

Perpetual puberty, on video

Of all the earth-shattering, body-altering, mind-bending changes in life, puberty has the strangest rep. And with good reason. Puberty's unfair. Without even asking, it moves right in and starts giving orders, making you do some pretty dirty and disgusting things. You get pimples and you get ignored. Your bike gets too small.

All in all, it's absolutely great.

Or so tomorrow's Puberty Film Show, presented by the Pleasure Dome and screened at CineCycle, 123 Spadina Ave., wants you to believe. For all of the blast of hot porn in Linda Feese's *Billion Dollar Babies*, or the deadpan desire in John Porter's *On The Street Where She Lives*, nostalgia, not heat-seeking passion, haunts these tapes.

But nostalgia is the great revisionist. Gerald Saul remembers the desperation he felt at 13 when he was always trying to leave home, "rocking to heavy music at rumpus room parties." But his video, *Dance*, is over-the-top with longing for a kind of early-teen *Paradise Lost*.

Here, a CD-sized tablet dances through the rich green leaves

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in a pretty Saskatchewan summer garden. Moving on the tablet itself are images of dancers borrowed from Edward Muybridge in the 1880s. The music is Kiss' "Detroit, Rock City," but the feel is more like a turn-of-the-century waltz played on the parlor organ.

S. Lilova's coming-to-adulthood in Bulgaria is equally romanticized in *Passion At 13*. Lacking rock'n roll, she had Tom Jones.

John Porter uses a vintage map of Toronto as he traces the route he and a pal peddled on their bikes up from midtown Hogtown to north of Highway 401 where young women he pined for lived. With Vic Damone singing Lerner & Loewe's "On The Street Where She Lives," we hear — still watching this map — how he waited outside her place, but she didn't appear. And that was that.

Hollywood and the rest of the film industry generally have cared less about the onrush of puberty than what happens af-

ter the hormones have really hit home. The subject has such special resonance that some exceptional films have resulted: *Stand By Me* or *Le Grand Chemin*. But puberty is about feelings in mid-mutation, where sex, romance, desire and friendship are shapes equally vague on the horizon.

It's about learning to see these vague shapes, too. The images — still and video — which flow through Michelle Groskopf's *A Moscow Night In Florence*, were taken in Europe, as well as a farm across from York University where she's a film student. But they have a distant quality to them. They look the way words sound when they're only partially heard in someone else's conversation.

Marnie Parrell's *Aki Wine* and Feese's *Billion Dollar Babies* are both close-ups — intellectually as well as visually. With Parrell, we're drawn to wonder what's going on in the brain just beyond the face floating gently in front of us. Feese brackets puberty with raw, blunt body-talk. Mottled images of baby genitalia are matched by porn images, equally blurry and lurid.

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