It seems ludicrous, getting lost in a sound stage, but that's exactly what happens during the shooting of Scene 0, Take 2 of *The Wars*, the $3.8 million screen adaptation of Timothy Findley's award-winning novel. The confounding element is a dense fog which has been so artfully contrived by the special effects crew (headed by Colin Chilvers, who won an Academy Award for *Superman*), that 15 actors and six horses on the other side of the Kleinburg studio have vanished into the thick of it.

What with the dry ice, the fog-sticks, the oil-based smoke and gallons of oozing mud on the floor, the stage has become an eerie no-man's land. When a horse somewhere lets out a snort, the sound is more than a touch unnerving. Suddenly, there's a muffled cry from Brent Carver, the Canadian star of the film, who has lost his bearings and can't find the camera.

Ironically, the scene itself is about being lost. Carver plays Robert Ross, a young Canadian officer in World War I, who, like the proverbial blind man, is unwittingly leading his men across a foggy, crumbling dike in Flanders, littered with the corpses of soldiers who took a wrong step and drowned in the mud.

Finally, the camera starts to roll, but Carver's horse won't budge. There is a long silence, followed by the wet sound of horses' hooves being sucked into the oozing ground. Then, out of obscurity come the pale figures of six officers on horseback. They ride wearily toward the camera, followed by nine foot soldiers weighed down by woolen greatcoats, guns and the fear of death.

After the scene has been shot, director Robin Phillips, former head of the Stratford Ontario Shakespearean Festival, talks about its lyricism, of all things. "There is something extraordinary about fog," he says. "That was probably the most horrific shot of the whole film, but with the fog even the gruesome becomes lyrical."

Though bloody spectacle is usually the foundation of war films, *The Wars* defies the standard devices of the genre. There are bodies in the film, but they don't blow up on camera. "Or on the camera," points out D.P. John Coquillon who is enjoying a respite after two Sam Peckinpah war films. There are no slaughter scenes and no battle scenes with the enemy. The closest the film gets to actual fighting is a single incident with a lone German soldier.

And yet, *The Wars* is filled with violence, the kind that is found among a legion of enemies, on a multitude of battlefields. "The film is about the wars we have inside us, and between each
"other," says Phillips. "It deals with personal suspense, especially the kind within families."

Timothy Findley's story focuses on the war's effect on an upper-class Toronto family. Although the scenes themselves are not especially late-Victorian, Rosedale types, are usually seen as cool and repressed, the Roses see life with rage. Many shots of the blowing veils, is actually "driven by fury," according to Findley. "Her fury comes from the fact that we celebrate the perfect child, and that's as they go to war." Robert Ross, the son, is also driven by anger. He might have been a hero in the war, and people know that he's the son of Mrs. Ross, sophisticated in furs and a tremendously charismatic personality."

The premise of Phil Jackson's sci-fi feature, *The Music of the Spheres*, is intriguing. The music of the spheres as it was formulated by the ancients, and later in the Medieval world-view, was the celestial music of an earth-centered recorder: the perfect interval of the gods. Jackson's aliens are, essentially, those supreme beings which exist for and in the music. A space project involving solar energy deflectors in orbit around the sun is the cause of friction between 'us' and 'them,' because it threatens to disturb the music. Sometimes in the 21st century a highly evolved technology has grown out of the ruins of our present military-industrial system, nurtured by the surviving scientific elite of the world. There hasn't been a nuclear cataclysm, but all cities have stopped dead, and social and economic change as we know it has disappeared. What is left is administrated by The System, a network of computers housed in Centres around the world. The key logistical communications Centre is located in what was once Toronto. Everything that happens on the planet is accounted for by an Equation. As long as it is balanced, the System works, and all the other things that we've managed to do with our brains and our bodies. The system cannot integrate. Alien beings are the one element the System cannot integrate. Music is a highly ambitious, experimental game, provided by a budget of $140,000. Shooting in 16mm, Jackson sees no difficulty for later blowup. The proposition is an example of the imaginative use of minimal resources by a committed group of professionalists.

The principal character, Melody, played by the remarkable actress from Quebec, Anne Dauversière, is the other half of a ‘human link’ computer, the Beast. Her brain is tied into the massive computer; she is highly sensitive, but only in relation to the Beast. Paul, one of the Beast's creators, was born under the old order and is one of the leaders of the new (played by Jacques Couture). Andrew, the psychiatrist who tries to 'explode it and get it out.' The cinematography will enhance this claustrophobic mood.

Jackson hopes the film will challenge audiences to deal with complex ideas about the limitations of rational thinking, bureaucracy, and words. Although the film will emphasize character and psychology over special effects, the effect of the concept of language is implied in words and sentence structure. However, when Melody starts to have intuitive feelings about the aliens, things which are not accounted for within the System - the lack of words, and is driven by a tremendous need to express herself, to explode and get it out. The music of the spheres will enhance this claustrophobic mood.

The film's dialogue will be bilingual, with appropriate English and French subtitles. The concept of language is central, both in logic of the system and implied in Melody’s dream sequences - subjective perception. Jackson envisions extremely theatrical effects in childlike landscapes, side by side with sophisticated, crisp, space realism.

In June the crew was shooting in the Eaton Centre and the production value of the location was superb. The vaulted ceiling of the Centre's gallery provided a vast, austere backdrop for the emotionally charged scenes. Proof that 'nothing is the mother of invention,' the constant splash of fountains in the background will be softened to a whisper in the final soundtrack - the breath of the Beast.

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