

IN PROGRESS...

South Pacific, 1942

p.c. Surfacing Film Productions Ltd. (1979) p. Michael Donovan p. asst. Michael Perry p. sec. Jayne Mackenzie d./sc. Paul Donovan a.d. Marc Copeland d.o.p. Juan Valladares cam. op. Les Krizsan ed. Hussein Mohamad, Stefan Ronavich (asst.) key grip Doug Meggison cont. Nancy Muise unit man. Lisa MacRae sd. Pierre Dostie mus. Marcel Doucet boom Chuck Lapp gaf. Michael Ruggles p. design. John Walsh cost. design Robin Benjamin make-up Kathy O'Connell, Jim Michieli, Carolyn van Gorp carpenters Tom Cove, Fritz Boonzaier cook Angela Chartie stills Bill Niven l.p. Alan MacGillivray, Richard Rebiere, Andrea Zadbun, Lynette Louise, Terry Depres, Jeff Pustil, Gary Vermeir, Dug Rotsteen, Lorne Ryan, Bill Papps, Maher Boutros.

So there are two wild and crazy oil rig divers on top of the submarine — one standing on the other's shoulders trying to hook a pulley into the roof of the old brewery warehouse. Muffled shots are heard from another corner, where one of the crew is trying to bring down a Halifax wharf rat with a .38-style pellet gun. The twenty-hour day wears on as last-minute set wrinkles are worked out for the HMCS *STRIDENT*, a fictitious World War 11 Canadian submarine, whose exploits are the subject of the film **South Pacific, 1942**.

The feature is being produced by Surfacing Film Productions of Halifax and was shot in that city this past winter on a six-week schedule and a \$500,000 budget. Frustrated by their encounters with the CFDC, the two partners — Paul Donovan and brother Michael — waded into the sea of private investment and raised the money entirely in Nova Scotia. Both are from Halifax originally, and shooting a 35mm feature about a submarine in the South Pacific, right in the middle of a Halifax winter, didn't seem as implausible to them as it might have to others; so they went ahead with it.

The film was written and directed by Paul Donovan. It is a black wartime comedy about a Canadian-crewed sub that picks up the survivors of a mercy liner, which they unknowingly sunk earlier. Under the impression that the Japa-

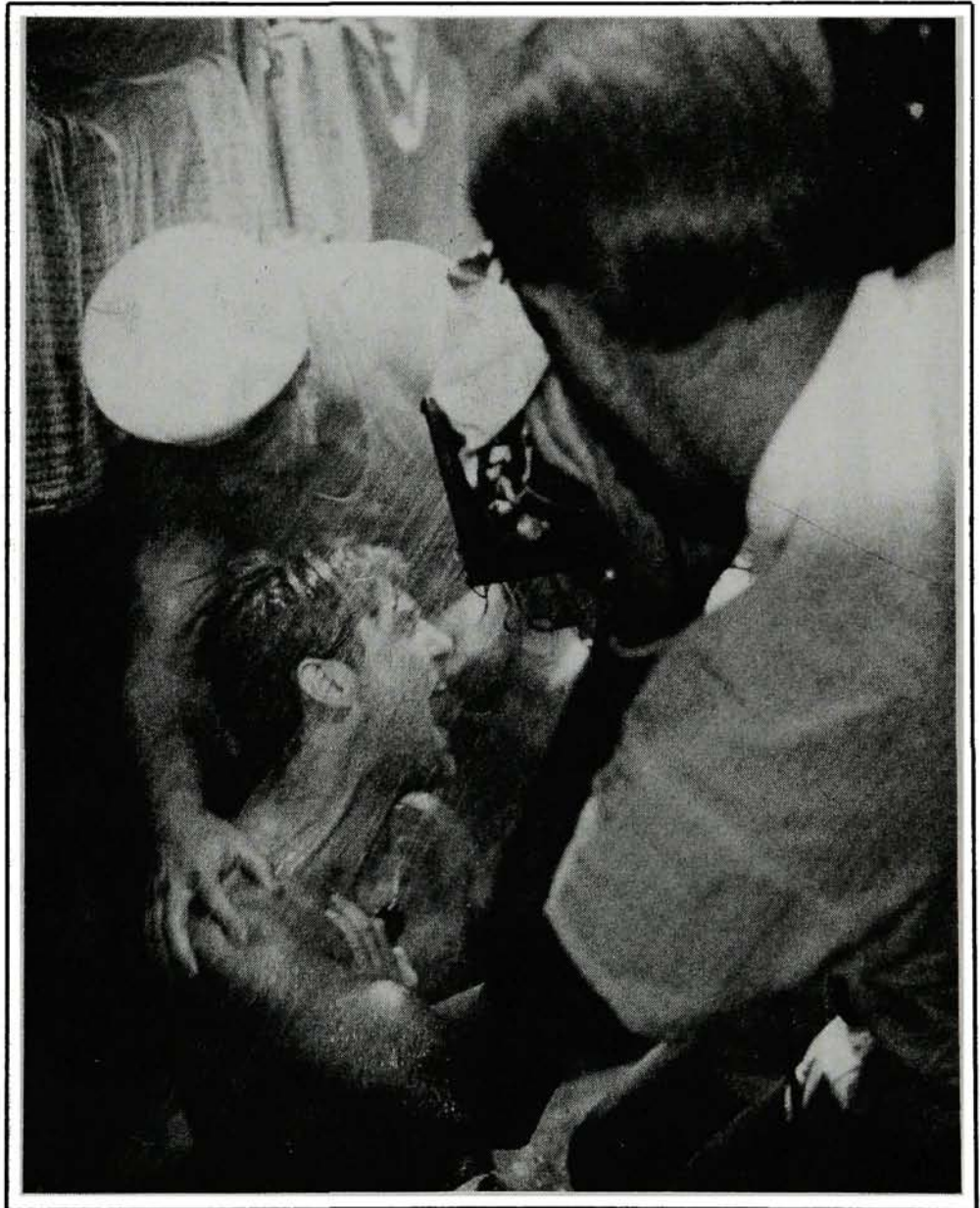


photo: Bill Niven

It's the 'wet look' for Montreal actor Richard Rebière, and shipmate Lorne Ryan of Toronto, in this action-packed scene from **South Pacific 1942**. Camera operator Les Krizsan moves in to get a piece of the action.

nese had sunk the liner, the sub, under the command of a glory-hungry captain, sets out to sink the largest Japanese aircraft carrier in the South Pacific.

Casting for the film was done in Halifax and Toronto, with the final cast made up of roughly fifty percent Nova Scotians, and fifty percent other Canadians. The

crew had an international flavor; a cinematographer from Venezuela, an assistant director from California, an assistant cameraman from England, and an editor from Lebanon.

The inherent hardships of the low-budget feature notwithstanding, the production more than proved a few of Murphy's Laws. The first week, one of the leading players had to be replaced after a disagreement; the second, a stray welder's spark started a fire on the set. From there on it was easy street — the makeup artist had to go into hospital; 6,000 feet of film

were forgotten in an Air Canada warehouse, for three weeks, en route to the lab; the Steadicam, rented at \$500 per day, didn't work (never mind it disappeared — all four cases — from an Air Canada warehouse on its way back to the rental company); and the topper of it all... another submarine movie production with a budget of \$18 million plus, expressed interest in buying the set, then decided against it. Two days after the set had been scrapped, they called up and said they wanted to buy it after all! Michael Donovan, generally the calmest of souls, almost told them to shove it in their aft torpedo

tubes: instead, he sold them the remains and shipped it off to Toronto.

Ah, but things weren't always tough. After six weeks of shooting in a cold, wet warehouse, the cast and crew flew to balmy Belize in Central America (formerly British Honduras), for some exteriors. It was R & R after six-day weeks and ten to twenty-hour days on as claustrophobic a set as one could imagine.

No efforts were spared in the construction of the set — to the specifications of an "S" class World War 11 British submarine. This meant an added element of realism, but very limited shooting space. Proper lighting requires the use of many small lights and mirrors to increase the light spread. The new Lowell "Omni" lights were brought in because of their light weight and high output, but it was found that they burned so 'hot' that their ceramic bases and bulbs went like "hot-cakes." The reliable old 'Inkie' stood up much better, even when sprayed with water.

Water — yes, there was a lot of that! the havoc wreaked by depth charges made walking through the set quite hazardous during filming. One was likely to get hit by falling ventilation ducts, or sprayed by red-hot metal from an arc welder, run by a fearless crew member perched atop the set, amidst the water gushing from high-pressure hoses...

Despite the shooting conditions, the morale of the cast and crew was remarkably high. The hierarchical pecking-order present in many film productions was non-existent. Prior to filming, the director and the director of photography could often be found building parts of the set with hammer or cutting torch in hand. The actors helped with the props and provided musical entertainment; the unit manager proved to be the most prolific dish-washer on the set; and no one really complained very much about the food being ostensibly vegetarian. The aim was to finish the film on schedule, to prove to the investors that it could be done, and to qualify it as a Certified Canadian Production for 1979. The final night of shooting — December 31, 1979 — was a long one; but the champagne was from France. Post-production will be finished for Cannes, and a late-summer release is expected.

Chuck Lapp

Chuck Lapp, coordinator of the Atlantic Film Co-op in its early days, is a Halifax-based filmmaker and free-lance writer.

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