Rubinstein in Life and on the Screen

By JOHN ROCKWELL

"I love to be at a performance where I don't have to play the piano," said Arthur Rubinstein to an admiring crowd. That, no doubt, is why Mr. Rubinstein, who directed the M.T.M. showings yesterday at the Festival Theater of "Love of Life," a documentary movie about the 68-year-old pianist at its premiere.

"We just found out two days ago that he was coming to town," said Jack Sprague, president of New York Filmers, which is distributing the documentary. "It was his idea to come. It's been a big fantasy of his to get this film up on a screen before he dies."

The 550-seat theater wasn't full to the rafters, but to judge from the fervent praise of the fans who were there, it would have been hard for more people known that Mr. Rubinstein.

Mr. Rubinstein who said afterward that he had seen the film three times already, arrived by limousine at 7:40, and was immediately caught up in a press of admirers. Somebody warned that he looked frail, but to this observer he seemed lively and alert indeed.

He was handed a bouquet by a representative of New York Filmers, which filmed the performance in French with Francois Reichenbach, the film's director, and dealt gracefully with even the smallest pushy fan. He said I could," he said politely but firmly to a particularly insistent auto-graph-hunter. "But I won't!"

During the film, the director applauded performances and on-screen remarks continguously, in defense of the pianist. Afterwards, he spent a good 15 minutes chatting with admirers as he moved slowly out of the theater.

Carol Lubetkin, a pianist who lives in Oberlin, Ohio, and teaches in Cleveland, booked space on a 5 P.M. flight to La Guardia Airport. "I heard Horowitz in Cleveland and New York last year," she said, "but I missed Rubinstein. My plane was held up in a holding pattern over New Jersey, but I managed to catch the film." She added: "If most of those at the theater had come to see Mr. Rubinstein as well as the film, there would have been no need for the pianist to be there.

"We just saw the movie twice and we're staying to see it a third time," said John Hendrickson, who was with Judy Stillman. Both study piano at the Juilliard School of Music. "We were so sure that he was coming tonight, but we would have seen the film twice any many times. We just worship him."

MISS ZYKINA SINGS RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS

Bravo may abound—and justifiably—when the Lenen Prize winner Ludmila Zykina plays with the London Festival Orchestra, which provides the background. But sometimes tough backgrounds to her Russian folk songs. So it was at Carnegie Hall yesterday afternoon with Miss Zykina, something of an institution on the Soviet folk scene, on another American tour. The industrial revolution has not yet caught up with her. Her songs deal with the toil of the worker, the struggle against the tsarist autocracy, and mountain ash, all delivered impecably in a voice equally capable of a love song and a long, long held note. Her folk music is certainly not unrefined or improvised. And the London Festival Beethoven Orchestra explores the properties of the balalaika, whether the piquant strings of Mireille Alexsandr Fedorov steps out of the ensemble to wisp into a couple of folk songs, his rapidfire violin bowing making him an American country fiddler or banjo palyer moving through the changes of some relic or jig.

JAN DOVE

Film: Arthur Rubinstein

Pianist, 89, Subject and Star of Documentary

At this late date it is obviously idiotic to "discover" Arthur Rubinstein. The 89-year-old pianist has been enthusiastically propping himself up all over the world for more than 70 years. But "Arthur Rubinstein—Love of Life" succeeds in turning the rare trick of revealing an extraordinary human being in a dramatic and often amusing film. The documentary, which was made in 1968 and won an Academy Award, had its be-lated theatrical premiere here yesterday at the Festival.

Francois Reichenbach and S. S. Wallis, the directors, have been working on it for a year. The documentary and of course the contented man himself can hardly be pleased with the pacing. But the documentary is a love story and it's a love story for the ages. Arthur Rubinstein may very well have a career that is filled with the same successes as Carnegie Hall in 1949 and other points in a worldwide itinerary. They are all very happy and pleased to have the Oscar for Best Documentary. The orchestra was directed by Murray Perles, the Park Avenue Symphony Orchestra.