

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS

The Arab Jews

d. Mark Dolgoy. sc. Mark Dolgoy. ph. Hanania Bair. ed. Harold Tichenor. sd. Don Paches. p. Lyla Lebane. p.c. Vertite Productions. col., running time 27 minutes. dist. Vertite Productions. 10237 125th St., Edmonton, Alberta.

There is little room for advocacy cinema these days. Television documentaries skim off the sensational and then retreat behind a wall of feigned objectivity. (You know the scene – the priest and the abortionist “confronting” each other on a panel.) The net result is that nothing gets said and the toothpaste people are kept happy. **The Arab Jews** by contrast is a short documentary that you will never see on television. It is consciously, actively and powerfully trying to make a point and it does so with conviction and believability.

There doesn't seem to be much left to say about the whole Middle East mess. Like the tragic events in Northern Ireland, the fratricide has gone on for so long and with such a tortured interweaving of loyalties, that most of us in North America are simply sick of the whole affair. It is therefore surprising that this film is able to add new insight into this tragic situation. It does so by approaching the problem from a completely new angle.

Much has been said about the Palestinian refugees and their displacement from their homeland with the formation of the state of Israel. The Arab contention is that Israel is, in fact, a European state settled mainly by European Jews and imposed on the Middle East for imperialistic aims. The slick propaganda film **We Are the Palestinian People*** forcefully asserts this viewpoint to the extent of suggesting that German Zionists acted in collusion

with the Nazis in their callous greed for power. **The Arab Jews** brings up the fact that Jews have inhabited the entire Middle East for the past several thousand years and, for the past thousand years, they have been outcasts in their own countries. Before the formation of Israel, there were almost one million Jews living in Syria, Morocco, Algeria and Iraq. As in Europe, being a minority group they were the subjects of frequent persecution.

There are now 600,000 Jews in Israel who are refugees from surrounding Moslem countries. The film tells their harsh story in their own words. “They hung my husband in public,” says a well-dressed middle-aged woman formerly from Iraq. “They displayed his body in public and there was great rejoicing. I can't blame the people; their leaders told them that the Jews were spies who poisoned the drinking water.” A simple Jewish-Arab peasant (looking very much like his Palestinian counterpart on the other side of the bloody border) says his morning prayers and then shouts into the camera, “In Syria, a Jew is for beating! As we walked to the synagogue, they lined the streets and spit on us.” The persons interviewed are from all strata of society, all having the common denominator of being both Jew and Arab. They express their hurt with a directness and intensity that comes from many years of suffering. “Imagine that you were born a refugee, that your father was born a refugee, that your grandfather and great-grandfather were all refugees in their own country. That is what it was like to be a Jew in Iraq.”

The power of this film is that it is just that, a film. So often political pieces of this nature turn out to be illustrated radio shows or hard-hitting diatribes with little respect for the sensibilities of either the viewer or the medium. Although the issues are complex and abstract, the approach of the film is direct and emotional. Edmontonian Mark Dolgoy



A scene from **The Arab Jews**

developed the subject himself and, using private funding, shot the film in Israel, supplemented with rich archival material both from England and the Middle East. It is an impressively personal statement, produced with a conviction which makes it at once both convincing and very moving.

It is to the credit of the film that the audience is allowed to think through the problem. We are presented with the heartbreaking stories of divided loyalties, the refugees now citizens of Israel with their roots in countries that never wanted them. “Would you go back if you could?” asks the interviewer. The replies range from tears to an impotent shrug. “This is the country that killed my husband. I left behind a lot – memories, a lifetime, a country I loved. I was born and raised there but

* Available in Canada through DEC Films, 121 Avenue Rd., Toronto, 52 minutes, B & W.

FILM REVIEWS

I will never return. We left a house, our clothes hanging in the closet and food in the refrigerator. I left my heart behind."

Through these interviews, through terse narration mixed with surprising archival footage, Mark Dolgoy has managed to very powerfully evoke a sense of place. The film tells you more than its words and uses the images of the people and their sur-

roundings to give it a depth rare in political documentaries. For politics operates in terms of maps, economics and large numbers — but political films, at their best, allow us to understand the world in human proportions. **The Arab Jews** will be a long-remembered document of a forgotten people.

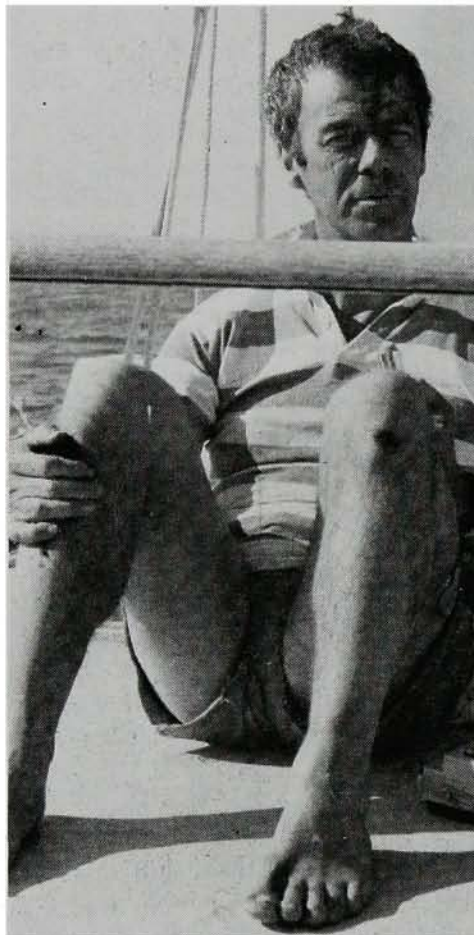
Ronald H. Blumer

Horse Latitudes

d. Peter Rowe, **asst. d.** Phil McPhedran, **sc.** Peter Rowe, **ph.** Richard Leiterman, **ed.** Peter Rowe, **sd.** Ian Hendry, **sd. ed.** Bob Grieve, **re-rec.** Joe Grimaldi, **set dec.** Peter Lauterman, **m.** Mathew McCauley, **l.p.** Gordon Pinsent, Vivian Reif, David Schurmann, John Bayliss, Anne Bulter, **exec. p.** G. Chalmers Adams, **p.** Tony Hall, **p. manager** Marie Waisberg, **p.c.** Rosebud Films Ltd. in association with Clearwater Films, 1975, **col.** 16mm., **running time** 43 min., **dist.** Viking Films Canada.

Horse Latitudes (could there be a less enticing title?) tells us little about director Peter Rowe, except that his personal fondness for sailing has attracted him to this **Marie Celeste**-type mini-feature, in which Gordon Pinsent plays an adventurous sportsman whose nerve deserts him, so that he cheats on a solitary journey around the Atlantic by sending in phony messages while becalmed in peaceful waters. The film has been made partly for a CBC television showing but that peculiar organization, having asked for approximately the present length for a program, is now threatening to cut the material to less than half an hour. That would be little more rational than Pinsent's character behavior. At 43 minutes, he already descends into self-shamed madness rather rapidly; an even more rapid deterioration might be ludicrous.

Horse Latitudes is well done, even if the shooting on Lake Ontario fails altogether to suggest a full-scale ocean. It is crisply shot and cleanly edited, while Matthew McCauley's atmospheric music is helpful at setting a mood, except at the end where it sounds oddly more like a sign-off



Gordon Pinsent becalmed in the horse latitudes, in a film by the same name

than a suicide. Pinsent's almost solo performance is decidedly impressive. Aided by some good pre-echoing dialogue, he well conveys the incipient egomania early on, which later prompts the mental breakdown. "I have God-like qualities," Pinsent announces, with a deceptively boyish grin. Beyond these good qualities, however, **Horse Latitudes** remains a curiosity rather than the major film we still hope to see from Peter Rowe.

Clive Denton

The Review That Wasn't

A Mountain of a Man

When the CBC produced a half-hour film, honoring a Canadian producer, Cinema Canada asked Doug Fetherling to review it. After all, he had done a lot of work on Budge Crawley, and was well placed to evaluate the film's impact. The review wasn't to materialize. The letter which we received in its place follows:

Dear Connie:

As you suggested, I arranged a screening of *A Mountain of a Man*, the tribute to Budge Crawley that the CBC telecast on August 17. As I might have known from the title, the show was corny and inept beyond belief. Frankly, I find it unreviewable. That's a shame, I'm sure you'll agree, in view of the fact that Budge is a fine and colorful fellow and considering the contribution he's made to Canadian film.

What can I tell you?

The show consisted mainly of taped highlights of the Canadian Film and Television Association dinner given in his honor. The speakers, who were piped onto the dais with what sounded like a scratchy record of E. Power Biggs, spoke in clichés and watery-eyed generalities. As might be expected, Budge himself was the best of the group, although he was on camera much too short a time. "In the broad sense of the word," he said, acknowledging past heads of the CFTA, "this is a creditors' meeting, and I feel very much at home." That was the best moment.

Bill Walker, the MC, I found impossible to divorce from his image as a game show host in Hamilton. Al Waxman (who inspired the title, by the way) was maudlin, Betty Kennedy sweet and Sydney Newman officious. The affair was held in one of the lesser rooms of the Royal York but looked like it was held at the Yellowknife Inn, and the camera work was such as to emphasize the smallness of the crowd. I found the production values, in-

FILM REVIEWS

cluding the music, embarrassing. When brass was called for, there was a string band and duelling banjos; when silence would have been better, someone used an old jazz disc from the basement.

Intercut with those goings-on were clips from some of Budge's old documentaries and features. It was interesting to watch clips from **The Loon's Necklace** and **Newfoundland Scene** from the 1940s, which I'd never seen. The use made of more recent films, however, made me doubt the wisdom of all the selections. For instance, there were clips from **The Luck of Ginger Coffey**, **The Rowdyman** and **The Man Who Skied Down Everest** that seemed to miss the flavor of those films. Unaccountably, nothing from **Janis** was shown. Oh yes, the program closed with Lorraine Thomson interviewing Budge in the corridor about **The Man Who...** Why, she asked him, would anyone do such a silly thing as ski down Mt. Everest? Caught off guard, Budge opined as how he must have done it because it was there.

The whole flavor of the program was that of a cheap travelogue made in about 1954. "As we leave behind the isle of Pago Pago..." It was the type of programming that, when it comes from the regions, causes CBC people in Toronto and Montreal to grumble about democracy in scheduling. A fine show could have been done on Budge, but Garth Price, who put this turkey together, and Munro Scott, who wrote it, didn't seem to be trying very hard.

Sorry I can't be of more help.

Best,
Doug Fetherling

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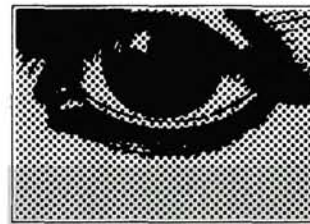
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continued from p. 5

18. A gentleman completely obliterated by the address label. **Cinema Canada** strikes again.
19. An older woman with glasses.
20. An older man looking at the bum in no. 27.
21. The same man after being caught looking at the bum in no. 27.
22. An attractive woman with two belt buckles.
23. The same attractive woman saying "I don't really know why I have two belt buckles. They were there when I got up this morning."
24. A woman tugging her ear.
25. A string bikini being held up by a body sans mind. The couple in the background are thoroughly amused.
26. The body looking for her contact lenses. She had nowhere else to put them. Someone should design a string with pockets.
27. A bum supported by two legs.
28. Two men being told of the events down at the beach.
29. A child of some nuclear family.
30. A young actress in **Jaws** about to meet the star of the same movie.

Those are my guesses. I hope they are all correct. Please send the subscription to:

Mr. Brian Mahoney,
109 Pembroke Street, Apartment no. 3,
Toronto, Ontario.

Thanking you in advance,
Brian Mahoney.

For those of you who still aren't satisfied, **Cinema Canada** offers its version of the identities of the people on the cover as well.

1. Mikis Theodorakis, Greek composer
2. Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinémathèque Française
3. Martin Malina, film critic of *The Montreal Star*
4. Bernadette Sulgit, past managing editor of *Saturday Night* and Martin Knelman, Toronto freelance film critic
5. Sergio Leoni (**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**)
6. Leoni
7. Bulle Ogier, Swiss actress (**La Salamandre**)
8. Ogier
9. Dominique Sanda, French actress (**L'Eredita Ferramonti**)
10. Shelley Winters, American actress (**The Tenant**)
11. Anthony Quinn, American actor soon to portray a Greek tycoon who bears no resemblance to Onassis
12. Isabelle Adjani, French actress (**Adèle H.**) and Roman Polanski, now a French director (**The Tenant**)
13. 14. 15. Names and addresses unavailable.
16. Jean Lefebvre, head of the Festivals Bureau in Ottawa
17. André Forcier, Québécois director (**L'eau chaude l'eau frette**) chatting with *Vancouver Sun* critic Les Wedman
19. Mai Zetterling, Swedish director (**Night Games, Doctor Glas**)
20. Joseph Losey, English director (**The Go-Between, Death in Venice**)
21. Losey
22. Marisa Berenson, American actress (**Barry Lyndon**)
23. Berenson
24. Zetterling
25. 26. 27. Same as 13.
28. Harry Blumson, president of Odeon Theatres Canada and Martin Bockner, Saguenay Films, Toronto.
29. 30. Mr. Mahoney's answers are probably correct.

CLASSIFIED

For Sale:

Have just purchased Arri 16SR. Have for sale an Eclair NPR with following accessories: 2 magazines; Perfectone Crystal Motor; Perfectone Constant Speed Motor; Zeiss 10-100 mm Zoom Lens; 2 Anton-Bauer Quick-Charge Batteries, Case, Charger (new); Power Cables, Series 9 Filters, Cases, etc. Total price \$8,500. Contact: Ron Orioux, 604-736-5278 (Vancouver) or Edgewater Film Productions, 1227 Richards Street, Vancouver. 604-689-8214.

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