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Harbourfront offers great alternatives

By Geoff Pevere
Special to The Star

Few local alternative screening venues can be as consistently counted on for quality as Harbourfront. With the recent unveiling of *Tokyo To Berlin* — the condo-ensnared venue's new fall series, provocatively assembled by resident programmer James Quandt — this assessment still holds. The harbor view is looking as good as ever.

The new Free Screen series — a far more sensible deal than \$5 weekdays — includes the usual number of hard-to-come-by oddities and masterworks, including Kenzo Mizoguchi's critically coveted *The Life Of Oharu* (Nov. 29) and festival darling Leos Carax's recent *Bad Blood* (Dec. 6).

The triumphant revitalization of post-Franco Spanish cinema is surveyed between Nov. 7 to 17 (Contemporary Spanish Cinema) a showcase that includes recent films by Manuel Gutierrez Aragon (*Half Of Heaven*, Nov. 7), Mario Camus (*The Beehive*, Nov. 9), Carlos Saura (*Deprisa, Deprisa*, Nov. 13) and the sublimely overwrought Pedro Almodovar (*Law Of Desire*, Nov. 15), whose recent *Woman On The Verge Of A Nervous Breakdown* won the International Critic's Prize at the 1988 Festival of Festivals.

Three filmmakers will be given the complete retrospective treatment this fall at Harbourfront. The Films Of Istvan Szabo series (Oct. 28-Nov. 3) traces the career of Hungary's Oscar-winning director of *Mephisto* (Nov. 1) and *Colonel Redl* (Nov. 2), who is currently completing his third collaboration with actor Klaus Maria Brandauer.

In terms of sheer stylistic radicalism, you couldn't venture much further beyond the pale than The Films Of Werner Schroeter (Nov. 18-26). Providing a unique (and probably one-time-only) opportunity to view the entire work of West Germany's most influential and demanding — yet largely unexported — feature filmmakers, the series includes the startling *The Rose King* (Nov. 18), *Day Of The Idiots* (Nov. 20) and *The Kingdom Of Naples* (Nov. 19).

Unquestionably, however, the main event of the new Harbourfront program is a long-awaited retrospective of the work of post-war Japan's most consistently innovative and consequential filmmaker, Nagisa Oshima.

A veteran of the so-called "Japanese new wave" of the late '50s and early '60s, Oshima is best known in the West for his much-banned study in erotic obsession, *In*



The Realm Of The Senses (Oct. 17) and, more recently, for *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (Oct. 26).

Although the retrospective doesn't fully kick in until Oct. 17, a special screening of Oshima's latest, *Max Mon Amour* (in which Charlotte Rampling flips for a chimp) will take place next Tuesday at 8 p.m. with the director present.

Next week's column will feature both a closer look at Oshima's consistently surprising career, and an interview with the former *enfant terrible*.



Words Of The Elder: Whether it's due to innate ability, aesthetic inclination or circumstances that have historically made feature filmmaking a rough ride in this country, Canadians have always demonstrated an abiding talent at making experimental films.

Among the most distinguished and commanding native exponents of this rarefied practice has been Toronto's Bruce Elder. In a career that has produced 13 films in so many years, and many thousands of words of erudite and rigorous criticism, Elder's work has followed a singularly demanding path.

Beginning as an intimate interpreter of personal, natural and domestic images in such early films as *She Is Away* and *Sweet Love Remembered*, Elder's work has progressed to astonishingly ambitious proportions.

Accordingly, his films have both expanded in length and swollen in density. His most recent films, including the 15-hour work, *Consolations*, are viewing experiences that are equally demanding of one's literacy as they are one's cinematic conditioning.

Seeing in the word the basis of human knowledge, Elder's recent films embark on an ambitious attempt to weave texts and images in a revelatory and volatile cinematic tapestry.

Beginning Thursday, the Innis Film Society will present a complete retrospective of Elder's work that will continue through the end of October. Screenings take place at Innis Town Hall, at 7 p.m., and passes are available that permit entrance to all screenings in the IFS program. For more information, contact Lisa Godfrey at 588-8940 or Jim Shedden at 978-7790.