

REVIEWS

Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*

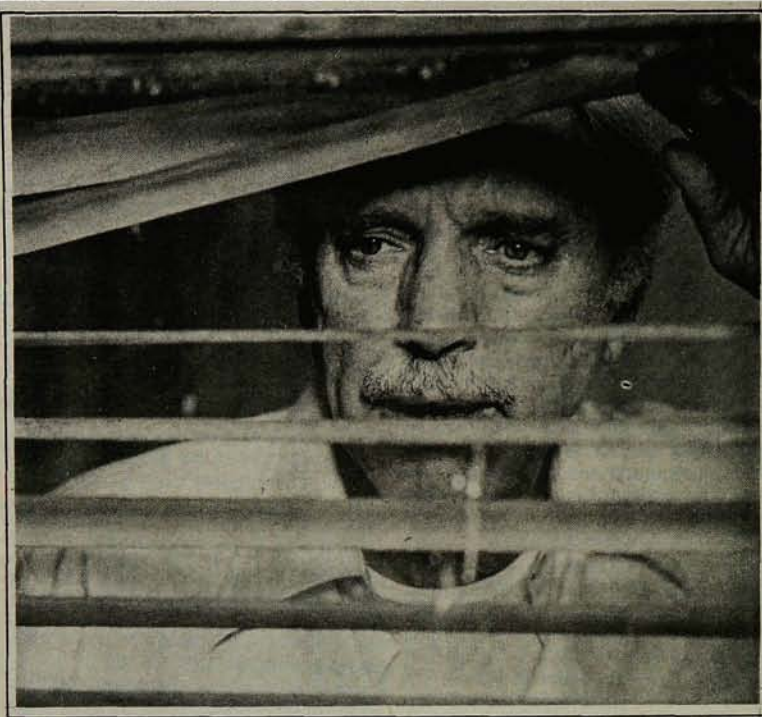
The first shot after the opening credits shows an ancient luxury hotel being demolished by explosives, while a wrecking ball smashes another condemned building as the end titles roll. In Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*, images of decay predominate. An ironic, poignant, darkly comedic study of life amid the grim underside of the American Dream, *Atlantic City* examines a society in transition between old and new, and a culture disintegrating through progress.

The film's strength rests in Malle's position as a detached observer looking from the outside in at American society. He does not Americanize his experience, but remains true to his artistic vision. The result is an honest exploration of North American cultural values that few of us would dare attempt ourselves.

John Guare's tense screenplay delivers a tight, effective plot, reinforced by tough, honest, and intriguing characters, all of whom survive on their dreams and are either living in or running from their past. Lou, an aging small-time hood, has always fled once the shooting started. He looks after Grace, a former beauty contestant and widowed gun moll, now a bedridden hypochondriac. Sally, a small-town Saskatchewan girl living next door to Lou in their condemned building, dreams of making it as a dealer. But the shame of her husband Dave and sister Chrissie having run off together still torments her, and Dave's criminal record threatens her employment status at the casino.

Dave and Chrissie, spaced-out flower children, show up one day at the casino looking for Sally. Dave holding some stolen dope and Chrissie eight months pregnant. Lou, infatuated with Sally, befriends Dave in hope of meeting her. With Dave's dope stashed in his apartment, Lou does the legwork on a deal. While Lou is still in the hotel, the hoods Dave has robbed catch up to him and kill him. Left with the money, Lou finally has the chance to live up to his feared gangster image, and can play the big shot to Sally.

Working both within and against the conventions of a thriller, Malle seems less interested in action alone than in action's effect on character. Though structured and edited like an action drama, the film's pace is more languid and sombre, as frequently the camera lingers on detail or dwells on nuances of character. Malle opens the film with Sally alone at her kitchen sink washing herself with lemons. From his kitchen window opposite, Lou secretly watches her. Sally's careful slicing of the lemons, the sensuous flow of the water, the mood accentuated by Bellini's *Norma* wafting incongruously through the still, dreary night, combine to give her actions a ritual quality. As Lou peeps from between the venetian blinds, the way the camera holds adoringly on Sally's beautiful, softly lit image tells us he is



● Secretly watching her—"but not simply another dirty old man"—*Atlantic City*'s Burt Lancaster as Lou.

not simply another dirty old man. These two strangers, alone in the city, separated by age and circumstance, share the unrequited intimacy of this nightly ritual.

At crucial moments in the plot, as when the hoods find Dave, Malle tones down rather than intensifies the action. There is no what-will-happen-next suspense to the chase, but rather an escalating dread. As the car park becomes a mechanical maze that overwhelms and engulfs Dave, we sense his doom is inevitable. The camera holds on Dave's stabbing: what we see is not lurid, sensationalized violence but rather the clinical, workmanlike efforts of a professional hitman. We see the reality behind the illusion: Dave's dream of making the big score ends brutally and unmercifully.

Much of the film's humour is darkly textured. Funny things happen, but often what's happening isn't funny. Mostly it's sad, and Malle frequently uses humour to end a scene on a comic upbeat, as when Lou, extending his glamourization of the past to its logical absurdity, tells Dave: "The Atlantic Ocean was something else. You should have seen the Atlantic Ocean in those days." The hospital scene's black comedy is grimly ironic. Sally identifies Dave's body while outside the operating room a singer and three chorus girls commemorate the opening of the new Frank Sinatra Wing. Reality penetrates *Atlantic City*'s commercialized illusion of happiness, rendering its everybody-is-a-winner mentality absurd.

There is biting social commentary in the scene where Sally is fired from the casino because her dead husband had a criminal record. "Would it matter if we hadn't been married?" she asks bitterly. Her boss answers that, "If this guy

loved you, he would have shown up eventually," "So love is the reason," she scoffs. "Yes, love," he replies, sounding peevishly inept. After creating a scene with Lou (whose drug money she demands), with the hoods who have beaten her up, and with her former mentor Joseph (who has just tried to pimp her), Sally is ejected from the casino. In the morality of *Atlantic City*, the most serious crime is disturbing the blackjack tables.

Atlantic City achieves a certain seedy, desperate look, and both cinematographer Richard Ciupka and production designer Anne Pritchard deserve praise along with Malle. The colours are murky, faded pastels glimmering amid an overcast gloom. Ciupka's camera captures as much city as possible in the background, emphasizing the grim poverty of garbage strewn slums and the soiled crassness of the Boardwalk. Yet at intimate moments, such as the love scene between Lou and Sally, his camera can also create delicately tender images. Pritchard's art direction sustains the film's grimy milieu through canine beauty parlours, hotel toilets, and subterranean dressing rooms. Conscious vulgarity and deliberate bad taste permeate but do not overwhelm her set design. The clutter of Grace's apartment reveals her as a woman clinging to the sentimentally precious junk of her lost past, and heightens our awareness of her pathetic situation.

Burt Lancaster's performance as Lou highlights the film. His penetrating eyes and steely smooth voice sustain a cool, understated screen presence. Kate Reid beautifully captures both the comic vulgarity and endearing pathos of Grace. Susan Sarandon is believable and compelling as Sally, a vulnerable character naive in ambition but brave in

determination. Robert Joy combines the right amount of sleaziness, fear, and desperation in his portrayal of the punkish Dave.

What saves *Atlantic City* from potentially being an utterly wretched descent into urban despair is the basic humanity of its characters. Malle searches for honest human truths beneath the city's vulgarity, greed, and crass commercialism. Lou defends Sally according to a gangland code of honour that the hoods have violated. But such a code has long ceased to exist, and Lou can live in it for no longer than a brief moment of glory. When he lets Sally go it is an act of kindness, an act intensified by our knowledge that he has the power to make her stay.

On paper, *Atlantic City* is everything that those who clamour for an indigenous Canadian film industry say a Canadian film shouldn't be: its director is French, and its script, stars, setting, theme, and even its title are American. Yet the excellence of its cinematic achievement makes all such discussion as to "How-Canadian-is-it?" seem ridiculous. Canadians should be proud such a film was made here, and could be made under the Canadian system. The advantages of talented, experienced international directors such as Malle working with Canadian crews are obvious. Proof rests in the fact that after working with Malle, Richard Ciupka has since directed his first feature, *Curtains*.

What Canadians should really be asking is why the numerous Canadian attempts to explore the American experience have yet to come close to the level of Malle's achievement in *Atlantic City*.
Bruce Malloch ●

ATLANTIC CITY d. Louis Malle p. Denis Héroux sc. John Guare mus.comp./conduc. Michel Legrand d.o.p. Richard Ciupka, csc. ed. Suzanne Baron sd. Jean-Claude Laureux p. des. Anne Pritchard assoc. p. Justine Héroux, Larry Nesis p. co-ord. Vincent Malle exec. p. Joseph F. Beaubien, Gabriel Boustany asst. cam. Andy Chmura (1st), Larry Lynn (2nd) stills Attila Dory gal. John Berrie key grip Jacob Rolling cam. grip Jean-Baptiste Dutreix grip John Oravetz construc. man. Marcel Desrochers. Raymond M. Samitz carp. Edward L. McMillan, Charles Cirigliano, Joseph Petruccio, Jr. p. man. Justine Héroux, Ken Golden asst. d. John Board (1st), Robert McCart (2nd), Jim Chory (2nd) cont. France Lachapelle unit. man. Micheline Garant, Carl Zucker loc. man. Robert Wertheimer p. office co-ord. Barbara Shrier asst. d. prep. prod. John Desormeaux cost. des. François Barbeau ward. mistress Marie-Hélène Gascon ward. stylist Jeffrey Ullman, Carla Froeberg (asst.) art. d. co-ord. Csaba Kertesz, Marie-Claude Tétrault props mistress Gretchen Rau set props Jacques Chamberland set dresser Wendell Dennis make-up/hair Rita Ogden wig specialist Donna Gliddon boom op. Gilles Ortion dubbing mix. Jacques Maumont asst. ed. Federico Salzmann ed. apprent. James Bruce cast. Canadian Casting Associates cast. extras Joy Todd Inc./Benetia Rickerby p. acct. Pierre Guevremont pub. co-ord. Myrna Post Associates unit pub. Jill de Wolfe James Video sequence Patrick Burns teamster capt. Lenny Luizzi Lp. Burt Lancaster, Susan Sarandon, Kate Reid, Michel Piccoli, Hollis McLaren, Robert Joy, Al Waxman, Robert Goulet, Moses Znaimer, Angus MacInnes, Sean Sullivan, Wally Shawn, Harvey Atkin, Norma Dell'Agnese, Louis Del Grande, John McCurry, Eleanor Becroft, Cec Linder, Sean McCaan, Vincent Glorioso, Adele Chatfield-Taylor, Tony Angelo, Sis Clark, Gennaro Consalvo, Lawrence McGuire, Ann Burns, Marie Burns, Jean Burns, Connie Collins, John Almond, John Burns col. 35 mm running time 103 min. dist. Cine 360 Inc. (Que.), Paramount Pictures p.c. Cine-Neighbor Inc. (Montreal)/Selta Films-Elie Kfoury (Paris) year 1979

Christopher Chapman's
Kelly

Exclusive of horror films that follow their own formula, the movies of English Canada observe certain clichés. Exploit the landscape: fly over, around, up and down the mountains; linger on the prairies; shoot the sunset; look for possibilities in snow, water and trees. If the action flags, make use of rapids, blizzards or dust storms. If you must specify the location, call it Alaska, Long Island, Montana, Texas or Bear Island; otherwise, keep mum. Include among the characters a wise old Indian or a philosopher-sage rooted in an earlier, simpler time. Growing up should be the theme, generally plotted around the search for a father, dead or alive. Whether, in the end, his values are accepted or rejected, the finding of that father is necessary to future fulfillment, because mother, when she appears at all, is ineffectual. Show the seeker as troubled or disruptive, but establish from the beginning a sensitivity that indicates a basic natural goodness. Gather a chorus of quaint rustics or ethnics to comment wryly on the action, to add colour and to define the community. Furthermore, don't forget to display a confusing ambivalence toward nature. It must be beautiful or sublime in the best eighteenth-century aesthetic tradition, with the power to heal the wounded psyche. On the other hand, it must be genuinely threatening, and capable of nurturing mad trappers and killers.

Above all, remember that animals respond instinctively to good people. Relationships with animals, in fact, be they birds, dogs, horses, wolves or Kodiak bears, provide the window into the human soul. To guarantee a General rating, a touch of Walt Disney's sentimentalism is not amiss, although surely not to the point where seven Trappist

monks play the Seven Dwarfs in *Kelly's* Alberta-as-Alaska forest. But perhaps that's just an in-joke, not a model to emulate. Indeed *Kelly* is not a model to be emulated.

Kelly provides a study in why the rules that it so faithfully observes prove no substitute for a sound dramatic screenplay. The landscape, as photographed by Paul Van Der Linden, is marvelous; the rapids are dangerous. George Clutesi, as Clute, overcomes the banality of his role as wise-man-who-talks-with-foxes to give the most interesting performance. But the script sinks everyone.

Kelly pretends to be the story of a young girl, frustrated by dyslexia, who has become a problem for her mother. Equally frustrated, her mother ships her to Alaska, to a bush-pilot father whom she has never met, since her parents divorced when she was born. In nature, she will learn to accept animals, her father, her mother and, most importantly, herself.

The first weakness in this screenplay concerns the characters. Aside from the fact that their dialogue is excruciatingly predictable, the story itself doesn't give them any scope. Susan, Kelly's mother, well-played by Elaine Nalee, has to be incurably urban. Her father, Dave (Robert Logan, also the author of all this simple-mindedness), can only be competent and warm; he smiles, showing even white teeth. The villain, who doesn't fit comprehensively into the main story, is the mad trapper, Beechum (Doug Lennox); he snarls, revealing horrid black teeth. The young heroine (Twyla-Dawn Vokins), because she changes, should be interesting, but the script snatches the opportunity away from her. Engaging as a defiant problem-child, game for every gesture including bank robbery, once she reaches the mountains, her resourcefulness is not allowed to function.

The primary device for establishing character in *Kelly* is the animal. Father and Clute are introduced rescuing a wolf caught in the mad trapper's snare;



● In the bowels of the mine Helene Udy meets her Valentine.

George Mihalka's
My Bloody Valentine

My Bloody Valentine is yet another in the seemingly endless stream of murdering-masked-maniac movies and it's a typical example of the genre. Which is to say, terrible. The writing, acting and photography range from flat to embarrassingly amateurish. One example will suffice: some young miners and their girlfriends are holding a secret party in the mine company's cafeteria (the official party having been shut down because the masked maniac has delivered some hacked-out hearts to the police chief, with a warning that he will continue to kill unless the townspeople remember a 20-year-old cave-in and honour it by never holding another Valentine's Day dance). In the middle of the party, in the middle of the dancing and making out, one of the girls says, in her cutest itsy-bitsy voice, "Oh, let's go down in the mine!" And the men agree. Ridiculous: they work long, hard, dirty, dangerous hours in that mine and they're willing to party in it? No way! In any real, or even plausible world, a mine is a hated and feared place. Nobody parties in mines. Ever!

As bad as this movie is, there are three pluses: for Canadian nationalists there are characters that say, "Eh?"; there are unmistakable Nova Scotian locations, and there is a Canadian flag flying in one shot. That flag means nothing to the story, but it is nice to find a producer who realizes that American audiences for this sort of thing don't need to see an American flag on the screen. They don't care where the action is set, so long as there's plenty of it.

For genre fans, there is the ending. The killer is neither captured nor killed. Instead, he runs away babbling for his mentor (the original mad killer of the 20-year-old cave-in). Like the Canadian setting this too is meaningless, but genre fans often take great delight in variations on a theme. Often there is precious little else for them to delight in.

The third plus is for folklore fans. The killer's motives are not sex or revenge, the two genre standbys. Instead, they seem to be based on the admonitory and punitive. Those familiar with the little-

known legend of the Foolkiller—the man possessed by a god and made into an instrument of divine vengeance—or the madman who imagines himself as such, can view *My Bloody Valentine* as an unconscious retelling of the myth.

Unfortunately, none of these things manage to push *My Bloody Valentine* beyond the level of trite hackwork.

Andrew Dowler ●

MY BLOODY VALENTINE d. George Mihalka p. John Dunning, Andre Link, Stephen Miller sc. John Beard story concept Stephen Miller assoc. p. Lawrence Nesis p. superv. Bob Presner d.o.p. Rodney Gibbons superv. ed. Jean Lafleur mus. Paul Zaza — Songs by Lee Bach art. d. Penny Hadfield exec. asst. to p. Irene Litinsky p. compt. Leo M. Gregory p. man. Danny Rossner unit/loc. man. John Desormeaux a.d. Ray Sager (1st), Julian Marks (1st), Anne Murphy (2nd), Richard Stanford (3rd) cast. Baly Casting cast. consult. Daniel Hausmann, Arden Ryshpan cont. Joanne Harwood sd. Bo Harwood boom Jean-Claude Matte cam. op. Louis De Ernsted asst. cam. Daniel Jobin (1st), Paul Hurteau (1st), Richard Montpetit (2nd), Jean-Pierre Plouffe (2nd) keygrip Marc De Ernsted grip Jean-Maurice De Ernsted, Antonio Vidosa, Jacques Girard, Chuck Lapp gaf. Walter Klymkiw best boy Jean Courteau electr. Mike Ruggles, Denis Ménard, Alex Amyot gen. op. Alex Dawes asst. art. d. Raymond Larose, Tina Boden props buyer John Walsh set dress. Maurice Lebland set props David Phillips, Ryal Cosgrove (asst.) construc. superv. Harold Thrasher head carp. Marsha Hardy, Tom Daly carp. Bruce Jackson, Mario Mecuri scenic painters Larry Demedash, Kari Hagness art. d. asst. Keith Currie, Patrick Dunne, Anne Currie cost. des. Susan Hall ward. mistresses Lise Pharand, Carol Wood, Renee April ward. asst. Benjamin Robin make-up Louise Rundell, Carolyn Van Gorp (asst.) hair Huguette Roy stunt co-ord. Dwayne McLean stunts Brent Meyer, Sandy Webb, Jayne Rutter, Peter Cowper stills Pirooska Mihalka ed. Rit Wallis, Gerald Vansier, Chantal Bowen (asst.) animal trainers Mark Conway, Danny Johnston p. acct. Lucie Drolet, Trudi Link, Donna Young (asst.) p. co-ord. Marcelle Gibson (N.S.), Yaniko Palis (Montreal) p. sec. Nicole Webster, Kathy Wolf craft serv. Hank Labelle, Arlie MacLennan driver capt. Robert Imeson p.a. Victoria Frodsham, Steve Wilkins, Bill Drake, Mike Stubbart, Gary Vermier 2nd unit d. Ray Sager 2nd unit a.d. John Desormeaux, Victoria Frodsham 2nd unit cam. Peter Benison, Frank Lenk sp. make-up efx. The Burman Studio, Tom Burman, Ken Diaz, Tom Hoerber sp. mechan. devices Cosmekinetics (Northridge, California) post-p. superv. Rit Wallis dialog. ed. Gerald Vansier sd. efx. Jeff Bushelman, Pat Somerset, Burbank Editorial Service Inc. sd. re-rec. Joe Grimaldi l.p. Paul Kelman, Lori Hallier, Neil Affleck, Keith Knight, Alf Humphreys, Cynthia Dale, Helene Udy, Rob Stein, Tom Kovacs, Terry Waterland, Carl Marotte, Jim Murchison, Gina Dick, Peter Cowper, Don Francks, Patricia Hamilton, Larry Reynolds, Jack Van Evera, Jeff Banks, Pat Hemingway, Graham Whitehead, Fred Watters, Jeff Fulton, Pat Walsh, Marguerite McNeil, Sandy Leim, John MacDonald p.c. The Secret Film Company Inc. 1980 dist. Paramount Pictures col. 35 mm running time 91 min.



● Kelly's Robert Logan—with a bear behind.

therefore, they are good. Beechum traps on Indian land, a sure sign of corruption, and kills a pet raccoon. Mother wears a fur coat that speaks volumes about her values. Kelly, although always redeemable because she has a blind friend (named Angela!), in her first phase steals a fur coat and hates toads. At the end, healthy in mind and spirit, she receives a tame wolf as a gift from Brother Robin, a monk straight out of *Snow White*. Brother Robin, in an understandingly nervous performance by Alex Willows, is accompanied by an owl, a wolf, a hawk, and an enormous Kodiak grizzly. Robin is, of course, the best person in Alaska, a Christian brother in tune with nature. He stops just short of walking on water, no doubt a failure of nerve on the part of the filmmakers!

Limited as stereotypes, these people interact with each other within the confines of an inept plot. Not only do the episodes fail to contribute to any unfolding of Kelly's character, but they also seem gratuitous. The scenes at the monastery for instance, appear to have been written simply to feature the bear. Moreover, the plot-lines are so separate from each other that the movie ends three times. The major resolution, Kelly's facing of herself - that should reveal the extent of her transformation - occurs first, and far too early. The second, a nuisance that ought to have been edited out, involves a renewed attraction between her father, and her remarried mother, who is soon removed from the story. Eventually, almost as an afterthought, the villain is set up to get what he, if not Russia, deserves. But because Kelly cannot take part in the revenge, the joke falls flat. This ending, however, reveals why the movie is not just bad but objectionable.

Kelly is not really the heroine's story, and hemmed in as she is by clichés and stereotypes she has no chance to act. Always rescued by a father who knows best, a spunky kid dwindles into a passive girl. Kelly insults children.

Anna Carlsdottir ●

KELLY d. Christopher Chapman p. Samuel V. Freeman asst. p. George Anthony exec. in charge of prod. Robert Meneray sc. Robert Logan mus. Micky Erbe, Maribeth Solomon song 'I'll Keep It With Me.' comp. by Maribeth Solomon, Micky Erbe, sung by Donna Ramsay rec. by Andrew Hermant art. d. Charles Dunlop superv. ed. David Nicholson, cfe. d.o.p. Paul Van Der Linden, csc. L. prod. Fran Rosati casting Canadian Casting Associates sc. consult. Francis Chapman cont. Margaret Hanly cam. op. Cyrus Block cam. op. (2nd unit) Rod Parkhurst foc. puller Brent Spencer foc. pullers (2nd unit) Theo Eglseider, Peter Smith clapper/loader Harvey La Rocque ed. Byron White, Peter Dale loc. sd. mix Larry S., tton boom op. Lars Ekstrom sd. ed. Fred Brennan Vanina Jezek (asst.) key grip John Dillard Brinson dolly grip Richard Allen, John Brown asst. grip Tom Hansen, Brian Kuchera prop. master Tracey Budd, Craig Ponton (asst.) hair Salli Bailey make-up Sandy Cooper a.d. David MacLeod (1st), Kim Winther (2nd), Val Steffoff (3rd) p. sec. Karen Hamasaki p. acct. Lacia Kornyllo p. bookkeeper Joanne Jackson p. sec. Angela Gruenthal p. asst. Vikki Haimila loc. man. Michael MacDonald asst. art. d. Suzanna Smith, Daniel Bradette painter Susan High gaf. David Anderson electr. Rob Brown best boy electric Rod Merrells gen. op. Glen Sherman set. d. Steve Shewchuk asst. set dresser Chris Merrells wardrobe Deborah Weldon, Jackie Merrells (asst.) craft serv. Mike Brown driver capt. Cy Barry, drivers Mark Barry, Don Brown, Betty Elliot, Martin Gutkind, Roy Hart, Ken McClennon stills Bruno Engler spec. efx. John Thomas Rex Cooley (asst.) whitewater consult. Robin Sims safety rafts Vivian Fehr pilots Tony Huggan, Scott Swanson stunt doubles Betty Thomas, Graham Elliott, Erwin Oertli animals Hubert Wells trainers Cheryl Shwaver, Karin Dew bear trainers Lloyd Beebe, Marinho Correia vet. Terry Quesnel l.p. Robert Logan, Twyla-Dawn Vokins, George Clutesi, Elaine Nalee, Doug Lennox, Alec Willows, Dan Granirer, Jack Leaf, Mona Cozart, Paddy White re-rec. Nolan Roberts, Film House dist. Paramount Pictures col. 35 mm running time 95 min. p.c. Famous Players Film Corp. 1980

Michael Snow's Presents

Michael Snow's new film is his most generous, exuberant and buoyant offering yet. As usual, it's a meditation upon the processes of perception. As usual, too, it's a rich, spirited film that should tease viewers into new thoughts however often it is viewed.

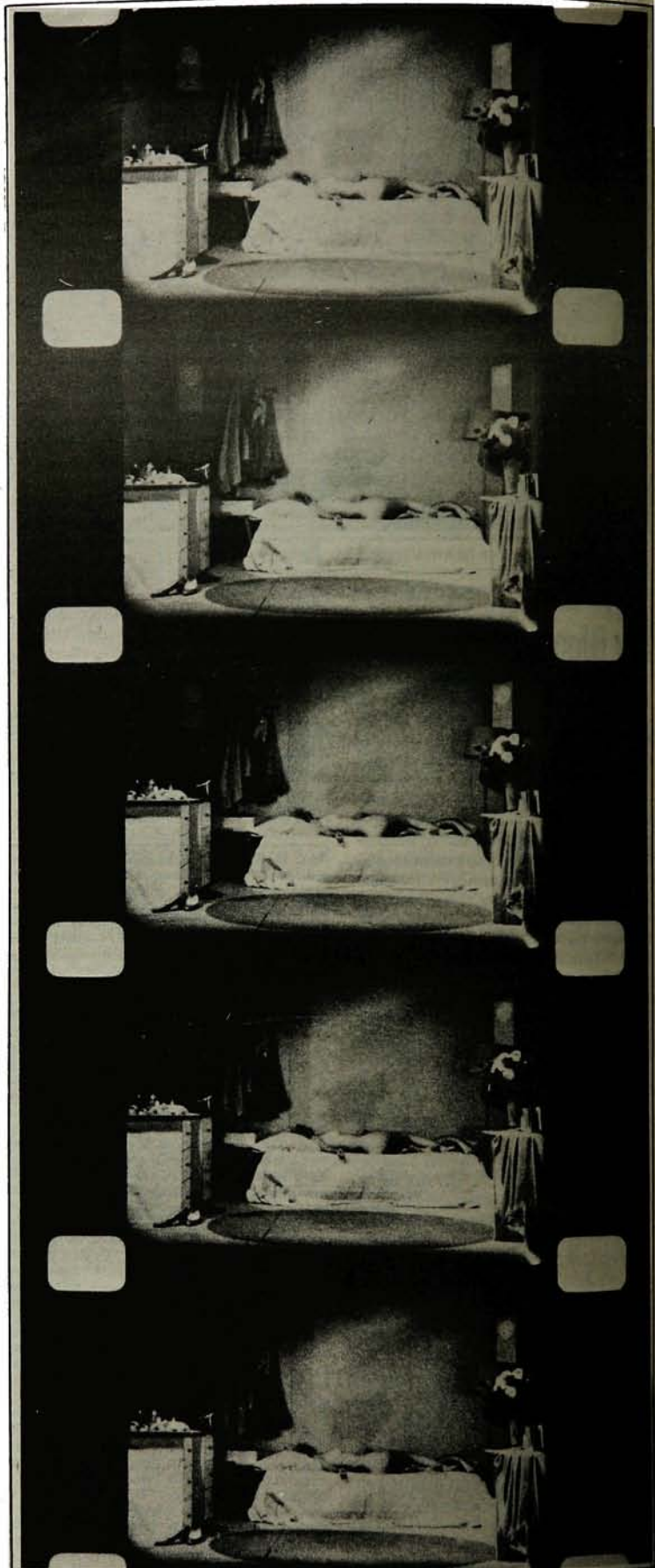
The film is structured in three precise parts. The first two dramatize the distortions which result when a willful artist imposes himself upon the materials of his craft. The third demonstrates the greater riches when the artist subordinates himself to the splendors of the world.

In the 10-minute first section, Snow presents the classical odalisque - a nude reclining in an artificial room. Snow opens with a thin vertical sliver of light, which he slowly stretches out into the full image. When his stretch reaches the Cinemascope proportion the woman has been rubberized, dehumanized, rendered grotesque. Here Snow exposes the filmmaker's intervention by prop, framing, and manipulation of the formal elements of his shot. Halfway through, the image is squashed into a horizontal slit, then stretched out again. Contrary movements are required to make the whole. As in the film's overall structure, thesis and antithesis give way to the climactic synthesis.

The second part is a hilarious 20-minute narrative in which the nude rises and joins a visitor to search for a trivial object. For the most part, Snow's camera is stationary, but the entire set moves back and forth. Both actors are hilarious in the stiff movements and in their heroic effort to handle their moving set. A phonograph plays classical music, its needle leaping crazily with the movement. We hear Snow call out numbers to direct his actors. We see his crew reflected against the set. The man freezes in mid-air whenever the set moves him out of camera range. This is a slapstick exposure of traditional narrative cinema, in which a trivial drama is performed against an artificial setting, and its entire world is manoeuvred by the director. The comedy lies in Snow making explicit the manipulation that is usually hidden.

As in the whodunit involving the body on the floor in *Wavelength*, and the classroom incidents in *Back and Forth* (informally called "Back and Forth"), Snow raises the spectre of narrative cinema only to drop it, in favour of analyzing the perception of experience. So in the latter stages of his narrative sequence in *Presents*, the romantic drama becomes a disaster movie. The furniture wobbles, crumbles, and is crushed. Finally Snow's camera breaks through the setting and we escape into the splendor of the real world. Our first image is the oppressive skyscraper, but we're free.

The third section is a 70-minute album of intriguing, rhyming, beautiful, unsettling, and extremely personal shots of life, in all its fullness and chaos. Here Snow shows the world instead of a fiction. Now he allows the objects their own free movement, unframed, unordered. There are passages of breathtaking beauty - the arc of a bird in flight, the sinuous routes of machines on earth. There are passages of chuckling irony - a pan of a dresser ends on a Genie; next a worker unloads a barrow of trash.



● A unique exploration of the medium: Michael Snow's *Presents*.

There are shots of unaccountable detail and appreciation, like the lengthy views of a steamroller, later a snowplow, as Snow's lingering camera seems captivated by physical details. There are sequences that rhyme textures - a blanket, then a field of snow. There are moments of drama - from a hunter proudly displaying his moose head, Snow pans blurrily across fields of red

and white flowers, as if tearing away in revulsion. No rose-lensed optimism, Snow cuts in an Arctic caribou hunt and a grisly surgery.

Presents is based upon the paradox of authorial personality. The first two parts demonstrate the falsity and folly of an art in which the creator obtrudes his voice and craft. The third is a celebration of the world, which the director

modestly studies and preserves in eternal "presents," and presents to us as delightful gifts (the third sense of "presents"). The paradox is that the film is most personal in the section in which the artist does not intrude. He shows himself most profoundly when he shares what he sees. So this, the third section, is so much weightier and more moving than the illusionist cinema which he satirizes in the earlier comic episodes. The first two episodes are enclosing and false. The third is an exhilarating exercise in opening out.

The third part is a collage of apparent objectivity. Neither heard nor seen, Snow is present only by his implicit functions of choice of material, filming and editing. But the world we see there is very much Snow's world. The section abounds with characteristic Snow shots - dizzying pans back and forth, and waves, and birds, and walking women. And a beaming Joyce Wieland hard upon (well, really soft) a shot of a happy family celebration. Not just the world opens out in that third section, but the private Snow as well.

The first part is accompanied by a modulating electronic drone, that seems to harmonize as the image comes into focus. In contrast, the sound in the second part is rooted in the setting, both in the character's room and in the director's operation. In the third part the sound works ambiguously between the synchronous and the imposed. Each cut is accompanied by a drumtap, like a pulse. We can't determine whether this tap causes, announces, or reacts to the change in image. That is the very ambiguity of the filmmaker's relationship to his image here. He is a present recorder. He is at once passive before the spectacle and active in its preservation.

For all its import, though, one must not lose sight of the sheer pleasure that this film presents. It's not often that one feels regret when a Michael Snow film comes to its end. But here one is disappointed when that brilliantly executed slapstick sequence is over. And even more when his collage of splendid reality draws to a close. But then the quickening drum-pulse heralds our return to the world beyond the screen. There we can exercise the sharper, appreciative eye for color and movement that Snow has primed. There his *Presents* will enhance our own present.

Maurice Yacowar ●

PRESENTS d./p./cam./ed./sets Michael Snow ed. John Kamenaar, Bill Buxton, Brian Day cam. Keith Lock p. man. Robin Collyer l.p. Jane Fellowes, Peter Melnick colour 16 mm year 1980 (with the assistance of the Canada Council) running time 90 min. dist. Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre.



● A glimpse of *Presents*.

Vic Sarin's *You've Come a Long Way, Katie*

Social problems frequently serve as good television fodder. They tend to provoke strong audience reaction, which consequently improves ratings. In the past, such diverse topics as venereal disease, male prostitution and child beating have been tackled with varying degrees of success. Now, *You've Come a Long Way, Katie* treats the subject of cross-addiction. This recent CBC mini-series of three, one-hour episodes, is a serious docu-drama as well as good entertainment; the subject matter has been handled with intelligence and good taste.

Cross-addiction is an addictive dependence on alcohol and tranquilizers to relieve daily stress - a by-product of our push-and-shove society. It's more prevalent in major cities, and seems to prey more frequently on women than men, as shown by a recent Alcoholics Anonymous survey of its members' - indicating that more than half are women - and a study by the Canadian Psychiatric Association stating that one Canadian woman in five consumes excessive mood-altering drugs. Mixed together, booze and drugs are a scary combination.

You've Come a Long Way, Katie grapples with cross-addiction factually and dramatically; in much the same way as did the old Ray Milland classic, *The Lost Weekend* in 1945. Producer Jeannine Locke, veteran director of numerous documentaries, including *To Die Today* and *Friends of Ireland*, utilized a documentary approach to breathe life into her plot and characters. Locke spent several months researching cross-addiction before scripting episodes one and three of the series, turning over episode two to writer Jay Telfer, who was cross-addicted himself for ten years.

Kate Forbes (Lally Cadeau) is the sparkling host of the popular daytime show, "Straight Talk." In episode one, *Madder Music*, we see the beginnings of her downfall from stability, the result of marital problems and heavy job stress. Kate has trouble coping with her problems and seeks a solution in alcohol. When drinking fails to provide the extra lift she requires, the booze is supplemented by healthy doses of Valium. "This is shaping up to be a three-Valium show!" she chortles before one difficult taping.

Eventually, Katie is physically and emotionally impaired to the point where Virginia, her producer (Irene Mayeska), issues an ultimatum: she must seek help or be fired. Rather than lose her job, Katie decides to spend a month at the Brentcliffe Clinic, and it is here that the second episode, *A Month On The Moon*, unravels.

During her stay at the clinic, Katie undergoes a comprehensive therapy program of exercise, group therapy, anti-booze pills and psychological counselling. With the help of fellow patients, doctors and nurses, and Stuart (Booth Savage), the new man in her life, Katie seeks and finds solutions to the problems that have gripped her. Consequently, she leaves the clinic with high expectations.

Episode three, *The Bottom Line*, sees Katie back at her hosting duties, and bored by it all. Realizing a change of



● Victim of a lethal mixture, CBC's "golden girl" Lally Cadeau as Katie Forbes in *You've Come a Long Way, Katie*.

scenery is in order, she decides to try for a position on a top nightly news show, and fervently sets to work on her audition piece for the screen test. However, she fails to impress the show's producers and loses her chance for the job. Katie's first impulse is to have a drink, to calm her nerves, and locked up in the darkness of her apartment, she turns to Canadian Club and Valium for moral support. The end result is tragic.

Despite its sometimes soap-operish qualities, this drama works well on the screen, due mostly to the talents of Lally Cadeau as the doomed Katie. After a fair number of television commercials and variety shows, Cadeau has recently become the golden girl of the CBC, and star of their weekly sitcom, *Hangin' In*. She possesses the ability to change mood at a moment's notice when playing Katie, and uses humour well in portraying the cross-addicted heroine, a role requiring great skill.

Ken James, as Katie's friend Lee, turns in a similarly powerful performance, and is backed up in his efforts by a fine supporting cast, including Catherine O'Hara (formerly of *Second City*) as the cross-addicted Chris, and Larry Solway as egocentric anchorman Dave Richards.

Despite the cast's fine acting and a competent script, this production occasionally falls prey to the same illness that seems to have crippled many similar American productions - the undying desire to make a social statement. At several points during the show, Telfer and Locke forget they are telling a story and begin to preach. This is most obvious in the second episode, which seems more like a training film for doctors intent on specializing in clinical

cross-addiction treatment, than an entertainment for the average TV viewer.

Despite this, *You've Come a Long Way, Katie* manages to hold our attention, and keep it; not an easy thing to do in this fickle modern society of video recorders and push-button converters. For this, credit must go to the writers; for Katie's plight is compelling enough to warrant us watching her for three successive nights. And it is time well spent.

The camerawork and direction are superb, thanks to the talents of Vic Sarin and his cameramen, Neville Ottey and Dave Towers. They accomplish much in the way of realism by using a documentary style in their shots to bring the events to life.

As first-rate drama *You've Come a Long Way, Katie* is a fine example of just how far the Canadian film industry has come. Lloyd Wasser ●

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, KATIE d. Vic Sarin p. Jeannine Locke sc. Jeannine Locke, Jay Telfer d.o.p. Vic Sarin a.d. Michael Zenon (1st), Allan Harmon (2nd), John Rainy cont. Carl Fisher p. sec. Vicki Ohashi cam. Neville Ottey, Dave Towers sd. Dave Brown unit man. Dwight Gallinger boom Ian Challis lighting Ian Gibson des. Paul Ames cost. Stevie Calder, Selma Garten, Christopher Drake make-up Daisy Bijac, Gerry Wraith des. co-ord. Bob Powers set dec. Stephen Finnie sp. efx. Arne Boye casting Gail Carr, Annika McLachlan post-p. Toni Mori p. co-ord. Duncan Lamb asst. p. co-ord. Janet Kranz l.p. Lally Cadeau, Irene Mayeska, Tim Henry, Booth Savage, Norma Renault, Edward Greenhalgh, Don Scanlon, Catherine O'Hara, Ken James, Douglas Campbell, Dean Regan, Dinah Christie, Sean Sullivan, Norman Campbell, Murray Westgate, Larry Solway p.c. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (1980) running time 3 one-hour episodes col. 16 mm.

SHORTS

Paul Mason's Dragoncastle

Dragoncastle is a claymation (plasticene animation) short. It won first prize for animation, the Chris Statuette, at the Columbus International Film Festival. It has also been a finalist in several other festivals, including the Canadian Film and Television Awards. Although *Dragoncastle* is ostensibly "an animation film for kids, made by kids," intended for Kindergarten through grades three or four, it has a much broader appeal.

The story is as simple as it is imaginative. It takes place in a strange, ecologically balanced kingdom. A Disneyesque castle presides over the productive pastoral of the village. There are the requisite fairy tale characters: the king, the queen, the knight, monsters, the dragon, and the townspeople. Yet these protagonists quickly break out of their stock medieval molds to become lovable individuals.

The action is narrated by two young children, one of seven years, who sticks pretty well to the point, and another of two years, who naively and delightfully punctuates the action with spontaneous exclamations and commentaries.

As the story opens, the farmers tend their cows and fields, the women do their chores, and the children play. All is at best in the best of worlds, or almost. The dragon, who lives in a cave under the castle, is accused of incinerating the odd house and devouring the occasional cow. The townspeople petition the king. Something must be done. The king, a benevolent despot if ever there was one, agrees, and sends for the white knight, who comes from afar to rid the kingdom of this dread beast. The dragon is not enchanted by the prospect of doing battle with a knight, but does haul himself from his cave and give the knight a good tussle. The knight eventually deals him a resounding bonk on the head, and the dragon sadly moves off, "not with a sore head but with hurt feelings."

Of course, no one realizes that in driving off the dragon the ecological balance of the entire kingdom has been drastically disrupted, until it's too late. The "moat monsters," without the dragon's flames to keep them swimming benignly around the castle, go on the rampage, destroying much of the village. As if this weren't enough, without the dragon's flames to provide central heating, the towers of the castle are soon bending and shaking with the combined coughing and sneezing of its inhabitants.

Once more the king is petitioned by the villagers. The knight is sent for, commanded to find the dragon and "politely" ask him to return. The knight swallows his pride and rides off on his charger. He finds the sulky dragon who, after a bit of hot air, agrees to leave his desolate cave and return to the kingdom, where he receives a hero's welcome. He quickly dispatches the monsters to their moat, reclaims his cave, and begins heating the cold, damp castle above. The balance is once again restored. The villagers rebuild their town and tend their gardens. The dragon is in his cave. Peace on earth.

Although *Dragoncastle* will be marketed as an educational film, it was not originally intended as such by those who conceived it. Becky and Paul Mason began working on *Dragoncastle* at the ages of 11 and 13, respectively, after receiving some plasticene as a Christmas present. They built a castle for fun, and also, just for fun, decided to try a few seconds of animation. Their father, Bill Mason, an award-winning NFB director, helped them with the more technical aspects. Five years later *Dragoncastle* was in the can.

Technically, the film is very accomplished. The animation is alive and believable, with great attention paid to often humorous detail. The editing is well-paced and there is a good variety of camera angles. The monsters and humans have distinct, endearing personalities. Remarkably, there are no "bad guys and good guys."

Becky and Paul began playing with the plasticene castle in the living room of their home. As the set grew, and the two began to take their game more seriously, their father allowed them to move into his studio. Yet the living room floor is never really abandoned. The film is never pedantic or moralistic. The fun of a child's game on the floor is preserved.

The original score is by Andrew Huggett. The string ensemble playing "early renaissance" music provides a sophisticated backdrop on which the voices of the two young narrators play. The distance between the childish commentaries and the adult music is teasing and fresh. Perhaps it echoes the distance between the adolescents who began the film and the young adults who completed it five years later, between the game on the floor and the work in the studio. These distances animate the animation and charm the viewer, whether he is a child, or simply a child at heart.

Jeffrey Reid ●

DRAGONCASTLE d. Paul Mason p. Bill Mason animators Paul & Becky Mason orig. score Andrew Huggett col. 16 mm running time 13 min. dist. Mobius International p.c. Mason Productions.

PHOTO: BECKY MASON

● *Dragoncastle's* unusual ecology...



David Fine's Viola

David Fine's new short *Viola* conveys the feeling of hands - out exploration - a young director trying on an attitude for size. In this case, the attitude is rudimentary aesthetics: it is a lovely film to look at, bold in no way, but still lovely and simple and full of life.

The viola itself is shown as an object of obvious sculptural beauty, and Fine has been lucky in his chance to work with Mark Irwin, whose camera work here is so lush and epicurean. We are shown the making of the instrument in detail, and Otto Erdesz's especially sensual approach to his craft. His attitude towards the creation of the instrument enlivens it for the viewer. At the end of the film, the craftsman's wife/musician, Rivka Golani-Erdesz, plays the viola with intensity that both touches and holds the audience. Fine and Irwin have managed to sustain the emotion and the integrity of the subject matter in document. If at times this film reads like the classic "artist's film" (step back and see Moore and his bones), on this level it is true to its subject matter, which is exciting in itself.

In the past Fine has worked primarily in animation. His short films have picked up a number of awards in various competitions, in the student division. Live action is a new direction for him and *Viola* is a respectable effort. With greater experience and confidence in



● "Otto Erdesz's especially sensual approach to his craft." PHOTO: DAVID FINE

his abilities, Fine may allow more of that imagination of his earlier work to once more show through - something we can look forward to. **Katherine Dolgy ●**

VIOLA

p./d. David Fine d.o.p./lights Mark Irwin, csc.ed. David Fine interviews Otto Erdesz, Rivka Golani-Erdesz, John Newton, Donald R. Dinovo **Bach's Adagio perform.** Rivka Golani-Erdesz, with Lillian Bezkorvany, Donald R. Dinovo, Shirley Fine, Carol Gibson, Gerard Kantarjian, Murray Lauder, Olga Priestman, John Trembath, Rosalie Zelonka **concert cam.** Mark Irwin, Phil Ernschaw, David Fine, Rolf Cutts (asst.) **concert rec.** Donald R. Dinovo **additional viola perform.** Rivka Golani-Erdesz **violas by** Otto Erdesz p.c. Fine Film Productions, 1980 (produced with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council col. 16mm running time 27 min. 50 sec. dist. Magic Lantern Film Distributors Ltd.

LETTERS

(cont. from p. 37)

Score one for culture

Appearance of the new format prompts me to write a long-delayed note of appreciation. I think the magazine is making a very important contribution to our cultural growth and to the representation of that growth both at home and abroad. This last number has been really fine. The only thing that gives me a funny feeling is the description of yourselves in the masthead as a "charitable organization."

Dan Driscoll,
P.E.I. District Representative,
National Film Board

The Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation is indeed a charitable organization, and donations are accepted with thanks. Ed.

Count me out

Regarding the ad for Cinema Canada's "coverage at Cannes." Congratulations. It's sexist, exploitative and very American, in the fashion of Penthouse and Playboy. I hope you're very happy with your new image. If I had a subscription, I'd cancel it.

Sharon Thomson
Vancouver

The ad got the results intended; no one forgot it, and the Cannes coverage, as you can see, is super.

Just a note about the ad being sexist. A sexist ad is one which uses sex gratuitously to sell a product, exploiting the person in the ad. The photo was of a lady who goes to Cannes every year, and was taken on the beach there. Not only would she be thrilled with the additional exposure she got through our ad, but the ad itself goes a long way to render one of the visible attractions of the Cannes fest itself. Think of it as a documentary! Ed.

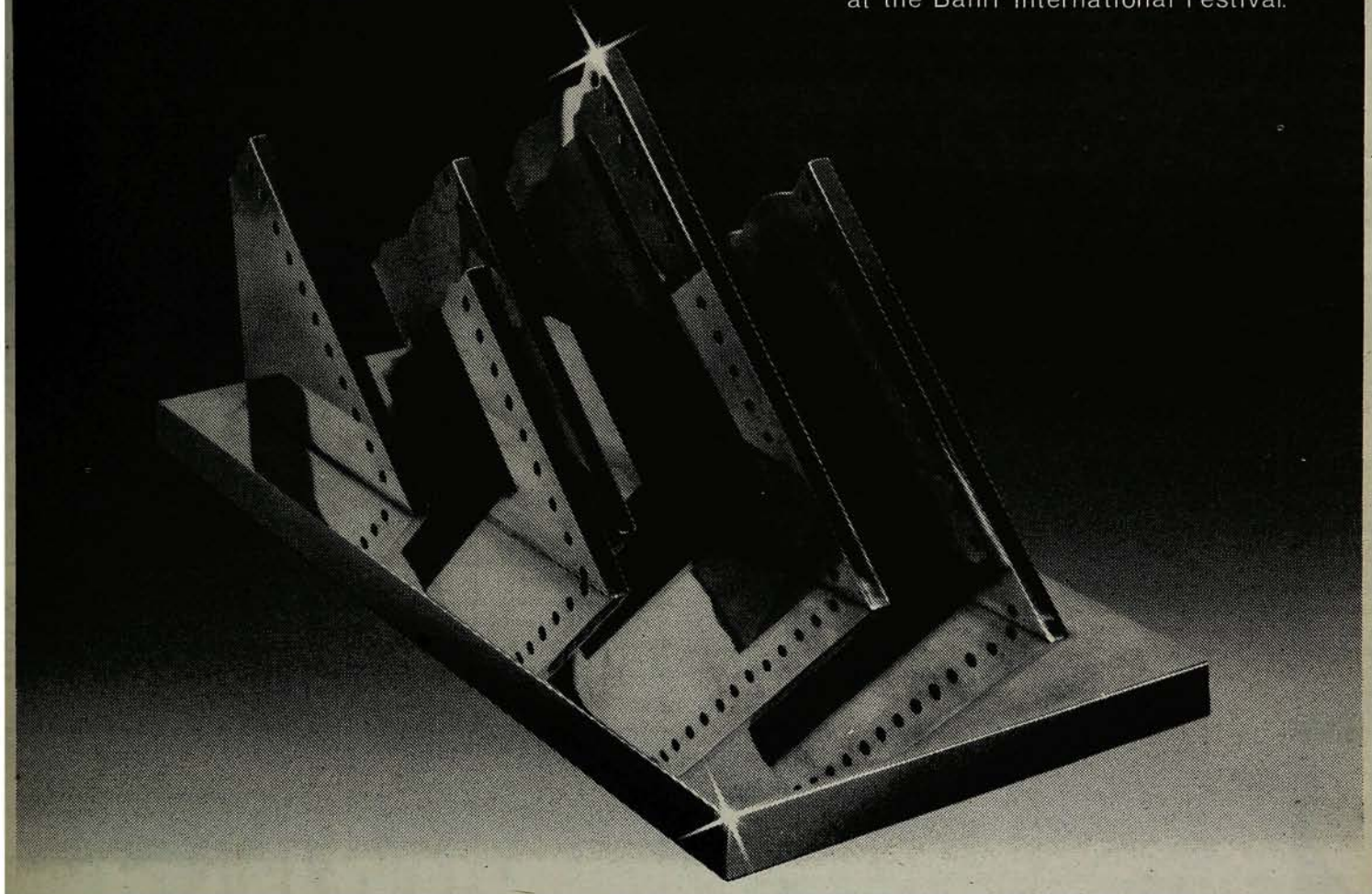
Good and disgusting

The new format of *Cinema Canada* is clearly a step forward; however, I find your choice for the cover of No. 73 and your advertising for coverage at Cannes both sexist and disgusting. Furthermore, if your magazine is, as you claim, "the best film magazine in Canada" (which it is), then why the need for "eye-catching" pictures that are cheap, exploitative and unnecessary?

Natalie Pawlenko
Toronto

The choice of the cover photo was made by Beryl Fox, the producer of By Design. We endorse her choice, and expect Claude Jutra's film to be neither cheap nor exploitative. Ed.

The Rockie,
designed by Michael Prytula and crafted by Roy
Leadbeater, will be presented to finalists
at the Banff International Festival.



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