

Dreamworld

High-voltage glamour

It's a blowy mid-September evening at La Ronde, Montreal's summer amusement park. Across the St. Lawrence River the city lights glimmer through an uncertain sky. On the water, protruding from a red-carpeted ramp, is an elegant white gazebo, resplendent with chandelier, flower arrangements, and a lavish table for two. White-uniformed waiters refill champagne glasses for a handsome couple in white evening dress. A full orchestra of musicians in dress whites waits on the shore under an enormous pink neon sign proclaiming the promise: "Kit Paget will be a star."

Charles Dennis, who was commissioned by executive producer Pierre David to write the screenplay for *Dreamworld*, Filmplan International's latest \$5 million feature, gestures toward the romantic set with evident satisfaction.

Praising director Jean-Claude Lord's effort, he says, "It's fantastic, just look at that, he's making a frame around my story."

After a few moments, the rain which has been threatening all evening, arrives on the scene. Only half an hour into the shoot, this does not bode well at all. Wardrobe people come scurrying with umbrellas to shelter the most precious of costumed and make-up commodities, and crew members hasten to throw plastic tarps over the set and equipment. Publicist Pierre Brousseau groans: "We're looking at one-hundred grand here tonight."

The precipitation continues on and off for a spell, leaving a disheartened crew to sit and wait. Only the extras (musicians) who have removed to the refreshments hut seem to take it all in stride, telling each other gags and playing desultory snatches of music.

The skies eventually clear and all is not lost after all. (I subsequently heard that the production wrapped up at 6 a.m., and I could have sworn I awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of fireworks over La Ronde.)

Dreamworld (changed from *Models* due to a copyright conflict) started shooting in Montreal on August 31. A voyage

into the glitter and glamour of the high-voltage New York fashion world (shot almost entirely in Montreal), it aims to be a highly stylized romantic comedy, with hopefully more than just a dash of cynicism thrown in with the fantasy.

Screenwriter Dennis, who also plays a supporting role in the film, describes it as a "Restoration Comedy" set in the '80s. He compares the male and female leads (Sloan and Kit) to Mirabell and Millamant from William Congreve's play *The Way of the World* (1700). It was a comedy of the love-chase more than of love, with all the conventional plots (disguises, financial reversals, jealous plotting acquaintances, etc.) thrown in. Like their Restoration counterparts, Sloan and Kit live in a corrupt society, surrounded by highly stylized people who continually seek to seduce or make deals with one another.

"All those plays of the late 17th century dealt with a new, affluent, sexually liberated society... and certain subliminal inspirations have influenced my writing of *Dreamworld*." Dennis, who has eight novels, a few successful plays, and a TV series to his credit, has been working on this idea for 13 years. He sees *Dreamworld* as the New York approximate of Warren Beatty's L.A.-based Restoration-style comedy, *Shampoo*.

The opulent, jaded New York fashion scene lends itself very well to this type of satire, claims Dennis. When asked if he thinks the satirical element will surface in the film, he replies he can only hope so; he wrote it that way. Director Lord has unfortunately vetoed any press interviews during the month of shooting, but Dennis says he has used the term "poisoned candy" when referring to the film.

Two quintessentially blond-haired, blue-eyed Americans occupy the lead roles: 22-year-old Irena Ferris as model Kit Paget and Jeff Conway as videogame manufacturer-cum-entrepreneur T. C. Sloan. Kit and Sloan meet unromantically in a car accident in Montreal's Place Jacques Cartier. They initially detest each other, but through a series of comedic encounters and blunders, fall in love. Sloan vows to catapult Kit to stardom as the super model of the '80s... and on it goes from there.

For Ferris, a successful model in her own right, this is a first major film role. Conway has co-starred in ABC's hit comedy series *Taxi*, and played the Kenichie character in *Grease*.

Dreamworld has a major drawing card in Montreal fashion designer Jean Claude Poitras' exclusive creations for the film. This 175-piece collection will

● A real 1960s Perry Como-style extravaganza: Irena Ferris, Jeff Conway, Al Maini



be launched publicly in the spring/summer of 1982, to coincide with the film's release. Poitras sees a trend toward natural, logical, and "non-gimmicky" fashion, the essence of his *Dreamworld* collection. For Poitras, fashion is an art, and he is a "guide" who aids in synthesizing the elements of the artistic process, presenting the modern woman with a wide range of fashion ideas from which she can assemble whatever look she feels or fantasizes.

What Poitras is to high fashion, art director Michel Proulx is to high style. With 25 features to his credit, he is easily one of the most sought-after artistic directors in Canadian film, and there is no underestimating the importance of his contribution in a film whose very cornerstone is style.

In this, Proulx's fifth film as art director for Lord, the keynote is exaggeration, largesse. Proulx describes everything in the film as larger than need be, but each set was plotted meticulously beforehand, down to the minutest detail. He worked with drawings and mock-ups, going over with Lord the blocking for camera angles, movements, and characters. Next came tests for color; using color symbolically the intention was to match sets (especially interiors) to the characters' personalities. Kit's apartment is done in candy-like pastels, with mirrors, glass and brass fixtures. Sloan's is predominantly grey, with gimmicky items in plastic and chrome, sliding walls and sharp angles.

At the time we spoke, Proulx was anticipating the shooting of the most magnificent set of all, in Expo's French Pavillion. We're promised a real "1960s Perry Como-style" extravaganza. But until the last shot is over, the crew still has some long working-days ahead of it.

Lyn Martin ●



● "... story concerns maniacal psychiatrist Dr. Sigmund Freed (Claude Jutra)

DREAMWORLD p.c. Film International Inc. (1981) exec. p. Pierre David, Victor Solnicki p. Claude Héroux p. man. Roger Héroux d. Jean-Claude Lord a.d. John Fretz (1st), Frank Ross (2nd), Michel Sarao (3rd) p. sec. Nicole Webster cont. France Lachapelle loc. man. Paul Lamontagne unit man. Jean Savard art d. Michel Proulx, Dominique Ricard (1st ass.) prof. master David Phillips prop. buyer Frances Calder set dress. François Séguin props. Ryal Cosgrove ass't set dress. Patrice Bengle sculptors Peter Borowsky, Peter Dowker const. superv. Dean Ellerton draftman Claude Paré art dep. admin. Maurice Tremblay cost. dea. Paul André Guérin ward. dress. cont. Mario Davigno ass't ward. mist. Laurie Drew dress. Christine Gribbin make-up Penny Lee, Jocelyne Bellemare hair. Constant Natale ass't hair. Denis Miller cast./Mtl. Ginette D'Amico ass't cast./Mtl. Flo Gallant cast./Toronto Deirdre Bowen d.o.p. René Verzier focus puller Denis Gingras 2nd unit cam. Peter Benison focus puller Larry Lynn 3rd unit cam. Serge Ladouceur focus puller Marcel Durand loader Jean-Jacques Gervais stills Pierre Choinière, Pierre Dury gaffer John Berrie best boy Jean Courteau elect. Alex Amyot key grip François Dupéré 2nd grip Michel Périard sd. Henri Blondeau boom Normand Mercier unit pub. Pierre Brousseau press agent Suzanne Daningburg ass't press agent Oksana Dykja sc. Charles Dennis sc. coord. Denise Dinovi ass't to p. Denise Ponton sec. to p. Monique Légaré ed. Jean-Claude Lord ass't ed. Jean-Pol Passet compt. Gilles Léonard p. acct. Yvette Duguet book-keeper Linda Duguet, Diane Williamson (extra) receptionist Johanne Russell, Linda Ek Dahl p. ass't. Claude Delorme, Gilles Perreault drivers William Nettles, Jean-Claude Cloutier, Jean-Marc Allard, Richard Marsan, Neil Alan Bibby craft service Ken Korrall l.p. Jeff Conaway, Irena Ferris, Cathie Shirriff, Roberta Leighton, Deborah Wakeham, Phil Akin, Kenneth Welsh, Charles Dennis, Caroline Yaeger, Paula Clark, Ian White, Titi Leek, Jean-Louis Millette, Samantha Logan, Gayle Garfunkel, August Schellenberg, Charles Joffe, William Hutt, Arnie Achman, Damir Andrei, Michele Scarabelli, Stephanie Daniel, Barbara Hamilton, Bronwen Mantel, Al Maini, Christopher Newton, Kim Nakashima, Les Rubie, Pat Patterson, Neil Affleck, Richard Comar, Suzan Aickinger, Deirdre Bowen, Vlasta Vrana, Clement Sassville, Dominique Charbonneau, Stephanie Biddle, Denise Di Novi, Roger Héroux, Robert Kirtwood, Curson Dohell, Danielle Schneider, Rosina Bucci, Sylvie Boucher.

Till Death Do Us Part

Mansion of the macabre

Quick, cheap and right on schedule, the \$400,000 made-for-TV movie *Till Death Us Do Part* is being produced by Seagull Productions in association with CTV. Slated for a three-week shoot, the film wrapped September 12 on the dot.

Till Death Us Do Part is a comedy whodunnit, described by co-writer Peter Jobin as a bizarre take-off on an Agatha Christie type mystery novel. The story concerns a maniacal psychiatrist, Dr. Sigmund Freed (Claude Jutra), who lives in an isolated mansion in the country. Dr. Freed specializes in radical group therapy for married couples. When three couples are invited to the doctor's mansion for a weekend session of intense therapy, a series of macabre accidental deaths occur. James Keach plays the part of Robert Craig, an undercover reporter who unravels the mystery and exposes the killer at the end.

"I was lucky to get such an excellent cast," says Timothy Bond, who is at the helm of this, his second feature film. James Keach flew in from Los Angeles to do 10 days' shooting on the film. "We got Claude Jutra at very short notice," he adds, "but he's had lots of acting ex-

perience and is working out great. I've got the best crew in Montreal (François Protat & Company), and some fine performances from Montreal actors Rachel Wilkinson and Riva Spier."

Bond, who has been directing theatre for 15 years in both Canada and England, co-wrote the script with partner Peter Jobin. Bond and Jobin's previous script efforts include *Black Christmas* and *Happy Birthday To Me*. *Black Christmas* was retitled in the U.S. because the distributor thought it was a film about Christmas for Blacks.)

Happy Birthday To Me has grossed \$14 million to date, so it was no small wonder that producers James Shavick and Larry Hertzog approached the team. They had heard that Bond wanted to direct another film. Consequently, Bond and Jobin sat down to write a low-budget picture that could be shot in three to four weeks. "We were interested in doing a low-budget film," says Bond, "because in that way we can do the film the way we see our script should be done."

Till Death Us Do Part was specifically written to be shot in the Johnson mansion (a beautiful estate in Senneville which has been the location for such films as *Two Solitudes*, *Agency* and other Montreal pictures). However, one week before shooting was to start, Mrs. Johnson fell ill and the house was quarantined. In a desperate last-minute scramble, the production sent out five cars in search of a new location. A mere three days before shooting began, lo-

cation manager François Sylvestre secured a mansion in Iberville, situated approximately 40 miles from Montreal.

"Everyone pulled together marvelously," comments Bond between setups. "People were doubling up to help each other out." There were no Winnebagos on this set and the cast and crew were all working for scale. Perhaps *Till Death Us Do Part* marks the beginning of a new era in Canadian filmmaking. In fact Bond and Jobin plan to finance a studio which will produce films on a continual basis. The company is called New Era Pictures and will make films with budgets all under \$2 million.

The boom in the film industry is now well over, probably never to be seen again. It is encouraging to see that producers such as James Shavick and Larry Hertzog have the insight to realize that picture-making in Canada has to scale down if the industry is to survive. With the making of *Till Death Us Do Part*, we are witness to the fact that films can indeed be made quickly, cheaply and on schedule.

Greg van Riel ●

TILL DEATH US DO PART p.c. Seagull/Brady Productions Ltd. (1981) p. James Shavick, Larry Hertzog, David Brady d. Timothy Bond sc. Peter Jobin, Timothy Bond exec. in charge of/1st a.d. Julian Marks p. man./2nd a.d. Danny Rossner p. coord. Kathy Wolf d.o.p. François Protat art d. Csaba Kertesz loc. man. François Sylvestre sd. Don Cohen cost. des. Marc O'Hara make-up Joan Isaacson hair Geatane Noiseux ed. Stephen L. Lawrence l.p. James Keach, Claude Jutra, Helen Hughes, Candace O'Connor, Jack Creley, Matt Craven, Rachel Wilkinson, Toby Tarnow, Dermot Stoker, Terrance LaBrosse, Riva Spier.