

# Arts & Entertainment

## Fassbinder films confront dark reality

By Tom Mockler  
Staff Reporter

Through the end of July, the Sheldon Film Theater will continue a retrospective of films by Ranier Werner Fass-

### REVIEW MOVIE

binder and Douglas Sirk. The series, which began June 13, runs until July 28.

Fassbinder was one of the leading forces in German New Cinema until his death two years ago at the age of 36. Fassbinder was amazingly prolific, having directed over 40 films between the years of 1969 and 1983.

Even today his films are causing controversy. Some critics reviled him for aesthetic reasons, others for political reasons. Most praised him as an important counterweight in contemporary cinema.

Fassbinder's films are not easy to watch. Sometimes, they aren't even enjoyable to watch. If you are looking

for escapist entertainment, I can't recommend them. His films are dark, rarely hopeful, and frequently unpleasant — he confronts us with a reality we would rather not see.

Some of the films might seem a bit provincial at first, but their characters and situations are easily generalizable. As opposed to the general run of summer fare, Fassbinder's films are the type that will stick in your mind after you leave the theater.

The series allows us to see the progression of Fassbinder as an artist. It begins with works from 1969 and runs into the 1980s, roughly in chronological order.

Another reason for seeing the Fassbinder series is to see Hanna Schygulla's rise to Germany's leading actress. Having appeared in some 20 Fassbinder films, Schygulla emerges as the star in such films as "Effi Briest" and "The Marriage of Maria Braun." Schygulla almost inevitably plays the "strong woman", frequently in contrast to the other female characters in Fassbinder films. She is a joy to watch, possessing both a certain beauty and a wealth of talent.

In conjunction with the Fassbinder retrospective, there is also a screening of four films made in Hollywood by Douglas Sirk. Sirk was a German filmmaker who fled Germany in 1937 and worked in Hollywood for the next 20 years. Fassbinder was a great admirer of American film, and in particular Sirk. That apparently is mutual.

While some may appreciate Sirk's

films at face value, they were originally labeled 'B' films, because of their melodramatic quality. Underneath the action, there is a certain style of direction which may be difficult to notice unless you watch for it carefully. Sometimes the films are so melodramatic you have to feel Sirk was being ironic. College-age viewers so far have tended to find them amusing for their camp quality.

Tony Rays, film critic for *Sight and Sound* magazine, a publication of the British Film Institute, will be present to lecture on Fassbinder's work and Sirk's influence upon it following the 7 p.m.

screening on Sunday, July 7. The film being shown that evening is "The Marriage of Maria Braun" and the lecture will be presented in the Sheldon auditorium.

"The Marriage of Maria Braun," is considered one of his best works. In the film, he used the story of the heroine as a metaphor for the defeat, rise, growing pains, and ultimate fate of postwar Germany. The film stars Hanna Schygulla.

Admission is \$3 (\$2 for senior citizens, children, or members of the Friends of the Sheldon Film Theater) per screening.

## 'Brel is alive and well and playing at Kimball

By Cindy Rohren  
Staff Reporter

Few American musicals choose to probe deeply into the psychological aspects of life. Fewer deal with the frustrations of having to mold into society-dictated roles. Seldom do they manage or even attempt to surpass flimsy lyrics, over-orchestrated scores and gaudily-dressed characters.

### REVIEW THEATRE

Whether it's because the music hails from France instead of 42nd Street or perhaps just because it was written by Jacques Brel, "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" usurps tradition bravely and effectively.

The UNL Music Theatre production, playing at Kimball Hall until July 13, is refreshing yet not light.

"Brel" weaves satire and sarcasm into a quilt of often uncomfortable honesty. It forces the audience to examine their lives as they examine the songs and leaves little room for fairy tales. It provides entertainment only in the form of a heightened experience of reality and the sole direction of escape is inward.

This is not to say "Brel" lacks humor. Quite the opposite. Brel's compositions allow us to look at ourselves and laugh; to examine our methods, motives and morals and realize how silly they sometimes are. He pushes us to look beyond the masks we all wear, learning that to love is to be able to pull down our facade without worrying if our neighbor is doing so. His lyrics, though bitter, are always true; like iced tea without sweetener or lemon, they are neither sugar-coated or artificially tart.

The music in Brel, ranging from vaudeville to pseudo-DeBussey, possesses a uniqueness that was enchantingly extended by the performers. The orchestra, a simple piano, bass, drums and guitar quartet under the direction of Bill Schmitt, provided a solid backbone for the singers while displaying their synchronized independence. The performers were polished and for the most part, the foursome carried their roles with convincing competence.

With only about a dozen spoken lines, "Brel" relies on the success of its 24 storytelling songs. These are powerful, powerful enough to hold one spellbound even without costumes, scenery and a lot of stage movement, all of which are absent in this production. The sold-out 100-seat enclosed stage provided intimacy impossible to acquire in a large auditorium and the nearness of the performers caused

Brel's theme to be more real, more inescapable.

By building a barcade of separation between the performers and the audience, the singers were able to fade from view as they faded from performance. Then, with only a single bench and occasional caps, capes and misplayed toy instruments as props, the singers traded from solos to trios, from unison to harmony.

Many songs or sets were performed by only one singer, others by one singer and a trio. This ever-changing format provided the diversity lacking in scenery and costume changes.

"Brel" uses sarcasm, wit and often blunt language. The "set-ups" (lines preceding a song) and lyrics are powerful if somewhat vague. But lines such as "Though you may live in town, you live too far away when you've lived too long," bring the audience face-to-face with issues like war and aging, issues we'd often rather ignore.

Brel the lyricist wrote of the lost loves, lost dreams and lost lives. He questioned the morality of bullfighting in "The Bulls": "On Sunday, the bulls get so bored when they are asked to drop dead for us."

He examines growing old in "Old Folks": "The old folks never die; they just lay their heads down and go to sleep one day."

And he writes of fallen marriages: "My death waits in a double bed."

Brel teases the audience in "I Loved," a song in which a woman recalls a utopic romance, then realizes she can't remember his name. He uses satire in such songs as "Matilda", where a man anguishes over his returning wife, then reveals his anticipation at her return. And he spites the audience in "Bachelor's Dance" by writing about a dream girl the man hopes to marry as he mimics, "No it isn't you."

"Brel" moves from the thematic statement of "We find we're alone" in the second song to "If we only had love" in the last.

His attitude, while examining reality, never loses hope. Brel questions war but esteems peace; writes of prostitution but clings to love. His characters are completely human: complete with faults, fears and frustrations. To understand Brel is to understand life.

"Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" is directed by Mark Jolen, a visiting artist from Maryland. The cast consists of Donna Harler, Kris Olson, Richard Colla and Steve Andrew in thoughtfully-executed and well-sung roles. The remaining show times are at 8 p.m. July 5, 6, 12 and 13 at Kimball Hall, 11th and R Streets. Ticket prices are \$5 for general admission, \$3 for students and senior citizens and available by calling 472-3375.

## Retrospective schedule

Starring Rosel Zech, Hilmar Thate and Cornelia Froboess. Screenings at 7 and 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, July 16 through Sunday, July 21: *Lili Marlene* Germany 1981, 120 minutes, black and white, directed by R. W. Fassbinder. Starring Giancarlo Giannini, Hanny Schygulla and Mel Ferrer. Screenings at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, July 23 through Sunday, July 28: *Lola* Germany 1981, 120 minutes, color, directed by R. W. Fassbinder. Starring Barbara Sukowa and Rosel Zech. Screenings at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3 p.m.

Friday, July 5 through Sunday, July 7: *The Marriage of Maria Braun* Germany 1978, 120 minutes, color, directed by R. W. Fassbinder. Starring Hanna Schygulla, Gottfried John and Gunter Lamprecht. Screenings are at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3 p.m.

Tuesday, July 9 and Wednesday, July 10: *Imitation of Life U.S.A.* 1959, 125 minutes, color, directed by Douglas Sirk. Starring Lana Turner, John Gavin and Sandra Dee. Screenings at 7 and 9:15 p.m. Wednesday matinee at 1 p.m.

Thursday, July 11 through Sunday, July 14: *Veronica Voss* Germany 1982, 105 minutes, black and white, directed by R. W. Fassbinder.



David Bourke/The Nebraskan

"Weird Al" Yankovic, the 23-year-old accordion player, singer and song writer from Los Angeles appeared in concert Tuesday night at the Royal Grove nightclub. The wacky show opened with videos of Dr.

Demento flashed on a large screen on stage.

Yankovic and his Stupid Band performed parodies of popular songs, the gimmick that has made him famous, including "It's Still Billy Joel To Me," a

parody of "It's Still Rock and Roll To Me." He also sang "My Bologna," a parody of The Knack's "My Sharona," and his most famous parody, "Eat It," a take-off of Michael Jackson's "Beat It."