MUltiple CULTURAL BIRTHS
LAND OF THE FREE?
THE NBA
PUNKS
PORN NOIR
features

8 Samir Gandesha
Flowers In The Dustbin, Or, Requiem For Punk
Why Punk is a progressive political force.

20 M. Numbasa Phille, Isira Mistry, Geoffrey Chan & Kevin Modeste
Fortress In The Wilderness: A Conversation About Land
Why kids of colour don’t go to summer camp.

articles

Gordon Brent Ingram
30 Vancouver as Pern Noir
Of Sikhs and homosexuality: a Vancouver story.

George Elliott Clarke
35 Honouring African-Canadian Geography
A “dubbed” version of white Canadian spaces.

6 op-ed
Julian Samuel
The Birth of A Nation
Lucie’s Bouchard’s no revolutionary

4 letters

film reviews

18 Marusya Bociurkiw
on Ali Karimi’s Shooting Indians:

46 Gordon Brent Ingram
on The Vancouver Film Festival

sports

Gamal Abdel-Shedid
35 Raptor Morality: Blacks, Basketball and National Identity
How the NBA sells Black middle America

literary corner

Di Brandt
40 This Land That I Love,
This Wide, Wide Prairie.

interview

Stan Fogel & Lynette Thomas
26 A Conversation with Black Panther
William Lee Broad

remembering

5

B/I List
43
Between Marx and a Naked Woman/
Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda
Dir. Camilo Luccioni
Ecuador, 1996. 90 minutes
Canadian premiere

For those with a taste for magic realism, this is a low-budget Like Water For Chocolate. Its focus is the Ecuadoran Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) in the period of the military dictatorship in the 1960s. The plot: a sort of revolutionary novel unfolding in the head of a youth while he is working in an organizing cell trying to reach out to the masses in preparation for hoped-for free elections that don’t come. The novel in his head is supposed to be some kind of political statement but is constantly veering off into soft (heterosexual) porn. This is cute to a point. Fortunately, the movie is a brilliant period piece with highly memorable scenes of Communist organizers being thrown out of an Indian village and a rock ‘n’ roll band, Ðia Ñ the Velvet Underground, with black turbaned and red banners, being shot down at a party, social for being anti-social—to be replaced by the worst lounge music. The scene of the military massacring demonstrators in front of a church puts to shame that sanitized scene of the same kind in Evita. There is some debauchery that made me wince though. There is an anarchist who looks like Jesus and is an alcoholic. Keflavik makes one appear as a street person. One of the male protagonists whose legs are crippled is shown trying to decide between dumping his gorgeous girlfriend and having his legs amputated. But for every awkward moment there are some charming ones. There is the almost predictable music box playing The International while the military ransacks an apartment and mistakenly takes the comple-
leaving. Some of the other men were either closeted or had been raped as boys. All change their stories in the course of their interviews. With such a poor grip on reality, each is motivated by hatred of gay men and lesbians. What is most chilling is the calm quality of “it was a bad day for me so I killed him.” There is little remorse for the hatred, just for the courage and having gotten caught at it. The photographs of the dead victims will stay with you for a long time.

“3E: The Fasson Recovery Industry, this might be worth reviewing—though I was disappointed.”

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Skin
Dir. Isaac Julien
Britain. 1996. 70 minutes

The creative team of Isaac Julien and Mark Nash has produced the most lyrical discussion of the legacies of Martinique-born Frantz Fanon. This alone makes the film worthy of viewing. But the pastiche has far too much thrown in to make a coherent statement on any of the many theoretical impacts of the several books written by Fanon just before his untimely death from leukemia at 36 in 1961. Most problematic is the application of the confrontation with father-figure Fasson makes the film “fully” stuff in deed. The operatic singing and piano clanging that come and go (also used in Julien’s The Attendant) are pure distraction. There are brilliant moments followed by excruciating re-enactments—notably the ones with Simone de Beauvoir. Thankfully Sartre did not show up. The eminent British theoretician Stuart Hall is the bright-eyed muse and his commentaries provide the only real structure for the film. The interviews with Fasson’s family are poignant as are those with some former Algerian revolutionaries.

“this deserves some B&L recognition” “brilliant.”

Happy Together / Chunghang Zhaxie
Hong Kong, 1997. 92 minutes

A sub-genre of queer films, the obsessive low-hustle gay male relationship is alive and well in this subby tale. Call me twisted but I loved this film. I was charmed, nearly even seduced. Happy Together starts out with sodomy, a butt-fucking, shot under the worst fluorescent light and recorded on the grainiest of film stock. Who cares that ejaculation occurs after twenty seconds? After the fucking is out of the way, the plot proceeds simply: a handsome young gay male couple from Hong Kong moves to Buenos Aires. There are countless scenes of kissing, tongos—yes male—male male dancing, arguing, working at bad jobs, breaking beer bottles, breaking up and searching for each other—often in vain.

Fortunately for both the protagonists and the audience, the only assaults are symbolic in the form of one lover’s purposeful ripping of the other’s Hong Kong Overseas British passport. If you believe that there is never any resolution to intense relationships like these, this film is for you: a meditation on bitter-sweet loss and misery as the purest form of love and eroticism. Southern Chinese gay male sub culture busts out in the land of the tango, but mind the glass.

“this is a maddening Canadian-govt funded erasure of homoeroticsism.”

Regeneration
Dir. Gillies Mackinnon
Britain / Canada. 1993. 110 minutes

This film is as beautifully crafted as the Pat Barker historical novel on which it was based. “Regeneration” is the story of the partial reconciliation from World War I of the real-life poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen in Craiglockhart Military Hospital in Edinburgh. But Sassoon is not really “ill” except in the sense of being sick of war. His denunciation of the British government and its complicity in prolonging the carnage landed him in what amounts to the country club military hospital for “public school fools.” Sassoon bonds with Owen (played by the stunningly handsome Stuart Bunce) who is much more damaged by the war and develops a strained friendship with military doctor William Rivers. The pro-war doctor's
relatively humanist therapies are at odds with the prevailing trends such as electrotherapy. Sometimes coming off as too rich a period piece, the support cinematography of architecture and landscape, not to mention handsome men's faces—these two latter headings—-is, fortunately, equal to the acting. The fragments of moral poetry are beautiful, in part due to their understatement, though the soundtrack is a bit heavy. Sadly, the undeniable homoeroticism of the participants is nearly completely removed from the narrative except for some unbearably steamy movements. Such historical awareness is embarrassing in the 1990s especially given Susser's well-attended bisexuality. For there-not to have even been a serious hug or a kiss between those men, raising each other from their postwar deliria in the privacy of the hospital grounds, was a painful and inaccurate omission. The trench warfare scenes were highly realistic, though, and will cause nightmares.

"This film is tricked up and neo-colonial and may be important to discuss in terms of resonance of such perspectives in European film."

**Clubbed To Death**

Dr. Yolanda Zecher, 1996. 94 minutes

The centre and the periphery collide in this painfully predictable first world / third world melodrama set on the outskirts of Paris. A white, teenage virgin falls asleep on the bus while going home after a party in central Paris to wake up in the rather world of Parisian and Middle Eastern rave culture. Like Alice in Wonderland, she takes a pill, starts tipping and ends up in the arms of an impotent boxer/junkie, yes—more or less and that order, who, if he can ever stay erect long enough, has promised himself to the queen dancer of the neighbourhood rave scene. But the love story is barely developed. *Clubbed To Death* is painfully predictable; the film reproduces the worst aspects of orientalism and places them in the contemporary rave scene. There is a white-centred voyeurism that makes the film highly suspect. This film has that painful combination of a weak story line and a brilliant soundtrack.

---

**East Palace, West Palace / Dong Gong, Xi Gong**

Director: Zhang Yuan

China / France, 1996. 94 minutes

This variation on the hunter being captured by the prey may well be one of the more influential films of this decade on homosexuality, sadomasochism and drag. *East Palace, West Palace* is an awesome breakthrough for Chinese cinema. Set in a series of imperial parks in central Beijing that see a lot of gay male cruising at night, a young writer is singled out by a guard. After a few nears with this guard, the young man sets himself up to be detained—those handcuffs please!—where he taunts the increasingly interested guard through divulging his personal history and sex life. This film explores the links between state power and sadomasochism in a way that few would ever dare—especially in China, of all countries. With lean dialogue and steamy scenes galore (though no sex), the cinematography is powerful in juxtaposing the architectural spaces of the Manchu, nationalist, revolutionary and current state capitalist periods. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Beijing was one of the most erotically tolerant cities and had some of the most potent enclaves of homosexuality in the world. Today, while homosexuality is not illegal per se, many gay men and lesbians are repeatedly arrested for homosexuality, especially around public sex, and repeat offenders in some areas receive long prison and even death sentences. There are some subtle statements at work about the resonance of the former tolerance of homosexuality invoked through the traditional palace architecture. This marvelous film will change the face both of Chinese and gay films.