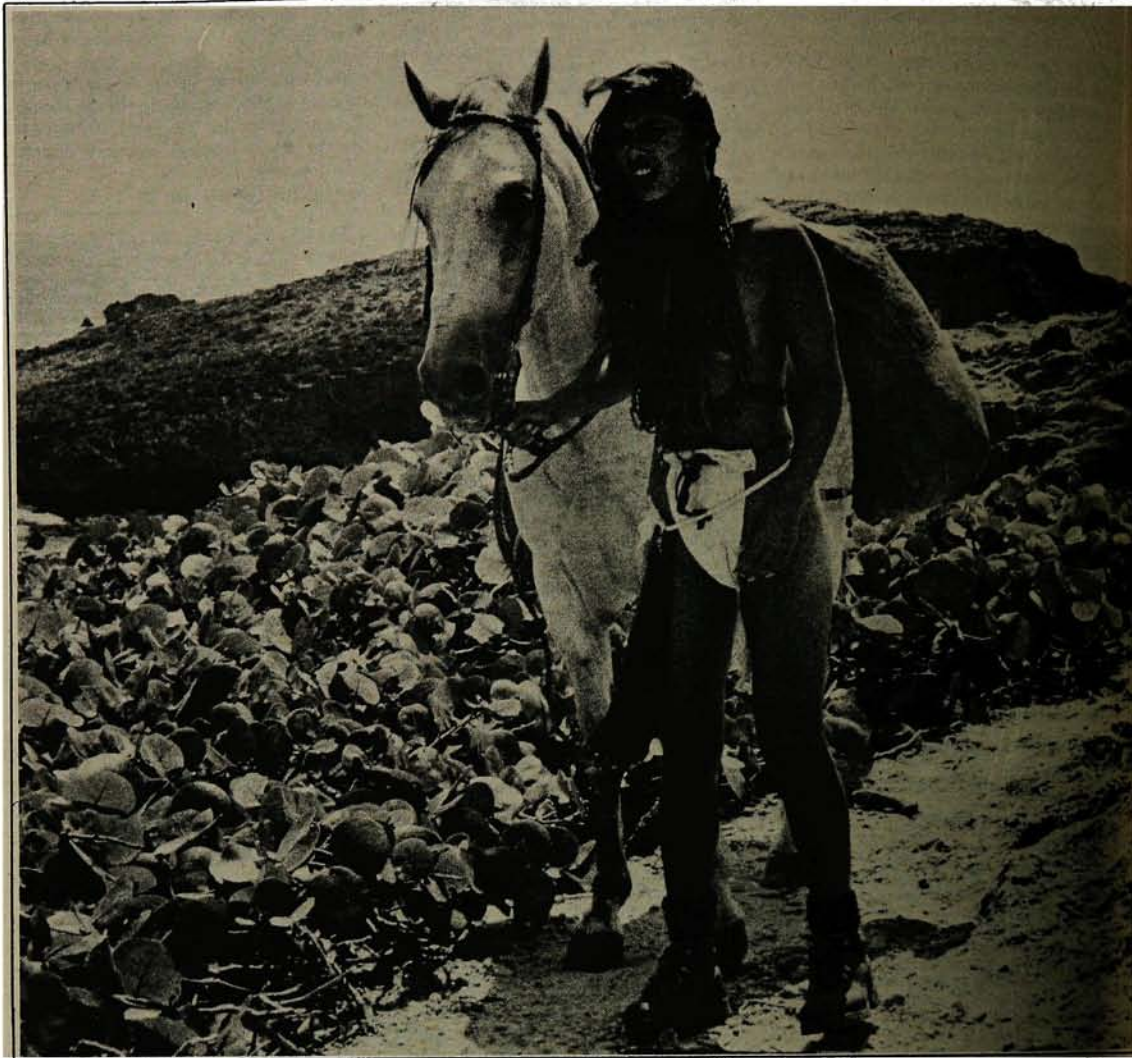


child. She has a properly exotic body, of which much is seen, but only the more innocent of audiences (like the Ontario Censors, who ruled that "some scenes may be offensive"), would call her trysts with man and near-man daringly erotic. Richard Sargent has studied (and not very well) in the Jan-Michel Vincent/Perry King school of acting, and Don McCloud, the figure in the monkey suit, doesn't speak, so his reputation is safe.

But in two areas, *Tanya's Island* doesn't need to apologize. Mark Irwin's cinematography is effective and lush. Though he couldn't have realized it at the time, his work calls to mind and bears favorable comparison to Nestor Almendros' work in *The Blue Lagoon* and Caleb Deschanel's in *The Black Stallion*. The ape make-up was created by Rick Baker, who rather specializes in simians (*King Kong*, *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*) and Bob Bottin (*The Fog*, *The Howling*). They have their own humorous touch, in giving Blue a face that bears a disconcerting resemblance to Sterling Hayden.

One's sympathy, however, goes out to Alfred Sole whose bad luck seems to be holding. His previous film, *Communion*, was well received at festivals in 1977, but only got scattered release under the title *Alice, Sweet Alice* before the distributor, Allied Artists, collapsed. A carefully plotted horror film, set in his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, it stands miles above the current stab-and-chase fare, but it could only be released (now called *Holy Terror*) by playing up the small role played by the then very innocent-looking Brooke Shields (only 10 years old at the time), in what was her first film part. Its tight control is in sharp contrast to the meandering and heavily edited *Tanya's Island*, but Alfred Sole's name is still in the credits.

J. Paul Costabile •



Losing her bearings? D.D. Winters is back to basics in *Tanya's Island*.

TANYA'S ISLAND

d. Alfred Sole a.d. David Shepherd, Steve Wright p. Pierre Brousseau co-p. Rainier Energy Resources Inc. exec. p. Pierre Brousseau, Jean-Claude Levesque assoc. p. Daniel Kingstone p. man. Frank Rosetti sc. Pierre Brousseau d.o.p. Mark Irwin, csc cam. op. Robin Miller gaf. Jock Brandis, Carlo Campana grip Maris Jansons, Scotty Allen sd. engineer Brian Day boom Tom Mather superv. ed. Andrew Henderson, cfe ed. Michael MacLaverly, cfe sd. ed. Peter Burgess mus. Jean Musy art d. Angelo Stea ward. Julie Ganton make-up/hair Shonah Jabour spec. efx make-up Richard A. Baker, Rob Bottin p. acct. Wayne Aaron set dresser Enrico Campana l.p. D.D. Winters, Richard Sargent, Don McCloud, Mariette Lévesque, Mark Irwin stills Denis Fugère p.c. Pierre Brousseau Productions (1979) col. Film House, 35mm running time 91 min. (original version), 82 min. (N. Am. version) dist. New World-Mutual (English Can.), Les Films Mutuels Ltee (Quebec)

Clown White's Lorene Yarnell and Mark Dillon photo: Ron Watts.



Paul Shapiro's Clown White

Producer Martin Harbury picked up on an idea that had been circulating among a few Toronto filmmakers for some four years, to make a film on deafness and mime. That was over three years ago, and the result is *Clown White*, a fifty-minute television film. In telling the story of a rebellious deaf child who goes on a class outing to the city, where he runs away, Harbury got himself in for more than he bargained for. "The whole field of deafness is a vast and complicated one," says Harbury. "Everyone has very strong viewpoints, so we had to tread a very delicate path."

This delicate path concerns the ways in which deaf children are taught to communicate. *Clown White* doesn't comment on these ways - indeed, its strength lies in its open-mindedness towards the various approaches used by the concerned adults in the film. It does, however, throw a curve into any

SHORTS

handbook approach, considering the film's central character, Jason, a very bright but frustrated and uncommunicative boy about ten years old. Jason's isolation goes beyond the fact of his deafness. He appears singular in his alienation, even in his school class of fellow hearing-impaired children; we often see him through glass partitions or even as a background silhouette.

The best efforts of his teacher - an earnest, concerned man played with evident enthusiasm by Saul Rubinek - fail to reach him. When the boy defaces a school wall with chalk drawings of clown faces (an image which repeatedly intrigues him), his teacher feels compelled to respond punitively by barring Jason from a class trip to the Planetarium. Not easily deterred, Jason stows away on the expedition. Found out, and about to receive more punishment, he breaks loose and runs off into the midst of the city, pausing first to complete his freedom by discarding the Phonic Ear amplifier that remains his only link with the world of hearing. He returns to a store window where a mime in white-face (played by Lorene Yarnell of the famous American mime duo, Shields and Yarnell), has been performing. Through her and the gestures of mime he finds a mode of expression that satis-

fies him; he returns to the school group, now in white-face himself, with good cheer and a spirit of reconciliation.

What *Clown White* has done best is to depict sympathetically the world around Jason. With one or two hard-hearted exceptions, everyone tries in his own fashion to be helpful, even the otherwise anti-social bus driver whom the children love; this last is played by Michael Ironside, widely seen this year in David Cronenberg's *Scanners*. Jason's classmates are all tenderly created composites of children that Harbury and director Paul Shapiro met while researching the film in various institutions for the deaf around Toronto. Each of them is portrayed distinctly, rather than as part of an amorphous group of secondary characters, reflecting the care with which the film was made.

The film is Harbury's second dramatic project but it is no accident that his background is primarily that of a documentary filmmaker. *Clown White* is an extensively researched film whose story evolved from Harbury's and Shapiro's encounters with the deaf community. The children in the film were selected from among the 45 hearing-impaired youngsters that were auditioned, part of the largely positive response that the project received in that community. The

big find was Mark Christopher Dillon who plays Jason. "A natural," Harbury enthuses, and indeed, Dillon projects an instinctual sense for performing. After all, the boy had a lot on his shoulders; a leading role which is not a speaking part.

Director Shapiro finds poignant framing for Dillon but balances these with the young actor's own intense assertiveness. This assertiveness was one of Harbury's central discoveries in researching the film; that on the one hand deafness is "the invisible handicap" (probably few people are aware that Canada has some 1.7 million hearing-impaired citizens), while on the other, "in their own parlance and in their own understanding of things, they are not handicapped people." While the Jason character represents, in part, the difficult individual case which the textbook couldn't adequately prepare for, he also embodies the drive through which people find their own solutions. Mime is the discovery that unlocks

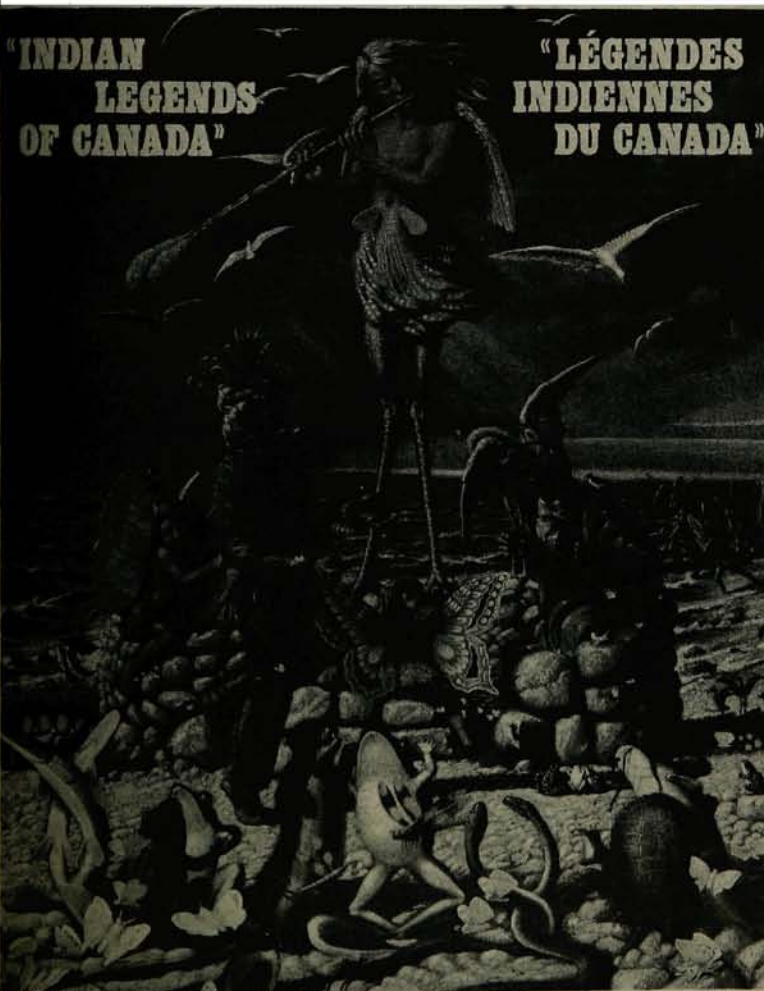
Jason's expressiveness, but it is also significant that he comes to it by means of the inner resources of pride and determination.

Salem Alaton •

CLOWN WHITE. d. Paul Shapiro sc. Jeffrey Cohen & Paul Shapiro p. Martin Harbury or mus. composed by Bruce Cockburn d.o.p. René Ohashi ed. James Lahti & Mairin Wilkinson p. man. Sally Dundas loc. sd. Bryan Day & Tom Mather art d. Roy F. Smith a.d. Steven Wright (1st), Martha Hendriks (2nd), Don Baldassara (3rd) props Peter Lauterman (master), Paul Dreskin (asst.), Greg Pelchat (asst.) 1st asst. cam. Bill Brown gaf. Jock Brandis best boy Scotty Allan grip Maris Jansons loc. man. Suzanna Plowright p. co-ord. Susan Mander ward. Mary-Jane McCarty, Karin Ariss (asst.) art. trainee Birgit Siber make-up Suzanne Benoit cont. Susan David casting d. Jeffrey Cohen extras casting Peter Lavender tech. advisors Victor Solitario, Patricia Vaughan catering Jesse Frayne stills Ron Watts lp. Saul Rubinek, Lorene Yarnell, Michael Ironside, Henry Ramer, Patricia Collins, George Touliatos, Michael Winecott, Ralph Small, Stephen Witkin, Shelley Goldstein, Tani Brown, Jeffrey Cohen, Bill Sheldon, Bernie Finkelstein, Bruce Cockburn, (kids) Mark Christopher Dillon, John Humphreys, Kelly Halligan, Arleigh Graham, Vanessa Vaughan, Danielle Turton p.c. Martin-Paul Productions Ltd. col. 16mm running time 52 min.

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