

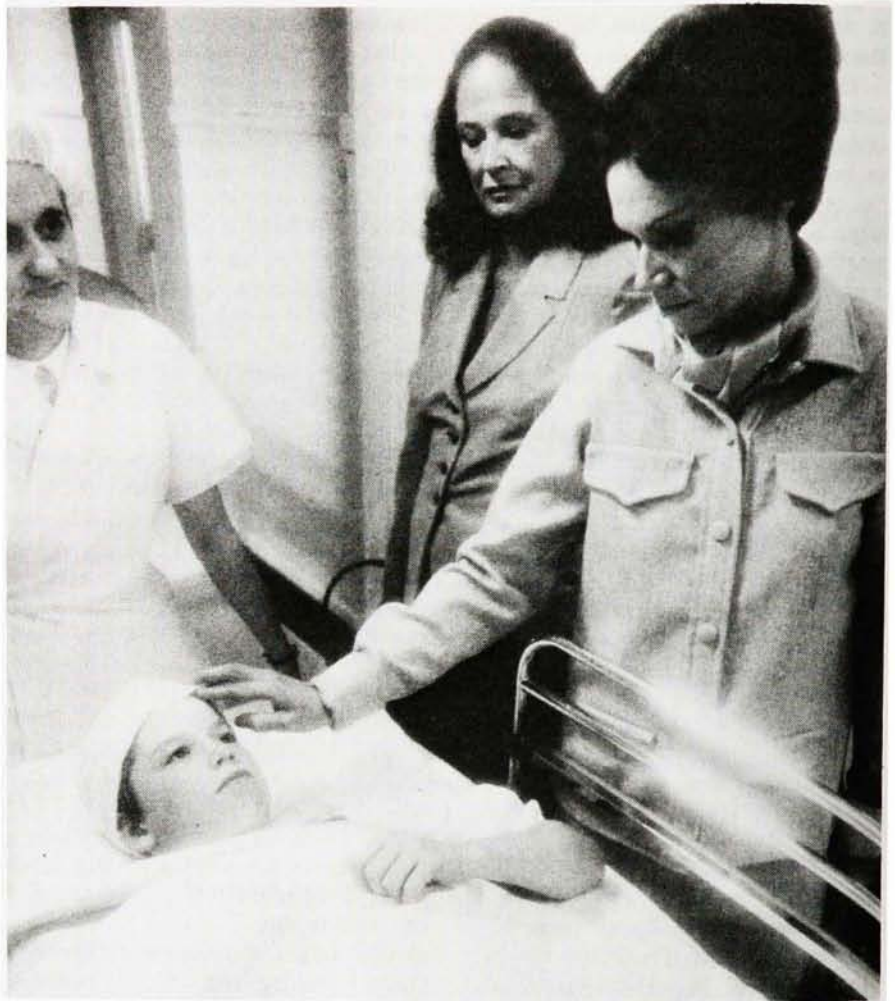
FILM REVIEWS

T.C. McLuhan's THE THIRD WALKER

d: T.C. McLuhan, sc: Robert Thom, ph: Robert Fiore, ed: Ulla Ryghe, sd: Richard Lightstone, sd. ed. Ken Heely-Ray, a.d.: William McCrow, m: Paul Hoffert, l.p.: Colleen Dewhurst, William Shatner, Frank Moore, Monique Mercure, Tony Meyer, David Meyer, Andrée Pelletier, Diana LeBlanc, exec. p: Melvin Simon and Quadrant Films, p: T.C. McLuhan, Brian Winston, p.c. Wychwood Productions (1977), col: 35mm, running time: 93 minutes.

The *Third Walker* may find a few enthusiastic defenders. More likely it will get the bloody bludgeon; savage wit rather than film criticism. The movie is an easy target for all those middlebrow reviewers who have no tolerance for any film outside the mid-ground and who customarily treat the work of Resnais, Pasolini, Warhol (to say nothing of more radical directors) as if it were an illegitimate use of celluloid. In this case the close spiritual relatives of *The Third Walker* are those eccentric Canadian movies — Gordon Shepherd's *Eliza's Horoscope*, Paul Almond's *Journey*, Don Owen's *The Ernie Game*, Joyce Weiland's *The Far Shore*, among others — in which it seems the material is far more meaningful to the director than it is to anyone else.

There are two explanations for this odd form of filmmaking; one prosaic — they are often the handiwork of someone who wrote, produced and directed the whole thing, so that there is little opportunity for internal criticism. By the time the movie is finished, it's way off the deep-end, as subjective as an Elizabeth Smart novel or a Sylvia Plath poem. It takes a monumental obtuseness not to recognize the different latitudes permitted a literary work with its far less-costly economic base, and a supposedly-commercial fea-



Waiting for the operation to establish which of the three boys are the twins...
(Colleen Dewhurst and Monique Mercure)

ture weighing in between \$600,000 and \$1 million, requiring the attention and support of millions of filmgoers to break even. The other (or additional) explanation for our long list of idiosyncratic films is that there is so little sense of artistic community in Canada we don't know what the common language, or the meeting grounds, of our culture should be. In this view, the directors of these films had no inkling that their films would strike many as being unintelligible. They want to establish a distinctive film culture. They want to break with American mass-tastes. But they have great difficulty creating something that is distinctively Canadian and *passionately interesting* to replace the dynamic

mass culture originating in New York and Los Angeles.

By now, after so many Canadian film underdevelopment flops, one would expect any director to realize a few basic rules of the business: (a) the general public doesn't like elliptical, non-linear forms of film story-telling and no such film is ever as popular as those with a straightforward narrative. Moreover, few stories benefit from a fragmented structure. For every *Blow Up, If...* or *The Servant* that *can* justify their obliqueness, and which did become major hits, there are dozens of obscurantist muddles — confusing films about nothing vital — that regularly die at the box office and certainly are no model to follow. (b) Any

film that doesn't have much to offer in the way of interesting characters or compelling observations had better lay on the sensationalism (witness Brian de Palma's current success with *The Fury*) so that filmgoers get *something* for their time and money. A common error in Canadian movies is that, not being Bergman, Antonioni or Fellini, our fantasist directors start out aiming at Art and end up looking silly, having given their shallow imaginations free reign to putter about in a cinematic sandbox. Surrealists have to be willing to probe their psyches deeply — boldly and crudely, at the very least, like Alexandro Jodorowsky, or with the consummate skill of Bunuel; otherwise it is a mode of filmmaking best left to the realms of 16mm where high-risk experiments don't lead to financial disaster. With a few exceptions — David Cronenberg, Richard Benner, Murray Markowitz come immediately to mind — the redeeming importance of sensationalism is not much appreciated by Canadian filmmakers.

Maybe, as I have argued elsewhere in "Inner Views", there are too many conservative areas in Canadian society to create and support a *vigorous* film-culture; if true, that leaves us in the paradoxical position of trying to sell naive films to sophisticated markets. Two provinces have recently banned Louis Malle's *Pretty Baby* — you *have* to be a cultural backwater (like Ireland, South Africa, Australia) to support the censorship practices of English-Canada. The question is, if we live in a place that prides itself on its conservative control of passion and imagination, what is there that the outside world should take an interest in? What is there to celebrate? More basically, what is there to sell?

In *The Third Walker* writer-director Teri McLuhan seems only to have considered intermittently that movies are something that have to be marketed. It has a saleable cast — Colleen Dewhurst is especially good, William Shatner and Monique Mercure are fine in smaller roles — but the screenplay never develops the real issues at stake in the story. Mood alone (Cape Breton scenery, Paul Hoffert music) can't sustain the film. Any ideas it has dissipate into whimsy. The story unravels like a knotted ball of yarn but this much is clear:

sometime in the 1950s, twin brothers were born to a Scottish family and were accidentally separated at birth through an error by a maternity-ward nurse. One is sent home to a French-speaking family, the other to his real family along with a "twin" who is not a blood-relation. Monique Mercure portrays the mother of the misplaced twin, Etienne; Colleen Dewhurst, the true mother of the twins, raised his brother, Andrew. The brothers (depicted by real twins, Tony and David Meyer, from the Royal Shakespearean Players in England) are in their early 20s when the film opens, and haven't seen one another for about 15 years. We later learn that Dewhurst became suspicious of a possible error in the hospital when the boys go to school and are frequently mistaken for one another. She undertakes legal action and a court order for all three boys to have skin-graft tests to determine their parentage. The results prove, we are told (the court judgment is rendered by the voice of Marshall McLuhan) that Etienne and Andrew are truly twins while pseudo-brother James (Frank Moore) is of no fixed genetic address. The court further orders that Etienne and James should be swapped but Etienne's mother apparently runs away with him to prevent this from happening. "Apparently," because when the film opens, she lives in the same small community as everyone else, and (there's no explanation why the brothers have never run into one another over the years) and the father of the twins (William Shatner) has no difficulty locating them both, just before he dies. It's at his funeral that the twins meet again, and *The Third Walker* is ready to begin. Phew.

What we have next is a second wave of psychological complications set in the present. Etienne returns to his true mother's household (the twins, in twin beds, have long talks at night. They do a lot of deep staring at one another.) Step-brother James (who looks to be about 30) decides it's time to leave home. Andrew is torn between proceeding with plans to get married or investing all his money in a yacht and "cruising around the world" with his long-lost brother. As his relationship with Etienne deepens, his girl-friend (played by Andrée Pelletier) becomes

jealous, insecure and possessive. He asks her to decide what he should do with his life and gives her all the money he has saved over the years (about \$6,000). He tells her to place all of it on a racetrack bet (Andrew is a jockey) so that he can double it by winning the next race and buy the boat he wants — *if* she thinks that granting him freedom is a wise course. Otherwise she is to keep the money and they'll get married. She keeps the money, he wins the race. Then she realizes he will resent her for the rest of his life. Whereupon parting-brother James, in a gesture of largesse unmatched since the all-for-love sacrifices of Greta Garbo movies, gives her all the money *he* has, so that Andrew will think that she *did* trust him and placed the bet after-all. Then James goes to Andrew and apologizes for having nothing to give him for his wedding, and leaves with stoic heartburn.

If a man had made this movie he would probably be accused of being anti-feminist — at least — if not fur-tively homosexual. None of the female characters are humanly appealing — Dewhurst is ruthless, reducing her husband to alcoholism, and rebuffing the affection of James while pursuing her obsession of getting Etienne; Pelletier portrays a possessive cow to whom "love" means total ownership; Mercure is required to do a shrewish number at the top of her voice. The boys alone are shown to be warm, generous, affectionate — and fascinated by one another.

On the psychological level, the film doesn't wash. On the political-symbolism level, it doesn't make sense (assuming that the French-English division in the movie is supposed to make any comment at all).

Yet, occasionally, more in the resonance of the acting than anything that is said, *The Third Walker* acquires a haunting quality. In the main, however, the film is a wistful mystery about imaginary lives that ultimately has nothing to say. McLuhan is either faking her real concerns, or else, perhaps, she hasn't any.

It's astonishing, given the world we live in currently, that someone could come up with this sheltered-life fantasy.

John Hofsess

Richard Loncraine's FULL CIRCLE

d. Richard Loncraine, sc. Dave Humphries, ph. Peter Hannan, ph. op. Terry Permane, still. Anthony Bliss, ed. Catherine Lane, sup. ed. Ron Wisman, sd. Jim Hopkins, sd. ed. Tony Jackson, a.d. Brian Morris, set dec. Chris Burke, cost. Shuna Harwood, l.p. Mia Farrow, Keir Dullea, Tom Conti, Jill Bennett, Robin Gammell, Cathleen Nesbitt, Anna Wing, Pauline Jameson, Peter Sallis, Sophie Ward, Samantha Gates, exec. p. Julian Melzack, p. Peter Fetterman, Alfred Pariser, p. sup. Hugh Harlow, p. manager. Peter Bennett, Tony Thatcher, p.c. Fetter Productions (London), Classic Film Industries (Montreal) 1976 col. 35mm. running time 108 min., dist. Astral.

Within the last year or so, the Canadian film industry has made several contributions to the growing number of "Bad Seed" motion pictures — films in which a spiritually or psychologically twisted child, almost invariably female, is used as an agent of mayhem and destruction. These have included Nicholas Gessner's *The Little Girl Who Lives Down The Lane*, Eddy Matalon's *Cathy's Curse*, (both of which were coproductions with France) and the Quebec episode of Denis Heroux's *The Uncanny* (a coproduction with Great Britain). Except for Gessner's film, which had the advantage of Jodie Foster in the title role and U.S. distribution by American-International, none of these works were distinguished by their plotting, execution, or by their box office reception. Thus, Richard Loncraine's *Full Circle*, based on Peter Straub's rather grisly novel *Julia* is not in very good company. All the more wonder, then, that it is really not as bad as one might expect.

It is perhaps to the credit of the backers of this film (including bookstore chain scion Julian Melzack whose Classic Film Industries is the Canadian production company), that they did not scrimp on production values. Cinematographer Peter Hamman shot *Full Circle* in a sumptuous, if rather dark style, using wide-screen Technovision equipment. While one may feel



Mia Farrow, sinking into depression, with photos of her dead daughter.

that Hamman overdoes his backlighting, it at least creates a thoroughly gloomy atmosphere that permeates the film. This is probably all to the good when the problems of the script are considered.

Writers Harry Bromley Davenport (adaption) and Dave Humphries (screenplay) have streamlined Straub's convoluted plot — wisely, though uncharacteristically discarding much of the supernatural and almost all of the sexual aspects of the story. The resulting material could have made a good suspenseful thriller in the Hitchcock mold, had the director had the wit to do so.

Richard Loncraine, however, chose instead to indulge in some fancy games with the viewers, beginning with some rather obvious casting. Mia Farrow, looking as clipped and gaunt as she did ten years ago, plays Julia Lofting, a depressive young woman who buys an atmospheric period house off London's Holland Park. There, she shuts herself away from her domineering husband Magnus (stolidly played by Keir Dullea) to mourn over the violent death of her eight year old daughter. Soon she feels herself haunted by the vengeful spirit of another child, Olivia Rudge, who had also died violently

over thirty years before, having been the instigator of the murder and mutilation of a playmate. It is just possible that Julia is insane, and has conjured Olivia's ghost out of a series of coincidences and her guilt over her daughter. Using this basic story, in itself derivative, Loncraine shows threadbare imagination by making passing allusions to a whole raft of psychological films, among them *Rosemary's Baby* and *Secret Ceremony*, *Bunny Lake is Missing* and *Wait Until Dark* and even uses some Vertigo-like staircase shots. In the midst of this, the plot gets so mired that Loncraine kills off three members of the cast — Dullea, Tom Conti as Julia's boyfriend, and Robin Gammell as one of Olivia's former gang — without any other reason than to get them out of the way. The deaths do not affect Farrow's character at all. This kind of arbitrary twist is not a means of compelling suspense; it is an artificial outlet from a sloppy plot.

The main problem with *Full Circle* seems to lie in the contradictions which are inherent in Loncraine's approach to the film. He was obviously aiming for a higher artistic plane than the blood-drenched fantasies of a Corman disciple like David Cronenberg. The fact that he never shows the phantom

Olivia (enigmatically and silently played, when she does appear, by a hollow-eyed and pretty girl named Samantha Gates) makes actually killing anybody a mark in his favor. Yet, he remains faithful to some of the most hoary conventions of the horror genre. One of these is the use of a mad old woman who speaks truths that are unrecognized, except by the hysterical heroine. Here, these roles are filled by Mary Morris, made up to look like Mia Farrow might at the age of seventy, and by Cathleen Nesbitt, who rather overdoes a classic death scene. Yet another convention is the whining piano and synthesizer score composed by Colin Towns. At least it does not resort to direct quotations from the works of Bernard Herrmann.

In the end, one is unsatisfied with Richard Loncraine's work in *Full*

Circle, partly because there was the promise of much better things. When the visual effects come together — Farrow's waifish vulnerability, Hamman's photography — the results are more often than not frustrated by the inconsistent plot. When Loncraine moves away from atmosphere to attempt to tell the story, the film seems to jerk in several disconcerting ways.

The problem may, in the end, lie in the genre itself. Almost all attempts to bring situations and characters that are proper to the Gothic tradition into a modern setting succeed only because a suspension of disbelief is achieved, especially if a child is depicted as an evil force. Because characters are so ill-defined in *Full Circle*, Richard Loncraine is not able to achieve anything like this, and so the effect is dissipated.

J. Paul Costabile

final release which I can only describe as a sense of flying. Material confines seem to have been dissolved and gravity itself defied, as though one had stepped into the fourth-dimension of relativity theory or the higher plane of Eastern mystics. There is a final, fragile coming to a point of rest, almost a bitter-sweet recognition of the necessity of being grounded once again in materiality. *Unremitting Tenderness* is a remarkable achievement as both a film "about" dance and a film "about" film because its creator so well understands both.

Even so, in comparison, *Look! We Have Come Through* is the more accomplished and intense work. Elder here set himself the difficult task of creating a seamless whole from approximately 385 separate shots, again of a dancer in motion. Unlike *Unremitting Tenderness*, this film does not rely on optical printing or loops to achieve its transformations. Instead, it is a revelation of the editing process, in this case done with remarkable care and precision. The intensity is in the cutting — almost an attempt to see simultaneously from all perspectives, but it is also in the use of extremes of darkness and light in tension within the frame. In comparison to *Unremitting Tenderness*, the camera distance from the dancer is lessened here by a quantum leap, and the interrelationship between moving body and moving camera is thereby heightened to the intensity of a struggle. In this piece, there is a terrible urgency, and an agony unlike anything I've seen visualized elsewhere, unless it be in the expressionist woodcuts of Edvard Munch. Yet, such a comparison ignores the extraordinary fluidity achieved in the editing, the exploration of dynamic motion which this filmmaker pursues relentlessly.

The work of Bruce Elder should be familiar to a Canadian audience. In 1976 his film *Barbara Is a Vision of Loveliness* won a Canadian Film Award in the category of experimental film. The very elimination of that category from the Awards this year does not bode well for Canadian film artists attempting to challenge the confines of filmmaking and our perceptions.

Joyce Nelson

SHORT FILM REVIEWS

UNREMITTING TENDERNESS

Filmmaker: R. Bruce Elder,
Length: 9 minutes, color,
Lightworks Production, 1977,
Distributor: Lightworks Productions.

LOOK! WE HAVE COME THROUGH

Filmmaker: R. Bruce Elder,
Length: 12 minutes, b&w,
Lightworks Production, 1978,
Distributor: Lightworks Productions.

Stan Brakhage once asked us to "imagine a world before the beginning was the word." It is an invitation to another plane of perception, a more holistic plane where the subtle chains that bind and fix us into narrow path-

ways of separation and arbitrary divisions are left behind. I thought of this invitation while watching these two films by Bruce Elder, a filmmaker who, like Brakhage, is caught up in the synaesthetic and kinaesthetic flow of color, forms and motion, especially in their transformations. *Unremitting Tenderness* is the more gentle of the two films, gentle in the sense that its structure takes us more easily through its own process. The opening section, approximately 12 different shots of the dancer Sarah Lockett, functions like a threat to lead us through the labyrinthian transformations which follow, done through optical printing and rearrangements of the initial sequence. The affect, for me, is of scales falling away from the eyes, layer by layer, as if progressing unremittingly closer to the optic nerve. Yet, the combination of sitar music, fluid cutting on movement, and the color progressions make the process a painless one, as in meditation. There is a gradual working-through, both of the materials of film itself and of one's perceptions, into a

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

FILM STUDIES AND FILM PRODUCTION POSITIONS (PART-TIME):

There may be a number of positions for part-time instructors in film studies and film production. We are interested in receiving applications for these possible openings in such areas as documentary (history and theory), animation, and scriptwriting.

Please address all inquiries and/or applications to: -

Associate Professor Judith Kelly,
Director, Division of Visual Arts,
Faculty of Fine Arts,
Concordia University,
Room H-543-1,
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West,
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8, Canada

ADVERTISING INDEX

Alberta	41
Alpha Cine Service	5
Arthur Winkler, CLU	9
Bellevue Pathé	2
Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre	41
Chris Stone Audio Productions Cinema Productions	41
Ciné Québec	9
Film Opticals	43
Frezzolini Electronics Inc.	9
M.S. Art	43
Paramount Pictures	5
Racal Zonal	5
Sonolab	44
Wm. F. White	9

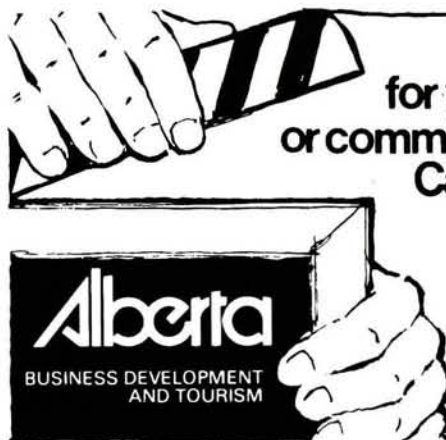


The Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre

will open its
U.S. office
July, 1978 in
Boston Massachusetts

Jerry McNabb
Executive Director

Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre
406 Jarvis Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 2G6

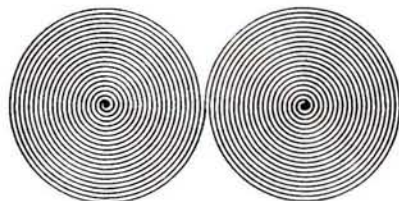


**Need talented people
for your next documentary
or commercial shoot in Alberta?**

Call us Len Stahl, Alberta Motion Picture
Industries Association
347 Birks Building, 10113 - 104 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 1A1
Telephone 403-424-3456

Film Industry Development Office
Alberta Business Development and Tourism
14th Floor, Capitol Square, 10065 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 0H4
Telephone 403-427-2005

FOR SOUND SERVICE



CALL (416) 923-6700

Chris Stone Audio Productions Ltd.

45 Charles St. East, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1S2

Music selection from more than forty libraries of pre-recorded music
large sound effects library on tape — ¼", 16mm & 35mm magnetic-film transfers

Chris Stone

John Parry

F
PROFESSIONALS
in all phases of special
photographic effects

F film opticals of canada ltd.

410 adelaide st. w. toronto (416) 363-4987

vancouver (604) 687-4491

montreal (514) 937-2336

More than just an audio/visual house
More than just an animation house
Ms art services ltd. toronto m5v 8s1

410 adelaide st. w.

363-2621

JACK A.
frost LTD.
LIGHTING EQUIPMENT
RENTAL - SALES MOTION PICTURE CAMERA SERVICE
MOTION PICTURE EQUIPMENT DESIGN

335 Horner Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M8W 1Z6

PRESENTS "THE BLUE LIGHTS"

*H.M.I. Lights made by
LTM France*

AVAILABLE IN:

Fresnel Luxarc
200; 575; 1200; 2500; 4000 watt
Open Face Ambiarc
200; 575; 1200; 2500 watt
Softlight Softarc
575 watt
Spotlight Spotarc
575; 1200; 2500 watt
Reporter Light Variarc
575 watt
6000° K Colortemperature
Instant Restrike
115 volt 60HZ Operation
90 Lumens per watt efficiency

*Frost Services all Motion Picture Equipment,
Zoom Lens Repair and Overhaul, Modifications to
Lenses and Cameras Arri, Mitchell, Eclair, CP
etc.*

*New from SACHTLER W. Germany the ultra smooth
fluid head for 16mm and 35mm equipment also for
video cameras.*

*Stainless steel tripods
Shoulder braces, spreaders and transport cases*

SALES IN:

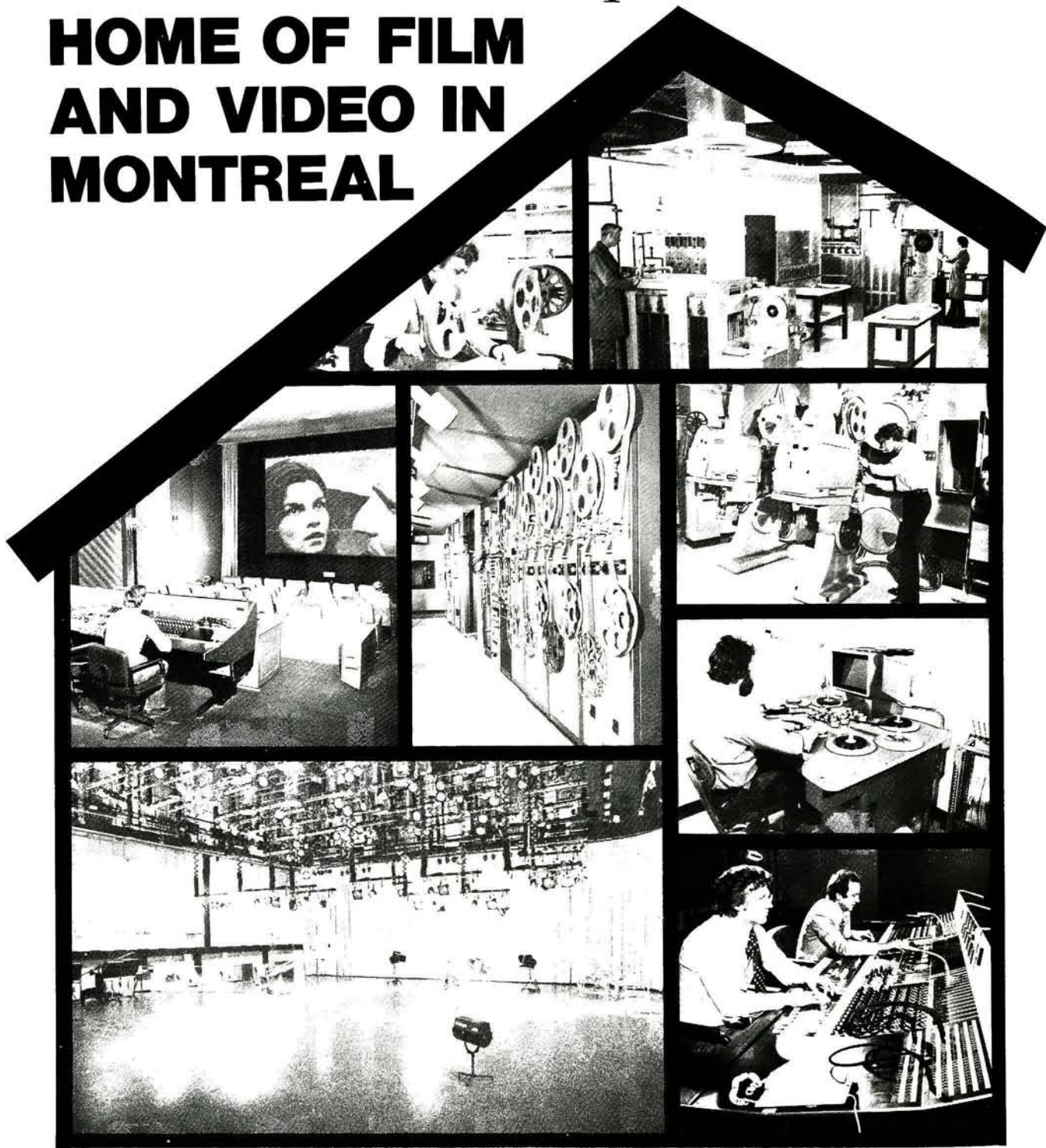
*G.E. and Sylvania Photo Bulbs
Colortran, Lowel, Kliegl, Strand, Thorn C.S.I.*

For all lighting call 252-1115

For all camera and H.M.I. call 251-9994

Sonolab and Tele-Metropole

HOME OF FILM AND VIDEO IN MONTREAL



Our technical facilities are one of a kind in Montreal, and rank among the world's finest. Shooting stages, recording studios, screening, editing, video recording, dubbing and language adaptations. It's all here and more.

For modern, high-quality audio-visual productions and service, SONOLAB gets top billing. Great producers have already made use of the many services we have to offer. What about you?

Consider Montreal. Consider SONOLAB... superstar of the Canadian film industry.

sonolab INC.
FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN

1500 Papineau Street,
MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA, H2K 4L9

TELEPHONE (514) 527-8671

TELEX 05-267-329