

Life imitates art in Clemente gang film

By Gene Mustain

For student filmmakers at Roberto Clemente High School, it was a tragic case of life imitating art while art was in the process of imitating life.

Two weeks before they began shooting a film about street gangs in Chicago, cameraman Maximino Inostroza's brother was shot and killed by real-life gang members.

After filming was completed and while students were adding titles and credits, production aide Steve Negron's two brothers were murdered because they happened to be in the wrong place during an outbreak of indiscriminate gang violence.

The killings had an all-too-real quality for the cast and crew of "Too Late for Me," which will be shown at 10 p.m. Saturday on the WTTW-TV (Channel 11) Image Union program.

MOST OF THEM live in or near "Rumble Row," the name given the West Side Humboldt Park neighborhood where gang violence is a daily menace.

"We were trying to show gang violence can happen to anyone, even if they are not members of a gang," said Oscar Monterrubio, 18, a Clemente senior who portrays Freddie, the film's lead character.

In the film, Freddie is shot and as he lies dying in a garbage-strewn alley he recalls in flashbacks how he joined a gang and how it affected his job, his education and his relationship with a girl friend.

He joined the gang, the Zero Boys, for protection. That was after he innocently hit a baseball through a window of a car be-

longing to a member of a rival gang, the Insaints, who promptly promised retaliation.

OF SUCH TRIVIAL disputes are gang wars started, and lives lost, along Rumble Row.

In April, Steve Negron's brothers, Ralph, 20, and Isaac, 17, were standing on a street corner when they were mowed down by members of the Insane Unknowns, who mistook them for members of the Latin Cobras.

"We wanted to show how people get sucked into gangs merely by their environment," said the film's director, Bill Alvelo.

"But the film is not just about Humboldt Park," he said. "It's about all places where there is inferior housing and education and where there are no activities for people, except the streets."

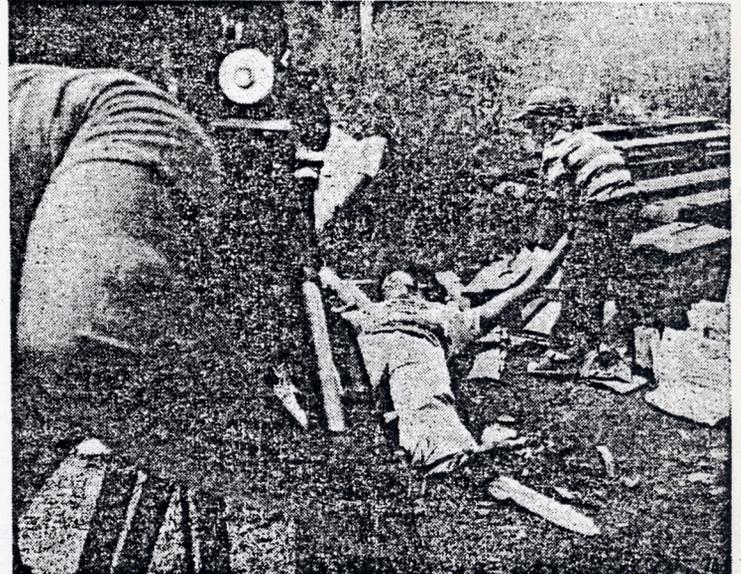
THE IDEA ORIGINATED last year with Orlando Cruz, a student in Clemente's film and radio/TV course, who was concerned about the gang activities of his older and younger brothers.

Orlando's mother, Maria, who is rearing five children on income earned by selling guacamole on Milwaukee Av., was picked to portray Freddie's mother.

Several other students, encouraged by faculty producer John West and assistants Emmanuel Harris and Claudia Crask, added their own personal experiences to the story line.

West said he hopes funds can be found to produce multiple prints of the film for showing in all Chicago high schools and in other cities.

"The irony and poignancy of this story has more of a chance of reaching audiences



CHICAGO TEENS act out and film the terror of street gangs in the movie, "Too Late for Me," which was produced totally by students from Roberto Clemente High School. Its television premiere will be on Channel 11's Image Union program at 10 p.m. Saturday.

than those gang situations traditionally portrayed by Hollywood," he said.

Filming was funded by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and by the Allstate Insurance Foundation. In addition,

Ogilvy & Mather Inc., an advertising agency, contributed production assistance.

Alvelo and Monterrubio, both 18, will enter Columbia College in the fall—to study filmmaking.

Gary Deeb
TV-radio critic



● "Too Late for Me," a 25-minute film about Chicago street gangs that was produced by 38 Northwest Side teen-agers, is the featured attraction at 10 p.m. Saturday on WTTW-Ch. 11's "Image Union." The short subject was directed by Bill Alvelo, a senior at Roberto Clemente Senior High School. "Image Union" is Channel 11's weekly outlet for local film and videotape makers.

Richard Christiansen
Critic at large



"TOO LATE FOR ME," a 25-minute film made by 38 students of Roberto Clemente High School about

Arts at large

the dire consequences of street gang warfare, will be shown at 10 p.m. Saturday on WTTW-Ch. 11.

The film, backed by the Chicago Board of Education and the Mayor's Office of Manpower, was made on location on city streets last summer with the aid of \$8,000 from the Allstate Insurance Foundation. Ogilvy & Mather, which donated postproduction services, also hired three cast and crew members for its advertising agency after the movie was finished.

The production was supervised by John C. West, who teaches film and broadcasting at Clemente, but the story, viewpoint, and filmmaking came from the students. The result is a sometimes moving, sometimes mawkish, and surprisingly well-crafted work.