

responsibility or the right to intervene when an individual neglects his or her own welfare? How does one determine neglect and who does the determining?

If the film can't answer those questions, it at least opens a door for us into the world of the elderly. By the end we know that Jack is a treasure—a quixotic character with a refreshingly independent spirit.

Jack, without family support, happily found an ally in Senior Link, a neighbourhood organization which arranged a lawyer from the Advocacy Centre to go to bat for him.

For the elderly in *A House Divided*, the family was the problem. The film tells four stories of elderly abuse within the family. In the first, the distinction between the abuser and the abused becomes clouded. A long-suffering 50-year-old daughter 'gets along' for many years with her aging mother whom she loves dearly and has taken into her home. The relationship changes when the care-giver is pushed beyond the limits of her endurance. Love turns to hate and outside help is necessary to bring some balance back into the family.

Financial abuse is the topic of the second episode. The father, completely disabled after a severe stroke, survives only because of the constant care of his wife. Their children convince them they should pool their life savings and buy a large house where they can all live together. When the diverging needs of the two families bring the situation to a crisis, the financial arrangement they have entered into tears the family apart. The older couple are not allowed to go their separate way because of the son-in-law's intransigence. What starts as a suspicion that they have been cheated financially now becomes a reality. The older woman must turn to the courts to escape her own family.

In the third story, a 73-year-old woman must deal with her 33-year-old alcoholic son. The formerly perfect, mother-adoring son has turned into a monster. Unfortunately, we never hear his side of the story. We hear her litany of beatings, forgiveness and hope for a change which never comes. She begins to report the beatings. Once again the courts must intervene with an order barring the son from entering her apartment.

For the final story, the film goes south to San Francisco. The surprise is to find elderly abuse a problem within the Chinese family system. An older Chinese father is pushed aside by his wife and adopted son. He's forced to live in the basement while wife and son take over the rest of the house, take away his social security cheques and even deprive him of food. He longs to return to China but doesn't believe he will ever be able to fulfill that dream. Rather than meekly accepting his fate, he has the courage to seek out redress. He finds a friendly and effective support community and discovers he is not alone. There are others like him who have

been neglected and abused. The love and support he expected to find within his home and family he now finds outside the home.

Along with child abuse, elderly abuse has for too long been a shocking and often taboo subject. Wright, who previously dealt with children of divorce in *Dad's House, Mom's House*, has broached the topic of the elderly with tact and sensitivity.

John Friesen •

THE ELDERLY AT RISK. PART ONE: MR

NOBODY *d. lsc.* Lyn Wright *ed.* Leslie Borden Brown *cam.* John Walker, CSC *sd. rec.* Ross Redfern *sd. ed.* Gary Oppenheimer *mus.* Randolph Peters *narr.* Tedde Moore *add. cam.* Leonard Gilday, CSC; Doug Kiefer, CSC; Joan Hutton *add. sd.* Ian Hendry, Ervin Copestake *ass. cam.* Gillian Stokvis, Cathryn Robertson, Phillippe Champion, Per-Inge Schei, Joel Guthro, Yvonne Dignard *ass. sd. ed.* Robert Benson *tech. coord. rerecording* David Appleby *marketing* Doug Eliuk *unit admin.* Sonya Munro *p.* Silva Basmajian *exec. p.* John Spotton *running time* 35 min, 16mm § video, colour. Produced and distributed by the NFB.

PART TWO: A HOUSE DIVIDED *d. lsc./narr.* Lyn

Wright *ed.* John Kramer *cam.* John Walker, CSC; David Meyers, Charles Knowal *loc. sd.* Ross Redfern, Stephen Longstreth, Michael Mirus *sd. ed.* Eva Jaworska *mus.* Randolph Peters *re-recording* Jack Hereen *marketing* Doug Eliuk *unit admin.* Sonya Munro *p.* Silva Basmajian *exec. p.* John Spotton *running time* 35 min, colour, 16mm, video.

IFVA Film and Video Showcase

Venues for the work of independent film and video producers are generally scarce in this country, especially compared to those available to more commercial productions. But during this year's Independent Film and Video Alliance annual general meeting in early June,

Vancouver was treated to a curated showcase featuring one program of films and another of videos.

Titled 'In Absentia'—meaning, in the absence of—and organized thematically around this concept, the programs were put together by Maria Insell (film) and Paul Wong (video). And although the two curators each interpreted the concept slightly differently, the essential aim of each seems to have been to give a presence to otherwise marginalized voices.

The film program featured 12 films, three of which were excerpts from longer works, and was described overall by Insell as raising "important questions about the representation of an experience of loss, alienation or social tragedy." Janis Lundman's *Las Aradas* operates very effectively within this context.

This eight-minute film successfully conveys the horrible story of the 1980 Sumpal River killings, in which members of the El Salvadoran army massacred the inhabitants of a refugee camp. As the narration becomes more obscene with details, the juxtaposition of the pastorally calm imagery, devoid of people, assumes a kind of unpredicted grotesqueness and reflects the lack of photographic documentation of the incident.

Justin Hall's *On Rooftops*, described as "a cultural memory of St. John's, Newfoundland... depicting the original architectural monuments of the city," is also without people, but attempts and achieves a much different effect. This film was the most powerful in the program and best exemplifies some of the strongest qualities of the work shown—the use of tonalities and textures. *On Rooftops* also made good use of the relationship between sound and

image with its appropriate, music soundtrack, and the emotional attachment of the film never deteriorated into sentimentality.

Which is perhaps where the technically and visually appealing *Waterworx* (*A Clear Day and No Memories*), by Rick Hancox, may have erred a bit. Memory—including film as memory—cannot be trusted unequivocally. Hancox's film doesn't consider the potential danger here.

The 11-tape video program, in general, felt less tentative, consequently a bit more dynamic, than the film showcase.

The excerpt from Michael MacDonald's *What Price An Island?*, which featured scenes of clear-cut hillsides and coverage of a native Indian rally to preserve Meares Island, allowed the speakers to make a strong statement—not mere rhetoric, but an eloquence of integrity and true feeling.

Following this came James Solkin's music video, *Tarde Gris*, in which children's drawings of war, violence and torture in Latin America articulated these horrors more powerfully than photographs or actual film footage could have. It also demonstrated that our society has become so accustomed to violent news images, we almost expect them and have built up a resistance to their potency.

Amherst, by Jim MacSwain, uses a resemblance to news documentary to question the accuracy of memory in his return to small-town Nova Scotia. A strange but effective silence to the images that accompany his monologue of discovering his homosexuality enhances the underlying suggestion that the viewer must reinterpret the film—or video-maker's point-of-view.

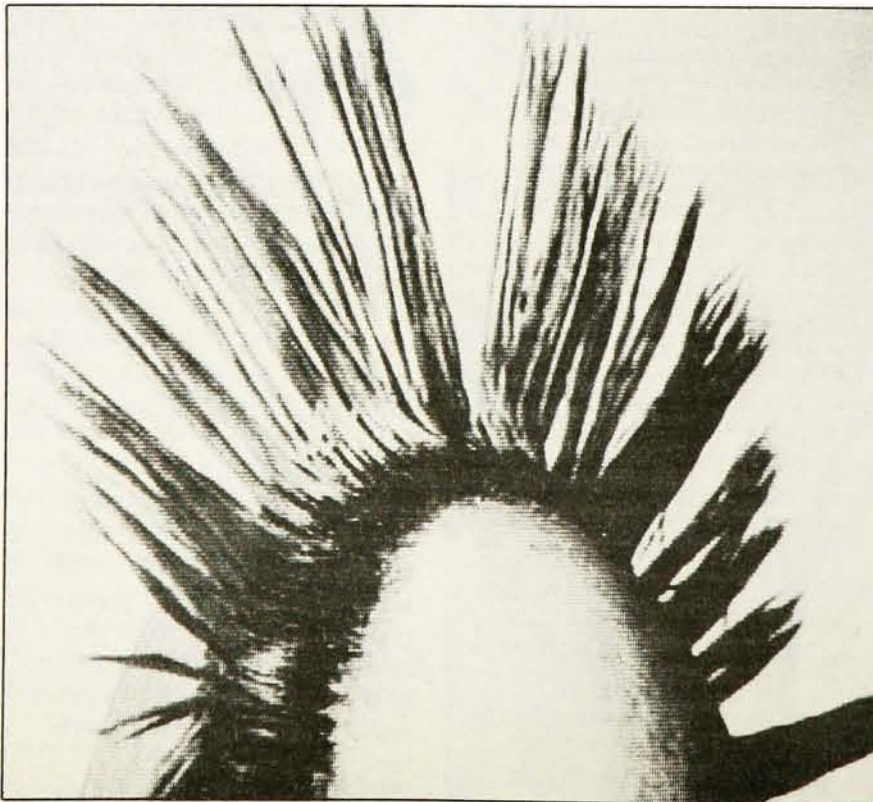
Joe Sarahan's *Rise And Fall Of An Empire* is a visually interesting investigation on the waning world of "punk." However, the ideas of the subjects come across as secondary to the look—the fashion statement of the movement—and in fact seem more superficial than the sophistication of the production suggests.

Least successful in this program is John Greyson's *The AIDS Epidemic*, a rock-video look at the paranoia surrounding AIDS. The message, that "Acquired Dread of Sex" is unhealthy, is fine. Unfortunately, its presentation is weak, particularly given what we have come to expect in terms of dynamic from the rock-video format.

But, on the whole, the two programs worked well. The thematic considerations of the curators shaped the showcase in a manner perhaps more powerful than a less-organized sample of Alliance members' work might have done. And certainly these productions are segregated outside the main avenues of contemporary "cultural" views.

If nothing else, the IFVA Showcase demonstrated the strength of its membership aside from its lobbying power—the ability to create powerful, 'other' voices, and have them be heard.

Calvin Wharton •



Punk hairstyle 'statement' from Joseph Sarahan's *Rise and Fall of an Empire*