it is the only time this year that you drag yourself out to the pictures, go on...do it! Anyway, isn't it about time that we claimed the back row?

Catriona Macaulay



Queer Looks in the Fruit Machine

## A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

On the front of the press release it says 'A film about AIDS' and on the back it says, 'A human drama about sexuality, death and the victory of love': never judge a press release by its cover. The story is about Andrew Boyd, the fourth person to die of AIDS in New Zealand. He is at the centre but really the story is more about the people around him who look after him and love him at home. We are told, or rather he is told, right at the beginning that he has five days to live. His family don't want to know so his friends take him to their home. There the drama of sadness and fear and love and discovery unfolds against the perpetual swing of the pendulum as the days pass. Indeed the camera becomes a pedulum itself, constantly swaying back and forth between people, between rooms, between life and death. This is no documentary on how to approach AIDS but a film about feelings - sharing, loving, being together and being apart. Though no documentary an awful lot of common ignorance and prejudice is overcome: for example, Andrew's doctor visits him at home and brings her young baby who plays happily on his bed; Simon, one of Andrew's friends who comes to stay, is at first naturally very nervous of seeing his friend but by sharing with him he comes to feel 'less frightened of AIDS now than I ever have'. When the family eventually do come to see Andrew we are prepared to hate them - but nothing is that simple and soon we cannot help but wonder, like Simon, 'Why does their bravery affect me so?' It's hard to believe at times that what we are seeing

Weiss were intrigued by 'warnings that the trumpeter, 'Tiny' Davies, might say some things they may not want to hear. The film does contain a couple of hints as to what was being alluded to, as Tiny herself says she did 'love them gals!'

Matters were sealed when Schiller and Weiss went to meet Tiny at her home and were greeted by her companion and lover of over forty years, drummer Ruby Lucas. The film that resulted from that encounter, 'TINY AND RUBY', by turns outrageous, inspiring and hilarious, is a must for anyone feeling jaded by the effort required in these Sectioned times to stay a healthy, happy and sane queer.

I meet one of the directors, Greta Schiller, earlier this year in London and it did not take me long to realise why it is that the film works so well. There is a great deal of common ground shared by director and subject, and the respect and admiration that Schiller and Weiss so obviously have for Tiny and Ruby shines throughout this infectiously positive documentary. Ms Schiller is a great believer in an attitude that is often regarded this side of the pond with a mixture of suspicion and derision; that of the go-getter. Tiny and Ruby have gone out, and with everything (their gender, race and sexuality) against them, done it the way they wanted. In the directors own words, the film is intended to 'celebrate their refusal to be victims'.

The release of 'TINY AND RUBY' coincides with the publication of a book to go along with one of Schiller and Weiss's earlier films 'BEFORE STONEWALL'. The book, which goes by the same name as the film, arose out of the vast amount of re-