

movie JOURNAL



by Jonas Mekas

In the issue of July 23 I gave a few names and addresses of colleges and universities where I figured one could go and study cinema without too great a danger of being ruined. Here I have a few more:

During the coming year, George Landow and John Schoffill will be teaching cinema at the Chicago Art Institute, with Stan Brakhage as a visiting lecturer. Ed Emshwiller is teaching at Cornell University, Ithaca. Manny Farber is conducting a "Film Criticism" course at the School Of Visual Arts, 209 East 23rd Street, New York. Robert Downey will give a "Feature Film Workshop" at the New School, 66 West 12th Street, New York.

The most important new work I have seen since Rossellini's "Louis XIV" is Ernie Gehr's new film "Serene Velocity," a non-narrative, structural work of about 30 minutes in length. I can't say anything more about it since I've seen it only once.

Another film of importance is a short narrative film by Robert Beavers, entitled "The Count of Days." Again, I've seen it only once, so I can't say much on it except that the first viewing left the impression that here we have a major work, brilliantly executed, complex, beautiful, subtle, intriguing, and far above the usual cinema that we see in theatres or at the festivals.

I have a problem. If I am intrigued by a painting, I can go to the gallery or museum and re-see it many times, on many different occasions. Unless the painting is at El Prado or some other distant place. Literature: I can buy the book. Beavers' film—I managed to see it once, and I don't know when there will be another occasion. And since I cannot write about films any longer unless I see them at least a dozen times, I have to remain silent about a number of very good films, only because they are not easily accessible. It's simpler with the films distributed through the Film-makers' Cooperatives—at least they can be rented. Not so with the new work of Markopoulos or Beavers.

But you can easily see the "Eldridge Cleaver" film, by that bad film-maker William Klein. Not that he is that bad. He makes me nervous. Because he is so pushy. For instance, he makes Cleaver walk through the

people to the side, taking the middle of the street for himself. I hope Cleaver is more polite than that. It's Klein's pompous, pushy, arrogant camera that is impolite.

Still, the Cleaver film has values. As a documentary, it informs us about the character and ideas of Cleaver. Not so much through the words pronounced as through the facial expressions, intonations, movements. To know anything about Cleaver, from this film, you have to get through the barrier of the film-maker's presence: Klein's cinema is the barrier to the truth of Cleaver as a person.

Still, I couldn't help wondering why Rugoff shows the Cleaver film and doesn't show Brakhage, Nelson, Baillie, Snow. You see, art is always more radical and more diametrically opposed to oppression than any politics. Plus: bad film-making is also bad politics. So that, somewhere, Rugoff doesn't lose much. The first requirement to be shown at a commercial theatre is to be part of Commerce, directly or indirectly.

What do I know about politics!

I approve all instantaneous violence because it comes from a provocation, it's provoked by the evil deeds of others; but I am against all planned, advocated, reasoned violence.

I believe only in changes through education, enlightening. No really truly educated, enlightened, intelligent man will suppress another man.

SUGGESTIONS: New films by Frampton, Breer, and Nelson at the New York Film Festival.

But you can easily see the "Eldridge Cleaver" film, by that bad film-maker William Klein. Not that he is that bad. He makes me nervous. Because he is so pushy. For instance, he makes Cleaver walk through the streets of some South African town, and he makes him walk like a stupid punk: he walks without any regard for the people in the street, he walks, pushing