

Film reviews by *The Globe and Mail's* Jay Scott are assembled in **Midnight Matinees**, a collection of lively and articulate pieces about movies and their makers during the last decade. Scott's familiarity with film's history, his concern for cinema as "the pre-eminent purveyor of popular culture" (a role now usurped by television), and his natural wit enhance his book's appeal as a discriminating commentary of current Dream Factory output (*Ungar, NYC, \$10.95*).

In **Film Genre Reader**, an anthology edited by Barry Keith Grant, the various well-defined types of movies – gangster, Western, sci-fi, musicals, et al – are credited as the main factor in the American film's growth as an art and an industry. The book discusses in detail the characteristics of genres as well as the theoretical issues and critical approaches in-

involved in the highly successful genre form of popular entertainment (*U. of Texas Press, Austin, \$32.50*).

A valuable reference work of encyclopedic proportions, **The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985** lists chronologically all British feature films produced since the invention of the cinematograph. Compiled by Denis Gifford, it includes over 15,000 titles numbered consecutively for convenient research with complete credits, plot summary and an alphabetical cross-index (*Facts on File, NYC, \$75*).

Raymond Carney's innovative study

of Frank Capra's films, **American Vision**, places the director's work within the larger post-romantic tradition. In this cultural and artistic context, Capra's films emerge as explorations of the dreams and frustrations of the American struggle for self-expression (*Cambridge U. Press, NYC, \$24.95*).

A provocative "portrait of an anti-star," **Louise Brooks** pays tribute to an actress who shone brightly, but briefly, in such films of the late '20s as Howard Hawks's *A Girl in Every Port* and G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box*. Edited by Roland Jaccard, essays by Brooks herself

and other filmmakers, with impressive photographs, conveys the flavor of an era when non-conformism and self-doubt flourished in a jaded society (*NY Zoetrope, NYC, \$19.95*).

A definitive pictorial and statistical record of films released the previous year, the 37th edition of John Willis's popular yearbook, **Screen World 1986**, includes some 10,000 entries and 1000 stills in a comprehensive and entertaining overview of films, personalities and other relevant material (*Crown, NYC, \$24.95*).

The work of such Soviet directors as Eisenstein, Ermler, Pyriev and Kulidzhanov is examined in **Dostoevsky and the Soviet Film**. This stimulating survey describes the way in which adaptations of Dostoevsky's fiction altered and extended the language of film (*Cornell U. Press, Ithaca, NY, \$24.95*).

## BOOKSHELF

by George L. George

## MINI REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson

Going to the new home of **Atlantis Films Limited** in Cinevilleage, is like visiting a 'work in progress'. But the hammering and sawing in and around this new office and production facility (jointly owned by Atlantis and P.S. Production Services) can't possibly detract from the quality of the films screened.

### RED SHOES

Two young sisters are left with their grandparents for two weeks while the parents go to the seashore to try and patch up their marriage. Dad asks his girls what he should bring them back; one wants red shoes and a rock from the ocean, the other a new dress. The sisters hope that Mum and Dad won't fight. Grandfather is cynical – so, they want a change of scenery, he says to his wife, but is that going to make any difference?

Grandfather is an old curmudgeon. He shouts at the girls for getting into his garden, and orders Tom, the cat, to be left outside. Carson, the younger sister, starts to hop around on one foot and convinces herself that, if she stops, her parents will start fighting again. Tom disappears and the children are sure that grandfather has something to do with it. Grandmother tells her daughter over the phone that she understands the marriage problem because "I have been there, and I know what you are talking about."

Meanwhile, grandfather has a change of heart and walks the railway tracks looking for Tom, but the sisters find him in the garage. When the parents come back, they bring Carson her new dress. But Meg's red shoes turn out to be both for the left foot! In the end, grandfather mellowed and finds a sort of solution to the red shoes problem.

A perceptive look at the effect of possible separation and divorce upon two little girls. Their half-understanding of the problems of a quarrelling Mum and Dad leads them from constant worry into fantasy. The grandmother's unhappy marriage to the testy grandfather is dragged in somewhat unceremoniously, giving the film an overflow of plot and intercut images.

exec. prods. Michael MacMillan (Atlantis)/Andy Thomson, Ches Yetmann (NFB). prods. Susan A'Court (Atlantis)/William Weintraub (NFB). assoc. prod. Seaton McLean, Janice Platt. dir. Allan Kroeker. sc. Nancy Botkin, Allan Kroeker (from an original story by Lois Simmie). cam. Robin Miller. ed. Michele Groleau. mus. Pierre Guérin. i.p. Antony Parr (Gramps), Patricia Moffatt (Grandma), Cedric Smith (Dad), Carol Lazare (mon), Meg (Andrea Cole), Samara Janzen (Carson). Col. 24 mins. Co-production with the National Film Board, and with the participation of The Global Television Network and Telefilm Canada. awards: Chris Bronze Plaque, Arts & Culture cat, 1986 Annual Int'l Film Festival (Columbus, Ohio) [tie with **Concert Stages of Europe**]; Hon. Mention, Live-action under 30 mins. cat, 1986 Chicago Annual Int'l Festival of Children's Films.

### THE CONCERT STAGES OF EUROPE

My mother knows, says Barclay Desmond, that I am "destined for greatness." His voice-over adds that Cornelia (a girl at his school) got him into this mess in the first place, and mother wanted him into this mess in the first place, and mother wanted him to grow up to be a concert pianist.

But Barclay knew with unwavering certainty that he wanted to be a Finn. He enjoyed his Finnish neighbour's sauna, beating himself with birch twigs, and counting each stroke in their language. As a bonus, they also had a beautiful and flirtatious young daughter.

But mother pushed him into piano lessons – his teacher was definitely alluring, with a parrot named Chopin. She exuded a soft, dreamy femininity and, in a room filled with exotic plants, played the piano while Chopin swayed in time on his perch. Barclay fantasized about the other things she could teach him – tangoing with her in the jungle atmosphere came to mind.

Then Ritchy Ryder and his radio talent show came to town and Barclay's Mum entered his name. Protesting all the time, he got sponsors and, to his surprise, gathered a lot of money too. On the fatal day, the terrible talent lineup grinds on, and it dawns on Barclay that he might win... however, Cornelia

plays the piano divinely, loudly and expertly, and is an obvious first choice.

Barclay makes his final declaration: "I decided that the whole experience had brought one benefit with it – I was free to concentrate on pursuing the only goal that mattered to me – becoming a Finn!"

A first-rate script – witty, dry and humorous – sets the tone of the well-realized '30s atmosphere. Nicely tuned performances, expert cinematography – in short, a little gem.

p. Martin Cannell, Seaton McLean. d. Giles Walker. sc. Seaton McLean. cam. Andreas Poulsson. ed. Richard Todd. mus. Richard Gresco. Col. 24 mins. Co-production with the National Film Board. awards: Chris Bronze Plaque, Art & Culture cat, 1986 Annual Int'l Film Festival (Columbus, Ohio) [tie with **Red Shoes**]; Golden Sheaf, Best drama under 30 mins. 1986 Yorkton Film Festival.

### MORTIMER GRIFFIN AND SHALINSKY

Mortimer Griffin lectures his class. Shalinsky, an older student, compliments him on his opinions as to "how Kafka was influenced by his Jewish ancestry," and thinks Griffin is Jewish, but he denies it. Shalinsky perseveres, gives Griffin a magazine to which he contributes, then a book about Chagall, and finally asks him to speak to the Jewish Thought Literary Society about Kafka. Griffin has dinner with the Shalinsky family prior to addressing the Society.

Griffin feels obliged to prove to Shalinsky that he is non-Jewish, but evidence appears to pile up. The persistent Shalinsky tries to take over Griffin's class; students circulate a petition stating that Griffin is anti-Semitic; and the Dean recommends he take the second term off. But Griffin chooses to resign, and then finds his wife has left him when he arrives home. Some two years later, Griffin remarries and starts a new life with Shalinsky as his father-in-law.

Based on a Mordecai Richler short story set in the '50s, this little film has a faintly old-fashioned, unrealistic air about it. The problem is the 'feeling' of the piece – is it supposed to be funny/dramatic, dramatically droll, or whimsically period? Anyway, Paul Soles does his sprightly best and manages to breathe life into the engaging, if irritating, Shalinsky.

p. Janice Platt, William Weintraub. d. Mort Ransen. sc. Gerald Wexler, Mort Ransen. cam. Andreas Poulsson. ed. Rita Roy. mus. Eli Rubenstein. i.p. Paul Soles, Ron Lea, Susan Almgren. Col. 24 mins. Co-production with the National Film Board, with the participation of Global Television Network and Telefilm Canada.

### THE LEGS OF THE LAME

Gordon Beaton drives along the highway thinking about preacher Clay Burridge, who didn't drink or swear, and was faithful to his wife.

Beaton used to manage a band. On a small-town date, quite by chance, he looks in on a prayer meeting and sees Burridge, laying on hands, straight from the Maritimes and clad in fringed buckskin jacket, western hat and shirt. Beaton outlines a proposition to put him across as a dedicated preacher with a gift from God. Burridge says he would welcome a wider audience for the Lord, and it's then that Beaton is convinced of his incorruptibility.

After three months on tour Burridge says he is beginning to lose faith. His impassioned addresses, his search for God, bring heavy pressures as people come forward expecting to receive the healing powers of Christ. The preacher checks out of his hotel early one morning, leaving a letter for Beaton, plus a newspaper cutting as an explanation. Beaton, ever the optimist, drives to Toronto to look for the next thing to promote...

A well-crafted film shot on highly suitable locations in Orono and Kendal, Ontario, and replete with some nifty moody lighting and camerawork. Two good performances from August Schellenberg and R.H. Thomson as the promoter and preacher respectively, enliven the proceedings.

p. Gillian Richardson, Marrin Canell. d./sc./ed. Bruce Pittman (based on a story by Hugh Garner). cam. Ludvik Bogner. i.p. August Schellenberg, R.H. Thomson, Angela Fusco, David Clements. Col. 24 mins.