

JANUARY 10-JANUARY 16, 1997 LA WEEKLY

CALENDAR

## NEW RELEASES

**PARIS WAS A WOMAN**

Greta Schiller's wonderful documentary *Paris Was a Woman* is an evocative celebration of the feminine energy that fueled Paris' Left Bank art and literary scenes during the early part of this century. And though it goes unspoken — if impossible to ignore — it's a specifically dyke energy that's at the heart of the film. Using cool, classic photographs, old radio and television interviews, stock and vintage newsreel footage, along with talking-head interviews from both participants and scholars of the era, Schiller weaves individual psychologies and exploits them into a cohesive historical tapestry. Along the way, she importantly fills in the larger cultural context — WWI and the way it refigured women's roles and status in France and America — to explain this burst of female activity. The result is fascinating. From Gertrude Stein's position as patron of the arts and pillar of the community (which included such figures as Djuna Barnes, Colette, Janet Flanner, Romaine Brooks and many others) to the awesome spectacle of Josephine Baker, Schiller makes a strong case for women being the locus of the artists' colony. Although there are times when the viewer may want to linger on a subject longer than Schiller does, this fast-moving film is deep, informative and highly entertaining. (Nuart; Thurs.-Wed., Jan 9-15) (Ernest Hardy)