

Ron Hallis'

# Toni, Randi and Marie

d. and ph. Ron Hallis, ed. Ophera Hallis, sd. Cinelume-Yordan Nicolov, m. Leon Aronson, p. Hallis, p. assts. Ron Tibbett, Jenny Cleary, p.c. Ron Hallis Films 1973, black and white, 16mm blown to 35 mm and 35 mm, running time 65 minutes, dist. Ron Hallis.

Toni, Randi, and Marie are, respectively, a transvestite, a male, and a female prostitute. They are members of our society and Ron Hallis was interested in them as individuals before people on the sexual fringe, as it were, came into vogue among the analytical bourgeoisie. But Hallis doesn't analyze these people, nor exploit them. He is simply interested in them - at least, interest appears to be the sole inspiration behind his film.

If Hallis had had a well thought out purpose behind **Toni, Randi, and Marie** it might have been possible to determine whether or not he succeeded in his aims. As it is, his banal portraits of three street people are somewhat directionless. They leisurely present us with information, then cut off with undetermined endings, as though time had suddenly run out.

The film is a composite one, comprised of three short films, spliced together into feature length format. Consequently, transitions are convenient, not smooth. The trilogy is tied together with an apt musical score by Montreal composer Leon Aronson and by its style. While the camera shows us simple daily details of their lives, Toni, Randi, and Marie, in voice-over dialogue, tell us about the other side - about the sexual roles they fulfill in society.

This is where the trilogy as a whole becomes interesting. Three people, two of them male, functioning on various levels as female, raise some interesting questions concerning roles and images of women today. But this is all unselfconscious, and as a unifying theme is probably a happy accident. Certainly it seems by the way.

**Marie** is the only portrait that is really developed in any way. The three films were made over a period of several years, beginning with **Toni** in 1967, and Hallis' maturing direction



Toni...



Randi...



and Marie.

is evident. Toni, an exotic dancer, is seen only at work or nervously watching the camera in the street, and his main focus of conversation concerns his attractiveness to men. The camera shows Randi's life as more varied, but one wishes Hallis had exercised more guidance over the narration - Randi does little more than recite his 'tricks', which is rarely enlightening and somewhat tiresome. Xaviera strikes again.

With Marie, we are given some insight into her life - many shots of her are contemplative, and her narrative speaks of dreams, aspirations, and some thoughts on the role of the oldest profession. **Marie** is the most intimate of the portraits, though each is thought-provoking.

What makes **Toni, Randi, and Marie** an interesting film however, is not its content, but its style, directionless as it is. Because Hallis has attempted something the merits of which journalists and documentarists have been arguing for years. He has taken something controversial - sexual lifestyles outside the 'norm' - and sought to be objective. Insofar as one must select with the camera and reselect while editing, it seems he has succeeded. His lack of purpose has also left him without bias so that he *presents* rather than portrays these street people. No evident editorial comments are made and nothing about the film is sensational. Respect for these people is perhaps the film's major grace.

The film is unpretentious and non-judgmental. As a matter of fact, the only place the issue of morals comes up is in our own minds. Yet no statement can be made. Hallis finds that there are not two sides to the question; that sides are in fact irrelevant to personal lifestyles. The flatness of his presentation almost denies the existence of question. Camerawork is nicely composed but unobtrusive. Facts are presented matter of factly and slip into our visual consciousness easily, like familiar photographs. We may call ourselves liberated, but I doubt there are many who will not find parts of this film disconcerting. Yet Hallis puts them on the screen without the bat of an eye. He subtracts controversy and looks at the bare subject. With a sincerity and an honesty that is almost naive, he then says to us, "I met three people. Here they are." There's something to be said for that.

Jane Dick

