

E A S T E R N W A V E

by Chris Majka

A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of attending the Grierson Seminar in Brockville. Although not quite as heated as the previous year in Niagara-on-the-Lake when filmmakers had literally come to blows in the name of documentary cinema, the discussions were nevertheless spirited and intense. Peter Greenaway, of *The Draughtsman's Contract* fame and an extraordinarily talented and ingenious director of documentaries and satires of documentaries, became a kind of resident mischievous demon and leapt like a lyrebird on unsuspecting filmic snakes slithering blindly in the thick grass of cinema. The point Greenaway kept slyly reinforcing was that Canadian filmmakers, at least as represented that year by the Grierson crowd, were strikingly ignorant of film language. I must admit that he made a point. Upon reflection, it was apparent that many filmmakers were unaware of the unconscious choices they had made in bringing their visions to the screen and were often equally in the dark as to the myriad possibilities of film language available. The reason, alas, seemed to be a lack of knowledge of the history of cinema and the broad cinematic terrain which has been mapped-out by previous explorers of the form.

Now, not every filmmaker need be a critic and theoretician but methinks a smattering of such knowledge could only enrich, which brings me to the subject of this month's essay — how do filmmakers in the East have an opportunity to learn something of the history of cinema and the diverse forms of visual language which have developed as a result? How do actors, visual artists, and even the public at large find an opportunity to extend their knowledge of film? The answer is, of course, from many sources. Halifax is fortunate to have a repertory theatre, Wormwoods Dog and Monkey Cinema, which offers a diverse assortment of contemporary and classic films. Operating on a smaller scale a number of film societies, mostly associated with universities, exist in other parts of the region and aspire to the same ends. On the academic side, there are a few offerings and it is these and an intriguing new plan which is afoot that I thought I would focus on.

Besides idle oil derricks, Halifax also has a substantial number of establishments of higher education and several

of them make a token nod to film. At Dalhousie University, Robert Merrick, a professor in the Theatre Department, also has an abiding interest in film and offers a course called Introduction to Film. It is precisely that; an introduction and he draws both hardcore film buffs as well as people who have enjoyed the movies and would like to learn more. Unfortunately his teaching requirements are such that he can only offer the course during the summer semester — a time when few theatre students are actually present and able to take the course.

At the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NASCAD) there are two courses in film. The first is a technical course in 16mm filmmaking which is taught for NASCAD by members of the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op. It is a hands-on approach which teaches students the fundamentals of cinematography, sound, and editing. The second is taught by the National Film Board's Terry Ryan, pinch-hitting at NASCAD. Called Structural Principles in Dramatic and Documentary Films, its focus is on "how filmmakers solve problems of structure," and it aims to develop "an ability to analyze the elements which filmmakers use to give coherence to their work." The course is an introductory look at film language geared to people who, as students of the arts, already have some visual literacy. Ryan draws on the resources of the NFB as well as bringing in films and relying on the offerings of the local cinemas for the material for discussion in his seminar classes. Saint Mary's University offers a course through the English Department on screen adaptations of literary works.

Mount Saint Vincent University, perched high above the Bedford Basin, is perhaps the stronghold of cinematic academe in the province. David Monaghan, a professor in the English Department teaches a first-year course called Popular Cinema. It is an introduction to the basic concepts of cinema and utilizes films which are currently showing in town. Also at the Mount is French-trained Josette Deleas Matthews, a bona fide film academic and a woman passionately interested in cinema. She currently teaches a course called Aesthetics of Film which, she tells me, is more of an introduction to film language. This is because she finds that most of the students who come to her are largely visually illiterate. In this course

she quickly looks at the history of film as art, the development of the concepts of space and time in cinema, as well as specific contributions to film language by various directors.

Matthews is enthusiastic about film studies and, with this in mind, has several irons

on the fire in terms of bringing more opportunities for people interested in film. One is a proposal to the administration of the Mount to teach a second course called an Introduction to Film Language. Her plan is to teach what she currently does within the framework of

this course which would then allow her to do more advanced work in her Aesthetics of Film course. This proposal seems likely to be approved but another one, to teach a further advanced course called Women Directors, is more in

MUSIC AND
POST PRODUCTION

SOUND PRODUCTIONS LTD.

322 DUFFERIN STREET, TORONTO, ONTARIO M6K 1Z6 • (416)534-4211

Eastern Wave

doubt because of the ever-present shortages of, you guessed it, funds.

An even more ambitious proposal by Ms. Matthews is to create a mini Film Studies Programme here in Halifax by pooling the various academic courses which are offered by Dalhousie, Mount Saint Vin-

cent and NASCAD into a film minor which could be taken by students at any of the above institutions. This would certainly be an important step forward and she has received encouragement from the administrators she has talked with. However, the enterprise again rests on the frail foundations of

money. The current state of educational funding is such that the various institutions involved seem only prepared to support the proposal if it will involve no additional costs.

I wish her the best of luck in this. If filmmakers, as well as artists, actors, and students of literature are to better appreciate and learn more about film, the establishment of a film program, no matter how modest, will be an asset. It might even mean that in the long run we'll even see better films.

CRTC budget to help with deregulation measures

OTTAWA - The federal broadcast regulator will receive \$1 million this year to help implement deregulation measures for the television, radio and cable-TV industries.

The Treasury Board's main estimates for the 1987-88 fiscal year show The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission

(CRTC) will receive \$1 million more to pay for the increased workload needed to implement deregulation.

The estimates outline how the federal government plans to spend its money in the coming year.

The cost of deregulation issue was raised at a recent hearing of the House of Commons Committee on Communications and Culture.

Lynn McDonald, a New Democratic MP and committee member, asked CRTC spokesmen why there is \$1 million earmarked for deregulation and not a similar amount for research.

CRTC chairman André Bureau said the commission will receive more than 1200 applications this year that will have to be reviewed in light of the deregulation measures.

Under existing rules, cable operators must apply to the CRTC to change their existing conditions of license to ensure they comply with new deregulation measures.

"It is \$1 million for one year and I cannot hire any permanent employees or term employees," Bureau said, according to committee transcripts.

The money has to be spent on temporary help to process the applications so that the CRTC doesn't delay the rest of the service it provides, he said.

A CRTC spokesman said the money will be used to handle changes in the regulation system and upcoming licensing requests. He stressed deregulation in this case should not be equated with the lack of any regulation as the term is sometimes applied elsewhere.

The total budget of the CRTC for 1987-88 is \$27,734,000.

ROSCO products

FOR THEATRE,
FILM AND
VIDEO PRODUCTION

Here are the products that make it happen!

- Lighting Filters
- Projections
- Screens
- Designer Materials
- Fog and Smoke
- Painting
- Dance Floors
- Stage Platforms
- Special Effects
- Computer Software

For further details contact Rosco or your local authorized Rosco dealer



1271 DENISON STREET #66 MARKHAM, ONTARIO L3R 4B5 TEL. 416/475-1400

serving the performing arts

MONTREAL - Astral Film Enterprises has announced the development of an additional eight romance movies in the **Shades of Love** series for home video and television release. The first four titles in the initial eight-part series, budgeted at close to \$1 million a piece, are available in video outlets in Canada and the U.S. The second half of the first series will go on sale in the fall.

Shades of Love is produced by Astral Film Enterprises in association with First Choice Canadian Communications Corp. and L/A House Romances of Los Angeles with the participation of Telefilm Canada. Stewart Harding is producer. Ken Atchity is executive producer. World distribution rights are held by Astral.