

Document Citation

Title	Asylum
Author(s)	Devo.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1980 Mar 02
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Asylum, el Sissi, Azza, 1980

ASYLUM

Supplier: CBC

Exec Producer: Paul Wright

Producer-Director-Writer: Azza el Sissi

60 Mins., Sun. (Feb. 7), 9 p.m.

CBC-TV Toronto

Azza el Sissi has crafted a rigorous and penetrating docu going behind the scenes at a psychiatric chronic care ward. "Asylum" is not preachy or 1-sided. It's a dead-on, honest view of the patients and staff at Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital's ward B2.

Rex Loring's chilling narration assures us we will see schizophrenics, manic-depressives and what the mental health community calls "chronic failures." After the hour, the viewer feels he knows each of the patient profiles and can try to assess their potential for release.

The lineups for medication evoke the numbing scene from "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest." Here we meet Betty, a psychotic living in a fantasy world populated by film stars.

Matt is a likable patient suffering from severe depression. He attempted suicide 26 times and has great insight into his illness. He's afraid of leaving the ward too soon. Daryl is being held against his will, feels he's being overmedicated, and will appeal to the review board.

Sandra, a bright-eyed young girl, feels it's no fun being locked in and wants to go home. Mario is trying to get into another group home, but his bizarre behavior — drinking out of toilet bowls and ducking down in front of windows — makes placement difficult.

But the team leader Dr. Singh will not accept defeat. He thinks with proper drug regimens, two-thirds of his patients can be helped. His psychotherapy sessions are grueling and uncomfortable, but the occasional breakthrough makes it worthwhile.

Nighttime virtually seems peaceful on the ward, but spot checks must be made for fear of patients' suicides. Patients have to be on guard for unexpected pounding by one of their wardmates.

Azza el Sissi established solid trust with the patients and staff here. No one is "on" for the camera. She focuses on Dr. Singh's prime insight — the role of the psychiatrist is to treat a person on an individual basis, not to meet the needs of society. Unfortunately, Canada takes the opposite view. "Asylum" is unwavering in its honesty and deserves a slot in any broadcaster's sked. —Devo. *Variety*
3/2/88