

SHORT FILM REVIEWS



"Debbie Van Kiegebelt shows that running 'looks good'"

Born To Run

p.c. Window Films Ltd. p. Martin Harbury, Ilana Frank assoc. p. Ken Gass, Anna Stratton d./ed. Peter Shatalow cfe narr. Debbie Van Kiegebelt d. ph. Robert New ph. assist. Michael Savoie, Mark Irwin, Robin Miller assist. cam. Lynn Rotin sd. rec. John Megill sd. mix David Appleby mus. John Mills Cockell col. 16mm. running time 25 min. year 1979 dist. Viking Film Dist. (Canada), Wombat Prod. Inc. (U. S.)

Born to Run, first screened last September by the CBC, is a well-constructed short film about the pleasures and possibilities of running. An obvious amount of enthusiasm has gone into the project — and it shows.

Any misgivings in the average audience regarding the sport have been anticipated, and are taken up in a positive spirit as reasons to run. This approach is supported by the use of testimonials from a cross-section of runners. For example, those in the audience who doubt their physical suitability, are answered by a doctor from The Toronto Rehabilitation Centre, who prescribes the sport for heart-attack victims. A Toronto chiropractor, who runs herself, advises her patients to run. Another woman, sixty years of age, describes the exhilaration she has felt since she began running, at the age of forty-six. Debbie Van Kiegebelt shows that running "looks good". Footage of 7,500 runners in a Toronto mini-marathon, makes it clear that runners in the streets are no longer "unusual". An executive explains that running every morning does not deter him from his work, but adds to his efficiency and productivity at the office, while relieving stress. The sight of Jerome Drayton, marathon runner, shown in training for the 1980 Olympics, proves that the sport does not require extravagant outfitting — just a good pair of shoes.

This film is of a type: strictly promotional. Promotional film style (using testimonials, building a tight visual rhetoric, and smiles, smiles, smiles) can be offensive if the worth of the subject matter is questionable. Some films, however, are about subject matter which is so obviously worth promoting, that this sort of film style is excusable. The use of a strictly documentary film style, for example, would have been inappropriate: the aim of **Born to Run** seems to be to encourage people to *try* running. Shots of blistered feet, and faces, in the agony of marathon running, would not further this aim. **Born to Run** is not "an objective film" as its press releases state. Nevertheless, it is effective.

Katherine Dolgy

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