

IN PROGRESS...

Tulips

d. Rex Bromfield asst. d. Julian Marks sc. Henry Olek ph. François Protat stunt co-ord. Bob Minor ed. Don Ginsberg sd. Joseph Champagne a.d. Ted Watkins cost. Lynn McKay l.p. Gade Kaplan, Bernadette Peters, Henry Gibson, Al Waxman exec. p. Harold Greenberg, John B. Bennet p. Don Carmody assoc. p. Lawrence Nesis unit man. Josette Perrotta p. man. Phil McPhedran p.c. Astral Films Productions Ltd./Bennettfilms Inc. pub. David Novek/Holly Levine, Berger & Assoc. Assoc.

It's Grey Cup weekend and the prison cells in Montreal's Palais de Justice aren't yet emptied. They're nearly always cleared by two o'clock, but the Grey Cup festivities place an extra strain on this, one of the city's favorite overnight holding tanks, so the shooting in the prison starts an hour late. Despite this minor setback, the crew plows through and finishes all the day's takes a mere five hours late.

Considering the many features being filmed in Montreal these days, *Tulips* is unique, because it uses Montreal, itself, as the actual location for the plot. Gabe Kaplan, of *Welcome Back Kotter* fame, plays the chronically depressed Leland Irving. Irving is such a klutz that he can't even succeed in committing suicide, so he hires killer, Avocado (Henry Gibson), to do the job 'right'. Irving then meets the beautiful Rutanya Wallace (Bernadette Peters) while she — what a coincidence — is attempting suicide. And . . . they fall in love.

But, is it too late to prevent Avocado from completing the job . . . ?

The production of this "off-beat comedy" has been loaded with one-liners and practical jokes, and today the prison setting arouses a sense of claustrophobia and unreality just perfect for tension-releasing humour. Gabe Kaplan ruins a take and cracks up the crew by announcing that the hired killer (Henry Gibson) is the best in his business, because "he's throwing a party tonight." The crew is also in top form for pranks. And everyone on set recognizes the absurdity of the 'straight' extra, uncomfortably portraying a trans-

vestite prisoner hitching herself up after peeing.

Admittedly, this slapstick humour is really no indication of the quality of the comedy in *Tulips*. Director Rex Bromfield says he didn't even find the script funny until he recognized the potential for developing the characters' farcical relationships. By exploiting the audience's expectations of the well-known actors' characters, and by varying the usual elements in a comic scene, Bromfield will probably succeed in achieving an unusual, "serious, dark-grey comedy." He has worked extensively in television, but has one other feature — *Love at First Sight*, which he wrote and directed. Recently, he completed an "apprenticeship," partially paid for by the CFDC, to Jules Dassin on *Circle of Two*.

Creating the comedy's unusual lighting effects is the meticulous DOP, François

Protat, who spent two years as assistant to Michel Brault, and has since worked as DOP on a number of highly-acclaimed features. In this film he uses low-key lighting and dark pictures to create what is almost a black-and-white look in some shots. "Then boomph!" says Bromfield, "in comes a character with colour — with a pink face," adding another element of surprise to the film.

The production team, which really *does* work and play together, is so devoted to its work that everyone shows up (unpaid) for the rushes each night after the day's shooting. Most of the crew recently worked together on another film, *Crunches*, in August — which partially explains their team spirit.

The production of *Tulips* has not been all roses, however. Mark Warren, the original director, was reportedly fired at the last minute, postponing the start of



If looks could kill! Bernadette Peters with Gabe Kaplan in *Tulips*

production for two days. Following the decision to go ahead anyway, producer Don Carmody pinch-hit as director, along with stunt coordinator Bob Minor, for a number of exciting, highway-jumping, stunt shots. To top it all off, Carmody broke his leg on the first day.

Bromfield's subsequent appointment as director was no less spontaneous. He was flown in from Toronto simply to have a look at the script. Seeing its potential he said he was interested. Only then did he find out that shooting had begun two days earlier... and could he start seven weeks of shooting the next morning?

Now, the crew is terribly dependent on the whims of Montreal's weather. Carmody says they're desperate for just half a day of clear skies before the snow (?) arrives. He admits it was rather late in the year to be scheduling for clear weather without snow, but exterior driving shots of Bernadette Peters were put off for eleven days when the shooting started because of her previous commitments. At the same time stunt coordinator Bob Minor, had to get the stunts over with and return to L.A. Consequently, the stunts were shot in clear, snow-free, early November. Since then, Montreal has been rainy and gloomy most of the time, and because of this, Carmody says the production is a day behind schedule, but still within budget. He is confident though, that they can improvise the driving scene if they don't get the right weather.

In spite of possible production problems, **Tulips**, a 3.8 million dollar Astral Bellevue Pathé/Bennettfilms co-production, has already been marketed and sold, worldwide, by Avco Embassy Films. According to Carmody, **Tulips** has been one of Avco's biggest sales ever, largely because of the strength of the script, and the well-known cast of Gabe Kaplan, Bernadette Peters, Henry Gibson and Al Waxman.



The prison ward is stuffy after the team has spent five hours inside, and the cameraman is annoyed because he's receiving conflicting messages from the director and first assistant director. But it's hard to stay edgy when Avocado is about to land in jail — in style! Soon he'll come through the electric gates carrying an outrageous umbrella with a rubber-duck head for a handle, accompanied by his cart of personal 'necessities' including a television, ice bucket and mineral water. Besides, yesterday, the wonderfully funny and warm Henry Gibson sent out **real** avocados and hand-written invitations to drinks tonight at Stash's in Old Montreal. . . as soon as this take is over and the director calls "wrap!"

Mark Leslie

The Lucky Star

d. Max Fischer **asst. d.** Pierre Magny **sc.** Max Fischer, **adapt./dial.** Jack Rosenthal **ph.** Frank Tidy **ed.** Yves Langlois **sd.** Patrick Rousseau **a.d.** Michel Proulx **cost.** Jany Van Huber **i.p.** Rod Steiger, Louise Fletcher, Lou Jacobi, Brett Marx **exec. p.** André Fleury **p.** Claude Léger **assoc. p.** Pieter Kroonenburg **p. manager.** Matthew Vibert **loc. man.** Didier Hoffman **unit pub.** Denise Di Novi **p.c.** Caneuram Films Inc. **pub.** David Novek, Lucienne Appel for Berger & Assoc.

My appointment with the publicist is for two p.m. Finding the location turns out to be no trouble at all; after all, how many of Montreal's narrow, one-way streets have three trailer homes, a converted

school bus and four large Budget trucks parked on them.

Outside, all is quiet. I check the address, open the door, and follow the cables up a flight of stairs and in through another door — but still nobody. I look around and find all the familiar trappings: tape recorders, film cans, Coke and Seven-Up tins, wires leading everywhere. Then, to the left and down the hall there are voices. As I enter the room they stop talking, look up and smile. They, too, appear to be waiting for the publicist.

Inside the double livingroom/dining-room sits a man with a grey beard that curls up neatly at the tip. He is sketching,

The Toronto Super Eight Film Festival

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