You've Come a Long Way, Katie

Social problems frequently serve as good television fodder. They tend to provoke strong audience reaction, which consequently improves ratings. In the past such diverse topics as venereal disease, male prostitution and child beating have been handled with varying degrees of success. Now, You've Come a Long Way, Katie treats the subject of cross-addiction. This recent CBC mini-series of three one-hour episodes, is a serious docu-drama as well as good entertainment; the subject is treated with intelligence and good taste.

Cross-addiction is an addictive dependence on alcohol and tranquillizers that is so much more weightier and moving than the illusionist cinema which he satirizes in the earlier comic episodes. The first two episodes are enclosing and false. The third is an exhilarating exercise in opening out.

The third part is a collage of apparent objectivity. Neither heard nor seen, Snow is present only by his implicit functions of choice of material, filming and editing. But the world we see there is very much Snow's world. The section abounds with characteristic Snow shots — dizzying pans back and forth, and waves, and birds, and walking women. And a beaming Joyce Wieland hard upon (well really soft) a shot of a happy family celebration. Yet the world opens out in that third section, but the private Snow as well.

The first part is accompanied by a modulating electronic drone, that seems to harmonize as the image comes into focus. In contrast, the sound in the second part is mottled in the setting both in the centre and in the foreground. In the third part the sound works ambiguously between the synchronous and the imposed. Each cut is accompanied by a drumbeat, like a pulse. We cannot determine whether this tap causes announcements or reacts to the change in image. That is the very ambiguity of the filmmaker's relationship to his image here. He is a present recorder. He is at once passive before the spectacle and active in its preservation.

For all its import, though, one must not lose sight of the sheer pleasure that this film presents. It is not often that one feels regret when a Michael Snow film comes to an end. But here one is disappointed that that brilliantly executed slapstick sequence is over. And even more when his collage of splendid reality draws to a close. But then the quickening drum-pace heralds our return to the world before. And then one can exercise the sharper, appreciative eye for color and movement that Snow has provided. There his Presents will enhance our own present.

Maurice Yacowar


VICTIM OF A LETHAL MIXTURE: CBC'S "GOLDEN GIRL" LALLY CADEAU AS KATIE FORBES IN YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, KATIE.