

Channel 17 'Frontier' series features UB videomakers

By ANN WHITCHER

In a world that may bow before the canned and familiar, the work of independent film and video makers shines forth with special promise and originality. Even when least successful, these works bear the highly personal stamps of their makers, and not those of clients, sponsors or even television stations providing financial support.

Saturdays at 11 p.m., Channel 17 (WNED-TV) is airing *The Frontier*, an ambitious series of independent films and videotapes by 23 artists in Western New York and Southern Ontario. The series has been produced by Media Study/ Buffalo, and will air on successive Saturday evenings, although viewers should consult program listings for pre-emptions during Channel 17 pledge seasons and the like. The series extends to May.

A number of UB students, graduates, faculty, artists and administrators are represented in one way or another in the series, which offers a variety of film subjects and styles, including documentary, personal, experimental and fiction. Last week's opening, for instance, offered a program of four films and videotapes, including *Moving Along the X, Y Axis* by Roberta Hayes and Robert Coggeshall of the University. The tape, which begins with a single dancer isolated in the video camera's frame, won an award in the Experimental Category of the 1982 National Video Festival sponsored by the American Film Institute. It was completed through facilities at the Visual Perception Laboratory of the UB Psychology Department, where Hayes is currently artist-in-residence, as she is with the UB Center for Media Study, where Coggeshall is working toward his master's degree.

This Saturday's offering is a group of works including Gary Katz's 16 mm film, *Lemme Outa Here*, which assaults the audience with contradictory sounds and images, including, say the producers, "middle-class teenagers frolicking on the beach, Washington politicians haggling over tedious budget proposals, and winos languishing in an inner-city slum." The



film's emphasis, they add, is to "resolve a gap between meaningless rhetoric in society and the immediate visual environment of the filmmaker." Katz, who studied filmmaking at UB's Center for Media Study, has shown his work at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, at WCTC-Channel 13 in Worcester, Massachusetts, and at Zone Cinema in Hamilton, Ontario.

The noted video artist Steina (formerly known professionally as Steina Vasulka), who is a former UB adjunct professor in the Center for Media Study, will show four of her recent videotapes in the fourth program of the series. These include *Somersault*, in which she uses a glass tube with a hemispherical mirror attached to the lens of her video camera, so as to create a perception of space that "confuses one's sense of visual logic," she says. A co-founder of New York's *The Kitchen*, a major video exhibition center, Steina has shown her videotapes throughout the United States and Europe. She won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1976, and has received grants from the New York State Council on the

Still from *Loose Change*, a film by former UB student Joe Gutt.

Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Joe Gutt's *Loose Change*, a 27-minute color film set for April 9 airing, is Gutt's attempt to create his own "movie" after years of fascination with this beguiling medium, and for which he has cast Buffalo actors and chosen several familiar Buffalo settings. Now a cinematography fellow at the American Film Institute, Gutt also studied film and video at UB's Center for Media Study. His work includes technical assistance on television commercials, and production of his own independent films, including *Station-Break*, a film shot entirely at Buffalo's old Central Terminal before its recent reconstruction.

Dominic Angerame's color film, *A Ticket Home*, is sixth in the WNED-TV series. It assembles "memory-charged" visual fragments of a cross-country trip made to the filmmaker's home. Angerame, who began making films while a UB student, has screened his

films throughout the country. He won awards at the Chicago International Film Festival and at the Sinking Creek Film Festival.

Also of interest to area viewers is *Radiation Workers: Reprocessing*, by Tobe Carey, Pam Roberts and Ed Wierzbowski, 11th in the series, which examines the controversy surrounding the handling of nuclear wastes at the Nuclear Fuel Services plant in West Valley, located just south of Buffalo.

Independent videomaker Lynn Corcoran, whose *In Our Own Backyard* (which concerns the environmental disaster at Love Canal) won a Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival, is the series' producer. Executive producers of *The Frontier* are Dr. Gerald O'Grady for Media Study/ Buffalo and Wiley Hance for WNED-TV. O'Grady is director of the University's Education Communications Center and its Center for Media Study. President and founder of Media Study/ Buffalo, O'Grady hosted *Film-making*, a 13-part series of interviews with experimental filmmakers, broadcast on many PBS stations. He was also project director for *American Lost and Found*, an interpretive documentary of the 1930s, produced and directed by Tom Johnson and Lance Bird and broadcast nationally on the PBS system.

In addition, the series' assistant to the producer, Barbara Lattanzi, received an M.A. degree in 1980 from the Center for Media Study; her film, *Rings*, was included in the 1981 *Frontier* series.

This year's *Frontier* series is supported by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Canada Council (a number of leading Canadian artists will also show their works in the series; including Gordon Lawson's *The Censor*, a humorous and satirical comment on the Ontario Film Censor Board, second in the series), which provided fees to the artists. Additional support was received from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Twenty-nine hour and 30-minute programs drawn from Channel 17's signal area have been broadcast on *The Frontier* since the series began in 1979. □