

# Good rate of Exchange

Film festival offerings rate well

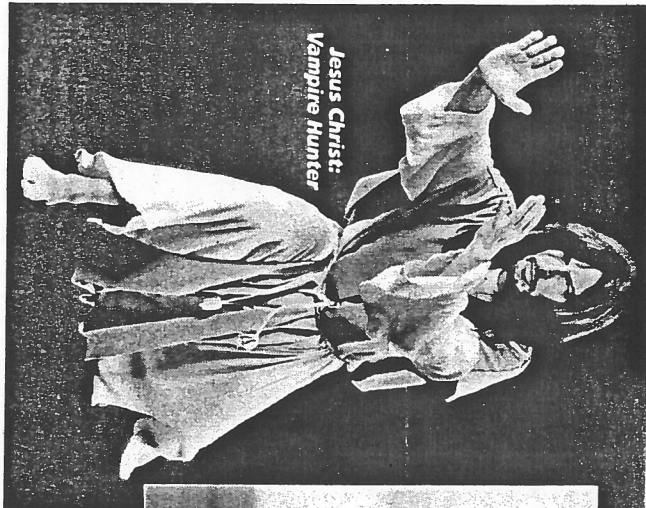
Peter Vesuwalla

**Barbara James**  
Thursday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m.  
Cinematheque  
C+

Barbara James begins with the young and very pregnant title character (Stor-ma T. McDonald) announcing that she plans to kill herself. That should add more dramatic tension to this film than it actually does, but nothing besides her narration indicates that she's depressed enough to do it. The fact that suicide is her goal hardly bodes well for any kind of character arc; however, McDonald's performance is enough to keep the film interesting. Winston Washington Mox-am's conservative directing and occasionally inexplicable camera placement is grating at times, particularly in the scene in which Barbara recalls being seduced by someone she just met while we observe the pair from the next room. The camera is neither a fly on the wall nor an active observer, it's just positioned so that both actors are in frame and seems obligated to stay there. The style works better in their final scene together, which is so well written that the camera ought to be unobtrusive.

**Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner**  
Friday, March 1, 7 p.m.  
Garrick  
A-

Zacharias Kunuk's epic story about betrayal and rivalry among Inuit clans plays, at times, like a soap opera, but that's part of its charm. It is a far cry from the old 16mm National Film Board documentaries about life in the North that put me to sleep as a child. Set against a glorious arctic backdrop so far north that the lighting conditions filmmakers call "magic hour" seem to last forever, *Atanarjuat* would already have been a must-see had it only been a story about survival. Kunuk goes a step further, injecting melodrama of Shake-



**Jesus Christ: Vampire Hunter**

**Turning Paige**  
Friday, March 1, 7:30 p.m.  
Garrick  
A

"Who is the woman?" asks Paige's teacher, pointing out exactly what's wrong with her latest short story. It's a crucial scene in Robert Cuffley's phenomenal feature debut. A lot of movies about writers are often disastrous once the screenwriter decides to make the character a prodigy (creating, no doubt,

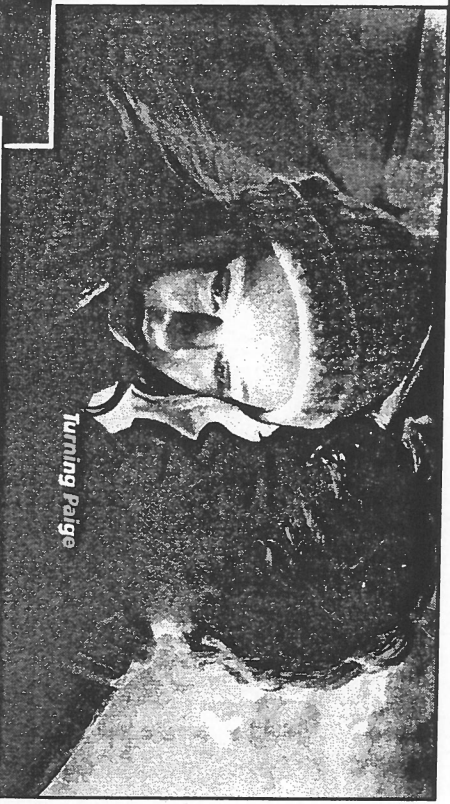


**Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner**

fanciful autobiographies). Cuffley and screenwriter Jason Long avoid that pitfall with the observation that before Paige Fleming (Katharine Isabelle) can progress as a writer, she'll first have to deal with her issues at home. It's obvious to the audience who the woman in Paige's story is, but it wouldn't be to the teacher. Context is everything here, and as we continually discover things about the characters, always seeing them in different ways, *Turning Paige* becomes ever more absorbing. Stunning performances from Isabelle, Nicholas Campbell, Brendan Fletcher and Phillip Dewilde make this easily one of the best features at FilmExchange.

**Jesus Christ: Vampire Hunter**  
Friday, March 1, 11:30 p.m.  
Cinematheque  
B

As the title suggests, Lee Demarbré's glorious piece of schlock finds ol' JC trading in his long hair and beard for an earring and an attitude to kick some vampire ass. Revelations style. What the title doesn't mention is that the film is also chock full of lesbians, kung fu and musical numbers. Call it a five-trick pony, but JC:VH continually finds ways to stay refreshing and surprising, even when the initial camp value begins to wane. That's when we start to notice that this future cult classic actually demonstrates more technical proficiency than it's letting on.



**Turning Paige**

**HEY!**  
Come up with a  
Caption for our Golden

Phone. Text. E-mail.  
One device does it all.