

The *Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)* is a nonprofit film co-op which supports and encourages independent filmmaking through the exchange of information and access to facilities. Under its auspices, three filmmakers presented their latest offerings at the Art Gallery of Ontario in April.

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND THINK OF ENGLAND

"Feminists do have a sense of humour."
(Janis Lundman, filmmaker)

She's won a lottery and the prize is BIG! Our Heroine just has to answer one tiny skill-testing question before she can pick up the money and run - all over the world; to buy a car, a house, a boat, and to pursue endless other grand schemes. So - the question is: "If you had one piece of advice to give to a woman for her to be perfect - what would it be?"

Our Heroine covers the city streets in her search for the right answer. Men and women of all ages and races are accosted for their opinions - AIDS, independence, taking control over your own destiny, finding a direct sense of yourself - are only a few topics that crop up in conversations. Our Heroine is perplexed; many stances taken and words spoken are variations of ideas and themes expressed over the years...

Janis Lundman has woven together a great deal of research, real-people interviews, and dramatized incidents with historical overtones (imagine chatting up Queen Elizabeth I in a washroom), to make an entertaining and witty comment on attitudes of and about women which remain conflicting, confusing and even downright ridiculous.

The film is crisply professional with a good central performance by Catherine Barry as Our Heroine and, best of all, is filled with a number of great quotes from such diverse people as



Catherine Barry as Our Heroine and Jo Ann Peritz as The Bride in Janis Lundman's *Close your eyes and think of England*

Freud, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Rebecca West, Judy LaMarsh and Nellie McClung, to name but a few.

p. Janis Lundman, Michelle Sirois. d. Janis Lundman. writers: Janis Lundman, Ann Marie MacDonald, Banuta Rubes, Maureen White. cam. Adrienne Mitchell. ed. Keith Hlady. Mus. John Lang. 16mm. ¾" & ½" tape. 24 mins. With assistance from the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, NFB Ontario Region and LIFT.

INSIDE/OUT

Joanna finds it difficult to cope with the outside everyday world - the streets, the crowds, the noise - so she decides to stay inside. And it's not too difficult to organize - groceries ordered by a telephone also hooked up to an answering machine; a computer to record thoughts and impressions; a video camera in the window to rove, at a distance, over the streetscene and its people. Joanna is not a complete hermit, she does talk to friends on the telephone and becomes interested in Mrs. Ambrose, her across-the-street neighbour whose wheelchair is always in the bay window. Mrs. Ambrose gives a friendly smile and wave, but Johanna retreats from the video camera into the shadows of her apartment.

At a small dinner party given for a few friends, Joanna is upset by criticism of her withdrawn life from an out-of-town visitor. A little while later, faced with a significant moral decision, she is forced to weigh her solitude against a matter of life and death.

An engaging first film, assured in treatment and style, and cleverly interlaced with the video material 'shot' by Joanna from her window (somewhat reminiscent of *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*). Emma Richler as Joanna does not always fit in with the intent of the script, but her performance is generally acceptable. The non-speaking role of Mrs. Ambrose is delineated by that ever-helpful trouper, Jackie Burroughs.

d. /sc. /ed. Lori Spring. cam. Steven Deme. sd. Chris Leach. mus. John Tucker. 27 mins. 16mm. ¾" & ½" tape. l. p. Emma Richler, Jackie Burroughs.

THE MYSTERIOUS MOON MEN OF CANADA

Brownie McFadden, an industrial filmmaker, is very, very excited! He's found a letter from Jean-Pierre to Wesley,

his companion on an unpublicized trip to the moon from Canada in 1959.

Given money and a credit card to document the cross-country journey of a blind cyclist, Brownie (dubbing himself "rebel filmmaker") interrupts this saga to search for the elusive Jean-Pierre. The Portuguese landlady at the address on the letter luckily has a computer in her kitchen, and prints out a list of her past tenants. Brownie muses about a Portuguese connection, major cover-ups and international intrigue! The outlaw filmmaker tools down the highway on his way to Québec to find Jean-Pierre and, following a lead, on to Nova Scotia after one Travis Pupkin (don't ask about plot points!). Astonishingly, he encounters the blind cyclist peddling madly with, as Brownie says humbly, no support team, no credit cards, but an amazing sense of smell...

Although Brownie McFadden doesn't really resolve his quixotic quest, as he re-reads Jean-Pierre's letter, his imagination supplies the home movies of him with Wesley on the moon's surface, cavorting and beaming in front of a makeshift rocketship (shades of Georges Méliès!).

A delightfully eccentric film, filled with quirky, tongue-in-cheek humour. The interesting script is firmly and funnily interpreted by Gerry Quigley as Brownie (he was the inept pickpocket in Steve DiMarco's short film *Thieves Like Us - Cinema Canada #141*), who has the great advantage of an off-beat, easily-recalled face.

p. /d. Colin Brunton. assoc. p. /ed. Bruce McDonald. cam. Gerald Packer. sc. Colin Brunton, John Pearson. l. p. Gerry Quigley as Brownie McFadden. 27 mins. 16mm. ¾" & ½" tape. With assistance from Ontario Arts Council, National Film Board, The Canada Council.

(As to availability of all these films, contact LIFT, 345 Adelaide St. W., #505, Toronto M5V 1R5 (416) 596-8233).

Montagnais Indians. To bridge the enormous gap between his archaic preconceptions and today's realities might have been Lafond's purpose, but whether he succeeds or not is lost in this octopus of a several-directions-at-once with bits-of-this-and-bits-of-that cinema.

Along the way, we get a few interesting insights into events that marked today's Quebec, such as Quebec chansonnier Claude Léveillée describing how he 'burned-out' three Volkswagens in three years going from small theatres to church halls from Moncton, N. B. to the small French-speaking centers of Ontario and points west. We get the feeling that it is through the songs that the French-speaking North-American found his voice after centuries of silence under the shadow of English Kings (or Queens) and Yankee neighbours. Indeed, Quebec's leading poet-chansonnier, Félix Leclerc, has probably meant more to his people's society and culture than Victor Hugo did in his

time for France. We also get a feel of how the natives of this province struggle to adjust between the old culture and language that is dying with its old people and the modern pressures of economics, education and the exploitation of the land. In Sept-Iles, when the Montagnais watch whole trainloads of mineral ore being loaded on ships for export, they say, "The Americans are leaving with our mountains," and in a sense it is much more than the mountains that are slipping away.

Yet just as these veins of filmic exploration are becoming interesting, but before they have a chance to settle into some kind of coherent picture, Lafond has Douai on the road again, driving up the old route 138 through Quebec City to the upper reaches of the north shore: Baie-Comeau, Sept-Iles and beyond Havre-St-Pierre to the end of a desolate, scrubby dirt road where, it is implied, Man will find Liberty. Symbolically, the trip is meant to represent a

kind of stripping away of modern influences, of returning to one's roots, of the nobility of the soul in tandem with the richness of nature's bounty. On his way to that point, Douai meets various individuals and they speak together on a variety of subjects, in no particular order, in no particular systematic exposition and, sadly, of no particular interest. What is worse, in the film version (as opposed to video) that I saw, no one was ever identified. Without a point of reference about who is speaking, the voices and what they have to say become confused, mere disembodied statements.

Cameraman Martin Leclerc shows imaginative ways of making a plain shot into an interesting one: the reflection of a chansonnier on a smoky cabaret window implies place, mood and subject better than any straight forward head-and-shoulder shots. His roving eye, ever-searching for new ways of seeing, sets a visual tone that raises the level of what could have been a much

plainer visual experience. Also, some interesting use of sound editing (by Alain Sauvé) helps relieve the tedium of the people-speaking-between-themselves orientation of this documentary. It is perhaps too bad that we did not have a narrator's voice to connect the various pieces into a well-thought-out discourse. Without it, we have a film whose pacing is jagged and whose reasoning is often incoherent, leaving an audience wondering just what the director was trying to say.

André Guy Arseneault ●

LE VOYAGE AU BOUT DE LA ROUTE (OU LA BALLADE DU PAYS QUI ATTEND)

d./sc. /rsrch. Jean-Daniel Lafond cam. Martin Leclerc ed. Babalou Hamelin sd. ed. Alain Sauvé mus. arr. & perf. Richard Lalonde, Mary Cowan mus. rec. Louis Hone mix. Jean-Pierre Joutel p. Eric Michel exec. prod. Eric Michel, Jacques Vallée Resrch. Babalou Hamelin, Kater Lescop (Sept-Iles) l. p. J. Douai, P. Jobin, J. Gagné, C. Léveillée, R. Jomphe. Colour 16 mm or video. running time 72 min. dist. National Film Board of Canada.