pouring personal energy and money into it. Four years ago Shebib optioned a story called Goin’ Down the Road from the Toronto-based producer Beryl Bainbridge. Kroonenburg, Patterson and Raibourn formed Rising Star Films Inc. in January of 1980. Shebib needed money for his film and Rising Star needed a project with which to launch their production company in style. They in turn optioned the simplest step. Next, came the financing.

Finding each other was probably the hardest part. Next, came the financing. Even for a team of three producers experienced in the ways of packaging and marketing feature films, the game of financing a picture is always a risky venture at best. The problem of financing often seems to be the killer, and did cause Heartaches more than its share of heartburn. At one point, problems with the public issue of the Seven Arts prospectus—seven Arts had committed itself to furnishing $2.5 million to Heartaches—closed down shop for a six-day period. Eventually, the Seven Arts option burned big by a miscalculation and thanks to help from the CFDC and a private offering from Newhouse Securities, the $4.9 million budget was assured.

Next came casting. Kroonenburg and Shebib went down to Los Angeles and came back with Margaret Kidder, Annie Petts and Robert Carradine. Winston Rekert in the meantime rounded out the cast. Shebib and Kroonenburg initially wanted Kidder to play Connie, but Kidder wanted the part of Rita so badly that they relented. Consequently, Annie Petts (King of the Gypsies, Corvette Summer) plays Connie, the naive country mouse, to Kidder’s Lois, the sophisticated city girl. The Films of Don Shebib, 1978.

But now that Abby Hoffman has surfaced, Van Riel left town to see the world while Siegel made other films. Listening to the two of them discuss how this film came together is a bit like listening to the counter-culture’s version of an Andy Hardy movie. They say, "The day Greg got back to Montreal, he called me from the airport and said, 'Let’s make a movie. And I said, sure.' Within a week they were driving around Montreal shooting a movie. ‘We didn’t have much money and we didn’t have just something about life in the city.’ Van Riel says casually. What they did have was a peculiarly painted automobile that held a small but snugly packed engine, and because it gave up the ghost, money from its sale to a Quebecois stunt family who featured in the film instead. And finally, the TV show called The National Driving Test. Says Van Riel, ‘I just loved that car—seeing it get blown away was an eerie experience. Unfortunately most of the money is being spent too early, so we didn’t really work out and we threw it away.’

That early stuff was in 1978 and from the sounds of things, they’ve been struggling ever since—and everywhere: at a time when some of the movies being shot here try to disguise their location, this one was made in Montreal—bright lights, big city above and below ground.

Watching these people shoot a scene really is a pleasant contrast to the facet of the Andy Hardy energy. Professional, definitely, but not jaded enough to over cover the unblurred enthusiasm they all have for what they are doing. One day they are shooting a business meeting scene in the tiny boardroom of a travel agency in the Town of St. Royal. The next day they have given their three hours to shoot the scene. Why does he bother? ‘Well’ Siegel explains, ‘we always offer a sympathetic audience here is they are willing to help and this guy is already involved in film financing or something so he’s sympathetic.’ And others? ‘It always seems to be up to the stars to help give us stuff or letting us use their place or something. Like at Filmplan, where we shot this scene of a secretary carrying a box of chocolate cake. She knew we did it in their office. But we’re going to give them a credit anyway. Adding up all the credits that have been promised almost totals enough footage for another film.

The cast of A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake is made up of all kinds of people who have been promised almost total credits that have been promised almost totals enough footage for another film. The corner of the Andy Hardy energy. Professional, definitely, but not jaded enough to over cover the unblurred enthusiasm they all have for what they are doing. One day they are shooting a business meeting scene in the tiny boardroom of a travel agency in the Town of St. Royal. The next day they have given their three hours to shoot the scene. Why does he bother? ‘Well’ Siegel explains, ‘we always offer a sympathetic audience here is they are willing to help and this guy is already involved in film financing or something so he’s sympathetic.’ And others? ‘It always seems to be up to the stars to help give us stuff or letting us use their place or something. Like at Filmplan, where we shot this scene of a secretary carrying a box of chocolate cake. She knew we did it in their office. But we’re going to give them a credit anyway. Adding up all the credits that have been promised almost totals enough footage for another film.

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appear to go on forever. At the far end of one of them, off to the left, is a door comfortable and in control of the editing table. Tonight there is a screening of film's musical composer, Andre Vincelli. Siegel tells him what she's looking for, using a vocabulary that many wouldn't understand, but which Vincelli appears to. When articulation fails them, they hum and Siegel turns on Nino Rota to reiterate. Together they watch and interrupt with ideas. "I consider this film to be research, just like Extreme Close-Up was research, and all my other films too. I'm looking for a new way to approach storytelling, so I've mixed up the elements of various kinds of films - from straight documentary to off-the-wall stuff," Siegel explains. The result will be, if nothing else, exactly what she considers to be worth the enormous effort that is going into the film. In addition to co-producing, directing and editing her feature, she wants to "find out about stock issues, distribution and all that - and this is the way to find out."

Compared to the average cost of feature films today, A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake is being made for nothing. However, Siegel has raised most of that 'nothing' herself, and that alone is a full-time job. Shooting is nearly completed and she's optimistic about finding enough money to cover post-production costs. "I'll find it somewhere, a remark not so much full of confidence as determination. "I'm really working on structuring this film because I want people to be able to follow it, to know what's going on and to like what they are seeing." As a result, changes are being made all the time; the beginning has been altered to establish Siegel's explanations of the central characters and the conflicts. Now that the end is in sight there's a touch of anxiety to conversations about when it will all be finished. Soon it will be screened for friends, most of whom will offer advice - but only because their opinions are sought in an open and sincere way. More changes will follow.

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