

Beauty and the Beast

Can men and women ever be friends? Probably not.

BY ELEANOR MALIN

RATE IT X

Interviews with defensive guys
Directed by: Lucy Winer, Paula de Koenigsberg
May come again sometime to the Clinton St. Theatre

Rate it X received strange reviews, to the effect that it wasn't a very good movie, but fascinating, nonetheless. The subject matter revolves around advertising that "exploits" women by showing them as pumped-up, pristine, blue-eyed blondes, aiming to sell any old

Cinema

thing to seemingly berserk male customers.

Comprised of interviews with men only, most of the talk centers around why women were chosen to dress up ads for such diverse products as cars and computers, and why they were displayed in such a vulgar way or otherwise trivialized. No woman is ever interviewed as to why she appeared in such an ad, and no woman was consulted as to how she felt about the French lingerie ad that shows three women in their underwear being arrested.

The interviewers are conducted by one

or the other director. We hear a voice asking leading questions. We see, occasionally, a blazer-and-jeans clad body creeping in at the edge of the frame, holding the mike in a gloved hand. The interviewer always sports eyeshades. Guess this moral blight is catching.

The message of this movie seems to be that men are choosing to make these ads to titillate each other to buy products, even though there is no logic to draping a blue-eyed blonde over the hood of an expensive car. A subtler subtext might be that women shouldn't display themselves in this manner, and should know better than to participate in this type of soft-core pseudo-porn wares peddling.

The type of advertising that appeals to the libido of straight males apparently makes thinking women see red. Only the underwear ad in the movie was geared to women. But a thumb-through any "women's" magazine turns up many ads depicting women in provocative poses, using products that are supposed to make them feel sexy; many of these ads have suggestive headlines and text. No lesbian or gay porn or ads were mentioned. Some Christmas cards with scantily-clad women were flashed to a group of young men who all affirmed enthusiastically that they liked the cards, and didn't think the women were demeaned by the depiction. The cards were not shown to women, and no

cards of beribboned males were shown to men or women for comment. I'd like to know why it's *not* demeaning for *men* to pose in a little ribbon and some spirit gum.

Clearly, men feel guilty about the enjoyment they get from sexy ads, and they sound incredibly stupid when they discuss the subject. But, clearly, women must not all have such strong feelings against such advertising, or there wouldn't be so many willing models.

The political stance of the filmmakers seems to be that if only men would shape up, stop exploiting women, selling war toys and perpetuating that silly macho facade, the world would be a better place. Maybe so, but, ladies, it's going to be a long wait!

SHERMAN'S MARCH

Interviews with predatory females
Film by: Ross McElwe
Now playing at: Clinton St. Theatre

A recently uncoupled filmmaker gets a grant to make a film about Sherman's march. He ends up being bombarded with eligible young Southern females, some tendered by his family; some he encounters randomly; as he gets into it, some of them he looks up from the past. All are single, and looking for something. All are eager to please, to entertain, and they go to great lengths to attract and hold that camera lens. There's the actress who swims by the boat he's in; who later skates for his camera, then, after an introduction, demonstrates her cellulite, and the exercise that's supposed to get rid of it. She could do better if she were wearing underpants. (Ohhh-kay!)

There's the linguist, who lives alone by the seashore, who suns herself in the nude, talks about sex, mutters gibberish about linguistics, and dumps him when he stays away too long. At one point she is shown examining her body intently for ticks.

McElwe's sister transforms herself during the film. At first she's herself, rather

beige, paddling the canoe, reading him a liturgy on the necessity of his mating. Later she appears at a fast food restaurant, showing her plastic surgery, inflamed eyeball, and talking about her fanny tuck. Toward the end of the film, she has gone blonde.

Apparently, many women will do anything to get on film, including stripping, talking provocatively, bragging, and exhibiting and discussing in gruesome detail their infirmities. Coyly smiling, flirting at lens contact, these women at all times are aware of where their cheekbones and breasts are in relationship to the camera.

Though McElwe appears on camera, performing monologues on his relative horniness and lack of fulfillment (amongst his harem of available females), often he, too appears around the edges of frames, as do the interviewers in *Rate It X*. Some type of denial is going on with these interviewers — some self-effacing defense mechanism or reluctance to participate. But McElwe and the women interviewers of *Rate It X* get what they go for. Straight men look dumb drooling over anonymous women, and straight women look, to be charitable, needy when showing off for the camera (anonymous men). Inadvertently hilarious comments are made by interviewees, and every so often, McElwe slips in a sardonic one-liner. The choppy editing and questionable production values actually add a homespun quality to *Sherman's March*, a good documentary approaching true folk art.

Surprisingly, by the end of the film, you do know a lot about Sherman and his march. You have learned a lot about marriagable females, particularly of the Southern persuasion, and you have had a jolly good time!

Should Rate It X and Sherman's March turn up as a double bill, take everyone you know, load up on popcorn, and kick back for a trip you've not taken before. Just don't forget the dramamine.

Round Midnight

Just the best, that's all.

BY ELEANOR MALIN

Starring: Dexter Gordon
Directed by: Bertrand Tavernier
Dedicated to: Lester Young & Bud Powell
Playing at: KOIN Center

Cinematic satisfying; strongly constructed, *Round Midnight* delivers a lovely, emotional filmic experience. The story of a proud but shopworn jazz musician living out the last months of his life convincingly recounts the loneliness of a sad genius, vastly talented but under-commercialized. Kept, literally, under lock and key in Paris, where he has gone upon the death of his partner, he is delivered every night to a jazz bistro. The, at first, curious, jazz buffs rapidly turn into a regular and substantial crowd.

At first it seems as though this saxophone player will not be able to keep away from alcohol. A guest notes, on the man's first appearance, that he can't even stand up to play.

He meets Francis, a Frenchman, most likely his biggest fan. Francis gives him support, unabashed love and adulation. He even liberates him, moving him into a new

apartment with Francis and his young daughter, Berangère. TLC and the youth and enthusiasm of Francis and Berangère move the musical genius into a better frame of mind. Pretty soon he is speaking more French than, "Si'l vous plait, deux vins rouges." Soon enough he's standing up to play. Not long after that, he's got him some sides.

You don't have to be a jazz fan to enjoy this movie. The jazz standards are done well; but it is the story that makes the movie. It's so endearing, so human. The simple-seeming camera work is thoroughly evocative. There is one shot, when Francis must hear news he has dreaded — the camera pans 360°. Straightforward; supremely haunting.

The acting is consistently fine. The young Frenchman, Francis, as mentor, is profoundly involved in the playing out of the bittersweet proceedings. Berangère, the pubescent daughter, is innocently nurturing and timelessly mature. As the musician, Dexter Gordon is beautiful. His work is subtle and sensitive. He gives one of the best performances of 1986, in one of the year's best films.

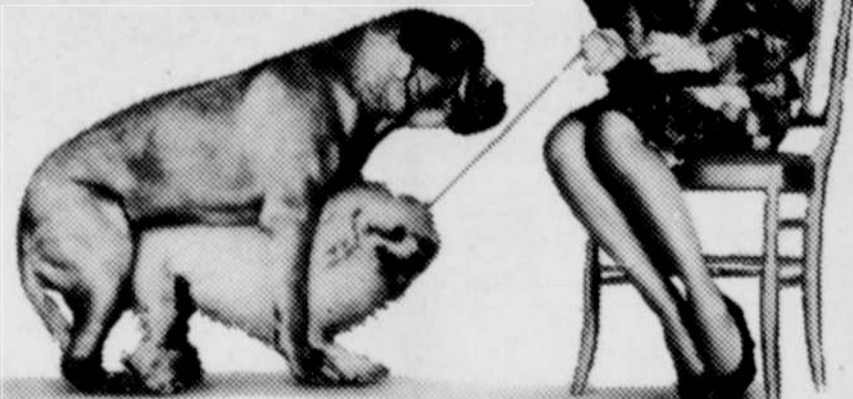
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
 'GET OUT YOUR HANDKERCHIEFS' AND 'GOING PLACES.'

"ORIGINAL, UNSETTLING,
 CRAZILY FUNNY..."

I WASN'T EXACTLY PREPARED FOR THE DEMENTED DELIGHTS OF 'MENAGE'
 ...A FARCE OF BREATHTAKING ENERGY AND DISORIENTING REASON."
 — VINCENT CANDY, NEW YORK TIMES

menage

a film by
 BERTRAND BLIER



GERARD
 DEPARDIEU

MICHEL
 BLANC

MIOU-
 MIOU

RENE CLEITMAN PRESENTS MENAGE A FILM BY BERTRAND BLIER
 WITH GERARD DEPARDIEU, MICHEL BLANC, MIOU-MIOU MUSIC BY GAINSBOURG
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