

MOVIE CAPSULE

★ ★ ★ **STOLEN** (unrated). The awe that overtakes visitors to the palatial Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston has been replaced in recent years by a sense of sadness and loss. On an early, post-St. Patrick's Day morning in 1990, two thieves made off with some of the gallery's most priceless holdings, including Vermeer's "The Concert" and Rembrandt's "The Sea of Galilee." The mysterious and, at this point, unsuccessful mission to recover them is the subject of Rebecca Dreyfus' excellent documentary "Stolen." The film's galvanizing figure is Harold Smith, a debonair, bowler-hatted art crime detective whose investigation has taken him from New York to London. Ravaged by lifelong skin cancer, Smith has cultivated a chipper, never-say-die

optimism that is repeatedly put to the test as he runs up against false leads and con artists, eager to partake of a \$5-million reward bounty. Smith's search brings him into contact with a colorful array of characters, including a cherubic, maturing Artful-

Dodger type in England, whose nefarious connections reveal a disconcerting network of complicity among the Boston underworld and their European cousins. Dreyfus trots out a number of art authorities and Vermeer aficionados, ostensibly to elevate the film beyond crime-TV melodramatics. But the meat of the film is her dauntless gumshoe, who plays his role to such eccentric perfection, he would have to have been invented had he not existed prior to that fateful March morning, 1:23. At Cinema Village, Manhattan. — JAN STUART



PHOTO BY TIMOTHY GREENFIELD SANDERS

Crime detective Harold Smith appears in "Stolen."