MINI - REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson

• **Here Today**'s lead Ingrid Veninger

HERE TODAY...WHERE TOMORROW?

Winner of the competition announced by the Ontario Women's Directorate on International Women's Day in 1984, Galacom Media's

Media's **Here Today... Where Tomorrow?** is an unforced, undeniably nice approach to planning a career at the high school stage, and mainly addressed to girls. Within a docu-drama format, Jill (Ingrid Veninger) struggles with science and math which seem abstract to her as well as to her friends... "but I'm not going to be a scientist" and "Grade 13 calculus will be a disaster!"

There are some group set-ups of discussions among male and female teenagers which strike this reviewer as excessively cautious, right-wing, and downright goody-goody. But there's no use denying it's a cold, hard world, and career planning comes early in life. It's to be hoped it doesn't take the fun out of being young and eager, hopeful and bubbly.

The positive and upbeat air is wafted along at a good pace. The theme song starts with, "No-one seems to understand your hopes and fears" and ends, "You've got to try a little harder." In between the kids generally appear to speak their own pieces, and talk about guilt, mother-power and stark horror, "You don't want to be one of those kids washed up at 40!" At the end, Jill's friend spurs her on, "It's only a couple of years – how bad can it be..."

The full house at the premiere at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto loved the film – though one suspects the audience was packed with students eager to see themselves on-screen, plus a fair sprinkling of parents and interested government people. However, the film puts across its points with clarity and, within its aims and parameters, is done with a certain charm and competency. It will no doubt have a strong appeal to its target audience.

p./d. Marilyn A. Belec, **sc.** Belec/Robert Fyfe, **cam.** Philip Earnshaw, **mus.** Andrew Thompson, **l.p.** Ingrid Veninger, Cree Summer Francks, Jayne Eastwood, Lizanne Hanks, Rachel Crawford, Gina Wilkinson, Jessica Booker, Wanda Cannon. **Running time:** 26 mins. **Col.,** 16mm/videotape. **Availability:** Ontario Women's Directorate (416) 965-1537.

SCAN LINES

by Joyce Nelson

Two minutes

The two-minute TV clip opens with a long shot of the spacecraft climbing steadily up into the sky, its booster rockets billowing massive trails of white smoke behind it. On the audio-track, Mission Control and Shuttle Commander Scobee are exchanging data about APU's (auxilliary power units), velocity, altitude. Cut to a telephoto closeup on the right side of the space shuttle Challenger, and the words from Mission Control, "Challenger, go with throttle up." "Roger, go with throttle up," confirms Scobee. Cut to a wider view of the shuttle, which suddenly bursts into a huge, fiery, gold-and-white cloud with two strange Y-shaped tendrils shooting off and down across the blue sky. Forty seconds of silence as the TV camera pans with the exploding debris.

On Tuesday, Jan. 28, this two-minute TV clip dominated the airwaves of North America. Although the only TV network covering the Challenger launch live was Ted Turner's Atlanta-based Cable News Network, within six minutes of the disaster CBS, ABC and NBC – shortly followed in Canada by CTV first, then CBC – broke into their regular programming and stayed with live coverage for five hours straight: playing and replaying and playing again this eerie, two-minute videoclip.

Time magazine called it "a nightmarish image destined to linger in the nation's shared consciousness." Senior writer Lance Morrow stated: "Over and over, the bright extinction played on the television screen, almost ghoulishly repeated until it had sunk into collective memory. And there it will abide, abetted by the weird metaphysics of videotape, which permits the endless repetition of a brute finality." CBC's **The Journal** called this two-minute videoclip an "apocalyptic image." Writing for *The Toronto Star,* Joe Erdelyi referred to the need to "wake up to the reality of what the screen portrays with such cold artistic beauty."

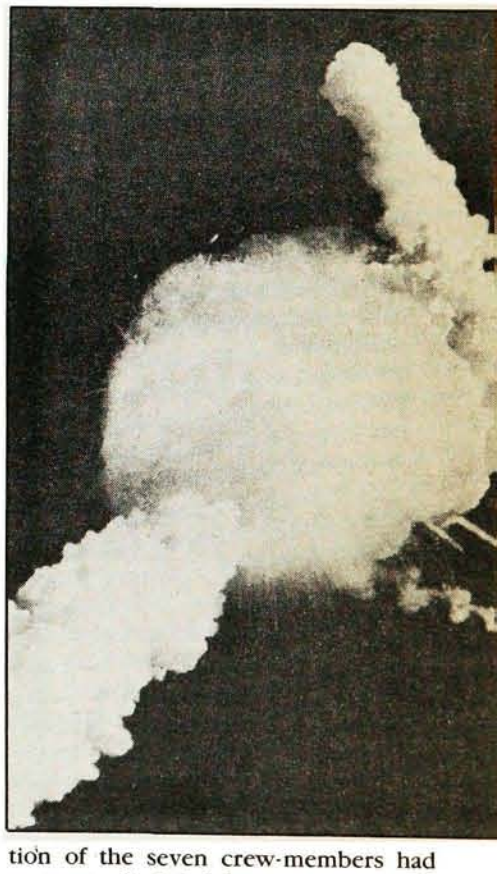
It is perhaps this last point – the "cold artistic beauty" of the TV imagery – that most deserves comment, and contemplation.

Unlike many people, the only TV coverage of the Shuttle disaster that I watched was that provided by CBC's **The National/The Journal** at 10:00 that evening. There, the two-minute videoclip was replayed at least four times. What immediately struck me while watching the clip, was the strange, uncanny, aesthetic beauty of the imagery – like some perfectly shot sequence of fireworks in summer. Maybe because of the smooth, even panning of the camera as it followed the exploding parts across the sky. Maybe because of the forty seconds of silence beneath the sequence that highlighted the spectacular quality of the visuals. Maybe because I've watched too much TV.

As Joe Erdelyi observed, this two-minute clip did convey to me a "cold artistic beauty" devoid of any emotion save for a kind of technological awe. Not an awe of technology, but rather a machine-like awe for the performance – even the spectacular failure – of another machine, and the success of camera-eye witnessing it.

It was only when I heard another human voice actually expressing the cold, emotionless void I had momentarily fallen into that I was able to snap out of a technological fascination with the imagery. Johnson Space Center commentator in Houston, Steve Nesbitt, had paused for those forty seconds of silence while the television screen filled with exploding pyrotechnics. When he resumed his narration, it was to say, in a voice completely devoid of emotion: "Flight controllers are looking very carefully at the situation. Obviously, a major malfunction."

The shock of Nesbitt's utterly technological response snapped me back to the land of the living and the dying. But up to that point, the oblitera-



tion of the seven crew-members had momentarily faded from my consciousness, completely overshadowed by the cold, artistic beauty of the TV images.

I suspect that my own response might not be atypical, that many people watching their TV screens experienced this void of technological fascination, this reduction of their human response before the TV spectacle of awesome explosion. In this sense, **The Journal** was right: it was, and is, an apocalyptic image.

While others claim that it's the visuals of this two-minute clip that'll remain embedded in their minds, for me it's that efficient, emotionless, technological voice of Mission Control clamly understating: "Obviously, a major malfunction."