

Growing Up with Sandy Offenheim

Growing Up With Sandy Offenheim is a new, hour-long, children's film from the Playing With Time production company of Toronto. Billed as a "musical special," it is based on the music of Sandy Offenheim, a suburban mother who transformed those long and tedious hours at home, raising the kids, into songs, and the songs into a string of acclaimed albums which she recorded with the help of her family.

The theme of the film focuses on the trials and tribulations of growing up gracefully. From a child's perspective, **Growing Up** examines such problems as living with adults who speak like babies, dealing with newly arrived baby brothers and sisters who steal all the attention, swallowing a loose tooth, and meeting new people. For each of these situations and dilemmas Sandy Offenheim has a song. The message of the film is double-edged, one that kids of all ages would do

well to cut out and stick to the 'fridge door: "Don't be impatient for change to come into your life...and don't be afraid of it when it does."

The strength of the film lies in the way it skillfully accommodates a variety of techniques in presenting its message. The story line focuses on a young boy, who appears to be about ten, writing in his diary. As he pauses to remember, or to look ahead, the film takes off in all its different directions. Animation, dramatization, dance, mime, and a great plasticine nightclub singer all help to make the movie a colourful whirl through the imagination. Director Kit Hood used four cameramen, three animators, three choreographers and two editors in putting it all together. Differences in style and tone are apparent, but the theme of the film allows for this diversity. For this reviewer the dance sequences, filmed at York University and in the Henry Moore exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) were the most exciting and imaginative pieces of filmmaking.

Writing dialogue for children — that sounds *natural* — is no easy task. In places, Amy Jo Cooper's script sounds forced, but for the most part, the young members of the cast work comfortably with it.

Credibility is probably the most intangible and important element in a children's film. In a series of vignettes — that look like they've been lifted from the Mike Douglas Show — Sandy Offenheim and her famous family are presented happily, earnestly, sometimes slightly out of sync, singing one of their songs. Unfortunately, the vignettes make the film a crucial 10 minutes too long, and undermine the simple, childlike sense that the film tries to create.

The first of these appearances almost completely obscures a dance sequence; the number about new places and new faces is an example of silly show-biz; and when 13-year-old Nadine Offenheim is set against a Toronto night skyline and croons at the stars it is definitely too much. It is unfortunate that the person who inspired the film in the first place should also become the source of its only major flaw. Offenheim's songs are charming and meaningful, but they ought to have been kept as a strong base for the film rather than transformed into an obtrusive highlight.

In **Growing Up With Sandy Offenheim**, Playing With Time appears to be taking a giant step toward commercial television programming. They will most likely make it; the film is valuable for the

understanding and fun it transmits on the grand scale that it does.

John Brooke

Growing Up with Sandy Offenheim

d. Kit Hood **p.** Linda Schuyler **sc.** Amy Jo Cooper **animation** Leach-Rankin Productions, Neil Warren and Andrew Reid, Patti Stren, Jim Miko, Joan Philips, Mimi Beck, Rosemary Grant **p.man.** John Helliker **d.o.p.** Phil Earnshaw, Len Gilday, Robert New, Jim Aquila **asst.cam.** Ray Lam, Chris Wilson, Lem Ristsoo **sd.** Andy McBrearty, Aerlyn Weissman **key grip** David Hynes **grips** Gerald Parker, David Rain, Carlo Sgnassero, John Trench **props** Gary McLeod **Wardrobe** Brenda Clark **Cont.** Wendy Vincent **ed.** John Bertram, Kit Hood **pub.** Sue A'Court **l.p.** Sandy, Harold, Nadine, and Stephen Offenheim **p.c.** Playing With Time **col.** 16mm **running time** 58 min. **dist.** Magic Lanterns (Toronto)

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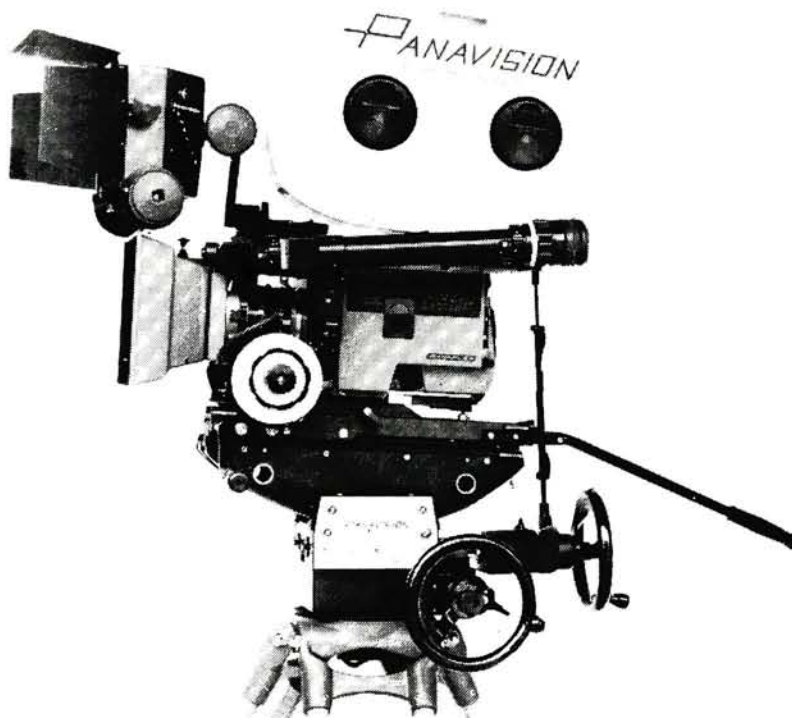
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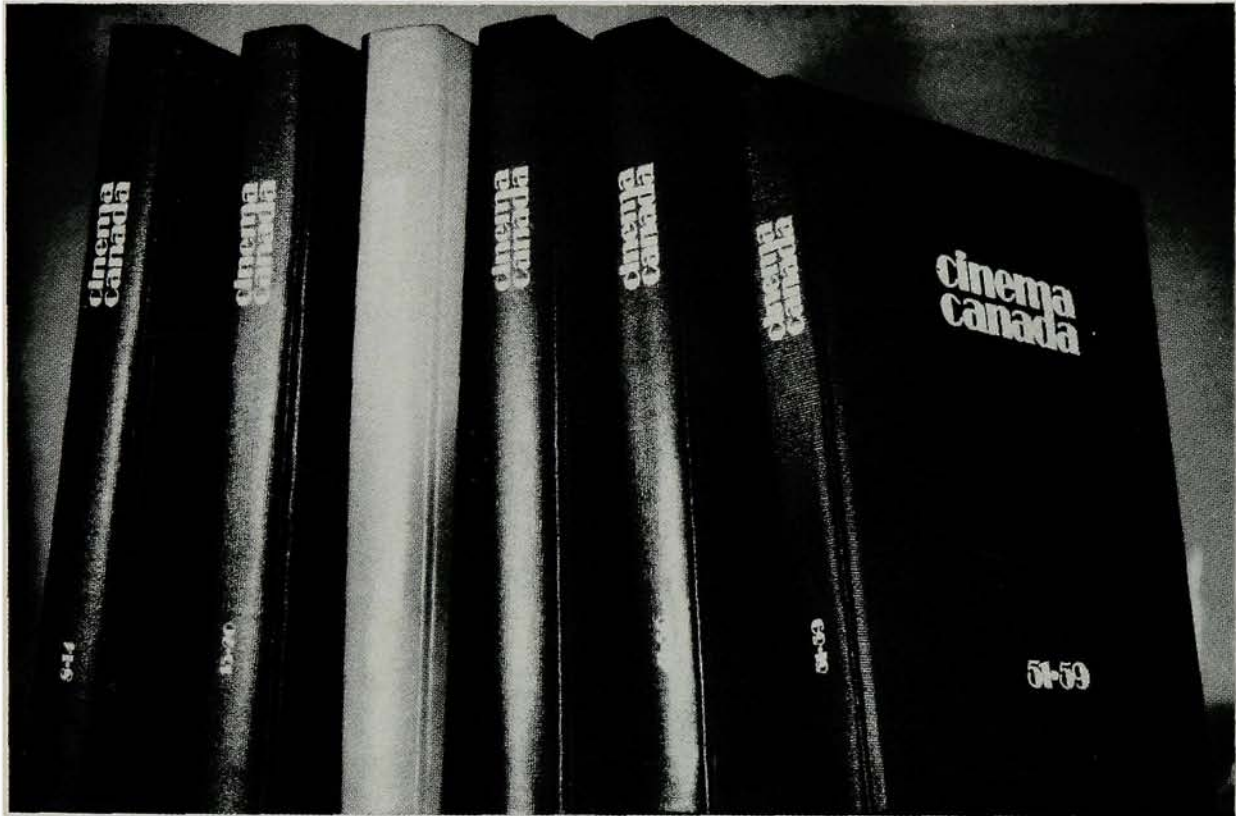
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