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Jiri Menzel Directs: **Closely Watched Trains** (Ostre sledovane vlaky) 9:10

Jiri Menzel is an actor and stage director, and a filmmaker whose philosophical comedies owe much to the modern Czech literary tradition [particularly the works of Bohumil Hrabal]. But his films reveal a unique and independent personality, a universe all his own. *Closely Watched Trains* is a story of a teenage boy whose greatest concern amidst the cataclysm of the war is how to lose his virginity, and thus enter into adult society. Redemption finally arrives in the person of an extremely attractive blonde who is at the same time the leader of the Resistance. But tragedy casts its shadow on the unexpected happiness—at the end of the road he sacrifices himself in the most natural way...Modest events describe and characterize the heroism. No one has been able to portray the boredom, the void of everyday life in a small town's railway station, the longing for exciting adventures, the gentle eroticism of adolescence as Menzel did, in a sharp contrast to the presence of the brutal war...In Menzel's vision, the average man, the simple common people—the Chaplinesque or Svejek-like innocent victim—becomes the central figure of an offbeat, bittersweet poetry. —Yvette Biro

Special note: Jiri Menzel will appear in person at the San Francisco International Film Festival in May, where he will be honored with the Kurosawa Award.

• Directed by Jiri Menzel. Written by Menzel, Bohumil Hrabal, based on a novel by Hrabal. Photographed by Jaromir Sofr. With Vaclav Neckar, Jitka Bendova, Vladimir Valenta, Libuse Havelkova. (1966, 89 mins, In Czech with English subtitles, B&W, 16mm, Print from Films Inc.)