

## Kalli Paakspuu's Maypole Carving

During baseball season in the summer of 1980, down in the Harbourfront park at the foot of Bathurst St., a strange obstruction appeared in right-field sometime during the month of June. It was the huge trunk of a 700-year-old cedar tree. It had been felled in the forest near Squamish, B.C., stripped and transported by truck to Toronto. With it came a small mobile office, and a group of people with a purpose as grand, it turned out, as the piece of wood itself.

They were going to carve something: a Cosmic Maypole. Great! We re-aligned our baseball diamond and continued on with our season.

Two years later, one Kalli Paakspuu, filmmaker, arrives at the Canadian Film Makers Distribution Centre with a 23-minute documentary describing the evolution of this Cosmic Maypole, from the felling of the chosen tree in the lush B.C. forest to the raising of the finished icon, oiled and swirling with carved images, on a chilly October morning in an empty park in Toronto.

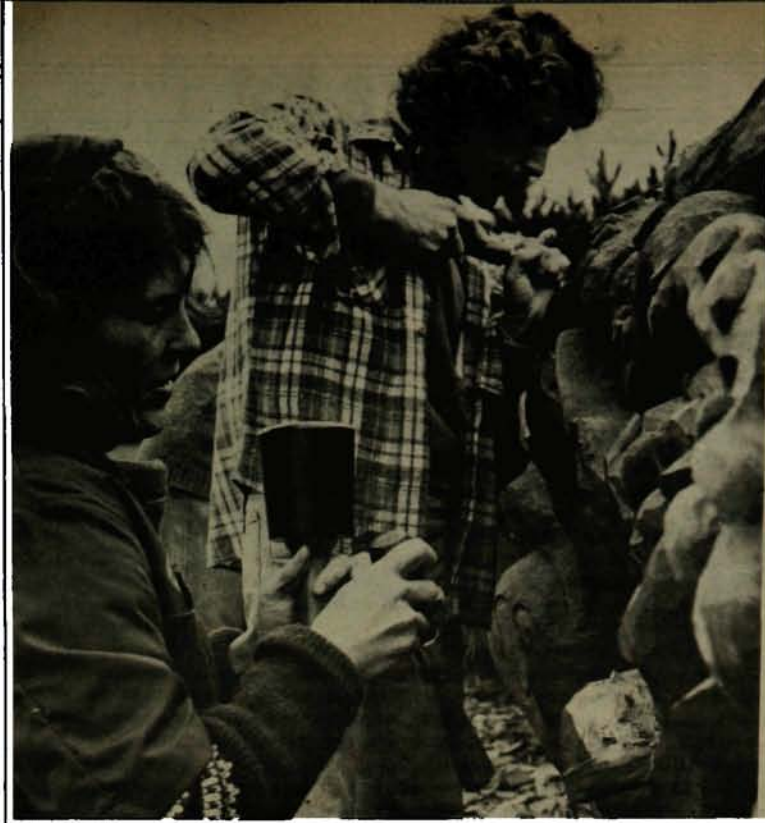
The film begins with a series of long-held close-ups showing a carver's hands, wielding mallet and chisel, slowly fashioning the details of a face in the wood. Timothy Sullivan's music compliments perfectly to immerse the viewer in what is to be the essential idea of the film: slow, patient, painstaking work, performed not as drudgery, but as a way of contemplation and learning - and therefore, creating.

During the establishing sequences, as we see the felling of the tree and its eventual placement at Toronto's Harbourfront, there is a voice-over in which designer Georganna Malloff explains the motifs and the story which the carving will depict. She has mapped the whole thing out for the carvers in red and black paint: it is to be a creation myth entitled "The Dreamwork of the Whales." The maypole's various sections will provide a telling of creation's beginnings... through to a vision of a higher consciousness which man will eventually attain.

### Scoring (continued)

big screen. The odiously miscast Jack Weatherall looks as if he had more fun doing *The Elephant Man*. That leaves us with those cinematic luminaries Cloris Leachman and Eddie Albert who are, supposedly, our bargain-basement rite of passage to the American distribution deal. Appearing quietly in a thankless supporting role is the one actor in this film who's got the face, talent and brains to be a great actor, Nicholas Campbell. When he looks at the camera you know what he's thinking and when the words don't suffice his body takes over. He's such a good actor that he can even make a lousy part look interesting. The producers of *Scoring* obviously never thought of Campbell for the leading role. Apparently, going for a second rate T.V. star/tennis player like Van Patten was their idea of inspired casting.

Taken all in all, *Scoring* isn't really much better or worse than any number of Canadian films we have seen recently. Its budget, \$1.5 million, is a fair price for any film these days if it is to recoup its



● The maypole slowly takes form

All the scenes and elements are autonomous, yet, by design, they overlap and connect with each other: a Cosmic Maypole.

Then comes the main body of the film which concentrates on the carvers. Chainsaws and axes are used to make the initial cuts. Then, as the maypole takes on a form, the tools become smaller and the work more delicate. But is difficult for the carvers, as they work at close-range on details of the still horizontal slab, to visualize the completed work. So designer Malloff is brought back during several scenes to make sure the rhythms and textures fit with the overall plan. It's interesting to see a "director" at work, striving to make the concept and the physical materials merge. The film could use much more of the presence of Georganna Malloff.

Chip by chip, the Cosmic Maypole nears completion. Two other sequences are inter-cut with the actual work on the wood. One hints at the engineering dynamics involved in raising the mammoth pole; and the other shows one of the members of the maypole group

appearing before Toronto city council, giving a progress report and appealing for aid in the matter of paying for the pole to be raised. As with the scenes involving Georganna Malloff more development of these elements of the project would have given the film a greater breadth. (It's always fun to see such worldly people as city politicians arguing and expressing themselves on the topic of such things as Cosmic Maypoles.)

The film ends with the raising of the maypole on an autumn morning in the nearly deserted park. Those involved dance with pride and joy at their accomplishment, but one is left with the feeling that the whole project was carried out in near anonymity.

Technically, the film's strongest point is the music track. This element is the strongest in helping to establish the feeling which must have surrounded the small group as they worked through the summer and fall. Paakspuu, who appears to have done her own editing, chops a few scenes off with a haste that is noticeable. Why didn't she linger more, as she did with those beautiful opening close-ups? Rolf Cutt's camera has provided the basic materials, but, (and I suppose this falls back into director/editor Paakspuu's lap), a little more thought beforehand to the *rhythm* of a story about such a huge sedentary object as a maypole could, perhaps, have illicit a little more in the way of variety in the cinematography. I don't know what her budget was, but, as stated, the thing was lying there from June right through to the World Series; plenty of time to study and story-board.

But the film is enjoyable and valuable. It explains the maypole, and, partially, the perspective of those who caused it to happen. It's good that we have filmmakers such as Kalli Paakspuu whose curiosity and dedication would attract her to produce and complete a project such as *Maypole Carving*.

John Brooke ●

**MAYPOLE CARVING** p.c. Kalli Paakspuu  
Films p./d. Kalli Paakspuu d.o.p. Rolf Cutt's ed.  
Kalli Paakspuu ed. Kalli Paakspuu. Scott Prebby  
music Timothy Sullivan diag. International Tele-  
Film Ent. running time 28 min. 16mm colour

## Peter Raymont's Magic in the Sky

## Harvey J. Crossland's Somewhere Between

## Anne Cubitt's Treaty 8 Country

Canadian cinema has presented us with two images of native peoples. The first was of smiling and silent performers of exotic crafts and practices. Whether we were asked to despise or romanticize this anthropological subject, the implication of these films was that the native person was essentially alien to our European culture, a sideshow to our daily lives.

The second image of the native person has been that of the political activist, the hero of films like *You Are on Indian Land*. Admirable as these films were in bringing native problems into public view, they carried within them a rather demeaning assumption. The first was that their native protagonists had gotten smart; they would succeed because they could be taught the mechanics of Western style radical struggle. No longer would the native person be essentially alien to the film audience. Instead, he fit quite well into the rhetoric of those productions that brought us Oppressed Minority, Type A.

Three recent films concerning native problems have come up against these fundamentally divergent views of native peoples in contemporary Canada. Most successful is *Treaty 8 Country*, a film by Vancouver documentarians Anne Cubitt and Hugh Brody. The first half of the film is a synch sound sequence of a caribou hunt on a western reserve. As the hunt slowly unfolds, the temptation is to see the film as yet another "Indians trap and skin something" ethnographic epic. Yet we are soon made aware of breaks with the anthropological approach. The silence and distance of the hunt is frequently punctured by the hunters' discussion of their actions and of the nature of the process.

While skinning and gutting their prey, the hunters project a social awareness that goes beyond the traditional practices of the hunt. This awareness is made more tangible with a radio announcement of a meeting to discuss infringements of the hunting rights guaranteed under Treaty 8. Almost imperceptibly, we move from the hunt to a meeting on the reserve. The legal issues surrounding the hunt are explained by a native lawyer to the band council and the hunters. And, as these issues are unfolded in a lengthy anecdotal fashion, the camera pans away from the speaker to the continued, now seemingly endless, process of preparing skins and meat.

The genius of *Treaty 8 Country* is the genius of any great documentary: the ability to tell a story on its own terms. The hunt, in its own good time, becomes a political rally. But it is a political rally

David Eames ●

that is never very far from the genesis of the conflict and the consciousness of those who struggle with it at their own pace in their own way.

At its best, Harvey Crossland's *Somewhere Between* begins to evoke this kind of synthesis. Sponsored by the Professional Native Women's Association with additional support from The Legal Services Society, The Secretary of State and the National Film Board, the film is an attack on the injustice of robbing native women of their Indian status for having married non-Indians. The argument is made largely through a series of interviews with native women who have been victimized by the legislation.

Like *Treaty 8 Country*, *Somewhere Between* is a lesson in watching and listening. The women's stories of arbitrary loss and separation are superb oral history. None of the women interviewed asks for our sympathy. Yet all of them earn it through their forthright renditions of the sexist bureaucratic nightmare that has plagued their lives.

The women's stories demolish the credibility of the few voices who speak for the status quo. But they also make pale the stock parliamentary footage of sympathetic M.P.'s raising the issue in the abstract. Indeed, the film's major shortcoming is its inability to clarify the current struggle in the context of the testimony presented. What are missing here are the smart lawyers and eloquent lobbyists who might be able to bridge the oral testimony and the bland, if sympathetic, parliamentary addresses. The film needs someone like the native lawyer in *Treaty 8 Country*, someone who can speak both languages.

It is just this question of speaking two languages that is examined in *Magic in the Sky*, an ambitious film by Peter Raymont. *Magic in the Sky* takes us from a eulogized image of Marshall McLuhan to the world's most isolated television station in its attempt to describe the genesis of native run northern television. Unlike the other two films, there is little in Raymont's production that forces us to observe or listen with a native sensitivity. Instead, the complex considerations presented here are brought to us with the fury of a mid-60's



● Inuit TV producers Mike Angalik (in headphones) and John Aulutjut (with videocamera)

media happening. At one point, Raymont's crew is filming an Inuit crew filming the filming of a network soap opera. At other moments, we are being given television-speed capsule descriptions of the nature of the medium, white/Inuit interface and the workings of communications satellites.

Understandably, the horde of information Raymont wishes to place before us represents 100 years' work for a native storyteller or a non-native filmmaker working to emulate his pace. Nevertheless, the many charming moments found in this film disappear far too quickly. A polar village debating the issues surrounding cultural interface, the relationships between Inuit student broadcasters and their white "trainers" and the interactions between CBC Headquarters and its most distant affiliate are more than sufficient subjects for individual films.

As is, the most promising moment of *Magic in the Sky* is its conclusion. Here, a slightly disoriented Francis Fox surrenders a tiny bit of broadcast time to some hunters and a former furnace

**Erratum.** Inadvertently, John Harkness's name was omitted from the film review of "Paradise" in issue No. 85. Our apologies to the author. Ed.

repairman, the staff of the new television network. Raymont's images assure us that the Inuit will carve up their freshly caught medium with political acuity and a sense of purpose - all in a manner that non-natives will never really understand.

Seth Feldman ●

**MAGIC IN THE SKY** d. sc. Peter Raymont d.o.p. Ian Elkin, Martin Duckworth ad. rec. Leon Johnson, Aerlyn Weissman, Claude Beaugrand ed. Michael Fuller asst. to p., research d. Nancy Worsfold initial research Marien Lewis, Beverley Straight camera asst. Frank Raven, Catherine Dorsey ad. ed. Bernie Bordeleau, Anne Whiteside re-rec. Jean-Pierre Joutel unit ad. Louise Clark narr. Michael Kane research consultant Kenneth G. O'Bryan Ph.D. p. Arthur Hammond, Peter Raymont assoc. p. Ted Riley p.c. : Investigative Productions/The National Film Board of Canada running time : 57 min., colour, 16mm. dist. N.F.B.

**SOMEWHERE BETWEEN** d./ed. Harvey J. Crossland sc. Ric Beairsto/Crossland a.d. Beairsto cam. Paul Lieske/Beairsto ad. rec. Peg Campbell mus. Ken Hemmerick exec. p. Ric Beairsto, Peg Campbell, Harvey J. Crossland in association with Joy Hall p. Harvey J. Crossland p.c. Hy Perspectives Media Group running time : 50 min., b&w/colour, 16mm.

**TREATY 8 COUNTRY** d. Anne Cubitt, Hugh Brody cam. Jim Bizzocchi ed. Justine Dancy, Anne Cubitt running time : 44 min., 16mm colour.

## Peter Carter

(cont. from p. 15)

who pulled that series into shape, and I loved working on it with him.

Peter and I stayed close friends and when, in the late '60s, I got my first feature film together, *Isabel*, it was of course Peter (with Joyce Cozy) that helped me set it up. He was everything from line producer down to third A.D., as well as props; but most of all, he was like a brother, and we shared that special adventure into my background on the Gaspé with a closeness I've found hard to match in film since.

When it came time to do *Act of the Heart* there was Peter again, helping me as associate producer. But once we got the thing rolling and were shooting he went back to Toronto to, at last, direct his first television film. That was in 1969, I believe.

A year or two later found us each submitting our own projects for a feature to the CFDC, which at that time was even more powerful than it is today. Once his own film was ready, with Gordy Pinsent and Larry Dane, he came to work with me preparing *Journey*. We sat together with the rest of the *Journey* crew, through that long afternoon in May 1971 while the CFDC deliberated on our fate. The meeting broke-up, but no one had the courtesy to pass on their decisions. So P.C. and I got on the phone, tracking down the CFDC members as they pub-crawled across town. We got the answer. P.C.'s *The Rowdyman* was on! But *Journey* was off! We were both torn between exaltation and despair. (But this story does have a happy ending. Within a week I got the CFDC to reverse their decision.) Now our only problem was to get a telegram to each other on the first day of shooting between the wilds of Newfoundland and Tadoussac on the rocky North Shore of Quebec.

In the late '70s, I lost a very happy refuge in Toronto where, on visits there, I spent a lot of time sharing Peter and Linda's circle of friends - they decided to move to Los Angeles. My wife Joan and I met them at the L.A. airport in a truck, and they stayed with us on the beach until they moved into their own art-deco house. Peter loved the birds which sang around his garden and he grew great roses and flowers, and continued to spread his influence on film down here. Funnily enough, we always used to say that in our old age we'd sit it out together in some old-age home, with no teeth, reminiscing over our lengthy past. We shared so many experiences, it would take a book to write them all. And now, I've lost a great friend.

Peter's story is the story of the beginnings of our new industry, from R.C.M.P. through *Forest Rangers*, *Seaway*, the early days of CBC-television films, on to our first features, and then to the first great wave of films. They were extraordinary years, and the whole industry is depleted by his unexpected death. I was going to say that they don't make them like that anymore - but then, there's his son Jason! If he decides on films, then I expect every door in the industry will open to him.

Paul Almond ●

Director of many television films and series. Peter Carter's feature films include *The Rowdyman* (1972), *Rituals* (1976), *High Ballin'* (1977), *Kavik the Wolf Dog* (1978) and *A Man called Intrepid* (1979).

● Braving the elements in *Somewhere Between*

