

ATLANTIC ECHOES

by Mike Riggio

NIFCO (the Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative) goes back to 1975. At the time, there were several filmmakers working on their own, borrowing equipment and cameras, taking advantage of where they worked to get at stuff. But they wanted to set up a facility that they could call

their own, so they wouldn't have to be begging for everything they needed, from rewinds to synchronisers.

Obviously, the thing to do was to do it co-operatively. Eventually, with the help of the Canada Council, the National Film Board, and Memorial University's Extension Ser-

vice, the Film Co-op was set up.

When the group started, there were people who had made films, others who wanted to, and some who thought they could participate in the film-making process. Those who had made films were the guides for the others.

Mike Jones had been working

on film on his own for a couple of years and he also had worked for the Film Board. David Pope had been making super-8 films with a group called the Soul Brothers and was anxious to move into 16mm.

John Doyle, who had gone to Ryerson, had been involved in super-8 and 16mm with his brother Bill. Derek Norman had been editing films for Memorial University. Paul MacLeod from the Media Section of the University Extension Ser-

vice had been helpful in providing equipment from the Film Unit.

From the beginning too, there were younger people like Tony Duarte and Paul Pope who had done some video work in their high school AV clubs - they didn't know much about film-making but were anxious to learn and to help out.

Initially NIFCO had a single-system Auricon sound camera on loan from Memorial University - it was a bit of a task, but you had to get by.

Today the Co-op has moved to a fairly solid membership of people who have made at least one 16mm film and in some cases are working in film or in film-related business.

The NIFCO catalogue has about 40 films. Some of them are first films, or student films - films which are primarily of historical value. But there are also a number of mature films, people's second and third films, which can stand on their own without any adjective applied to them.

Over the years various groups have assisted the development of the Co-op in one form or another. The CBC has provided short ends from their VNF stock, as well free processing. CBC (as well as NTV and ETV) has turned over, at a nominal cost, its discarded film stocks.

The Film Unit of Memorial University has provided free sound transfers and mixes, as well as special loan of equipment for a variety of projects. Memorial has excellent mixing facilities, and most budgets don't include a trip to Toronto or Montreal for a mix.

Yet the chances of earning a living at filmmaking in Newfoundland are not great. Most Co-op members who consider themselves filmmakers realize that they have to work at something else while they continue to make films.

"If they are lucky, they might find work with CBC as a cameraman or soundman, or as a writer for radio, or an agent for a camera company," says John Doyle, outgoing President of NIFCO. "Otherwise it's the rigs and the UIC."

Why then don't people go off to Toronto? "Why should they? Filmmaking doesn't need to be centralized. You don't need a factory or a large workforce. There's no reason why films can't be made all over Canada."

Doyle stresses that idea and energy are not problem. "When I look at the films that have been made here, I think 'if this is what they can do for nothing, what would they do if they had a few dollars?'"

And that's the question everybody is asking. Where to get that little bit of money. The Newfoundland Government has made its commitment to

**MCA
UNIVERSAL
FILMS
(CANADA)**

Universal Productions Canada Inc.
MCA TV (Canada)
MCA Records (Canada)
MCA Music Canada
MCA VideoCassette (Canada)
MCA DiscoVision (Canada)
MCA Distributing (Canada)

2450 Victoria Park Avenue
Willowdale, Ontario M2J 4A2
Tel: (416) 491-3000 Telex: 06-966876

Atlantic Echoes

the culture through the Arts Council—a budget of \$200,000—a sizeable commitment for a have-not province. But that has to cover administrative expenses, which leaves about \$120,000 (the equivalent of four teachers' salaries) for actual grants.

"One possibility," says Doyle, "is to examine whether there are economically viable films to make. That in itself might be a contradiction in terms. Whether it's possible to make films and get your money back... If you look at any area of the country, who is making cost-recovery films?"

Industrially sponsored films? "That's a very small market here. If everybody who is involved in alternate filmmaking started chasing after the television commercials and the industrial films, you'd soon learn that there isn't enough money to pay for the shirt and tie, let alone a living for everybody."

But Doyle feels that Newfoundland has potential to develop if one looks at entertainment films. "My dream is that it might be possible here in Newfoundland to start making films in a very small way that would be special and exciting. Different films because they come from a perspective that is unlike the rest of Canada. And maybe even in a broader market people would be interested and willing to pay to see them."

It seems like a far-flu dream, but Newfoundland has exported entertainment before—Codco, the Mummies, Rising Tide, the Wonderful Grand Band. "It may be our richest natural resource, and it's renewable." But this would require some major changes in attitude.

CBC, for example, produces *Up At Ours*, a local sit-com drama series. The show employs local script writers and local actors, but allows no room for local film people, even in an observer capacity. Says Doyle, "The production has eaten up a lot of money. It's a shame that it all has got to be done in-house at the CBC, but some of it isn't getting out to the independents—and not just because it would create work. I think they'd get another kind of program."

On a national level, CBC last year allocated \$22 million for acquisition of independent production. How does Doyle feel about this? "If that were distributed on a per capita

basis, there could be close to half a million dollars in Newfoundland. Imagine what that would do for production and for development!"

"But," continues Doyle, "I can see what they are saying at headquarters: 'Half a million bucks for production in Newfoundland! What? Throw good money into the incinerator? They'd probably use it to keep the Steenbeck warm when they can't pay the heat

bills.'"

Then he adds: "The films that have been made here demonstrate that the ideas, the talents, the organizational capabilities are not missing. The money is the problem. Why not take that leap of faith?"

But then he has a warning: "They wouldn't get the same kinds of films as would come out of Etobicoke (no offence). If they're really stuck on that kind

of film, then Newfoundland would be the wrong place to come with their money."

John Doyle, outgoing President of NIFCO (Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Cooperative) is working as a writer for a CBC radio soap opera, and spent part of his summer in Toronto, hosting Stereo Morning. In his spare time he is developing a feature film script which he hopes to eventually put into production.

Pearson to teach film at Queens

KINGSTON — Director Peter Pearson has accepted a full-time position as professor of film at Queen's University. His responsibilities will include several production courses, a look at the director as writer, and a study of the impact of agencies on the sorts of films produced.



National
Film Board
of Canada

Office
national du film
du Canada

NEWS



"The idea for *The Sound Collector* came from my early (and still lingering) fascination with how sounds work; how working on a film's sound track one finds that sometimes the most unlikely sound will work better than the real sound." Lynn Smith.

NFB FESTIVAL ENTRIES

Two NFB films, *The Sound Collector* and *Friends of the Family*, will have their world premiere at the international animation festival in Ottawa, August 13-18. *The Sound Collector* is the work of Lynn Smith who used cut-outs to animate a young boy's urge to transform household noises into fantasy. Smith is an independent filmmaker from the U.S. She has worked for the Educational Development Centre in Boston; for the TV series, *Mr. Rogers Neighborhood*; and has made numerous films for the Board including the award-winning *This is*

Your Museum Speaking.

Friends of the Family, directed by Yossi Abolafia, is an NFB/UNICEF co-production illustrating how UNICEF helps needy children develop self-reliance. Abolafia is an Israeli filmmaker. He has worked for CBC-TV and is the author of several children's books. Other films in competition in Ottawa are *Top Priority* by Ishu Patel, *Une Histoire comme une autre* by Paul Driessen, Anne MacLeod's *Death in Spring*, *Système métrique*, *Le Guide* by Jean-Jacques Leduc and André Leduc, *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin* by Janet Perlman, *E* by Bretislav Pojar, George

Geersten's *Klondike Gold*, Pierre Veilleux's *Une Âme à voile* and *Pig Bird* by Richard Condie.

The NFB is also well represented at the Montreal World Film Festival on August 19-29. Viviane Elnécavé's animated fantasy *Luna Luna Luna*, and Bill Maylone's *64,000 Years Ago*, a recreation of the dinosaur age using model animation, are both in competition. The festival will be the premiere, for Gilles Carle's *Jouer sa vie*, a feature documentary about the myth and magic of chess. Carle's film will be shown, along with nine other NFB films, in the "Cinéma d'aujourd'hui" program. Other titles include: *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin* by Janet Perlman; *Top Priority* by Ishu Patel, *E* by Bretislav Pojar, Pierre Veilleux's *Une Âme à voile*, *Steady as She Goes* by Robert Fresco, Terri Nash's *If You Love This Planet*, *Distant Islands* by Bettina Maylone, Joyce Borenstein's *Five Billion Years* and *Countdown Vignette* by Veronika Soul.

The Banff Television Festival, August 15-21, has selected five NFB films to compete this year. Two of the films were produced by the Ontario Production Studio: *After the Axe*, directed by Sturla Gunnarsson, and *Steady as She Goes*, by Robert Fresco. Other titles: *Le Canot à Renald à Thomas*, directed by Bernard Gosselin; *Le confort et l'indifférence*, by Denis Arcand; and *Le Grand Héron*, directed by Jean-Louis Frund, are all produced by French Production in Montreal.

The Film Board will also be participating in the Toronto Festival of Festivals. Details to follow.

NFB Offices in Canada:

Headquarters - Montreal (514) 333-3452
Pacific region - Vancouver (604) 666-1716
Prairie region - Winnipeg (204) 949-4129
Ontario region - Toronto (416) 369-4094

National Capital - Ottawa (613) 996-4259
Quebec region - Montreal (514) 283-4823
Atlantic region - Halifax (902) 426-6000
plus offices in most major cities.

MONTREAL-The Claude Leouch film *Les uns et les autres* will have been in release for one year as of Sept. 1, in Montreal. Distributor is L. N. Films.