One would like to see more Canadian films in this vein: not necessarily autobiographical films using non-professional actors - there are many fine actors still working in Canada - but Canadian films in this vein; not necessarily the variety of Canadian life and reflect the professional actors - there are many of them.

but heavy-handed, it is sometimes difficult to...
child. She has a properly exotic body, of which much is seen, but only the more innocent of audiences (like the Ontario Censors, who ruled that "some scenes may be offensive"), would call her trysts with man and near-man daringly erotic. Richard Sargent has studied (and not very well) in the Jan-Michel Vincent/Perry King school of acting, and Don McGlaughlin, the figure in the monkey suit, doesn't speak, so his reputation is safe.

But in two areas, Tanya's Island doesn't need to apologize. Mark Irwin's cinematography is effective and lush. Though he couldn't have realized it at the time, his work calls to mind and matches Almendros' work in the Blue Lagoon and Caleb Deschanel's in The Black Stallion. The ape make-up was created by Rick Baker, who rather specializes in simians King Kong, The Incredible Shrinking Woman and Bob Bottin (The Fog, The Howling). They have their own humorous touch, in giving Blue a face that bears a disconcerting resemblance to Sterling Hayden.

J. Paul Costabile

TANYA'S ISLAND


Paul Shapiro's Clown White

Producer Martin Harbury picked up on an idea that had been circulating among a few Toronto filmmakers for some four years, to make a film on deafness and mime. That was over three years ago, and the result is Clown White, a fifteen-minute television film. In telling the story of a rebellious deaf child who runs away, Harbury got himself in for more than he bargained for. "The whole field of deafness is a vast and complicated one," says Harbury. "Everyone has very strong viewpoints, so we had to tread a very delicate path."

This delicate path concerns the ways in which deaf children are taught to communicate. Clown White doesn't comment on these ways — indeed, its strength lies in its open-mindedness towards the various approaches used by the concerned adults in the film. It does, however, throw a curve into any handbook approach, considering the film's central character, Jason, a very bright but frustrated and uncommunicative boy about ten years old. Jason's alienation goes beyond the fact of his deafness. He appears singular in his alienation, even in his schoo class of fellow hearing-impaired children; we often see him through glass partitions or even as a background silhouette.

The best efforts of his teacher — an earnest, concerned man played with evident enthusiasm by Saul Rubinek — fail to reach him. When the boy defaces a school wall with chalk drawings of clown faces (an image which repeatedly recurs), the teacher feels compelled to respond punitively by barring Jason from a class trip to the Planetarium. Not easily deterred, Jason stows away on the expedition. Found out, and about to receive more punishment, he breaks loose and runs off into the midst of the city, pausing first to complete his freedom by discarding the Phonic Ear Amplifier that remains his only link with the world of hearing. He returns to a store window where a mime in white-face (played by Lorene Yarnell of the famous American mime duo, Shields and Yarnell), has been performing. Through her and the gestures of mime he finds a mode of expression that satisfies him; he returns to the school group, now in white-face himself, with good cheer and a spirit of reconciliation.

What Clown White has done best is to depict sympathetically the world around Jason. With one or two hard-hearted exceptions, everyone tries in his own fashion to be helpful, even the otherwise anti-social bus driver whom the children love; this last is played by Michael Ironside, widely seen this year in David Cronenberg's Scanners. Jason's classmates are all tenderly created composites of children that Harbury and director Paul Shapiro met while researching the film in various institutions for the deaf around Toronto. Each of them is portrayed distinctly, rather than as part of an amorphous group of secondary characters, reflecting the care with which the film was made.

The film is Harbury's second dramatic project but it is no accident that his background is primarily that of a documentary filmmaker. Clown White is an extensively researched film whose story evolved from Harbury and Shapiro's encounters with the deaf community. The children in the film were selected from among the 45 hearing-impaired youngsters that were auditioned part of the largely positive response that the project received in that community. The