

E A S T E R N W A V E

by Chris Majka

This month I thought I would take a brief glance at a feature of the film scene which most people may not associate with the Atlantic region - animation. Although the local film community has always been active in the area of documentary and experimental film, and in the past couple of years dramatic productions are also starting to appear in numbers, animation has not been completely ignored by filmmakers in this area. One of the first people interested in animation was Elaine Pain, a former member of the Atlantic Filmmakers Coop (AFCOOP) who in 1979 shot a film called *Sandwich*. It is a delightful mandalalike animation created with transforming sand pat-

terns. She followed this with a film called *Fly My Spirits* (1980) which is an animation of richly patterned drawings of birds.

Other AFCOOP members followed suite. In 1981 Lulu Keating completed a short film called *Jabberwock* which is an animated version of Lewis Carroll's imaginative poem, *Jabberwocky*. Then in 1982 Jim MacSwain finished his whimsical, and off-beat look at the problems of nuclear waste disposal called *Atomic Dragons*.

The powerhouse of animation in this region, however, has always been Doomsday Studios, who have managed to survive for the past six years, producing a remarkable variety of films. In 1980 Doomsday

founder and president Ramona Macdonald, discovered and acquired a little used animation stand and 16mm Oxberry Camera at Dalhousie University. Although hardly at today's technological cutting edge, it was a substantial improvement on the single frame Bolex stand at AFCOOP. Since then a steady stream of animators have spent untold hours in the dark room where the Oxberry sits.

Elaine Pain completed a film at Doomsday called *Boundaries* (1981) which looks at how the edges of things move and change. Graphic designer Floyd Gillis released *Perspectives* (1981), a slick and fast paced meditation on geometric harmony in our cities. Tom Lackey shot an ironic film called *Nuclear War - Survive And Come Back Fighting!* (1980) which features illustrations from 1940's bubble gum

cards on how to survive the nuclear holocaust. Willa Egrmayer produced *Why Maples Turn Red* (1982) which illustrates a Huron Indian legend. Ramona Macdonald directed *Sarah Jackson* (1980) which has within it animation of xerographs of artist Sarah Jackson, and *God's Island* (1980) which looks at the work of Prince Edward Island folk artist A.L. Morrison. The Atlantic Studio of the NFB produced an animation short at Doomsday called *Spectrum* (1982) which was done by animator/graphic designer Rand Gaynor. Montreal animator Christopher Hinton came to live in Nova Scotia for some time and worked with the NFB here on a number of short projects.

Since then animation at Doomsday has taken somewhat of a back seat to the live action dramas and comedys

which the studio has become involved in. Resident animator Pat Colp has been working on a variety of smaller projects, though. Sections of the NFB productions *Adventures Of a Ship's Carpenter* and *Built in Canada* have been shot at Doomsday by her. She has also begun doing a series of short children's animations for *Sesame Street*, two of which have thus far been aired. This is in addition to her own film *Nightvision* which she has been working on for the past couple of years and which is still in production. Colp is a 'renaissance woman' of animation doing all her own drawing for the cel animation which she does, operating the camera, and even developing her own test shots. A current project, in the early stages of production, is an animation of the stylized science-fiction drawings of New Brunswick painter Eli Bastarache.

In addition to animation at Doomsday, Henry Orenstein, at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, teaches both a beginners and an advanced course in animation as part of the art program offered there. Students are able to use a simple animation set-up there or, at times, to use the Doomsday facilities for more complicated projects. Doomsday itself has been active in workshops which it has organized, for both adults and children, who have the opportunity to do simple animation and pixillation on Super 8 film.

Outside of Nova Scotia there is an animation stand in Newfoundland at Memorial University and animator Anne MacLeod has been working there for some time. In Prince Edward Island there are a group of people who are interested in animation and are hoping to form a separate Co-op on the island to purchase an animation stand and camera.

So, although the facilities in this region are clearly limited, and the pool of animators is not large, there is a continuing interest in this field. The recent advances in the areas of computer and video animation, which greatly facilitate the animation process may provide a new impetus to the whole field of animation. Whether these advances will extend their reach into this region, we can only wait and see.

TORONTO - The *Kids of Degrassi Street* kids' series, produced by Playing With Time Inc., must have hit a few right notes with Toronto youngsters, as some 500, 10 to 15-years-olds mailed or hand-delivered letters in bids to become cast members of the sequel series, *Degrassi Junior High*.

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