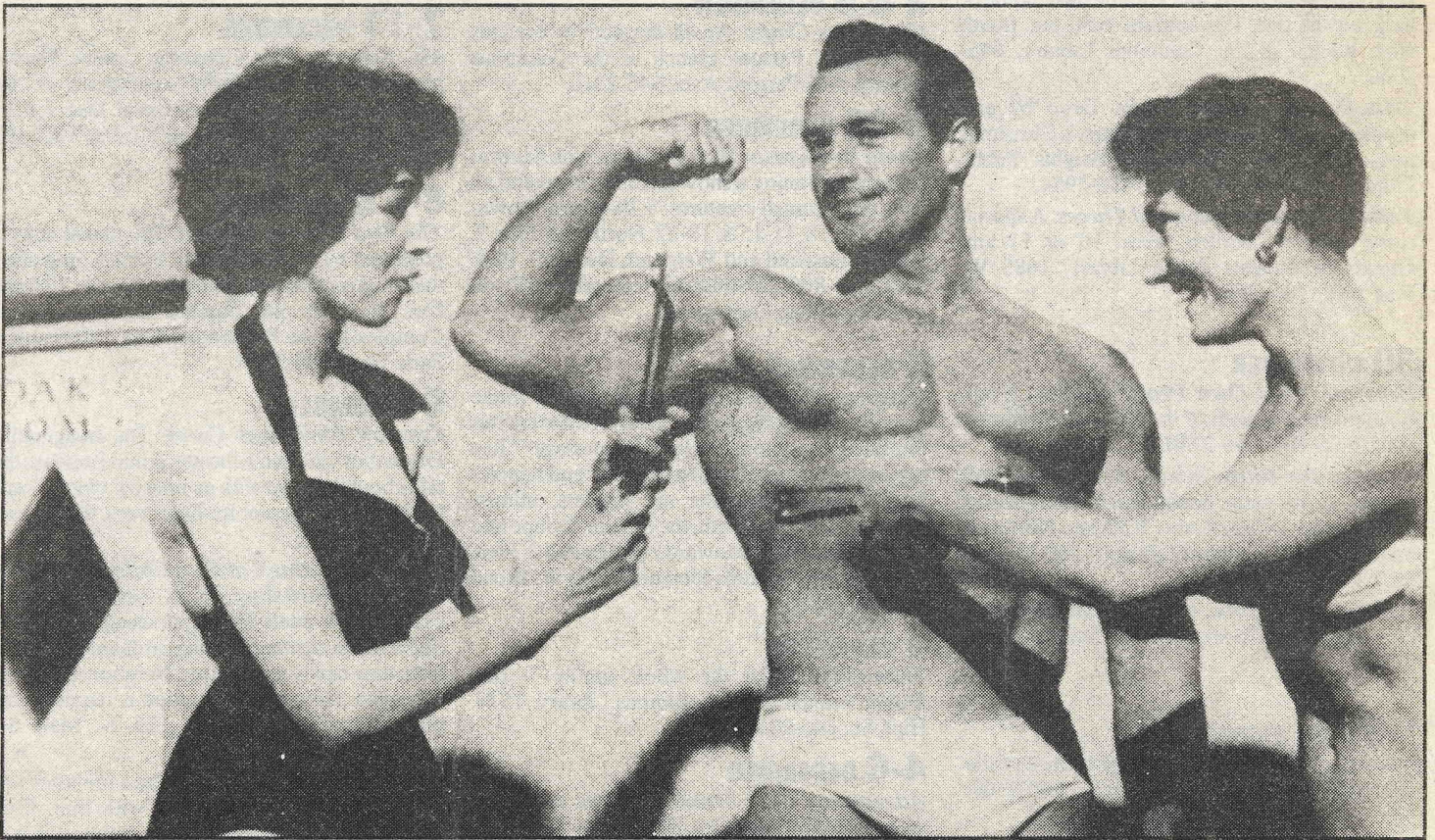


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Scenes from the 1950s are interspersed with celebrity interviews for a fun look at sex in the "docucomedy," *Heavy Petting*, now playing at the Drexel.

## HEAVY PETTING GOES ALL THE WAY

by Curtis Schieber

Frank Zappa once asked in song: "What's the ugliest part of your body?" After a few answers, he finally concluded, "I think it's your mind." Obie Benz's *Heavy Petting* asks a similar question of post-war and pre-sexual liberation America, but he lets the archival film clips that are the movie's heart come to that conclusion themselves. The sexism of those decades, as well as the sexual hysteria in the face of relaxed mores, are reflected in *Petting's* testimonial. On the surface and savagely persistent, though, is a hilarity that comes from the audience's recognition and identification with real life as served up by Benz.

Benz and his staff searched through thousands of hours of film—sex and social ed films, newsreels, TV shows and features—to find those clips that illustrate the process of coming of sexual age in the '50s. From films like *As Boys Grow*, *How To Say No*, *Molly Grows Up* and *Young Man's Fancy* to features like *Bus Stop*, *Invasion Of The Saucer Men* and *The Wild One* to *Ozzie and Harriet*, Benz chose scenes so

profoundly dated, yet still so familiar, that laughs of utter amazement are non-stop.

In order to modernize the themes—which unfold at a pace not unlike that of the coital act itself—Benz splices in interviews with famous "witnesses" like David Byrne, Sandra Bernhard, Spalding Gray, Allen Ginsberg, Laurie Anderson and Abbie Hoffman, as well as no-names talking about the dawning of their own sexual experiences. Hoffman tells a hilarious tale of marathon masturbation, Byrne reveals a charming shyness, Anderson confesses she had a hairdo that stretched her face tortuously and Gray admits to employing a Davy Crockett hat in his pursuit of pleasure.

Benz plays around constantly with the soundtracks of the old films, for example, repeating in several contexts a mother advising, "don't do the don'ts, do do the dos." And ever present is a great soundtrack of '50s and '60s rock and roll and R&B.

But the real stars are the guys and gals in the

old flicks. There is the Army officer demonstrating the application of condoms with the aid of a gleaming steel phallus. And condoms also play a role in one of the most blatantly sexist clips. In it, two hands reach toward a condom: one reaching to grab it, one pulling the other back. The voiceover indicates that the woman was trying to con the man into sex without—to get pregnant and force him into marriage?! Another star is the VD detective, a gumshoe right out of *Dragnet*, who doggedly tracks down a woman who was spreading VD. She plied her trade in a ballpark, where she seduced innocent men (under the bleachers?).

At nearly every turn, Benz's uproarious film reveals just how "ugly" (and absurd) society's mind can get. As the female protagonist in one snippet says, "Self-respect isn't important when you're in love."

## DRUGSTORE COWBOY DARES TO BE REAL

by Chris Jones

Drugs are ambiguous entities. They cultivate obsession, ignore harsh reality and destroy lives.

knows. Set in 1972, Gus Van Sant's offbeat film

money on the West Coast and has all the makings of a cult hit, especially when it comes