

MINI REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson

A visit to the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in Toronto brought to light a few recent acquisitions. All are available from 67A Portland St., 1, Toronto M5V 2M9 (416) 593-1808, and West: 1131 Howe St., Ste. 100, Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2L7 (604) 684-3014.

PLECO

The spotted fish swims before the credits. There's a flash of a girl's face and her black leotard. A man, walking along a wet, snowy street, stops to pick up a brown paper bag. He enters a house and, in the living room where two women sit, opens it to reveal a spotted fish entombed in a small block of ice. "What have you got?" ask the women. "What are you going to do with it?"

They sit in silence. The fish now swims in a bowl. At night, the man tosses restlessly in bed. His companion sees the marks on his back, and she runs her fingers over them. Later, the man is no longer in bed, and the woman goes out into the night. In another house she calls, "Are you there? Are you all right?"

A fine example of an eerie, tension-laden short tale that demands viewer interpretation and attention to the sub-text, all in the space of 11 minutes. Obviously made on a minuscule budget, but with much care devoted to mood, faces and music. **d./sc./ed./** Ross Turnbull, **cam.** Derek Redmond, **mus.** Andrew Grenville, **l.p.** Jennifer Hazel, André Czernohorsky. **Col.**, 16mm, running time: 11 mins.

AT HER COTTAGE

The sun shines, the birds twitter, the surface of the lake is glassy. A woman's voice starts, "Jack is the whole heart of the town." Her young pigtailed daughter plays on the dock. The calm lake and a picnic table, with its one coffee mug left of centre, are framed by tree trunks.

Other stories are told about Jack. Mother and daughter go out in a boat, and Polaroid shots are taken and filmed as they slowly emerge, held by the people already photographed. The water is splashed by hands and feet; boat engines roar and fade; the Jack stories are repeated – and the circle closes once again.

A poetic evocation of summer and the cottage, sharpened by the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated items. Lots of striking imagery – and there's one lovely "painting" of an orange bucket next to a wheelbarrow filled with water in which a fish swims, and a green fern undulates.

d./cam. Richard Kerr, **add.cam.** Phillip Hoffman, **ed.** Tom Thibeault, Richard Kerr. **Col.**, 16mm/3/4 inch video, **running time:** 20 mins.

TOGETHER AND APART

A 26-minute musical set in Kingston, Ontario, is surely a daring undertaking!

After a number of years, a published poet returns to his university to give a reading. He meets his ex-

lover Michael, now married to Julia, and accepts their invitation to a dinner party. The couple live in Michael's family home, and it brings back to Tom old and fond memories of the affair.

The action doesn't stop for the songs – everyone goes on conversing silently as Tom and Michael sing about each other, past shared feelings, and present satisfactory states.

A bold attempt which holds much promise for future work. The acting is somewhat stiff, and the music is not overwhelming, but the film is eminently watchable and evokes admiration for the filmmaker's flair and guts.

d./ed./ Laurie Lynd, **sc.** Marlene Glicksman, Laurie Lynd, **cam.** Jonathon Rho, **mus.** Micah Barnes. **Col.**, 16mm/3/4 inch & 1/2 inch video, **running time:** 26 mins. *Special Award, American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences 1985/Silver Plaque, Chicago Film & Video Festival 1985.*

OH DAD!

A hot and strong set-to about 'Star Wars' and pollution, between a young lad and his father.

The technique of this Toronto filmmaker involves animating fine silver chains and coloured sand directly under the animation camera. The background is black, and the figures of father and son appear in outline across the screen, rather like the skyline of a strange city!

However, the charming visuals are overshadowed by an angry, over-wordy diatribe delivered by the young son – far too preachy and unconvincing in a child's mouth.

An animated film by Joanthan Amitay, **voice:** Iris Paabo, **Col.**, 16mm, **running time:** 3 mins.

Newsmakers,
please note

You've read their names and maybe your own many times in the pages of **Cinema Canada**, but you've often wondered what the others look like... Well, so have we. That's why, **Cinema Canada** puts emphasis on the faces that make up Canada's program production/distribution industry. But don't wait for the news to happen first. Help us get a step ahead by sending along your photo to **Cinema Canada** now. That way, when you're in the news, we'll be ready to go with the story and your picture... while it is still news.

SCAN LINES

by Joyce Nelson

U.S. TV dumping

A recent page in *Variety* says a lot about the weird world of television economics. Every spring, *Variety* looks back on the previous year in terms of U.S. sales of American TV shows around the world, and it ranks the importing countries according to the average price-range they pay for each half-hour of American programming. These prices vary dramatically from country to country, depending on the stance each country has taken towards foreign imports. For example, in 1985, Kenya paid about \$60 for each half-hour, and Japan between \$6,000 and \$7,000. But Canada paid between \$15,000 and \$20,000 on the average for each half-hour of American programming. Once again, as it has for the past dozen years, Canada led the world in prices paid for American shows: shelling out over \$150 million a year for this dubious honour.

The U.S. entertainment industry has a very aggressive lobbying agent to act on its behalf around the world: the Motion Picture Association of America, which establishes pricing from country to country. Nevertheless, certain countries have better leverage than others in determining

the price they will pay. In the early 1970s, Canada was paying about \$2,000 for each half-hour: one-tenth of what we pay now. That's because the market then was a buyers' market. There were only two English Canadian TV networks competing for the rights to American shows. CBC and CTV could pretty well set their own price.

But, in the mid-1970s, the Canadian TV scene changed completely as a result of CRTC licensing decisions. The Global Network and CITY-TV came on the scene; independent CHCH-TV in Hamilton adopted an aggressive importing stance; and suddenly there were five or six English Canadian networks and stations competing and outbid-

ding each other for the rights to American shows. What had been a buyers' market quickly became a sellers' market. Between 1975 and 1985, the average price paid by Canada for each half-hour of U.S. programming *quintupled*.

Yet even at these high prices, it is still cheaper to buy American shows than to produce indigenous programs of an equivalent production quality. Why spend \$100,000 to make an episode of *Seeing Things* when for a mere \$20,000 or so, you can pick up an episode of *Lifestyles Of The Rich and Famous* and slot it into your schedule? And that's how American dumping of TV shows works. By peddling its TV product

around the globe, the U.S. entertainment industry undercuts the impulse to build a country's own indigenous programming.

One result of this situation in Canada is that, as of 1984, of 17,500 hours of dramatic TV programming aired across English-Canadian networks and stations, only 1 1/2 per cent of it was Canadian-made. And we paid at least \$150 million for this American TV deluge (a fact worth bearing in mind as we go into talks on free trade). The U.S. entertainment industry will want no tampering with that situation.

But the recent action taken by the Mulroney government has given me a new perspective on all this. In the midst of the current economic salvos being fired across the border, Mulroney has decided to really hit the American economy where it lives, by imposing a stiff tariff on American novels. All along I had assumed that millions of Canadians were actually watching *Miami Vice* and *Dallas*. Instead, as this Mulroney action indicates, they are secretly curled up with Walt Whitman or Sinclair Lewis. This new tariff on books must be causing real dread on the Potomac.