

# Too little music in Celebration At Big Sur

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"We got to get ourselves back to the garden," intones **Joni Mitchell** in *Celebration At Big Sur* (at the Coronet Theatre on Yonge St.), a musical plea for a return to innocence.

The movie was made at Big Sur in northern California, a locale which, with its lush green hills and magnificent coastline, makes a good approximation of Miss Mitchell's longed-for Garden of Eden.

The occasion is an annual folk and rock festival on the grounds of the Esalen Institute, a group therapy centre overlooking the Pacific. The event is as much a performers' jam session as a festival, and the artists perform free before a small audience.

The present film was shot at the 1969 festival, and in addition to **Joni Mitchell**,

the performers include Joan Baez, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, John Sebastian and Dorothy Morrison.

With a solid line-up of talent and some of the world's most spectacular scenery, *Celebration At Big Sur* has the makings of a fine movie. But producer Carl Gottlieb and his crew (there's no mention of a director in the credits) don't manage to pull it off.

The movie does contain a few entertaining musical sequences—particularly Joan Baez singing Sweet Sir Galahad while her sister Mimi Farina dances, and a combined effort by several of the performers of Oh Happy Day. But for a film about a music festival there's far too little music in *Celebration At Big Sur*. Anyone hoping to hear anything like a complete set by Joni Mitchell or Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young will be disappointed.

In more than one sense, in fact, *Celebration At Big Sur*

is a home movie. It has no continuity and it doesn't hold together as a film. And as with the vast majority of home movies, it's of far more interest to the people who were there than to those of us who weren't.

This is especially so of a nude scene in a sulphur bath in which a dozen people grin sheepishly and the sound system fails to pick up what they are saying.

There is one "incident" in the film. According to the promotional material from 20th Century Fox, what happens is that a member of the audience accuses Steve Stills of coming to the festival only to make money. Stills then attempts to avenge his affronted honor by doing battle with the man, only to be restrained by his friends.

Even if we could hear what was going on, it's doubtful whether the incident is worthy of inclusion in the film. But since we

can't hear, and those in the audience without access to promotional material from 20th Century Fox don't know what's happening, this attempt to include some drama becomes the most pointless part of the entire movie.

*Celebration At Big Sur*. At the Coronet Theatre, Yonge St. at Gerrard, 366-8897.

## Investigation of a Citizen

*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*, which was reviewed in these pages last February, has finally opened at Cinecity on Yonge St. after a two-month delay occasioned by the popularity of *Gimme Shelter*.

The delay couldn't have come at a better time for the box office prospects of this Italian production because in the interval it won, as it deserved to win, the

Academy Award as last year's best foreign film.

Director Elio Petri sets out to demonstrate the following thesis—that the people empowered to enforce the rules by which a social system, in this case Italy, is governed are themselves immune to those very rules.

But the film is no pedantic attempt to demonstrate a thesis. Instead, it's a taut, fast-moving political thriller in the style of *Z*. It contains a just about perfect performance by Gian Maria Volante as the chief of a police homicide squad who murders his mistress and then deliberately leaves a trail of blatant clues behind him.

As his mistress, Florinda Balkan gives a fascinating portrayal of a woman erotically obsessed with violent crime.

*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*, directed by Elio Petri. At Cinecity, Yonge St. at Charles, 922-1394.