Taking Chances


Taking Chances is a twenty-two minute docu-drama dealing with teenage sex and pregnancy. The film is divided between the enactments of various situations which occur in the relationship between the enactments of various sex and pregnancy. The film is divided minute docu-drama dealing with teenage


Taking Chances does just that — by leaving adolescents on their own to figure out their own values in a modern world. This may, in fact, be a realistic stance, considering that teenagers demand time and space to work things out by themselves anyway.

In sum, the film is optimistic and topical enough to remain relevant for a long time.

John Brooke

Letter to Vietnam

p./d./sc. Eugene Buia m. Joan Baez (Heaven Help Us All) sd./ed. Joe Solway l.p. Garry Sun Hoan col. 16mm running time 47 min.

Eugene Buia's Letter to Vietnam is precisely what its title implies.

The film is an open letter — albeit using the medium of film, instead of paper and an envelope — from nine-year-old Garry Sun Hoan, a refugee from Vietnam now living in Canada, to his parents who are still in Vietnam.

The young letter-writer, a Chinese national, fled Vietnam two years ago in a small fishing boat. He subsequently found himself on a Hong Kong-based
Vietnamese refugee Garry Sun Hoan with director Eugene Buia and his son — putting on a brave face in a new world.

freighter which took him to a Malaysian refugee camp. From there he came to Canada.

It would have been impossible for Garry to actually send an ordinary letter to his parents. He did not even know whether or not his parents were alive.

For those of us who have never experienced refugee status, the plight of those from Vietnam — or any other war zone — is exceedingly difficult to comprehend.

Yet, in Letter to Vietnam, director Eugene Buia — who is himself a political refugee, a native of Romania, where he gained extensive experience as a director and producer of feature films — manages to communicate, forcefully and clearly, the enormity of the refugee’s struggle.

Buia achieves this through a voice-over narration of Garry’s comments to his parents on life in Canada, newsreel and documentary footage from Vietnam, and silent footage of Garry exploring his new Canadian environment.

Buia’s ‘letter’ format encourages viewers to make that leap in imagination of placing themselves in Garry Sun Hoan’s position: of witnessing a Santa Claus parade for the first time, of visiting a typical Canadian supermarket, of encountering a newborn Vietnamese baby in the alien setting of a Canadian hospital, of sitting in a Canadian classroom, of reminiscing about a childhood spent in the streets of Saigon.

Technically, the film’s stock newsreel footage, and the Toronto sequences, both exhibit, at times, a somewhat disorienting camera jitter and a very frequent use of the zoom lens, which some viewers may find disconcerting. On the other hand, for many, the powerful content of Letter to Vietnam, and the confident, burgeoning quality of the editing (many of the newsreel sequences are repeated several times), to good effect, will make up for any of the film’s minor, technical shortcomings.

Jaan Pill

Star Ways


In Larry Moore’s first film, a young boy with his Star Wars comic book runs to the front window of a subway train and pretends to pilot a spaceship out of the station and into the black of space. The lights of the tunnel zip by, transformed into red, green, and yellow galaxies, as the boy hits the controls like a pinball machine. Abruptly, Darth Vader looms up and the boy fires at him. When the boy steps out of the ship, Vader chases and catches the boy on the platform — and turns into his mother.

It’s a five-minute miniature with a $700 million set built by the Toronto Transit Commission. Moore co-opted the architects’ ‘modern’ effect for his film, and does so successfully; since, for most of us, a house may be fact, but a subway is still science-fiction-becoming-fact.

With similar economy, Moore creates galaxies using another fiction already established by others in the big league — notably by Trumbull and the million-dollar special effects people of cinema-sci-fi. Abstract filmmakers diddled colors and patterns with sound, but were long out-of-work, until movies like 2001 created jobs. Deep space is mysterious, and so are abstract films: ergo, spaceships in deep space travel through colors and patterns with sound. It’s a fine convention, and for the first little while, Star Ways creates the right, headlong rush with its simple running lights.

But the convention is well enough established that viewers are wanting something more to happen, while Moore himself is still just speeding along.

In a small and precious miniature, there’s precious little room for confusion. The mother who switches places with Vader at the end is the same woman seen in an opening shot where she appears to be waiting to board the same train at the same time. So the audience faces some logical discomfort when Vader/mother appears on the platform ahead of the boy as he enters the last station. The problem is small, but so is the film, and the interference it causes seems large.

On the platform, the boy runs as though the fantasy has become too solid, and one momentarily remembers the rush and flash of a kid’s mind and the strength of its healthy psychosis. When, after all, the boy recognizes his mother, Moore is alert enough to show us the warmth between them, so we won’t go home wondering what villainy the woman actually represented.

As the boy runs from Vader, the camera swings in line with the accelerating train.