

Grandma (Kay Hawtrey) and Mr. David (Barry Morse) on the Elora, Ontario set of *Cries in the Night*

is he exactly what he seems?" The script, I think deliberately, leaves a lot for the actors to do and it's noticeable that a great many good scripts of this kind, in this genre, also leave a lot for the artist to do."

With distribution deals not completed, William Fruet and associate pro-

ducer Patrick Doyle wouldn't reveal the budget, but other sources inside the company put it at around 1.5 million. The film is also undergoing a little change, but that, too, remains an official secret.

Andrew Dowler

The Squad

p. André Link, Marie-José Raymond, d. Claude Fournier, asst. d. Avdé Chiriaess, Michèle St-Arnaud sc. Claude Fournier, from an original idea of John Dunning and André Link ph. Daniel Fournier art. d. Anne Pritchard cost. François Laplante l.p. Harry Reems, Jeff Bowes, Daniel Pilon, Jean Lapointe, Fiona Red, Gilles LaTulippe, Nicole Morin, Monique LePage, p.c. Squad Film Ltd.

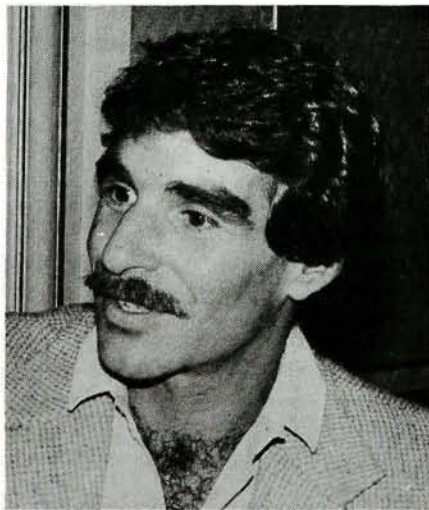
The Squad, due to wrap Sept. 7, began shooting July 21.

"We're on schedule," says veteran Quebec director, Claude Fournier. Then he chortles, "And within budget — this far anyway."

Marie Josée Raymond, producer, production manager and Fournier's partner in Rose Films and real life, permits spontaneity to poke through her cool, artful elegance to explain their success. "We've got a great crew! It's a lot of hard work but a very pleasant shoot."

On set, crew and cast morale is high.

Atop Mont Royale, against a "Giotto Sky," soundman Richard Nichol delays a take to find a "dead" spot for his



Harry Reems stars in Claude Fournier's latest comedy *The Squad*

Nagra. Bent in the cold wind, he shuffles the machine around, aware everyone is waiting. Instead of curses, someone yells, "Don't look for water; look for oil." Soon, a pleased Fournier jigs atop a rented truck. Later, when stunning black newcomer, 6 ft. plus Maggie Crooks (Fast Annie) is prone on a patrol car front seat, one foot out the back window, the other out the front, she'll be asked for some foot expressions. Her curling and uncurling toes straighten the kinkiest hair of most male onlookers. Someone mutters her legs are so long they meet at her chest; it's a sight when 5 ft 4 in. Fournier stands before her.

The Squad's budget is closer to \$1 million than the rumoured \$800,000, according to Irene Litinsky of Cinepix/DAL films. They, the CFDC, L'Institut Québécois du Cinéma, and Rose films are financing, though percentages are confidential. Private investors are involved, too; all \$5,000 units were snapped up within four days of the offering.

Daniel Pilon (Frank, "a cop who gets paid to get laid") says the film is "bawdy but not dirty." Purportedly a fast-paced comedy, it was co-authored by Raymond and Fournier. Mr. Clean (Harry Reems) is invited to rid Montreal of sin, having done so to Toronto. The morality squad he heads is corrupt and inept. Each cop's misadventures are depicted as he works under Clean's strait-laced supervision.

In one sequence, Reems and Swanson clumsily search a skyscraper foyer for clues. Suddenly, Reems points down.

Reems: "Pick it up."

Swanson: "But it's only a piece of lint, sir."

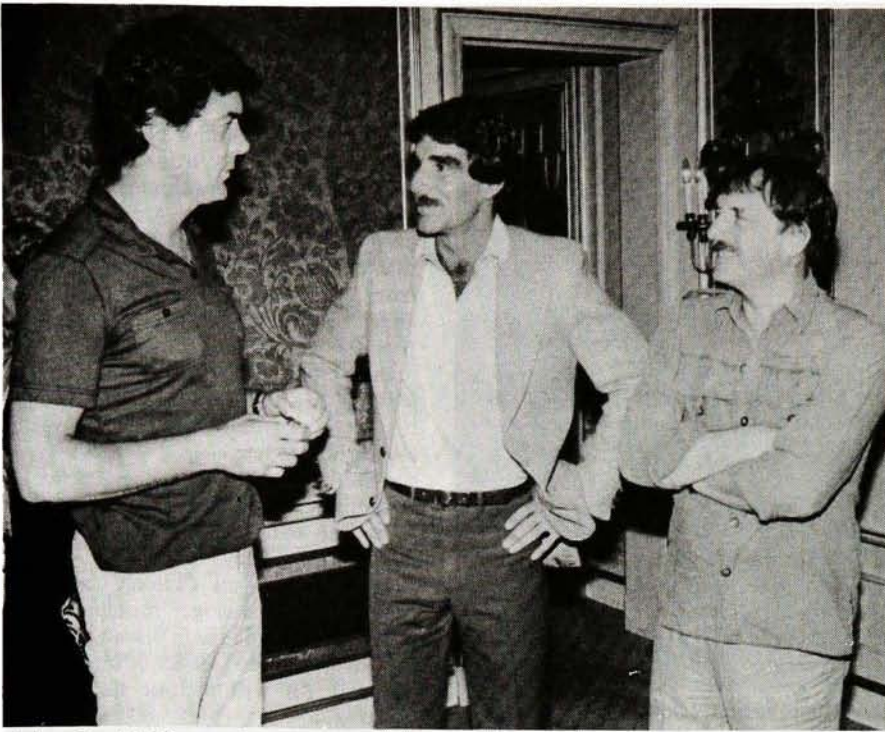
Reems: "Pick it up. We've got to start somewhere."

(Exasperated, Swanson wraps it in an oversized plaid handkerchief.)

Reems (taking Swanson aside): "We want the cold hand of the law in this man's pocket."

The "man" is Harry the Flasher (Gilles LaTulippe, praised by all). In the sequence prior, Deborah Weinstein has fainted after slipping a hand into the Flasher's pocket. The pocket has no pouch and everyone knows what's under a flasher's Aquascutum.

Much research has been done, since the authors originally had written a serious vice-squad corruption drama. It was DAL's John Dunning and André Link's suggestion that led to a transformation into comedy, which Fournier has done before (*Deux Femmes en Or*; *La Pomme, la Queue et les Pepins*; and *Je Suis Loin de toi, Mignonne*).



Actors Daniel Pilon and Harry Reems discuss the shooting of *The Squad* with director Claude Fournier

The film is entirely in English, but will be dubbed in French and released in that version in Quebec, before the English is shown there. A Christmas

release is planned, though this could change suddenly, according to Ms. Raymond.

Much publicity has been milked

from porno star Reems's (*Deep Throat*, *The Devil in Miss Jones*) top billing. Publicists are claiming this is his first attempt at less horizontal cinema.

"That's not quite true," Reems said in a mid-night telephone interview. "I've done relatively straight films in Italy, France, Sweden and, in Tokyo, a pirate film in Japanese."

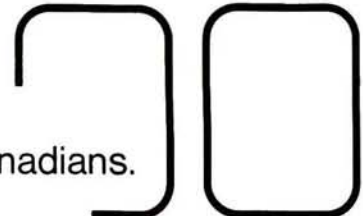
He claims to have appeared in 150 films. However, *The Squad* is his softest in English, and his first since being tried under U.S. conspiracy laws after charges were laid in conjunction with *Deep Throat*. His successful defense nearly bankrupted him.

Reems found Canadian crews really knew their craft. Not one day passed without 15 to 25 set-ups, compared to three or four elsewhere. This he said was because "they're not spoiled by lavish productions or unions."

Both Reems and Pilon, when asked, were quite candid about Fournier's directing through the viewfinder, instead of from beside the camera. Though favored even by Stanley Kubrick, Reems felt this style disturbs actors, working with them is sacrificed for framing and camera wizardry. Pilon suggested actors are insecure; to do well they need the director's undivided attention. "The director

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doesn't have time to take care of everyone and everything."

First assistant director, Avde Cheriaeff, was less severe. "When Fournier does it all, he's anxious to work. It's also faster than explaining things to 25 people, in two different languages. Claude's old school: small budgets, small crews. Then, over-specialization was a liability."

Fournier, 20 years a cameraman, explained, "It's the only way to see what the actors are doing, the only way to get what you want."

Last year he tried the more traditional way of directing but found he spent too much time explaining. He was being surprised — not always pleasantly. "I'm after the story, not beautiful pictures. The audience doesn't care about beauty, but what tells the story."

As for doing everything, "It's fun and it helps to 'decompress.'"

The production is as bilingual as a

box of breakfast cereal. When Fournier shouts, "Cut!", Cheriaeff echoes, "Coupé!" Although like bus drivers shouting, "Rue Peel, Peel Street," not all cast or crew members are bilingual. The first cameraman, Jean-Marie Buquet, according to Ms. Raymond, "the best focus-puller in the business," doesn't know a word of English.

Fournier said, "It causes a bit of uneasiness in the actors. When crew members speak French, the (monolingual English) actors think it concerns them, especially after a take when they are looking for approval. But nothing drastic has arisen. It does mean explaining things two or three times."

Nevertheless, on sked Harry reams clean and Pilon piles on. But the last quote belongs to Ms. Raymond, "The rushes are very nice."

"We, and the actors, too, will have to wait 'til Christmas or later for a peek and hopefully a giggle." **Doug Isaac**

Happy Birthday Gemini

p. Alan King, Rupert Hitzig co-p. Bruce Colman d. Richard Benner ph. Jim Kelly ed. Donald Ginsberg art. d. Ted Watkins sd. Ingrid Cusiell sc. Richard Benner based on the play Gemini by Albert Innaurato lp. Rita Moreno, Madeline Kahn, Robert Viharo, Sara Holcomb, Tim Jenkins, David Grant, Alan Rosenberg. p.c. Birthday Productions.

Happy Birthday Gemini began shooting in Toronto on June 20th and should have wrapped on August 3rd. Thursday, August 9th, the crew is setting up to do a major scene in an alley just off King and Bathurst — a week behind schedule and so far over their two million dollar budget that nobody's keeping up the polite fiction of calling it "a little over" or "slightly over."

There have been some problems. What they are depends on whom you listen to. Lisa Wilder, demon continuity woman, blames the weather. In a film with a lot of night exteriors, where every night brings its own blend of clear skies, cloud and rain, the need for matching backgrounds is served by standing and waiting. Gemini is a union film: waiting at night costs money.

Happy Birthday Gemini is the property of executive producers Alan King (the comedian) and Rupert Hitzig. They took the original play, a howling success on Broadway, to director Richard Ben-

ner (Outrageous), who adapted Albert Innaurato's script for the screen. Release will be through United Artists.

The story, as recounted by Lisa Wilder, production manager John Quill and others is this: Francis and Judith were lovers in college. When she and her brother visit him in South Philadelphia

during the summer, she thinks the relationship will continue. But Francis thinks he's gay. The pressures he feels from Judith and his macho father, Nick, lead him to destroy his 21st birthday party. Judith and her brother leave for California. Nick talks to Francis about the need for friends. Francis chases Judith and her brother down and the three of them go off with his sexual identity still unresolved. The plot also involves Madeline Kahn as Bunny, the neighbourhood glamour girl (somewhat faded), her asthmatic son, Herschel (Tim Jenkins) and Lucille, Nick's traditional Catholic girlfriend, played by Rita Moreno.

Francis is played by Alan Rosenberg, who can be seen in *The Wanderers*. Sara Holcomb, who plays Judith has appeared in *Animal House* and *Walk Proud*.

It may not sound like much on paper, but Phil Akin, a bit player in the film who has been involved with the play, says that something happens to it in performance that lifts it well beyond the thin plot line. Phil's had his own problems with the shoot. He's been wrapped off the film twice and then called back for shots that had been simply forgotten. He thinks there are major organizational screw-ups and cites another bit player who's been through the same thing.

The scene is ready to rehearse. It's Francis telling Judith he's gay. While Benner runs his actors through blocking, DoP Richard C. Brooks of New York, lines up the shot. Brooks is not the original DoP. He'd been called in two weeks previously to replace Jim Kelly who had shot *Outrageous* and who,



Happy Birthday Gemini: a coming-out party of sorts