

On Location

Vancouver

Terminal City Ricochet

In a cold, damp warehouse on Vancouver's waterfront, ex-All Star Wrestler Gene Kiniski teaches Joey (Shithead) Keighley, the lead singer of punk rock band DOA, how to warble "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

Huddling behind a chain link fence, in front of a heater, are about 40 of Vancouver's alternative musician types, artists, street kids, and extras. Around the cavernous waterfront, fertilizer shed graffiti artists spray-paint the walls, slide projectors go on and off, sculptures inflate... a vast alternative playground is being constructed. On stage, the band The Groveaholics are about to appear, giving those behind the fence the role of pogoing in the puddles for the camera. Unfortunately, it's freezing.

The scene is the filming of the Intens-i-thon portion of *Terminal City Ricochet*, the \$2.8 million social satire sci-fi film that slamdanced its way into the hearts of Telefilm and BC Film before stepping on IATSE's toes, giving rival motion picture union NABET 800 its first B.C. feature deal (see B.C. union update story page 23) on the last of 88/89's bumper crop of B.C. indigenous independent features.

"The Intens-i-thon, personally speaking," says Producer John Conti, "is our version of what a party should really be like... a multi-media explosion... an environment where people participate in the space. It relates to the film in that both are a direct approach to communicating ideas."

One of the ideas TCR wants to shoot out is the disturbing trend towards concentration of power in the hands of the few.

"That's a theme that's pretty heavy in the movie," says ex-Dead Kennedy's lead singer Jello Biafra, who plays Bruce Coddle, the right-hand henchman of ex-game show host/corrupt Mayor of Terminal City, Ross Glimore (Vancouver actor Peter Breck). "By that time (the future) the government is all in private hands, complete with privately owned and operated death squads (like those) encouraged by American multinationals in Latin American countries now. I think some of the characters are thinly disguised composites of a couple of millionaire power brokers in B.C., and I suspect there's some Bill VanderZalm in there and some Brian Mulroney."

Ironically, Minister of Communications Marcel Masse is also in the movie, playing a wino. While the movie seems as Vancouver East End-left-wing-radical as it is possible to be, an interesting level of marketing savvy creeps in. The film seems aimed at the "tweeners", that interesting emerging psychographic group that has money to spend, works in yuppie jobs, but still hates authority and all it stands for.



Terminal City's friendly, neighbourhood boys in blue

The film begins with Vancouver animator Danny Antonucci's three-and-a-half-minute, hilariously violent *Lupo The Butcher* projected onto a makeshift screen on the side of a building, and quickly segues into a police raid on those taking part in the "unlicensed screening". From there we witness police abuse, power abuse, and main character Alex's (Vancouver actor Mark Bennett) accidental arrest and political awakening after he is freed to "make the world safe for children, old ladies and bunny rabbits. Right?"

It seems the only clean fun to be had in the nuclear winterized future is in the form of New Age musak and pool parties in the snow. But then there's always the problem of space junk falling out of the sky and killing people. That's what happens to Glimore's re-election party: ice cubes in the drinks, and a hot butt of space junk dropping in to boil Glimore's pool guests.

Luck and humour bless the shooting of the movie. The pool scene was not originally supposed to have snow in it, but the day of the shoot, a blizzard forced a rewrite to include nuclear winter.

Says Toronto-based DOP Paul Sarossy (fresh from the shooting of Atom Egoyan's *Speaking Parts*) of the dark, bleak future the filmmakers are portraying: "There is also a certain comic book feel we're trying to achieve with the lighting that isn't

natural, but will enhance the costumes and the sets."

Executive producer Dan Howard — parachuted into the production at the insistence of the film's backers, just four weeks before shooting — says when he read the script he immediately thought of *Blade Runner* and *Sammy And Rosie Get Laid*. The former because of the bleak sci-fi future and the latter because of the political stance of the film.

Not on the set is the original screenwriter Bill Mullen, who says he was originally inspired to write the first treatment for the film after seeing *Repo Man*. He was impressed not so much by this movie as by the audience response to it. He approached Conti about doing TCR as an independent film and went so far as taking it into pre-production in late 1986, before it became obvious that no one was going to fund a low budget with an unknown director, writer and producer. Screenwriter Phil Savath joined the production in 1987. His name, and his rewrite of the film from "social satire to black comedy" lent the picture the credibility Conti needed to start raising money. Investors came and went. Deals fell through. Cast and crew changed as the day to begin got pushed back further and further. Meanwhile, the script underwent further rewrites with up to eight writers throwing ideas

into the story stew. When the "professionals" got involved with it, "I had to bail out," says Mullen who's heading for Europe with the money from the picture.

Meanwhile, the host of Vancouver talent, (including the bands No Means No, DOA, Art Bergman, SNFU, Gerry Hanna, The Scramblers, and a few others), will appear on a sound track album and tour as Intens-i-thons to promote the movie.

The picture will be among the first to be released by Festival Films, the Vancouver-based feature film distribution company recently started by ex-Vancouver Film Festival Director Leonard Shein and ex-Norstar Distributor's Tom Lightburn.

According to Conti, Lightburn is pleased with the rushes. There's a smile on Conti's lips consistent with the cheap leather jacket on his back, and his determined, subversive, let's-stir-up-the-pot-and-see-what-happens attitude that has propelled him and the E-Motion team to devote four years to this film. Somehow, he has courted the authorities and sold them their undoing.

"A lot of people won't be too happy about this movie when it comes out," he says. But by then it will be too late. Ross Glimores of this world, beware.

Ian Hunter ●