



• John Alexanders is smashing smashed

him. It was just too farfetched. It was also difficult to believe that every single character could be so taciturn on such a hotly debated topic. It was particularly aggravating to watch these characters sit and think. In order to understand exactly what they were going through, I needed some dialogue.

The screenplay credit is split between director Jon Pedersen, and writer David Adams Richards.

Pedersen has produced both documentaries and dramas, sound filmstrips and videos for the National Film Board and the private sector, three of which have won international awards (*Ski Peru*; the astounding *Alden Nowlan: An Introduction*; and *Tara's Mulch Garden*).

Richards has written four novels (*The Coming of Winter* made his reputation), a book of short stories, and a stage play. His style of writing hasn't transferred to the screen well.

Pedersen's background in documentary films doesn't help either. The audience is not made to care for the characters; we have very little sympathy for these people, who really have few redeeming qualities. They move in their own world, and we never feel a part of it.

But if the script was the weakest element of *Tuesday Wednesday*, the film's production values more than made up for it: they were exceptionally high.

The original music, by Mark Carmody, sets the mood perfectly, and holds it throughout the film. The original soundtrack is available on DTK records.

John Clement, director of photography, has done a superlative job of capturing this beautiful river town, including its seamier side.

*Tuesday Wednesday* is the first feature film to be produced in Fredericton,

by a locally owned company, Capitol Films. In 1983, Jon Pedersen set up Capitol, as a nonprofit organization, devoted to the long-term development of a commercial film industry in New Brunswick.

Over the past three years, Capitol Films has received approximately \$1.3 million from Employment and Immigration through the Local Employment Assistance Development program.

With this assistance, Capitol has been able to set up a studio equipped for 35 mm production, including an editing suite and a theatre with interlock projection.

They made *Tuesday Wednesday* in order to establish themselves as a film company with integrity, to introduce both themselves and New Brunswick to other film companies. Overall, they have succeeded. *Tuesday Wednesday* is a fine calling card.

Janet Clarke ●

**TUESDAY WEDNESDAY** d. Jon Pedersen sc. David Adams Richards, Jon Pederson d.o.p. John Clement orig. m. Marck Carmody prod. man. Louise Newman art d. Ilkay Silk, Patti Larman sc. sup. Freda Pedersen asst. d. Charles MacLellan loc. man. Tony Merzetti sd. Arthur Makosinski gaffer Heinz Gloss make-up Allie Hossack asst. cam. Terry Gallie, Terry Malone boom Peter Rowan cont. Dawn Aeron Wason prod. sec. Peggy Richards prod. assts. Dan Rendek, Mark Manderson caterer Colin Smith of *Homeworks* l.p. John Alexander, Liz Dufresne, Penny Belmont, Pearly Haines, Bill Rogers, Victor Wright, Frank Sweeney, Sherree Fitch, Mona Loosen, Mamie Murray, Ted Pead, Dawn Gallant, John Washburn, Bill Gould Sr., John Gail, Chris Boudreau, Joan Fraser, Tayce McAvity, Matthew Dymond, and Randy Hall. Many other Fredericton people and organizations assisted such as: Theatre New Brunswick, the Fredericton Police, Department of Supply and Services of the Province of New Brunswick, Chippins Ltd., Grandma Lee's, Imy Frabic and Design, Fred Grass, David Cozac, Debby Russell, Wendy Lill, Richard Starr, the University of New Brunswick's Harriet Irving Library, The Bakerty, Paul Marr Sports, Mark Leonard of the Craft Gallery, and more. running time 82 minutes colour 35mm.

Norma Bailey's  
**Ikwe and The Wake**

**D**ughters of the Country is a series of four, one-hour, dramatic films produced by Norma Bailey, a documentary filmmaker from Manitoba. The purpose of the series is to take a second look at Canadian history and especially the place of Métis women in that history. The National Film Board's publicity folder describes the Métis as "the 'half-breeds', the children of European and Indian blood, the progeny of the New World, the genesis of a New Nation."

For the purpose of this review, I will only discuss the two films that were directed by Norma Bailey; *Ikwe* and *The Wake*, the first and last in the series. However, the two scripts were written by different scriptwriters. Wendy Lill (playwright, *Fighting Days*) wrote *Ikwe* and Sharon Riis (scriptwriter, *Loyalties*) wrote *The Wake*. The two films seemed very different to me, especially in light of the fact that they were directed by the same person. I suppose that the difference originates in the screenplay.

*Ikwe* is set in the 1770s in British North America and it is the name of the heroine of the story, a young Indian woman. The film begins with a scene of an Indian camp. An old woman is beating a drum and chanting, more Indians gather about a campfire, roasting meat, laughing and talking. It is late evening, the old woman seems to hear a strange, eerie sound and walks towards one of the tepees. There is a close-up of a young girl's face. She is sleeping fitfully and her

face is painted with some sort of magic pattern. The old woman asks her, "You dreamed, Ikwe?" And the young girl answers (all Indian dialogue is in Ojibway), "I saw this spirit come out of the water where the sun rises. It was a man-spirit, only covered with hair. As he came toward me, he changed into a white bird." At this point a shot of a white man coming toward the camera is inserted. The old lady comments, "That sounds good." And the young girl continues, "But then, I heard a terrible sound and the clouds darkened the sky." Again there is an insert, this time of Indian children moaning. The old lady exclaims, "Oh, that doesn't sound so good."

I've described this scene in detail because it is the base on which the story rests. *Ikwe*, who has never seen a white man before, dreams of one and of what he will bring, both joy and sorrow. Because she has had this dream, she agrees to marry him and leave her own people. We seem to be in the realm of fairy tales and legends but the setting (except for the recurring, extra-diegetic eerie music) is realistic. A great deal of attention has been paid to the reconstruction of the Indian artifacts and costumes, and the film, which has won many awards, has been praised for its authenticity.

I think that the film should be commended for trying to change the stereotypical image of the Indian that we've seen in so many Westerns, i.e., the savage standing in the way of civilization. But somehow, this particular depiction of the Indians still makes me uneasy and I think that perhaps the problem is that the film has only exchanged one stereotype for another.

Instead of the big, bad Indian, we get the happy (I've never seen any group of actors do so much giggling), innocent savage, *à la Rousseau*, and this seems to me a rather condescending attitude. Which brings up the question of why these films weren't written and made by

• Hazel King as Ikwe — pondering a future of death and disease



Indians. Apparently, the idea for the film came from the Manitoba Métis Federation but I see no signs of Métis collaboration in the credits. Even Flaherty tried to show us the Inuit's past way of life through the eyes of Nanook and with the collaboration of Nanook. Certainly, he achieved a greater authenticity. Perhaps this film could also have profited from this type of collaboration.

The premise of the dream, as the motivation for Ikwe to accept her marriage to a white man, was hard for me to believe. I also found it incredible that these apparently warm and innocent people would barter off their daughter for a few muskets. However, the development of the relationship between Ikwe and her Scottish, fur-trader husband is believable enough once the situation has been accepted. Even though very briefly sketched in, what unites them and what separates them becomes very clear. The tensions engendered by the differences between their two cultures leads to their final rupture and Ikwe goes back to her tribe. With her, she brings death in the form of smallpox which kills off her whole village except for her Métis daughter. This ending, like the beginning, seemed too arbitrary and basically just an easy way for the film to make its point, i.e. of the survival of the two cultures in the Métis.

**The Wake** is set in 1985 and the events take place in and around the Medicine Creek Métis Settlement in Northern Alberta. Perhaps it is the contemporary setting that has made it possible for the director to convey a stronger sense of actuality to the audience. The events jump off the screen and communicate a strong sense of life as it is lived with all its ambiguities and conflicting emotions. One of the first scenes in the film is worth relating to prove this point. At a wake for an old man which takes place at the reserve, Joan, the heroine, meets her estranged husband and punches him in the stomach, only to sit and laugh with him a few moments later. She then turns from him in pain and anger when she realizes that he has somebody else.

Every scene seems to have some of this ambiguity in it, so that the audience is constantly kept on its toes trying to size up the situation. This is even more true in terms of the central conflict which involves the relationship between the whites and the Métis. This conflict evolves in two parallel stories; that of Donna, who is running for Mardi-Gras Queen at the local high school, and that of Joan, who falls in love with a white cop.

The election of Donna becomes a minor political issue and serves mostly to show how the whites and Métis in this 'integrated' high school are separate and opposed cultures. The conflict between the two cultures appears even more severe when we witness how the white cops deal with a family crisis within the reserve. Donna's mother is a diabetic, an alcoholic and sleeps around with white men. We see one hiding his face as Donna comes home. When her mother sinks into a coma and has to be taken away, Donna refuses to let the cops and social workers in so as to keep her brothers and sisters together. Joan, her cousin, is asked to come and help. As she is trying to reason with her, the cops brutally barge in.

Neither society looks very good in

these scenes and we are almost ready to sympathise with Crawford when he tries to justify his actions to the younger cop, Jim. "I could tell you stories," he says. "Stories about kids so abused that they didn't even know their own name." But then he adds, "They're not like you and me." Here the essential racism of the man shines through. It is Jim who gets caught in the middle of this conflict since he falls in love with Joan and sympathises with the Métis.

The conflict comes to a head when four of the Métis teenagers fall through the ice and drown after being chased by the cops. Here again we are faced with an ambiguous situation. The kids are certainly acting in a crazy and irresponsible manner. The cops see them crash through the ice but Crawford tells Jim that there's only three feet of water and they leave. We never know whether he really believes this or not.

The center of the drama, however, is not Crawford but Jim, who lies to Joan about his involvement in the tragedy. Even when she does find out the truth, he doesn't have the guts to come out with a public statement about it since it would jeopardize both his and Crawford's job. Basically, he opts to support the white society at its most oppressive and destructive so as to keep his place in the power structure. The decision is his and through this decision the scriptwriter shows us that the working-out of the conflict between the two societies is both a personal and a social responsibility. In **Ikwe**, on the other hand, the author of the story seems to minimize the white's responsibility for that conflict since the destruction of the Indians is attributed primarily to a natural phenomenon (smallpox) and an unavoidable destiny (the dream).

What shines through in both films is the strength of the Métis women, especially Ikwe and Joan, to carry on against all odds. This in part could be attributed to the excellent choice in actresses (Hazel King and Victoria Snow, respectively) that the director has made. Both of the roles are played by Métis women and the quality of their performances is heightened by the strength of their beauty. The performance given by Diane Debassige as Donna, the troubled teenager, is also highly praiseworthy in its sensitivity and courage.

Mary Alemany-Galway •

**DAUGHTERS OF THE COUNTRY**

A four-part dramatic series from the National Film Board of Canada

**IKWE** p.d. Norma Bailey sc. Wendy Lill d.o.p. Ian Elkin ed. Lara Mazur art d. Jane MacLeod orig. m. John McCulloch prod. man. Connie Bartnick asst. d. Roman Buchok loc. sd. Richard Patton ward Marie Melanson props Michelle Convey asst. cam. Charles Lavack gaffer Frank Raven key grip Bill Mills sd. ed. Gloria Thorsteinson Foley Andy Malcolm re-rec. Clive Perry studio admin. Cyndi Farcand exec. p. Ches Yetman, Michael Scott l.op. Hazel King, Gladys Taylor, Geraint Wyn-Davies, Patrick Bruyere, William Ballantyne, Vicky Klyne, Marion Moneyas, Jamie Hardisty, Sarah Peebles running time 57 min. +1 sec. colour 16mm, VHS

**THE WAKE** p./d. Norma Bailey sc. Sharon Riis d.o.p. Ian Elkin ed. Lara Mazur art d. David Hewlett m. Ron Halderson prod. man. Connie Bartnick asst. d. Jack Clements loc. sd. Leon Johnson ward. Charlotte Penner props Michelle Convey asst. cam. Charles Lavack gaffer Frank Raven key grip Bill Mills sd. ed. Gloria Thorsteinson, Wayter Klis foley Andy Malcolm re-rec Clive Perry studio admin. Cyndi Farcand exec. p. Ches Yetman l.p. Victoria Snow, Diane Debassige, Timothy Webber, Michelle Thrush, Chris Henderson, Cynthia Alcorn, Darrell Ducharme, Jean Paul, Frank Adamson running time 57 min. 48 sec. colour 16mm, VHS

ADVANCED  
POLITICAL  
MONTAGE

Julian Samuel's  
**Red Star  
Over the  
Western  
Press**

When the fierce little playwright was storming around Berlin laying the plans that would explode conventional theatre, he never once said that challenging, political art had to be confused, or messy, or awkwardly self-reflexive. And yet to the scores of filmmakers who tend to trip over their ideology on the way to the editing bench, being 'Brechtian' so often means being wilfully obvious and clumsy. Montreal videomaker Julian Samuel's new tape, **Red Star Over the Western Press: Archive: Algeria 1954-1962**, quickly falls into this trap. Work like Samuel's makes you realize that Brecht really wasn't so much robbed by his interpreters. He was mugged.

**Red Star** is based, in part, on Frantz Fanon's **The Wretched of the Earth**, which documented the horrors of French imperialism in Algeria, and the North African nation's struggle for independence. Fanon's book was to the French presence in Africa what Arthur Koestler's **Darkness at Noon** was to Stalinism: its most caustic literary scourge, an indictment of the colonial license which turned so easily into state-sanctioned terrorism. Unfortunately, what Samuel does to Fanon's work rates as an act of terrorism itself.

Samuel throws Fanon's words to actors who act up more than they act. Then he intersperses these acted segments with his own armchair interviews with academics on the subject of media bias. There's also some very powerful newsreel footage of the Algerian rebellion from 1954 to 1962. And footage of the aftermath of race riots in Newark and Detroit. And some vaguely defined connections made between the Algerian situation of the '50s and the "Zionist Colonization of Palestine." In short, there's an overabundance of material, perhaps meant to match the purposefully (and justifiably) excessive tone. There's nothing wrong with excess as a strategy,

and no sophisticated viewer would ever say that a work of art need follow only one line. But excess and eclecticism together can too easily undermine any attempt to convey a coherent message.

The problem seems to be that Samuel isn't quite sure who or what his target is. Is he attacking imperialist oppression (the French in Algeria, Afrikaners in South Africa, whites in Detroit), or is his real object the Western media's representation of that oppression and the resulting resistance movements? And why just Western media? Do the television and print reports coming out of the eastern and southern hemispheres avoid the biases of European and North American news? Or is it the hegemonic rule that the Western news agencies enjoy that makes them a worthy target? We never know, because the tape never makes these things clear. In fact the only thing that's made really clear is that Samuel doesn't like the CBC any more than he likes Charles de Gaulle.

Fair enough. But the problem with the tape is that Samuel never fully addresses the issues he brings up; he throws together ideas without developing their implications. What does Zionism have to do with French colonialism? What does 'O Canada', the soundtrack in a casualty count text-crawl, have to do with the Algerian war? Isn't it simplistic to reduce all forms of nationalism to one horrific conclusion? And why do we spend so much time watching two white academics (McGill graduate student David Hogarth and Carleton film professor Will Straw) talking about the Western media's treatment of 'Third World' revolution?

Ironically, Straw indirectly points out one of the tape's contradictions. "The systems of bias," he observes, "are partly the desire to go to authoritative voices." Hogarth and Straw do function as sources of authority within the tape, despite Samuel's rather callow attempt to subvert Hogarth's words by overlaying Algerian atrocities over his image as he talks. And their "expert" analyses of media ideology are more penetrating than anything Samuel and his video-effects generator can manage.

In the end, it's the effects that rankle. More often than not, they simply don't work; usually, they're overdone. The breaking down of image clarity through slow motion and freeze-frame is sometimes interesting, but having a text-crawl change colour, then turn sideways so the text becomes the imprisoning