

## Mini-Reviews

by Pat Thompson

### KODO

This exciting performance documentary vividly communicates the exhilaration of an astonishing young company of musicians and dancers known as Kodo, the heartbeat drummers of Japan.

The members of the troupe live communally on Sado Island in the Japan Sea, 200 miles north of Tokyo. The daily round begins with a 10 km run and includes gruelling exercises plus a complete dedication to perfecting their music. This constant striving keeps the mind and body in harmony.

The necessity for rigorous training is more than apparent from a performance by Kodo. The beating of the drums – from small with a high tone to large, cylindrical mammoths – requires stamina, fortitude and superhuman energy.

A sonorous, almost demonic drumming pervades the whole film, especially from the largest drums, around which the musicians brace their legs and club away. The huge barrel-shaped drum on a stand is pummelled at each end by a musician. The booming, shuddering sounds positively exude from the screen in waves that can almost be seen. At one point the narrator explains that the "spirit of the drum enters the drummer" and there's doubt about it after witnessing these artists in performance.

An interesting sidelight is that Kodo commissions modern drum works, and a featured composition in the film is Maki Ishii's "Monochrome." The troupe is followed as it leaves Sado Island to attend a drumming festival at the National Theatre in Tokyo, where this work is performed. They pack their own equipment, travel tatami-mat class on the steamer to the mainland, and are then plunged into the frantic pace of a big city.

This truly poetic film blends the simplicity of nature with the art of age-old drumming in a splendid manner. The rain on the flowers and leaves of Sado Island, increasing in intensity, gradually slips into the drumming of Kodo – and then fades



● Kodo is a truly poetic film just crying for an audience

into the roar of the ocean. One is always conscious of the sand and the sea as the drummers practice on the shore as the waves foam in. In loin-cloths and headbands, muscles rippling, poised against the sunset, they appear as living statues.

A 10-minute extract from the film was blown up to 35mm and shown at the Festival of Festivals in Toronto last year. However, it was only a teaser for this full-length glimpse into the life-style and performance of a unique troupe of musicians. Here's a stylish, informative and vastly interesting piece just crying out for an audience.

p.d./ed. Jacques Holender **assoc. p.** Christine Norman **cam.** Rene Ohashi **sd.** Charles Bagnall **sd.mix.** Daniel Pellerin. **p. man.** Barbara Sweete **gaiff./grip** Maris Jansons. **narr.** Michael Crabb.

The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT) held its first collective screening at the Bloor Cinema in Toronto in April. LIFT is a co-operative production group of Toronto filmmakers dedicated to supporting and encouraging independent films outside of CBC, NFB, and private film companies. It receives support from The Canada Council, NFB and Metro Toronto Arts Council, and the screening was funded by the Ontario Arts Council.

A program of seven 16mm films was introduced to a fairly large, but plainly partisan audience. It's a long time since such a non-bias crowd has been encountered in Toronto – quite a refreshing change. And it was good to see a repertory house branching out with a program of short films.

The show opened with *Get The*

*Sensation* by Keith Hlady, a four-minute, grainy b&w effort. It aimed to squeeze comedy out of a visit to the dentist, ending up with the horrific buzz of a drill almost drowned out by screams. The audience laughed loudly and applauded. (The man across the aisle just kept on munching stolidly on his popcorn). *Las Aradas* followed, (reviewed in Cinema Canada No. 112) a chilling eight-minute colour film enunciating a massacre by San Salvadorean soldiers, for which Janis Lundman won a 1985 Canadian Short Film Showcase award. (The man across the aisle didn't flinch.) *Under The Table*, a dreamlike document exposing the terror and uncertainty of illegal immigrants in North America, was perhaps a bit too long at 24 minutes in Spanish with English subtitles. However, the script by Jose Luis Goyes who lived in Toronto clandestinely for two years, gave a raw authenticity to the efforts of filmmaker Luis Osvaldo Garcia. (The man across the aisle yawned.) *Z*, one-minute of excruciating splashes drawn on clear leader with coloured markers by Michael Korican, whizzed by like Halley's Comet. (The man across the aisle cleared his throat.) *Unclassified Two*, another mess of b&w shapes drawn on film and accompanied by a cacophony of horrid sounds was surely longer than one-minute. (The man across the aisle shifted uneasily in his seat.) *Ratstonegamics* by Linda Outcalt was too much – 28 minutes of b&w ravings by an obsessive paranoid about the oppression of the masses, accompanied by a series of repetitious (and mostly American) pop images. The manic piano music was perhaps appropriately entitled "Seething". (The man across the aisle trod firmly out of the theatre, never to return.) The final gum-drop was Bruce McDonald's *Let Me See...* (and don't forget the three dots – everyone stressed this endlessly during the film). Made when McDonald was a student at Ryerson – and seen many times by this reviewer – its first fatal charm has definitely worn thin. The filmmaker should retire this 30-minutes of b&w juvenalia to his archive for good.

Pat Thompson ●

## ORDER FORM

Enclosed please find

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

to cover my order as checked

### CINEMA

P.O. Box 398  
Outremont Station  
Montreal, Quebec  
H2V 4N3

#### 1 YEAR (12 issues)

- Individuals: \$22  
 Companies & institutions: \$26

#### 2 YEARS (24 issues)

- Individuals: \$42  
 Companies & institutions: \$46  
(Add \$9 postage for USA and overseas **per year**)

#### SPECIAL ISSUES

- Film and the Future, \$5  
 The Grierson Files, \$2.50

#### BOUND VOLUMES

- |                                 |      |                                  |      |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 2 | \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 7  | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 3 | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 8  | \$60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 4 | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 9  | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 5 | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 10 | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 6 | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 11 | \$35 |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

PROVINCE \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_

CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Payment enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Bill my VISA acc. no. \_\_\_\_\_

Bill me, P.O. no. \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Profession \_\_\_\_\_