



● Ulrike Ottinger's *Freak Orlando*: mutant offspring of German filmmaking

An expressive sort of howl

by David Clarke

To prepare myself for the 11th Montreal International Festival of New Cinema, I went and saw *Tron* and *E.T.*, on the theory that I might as well know what the mainstream was up to these days. Getting to know my video game seemed more cathartic than learning to love an alien, but then I've never actually seen an alien.

But there was really no preparing for the Festival. I hesitate to criticize it, even mildly, for I think the Festival is a truly magnificent event, a beacon of film culture, and dollar for dollar the best value for government support of the arts that I have ever seen. But 76 films in 10 days? Plus an intriguing display of video art? And press conferences and panel discussions to boot?

I think this year's Festival got a little out of hand, at least in terms of a lonely guy who wants to digest what he's seen in the company of others who have seen the same things. If you want to be scien-



● Les Blank and extras from the Campa and Machiguenga tribes

tific about it, satisfying the greatest variety of appetites for new cinema by showing the greatest number of new films is probably correct. And little groups of directors, press and superfans did coalesce here and there... but the conversation does tend to lag when it takes several minutes to find something someone else has also ingested.

As I say, though, that is very mild criticism. I saw some truly remarkable films at this year's Festival, and I don't know where else I would see them. This was without question a world-class film festival, well run and well received by the thousands of people who attended.

Les Productions Avantage taped a number of interviews with directors present at the Festival; and it may well be that when their video is released, we'll have a document of widespread and lasting interest.

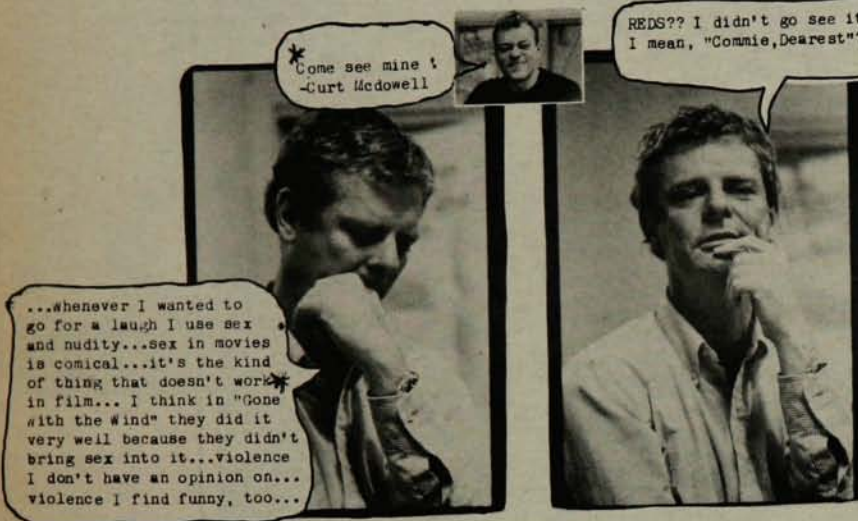
When you tilt an empty coffee cup towards a truly fierce wind, you add a new and distinct howl to the overall furor. It's not very loud, comparatively,

(cont. on page 28)

David Clarke is a Montreal freelance who writes the occasional screenplay.

MORRISSEY MEETS THE ANARCHISTS
 (or, if you prefer...)
ANARCHISM IN AMERICA MEETS THEIR MAKER!
 (THEIR, being: FLESH, TRASH, HEAT, L'AMOUR,
 WOMEN IN REVOLT, FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN,
 BLOOD FOR DRACULA, THE HOUND OF THE BASKIN
 ERVILLE & Mrs. WANG...)

A RUNAWAY JOURNALIST UNCOVERED



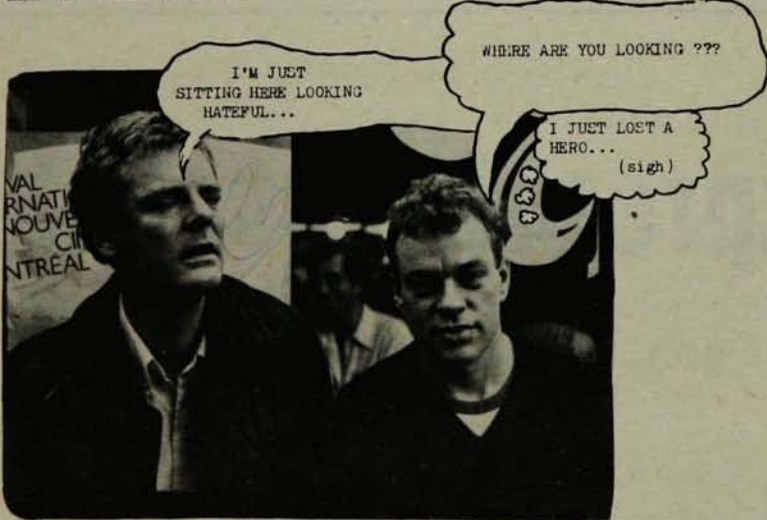
PAUL MORRISSEY/"FORTY DEUCE"/U.S.A.



BURDENED WITH DREAMS

...whenever I wanted to go for a laugh I use sex and nudity...sex in movies is comical...it's the kind of thing that doesn't work in film... I think in "Gone with the Wind" they did it very well because they didn't bring sex into it...violence I don't have an opinion on... violence I find funny, too...

MEETING (NOT CONVERGING) AT THE PARALLEL



PAUL MORRISSEY/"FORTY DEUCE"/U.S.A.

CURT McDOWELL/"NUDES-A SKETCHBOOK"

...If I abandon this film, I would be a man without dreams...I live my life or I end my life with this project...
 -Herzog in Burden of Dreams

...We have to articulate ourselves, otherwise we would be cows in a field...
 -Herzog in Burden of Dreams

...Dreams are universal...the only distinction between you and me is that I can articulate them...
 -Herzog in Burden of Dreams

...I shouldn't make movies anymore. I should go to a lunatic asylum right away...
 -Herzog in Burden of Dreams

...I'm running out of fantasy. I don't know what else can happen now...
 -Herzog in Burden of Dreams

...My hero. He is his passion torture. He his belief passion for unrepeatable the whole toward across This is the paid for the earth...if that is be sometimes.
 -Albert Camus

LEE BLANK/"THE

RE-TAKES



MICHAEL SNOW/"90 IS THIS"/CANADA



DICK RIJNSMA & MILDRED VAN LEEUWEN/"FINKEEL"/HOLLAND



ALEXANDER BOGWELL/"LENS"/U.S.A.

... At times I feel like my head SCRAPES against the sky...
 -from the film, IRENE

...What is life? Life is to live. Life is- life...you're being lived. Someone else is deciding...
 -Finkel

MONTREAL FILM FESTIVAL... (and PEEKS!!!)

...THE CAUSE OF POVERTY?? ...
VICTIMS OF RUNAWAY JOURNALISM...
(that's) WHY PEOPLE LIVE THE WAY
THEY DO...



(Left field)
WE DO WHAT WE'RE TOLD
TO DO.
-Policeman
Anarchism in America

ANARCHISM? I didn't think
it was something people
take seriously...
-Paul Morrissey, filmmaker

(Right wing)
EXTREMISM IS THE WIDWIFE OF
ANARCHY !!
-Politician
Anarchism in America



JOEL SUCHER & STEVEN FISCHLER/"ANARCHISM IN AMERICA"/U.S.A.

CHEAP SHOTS: by Linda Dawn Hammond

Linda Dawn Hammond is a freelance photographer living in Montreal.

WHIM'S WIM

...(Fitzcarraldo is an)
outdated version of our
reality...

-Fribal Council
Burden of Dreams

...they will take off
your face and use your
grease for airplanes...

-unsubstantiated Indio rumour
Burden of Dreams

... I want them to go so
I can take off my clothes
and show myself to my lovers...

-Peruvian Tribeswomen
Burden of Dreams

...one of the biggest
set-backs occurred when
the soccer ball busted...

-General consensus
Burden of Dreams

...Stories need stories. Life
doesn't need stories... They were
looking for a story...
without a story you're DEAD
...I knew how to tell stories
...10 films...10 stories...
Same story.
Life sneaks out...
everything gets pressured
into images... All stories
are about Death (it's the)
Biggest Story in the World,
Second-best only to love stories..

It's time now for The Survivors
to separate...

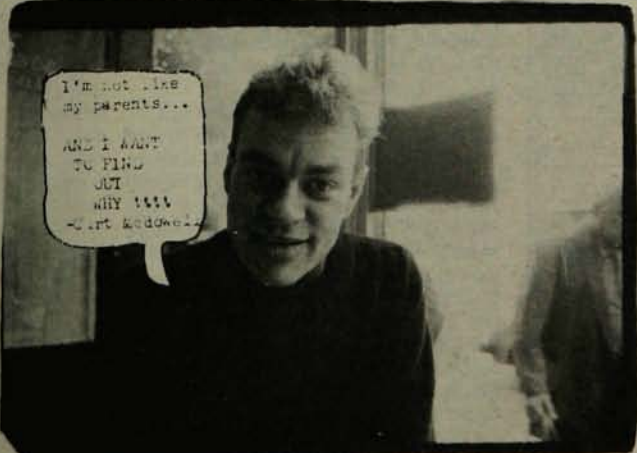
BANG ! BANG !
(Whirrrrrrrrrrr)
BANG ! BANG !
(and that's, THE STATE OF THINGS)



WIM WENDERS/"THE STATE OF THINGS", "REVERSE ANGLE"/GERMANY

I'm not like
my parents...

AND I WANT
TO FIND
OUT
WHY !!!
-Curt McDowell



CURT McDOWELL/"NUDES-A SKETCHBOOK", "TABOO", "LOADS", "THUNDER/RACK"/U.S.A.



CLAUDE CHAMBERLAN/DIRECTION II FESTIVAL DU NOUVEAU CINEMA, MONTREAL

Burden of dreams

Montreal has been described as the underground film capital of North America. Certainly the enthusiasm aroused by the 11th International Festival of New Cinema, held Oct. 29 - Nov. 7 attests to a demonstrable receptivity to non-mainstream film. But a festival remains a festival, the exhibitory high point of a long, hard road.

At the beginning of that road stands the lone filmmaker, burdened with dreams but without money or support; often with barely enough equipment. For a view from that end of the road, Emil Sher describes the creation of a new Montreal film co-op.

When immigrants first arrived in Montreal at the turn of the century with suitcases and dreams in hand, it was on the Main - St. Lawrence Boulevard - that many of them set up shop and replanted their roots. From grocers selling pickles out of wooden barrels to dry goods merchants hawking their wares, they flanked the sidewalks in a colorful blend of languages and lifestyles. So it seems appropriate that a group of young filmmakers who have joined forces to form a cooperative where diversity can thrive should choose to establish themselves on the Main. Nestled on top of a bakery, Main Film is a new co-op that serves as a resource center for those who want to pursue alternative filmmaking.

Main Film embodies the pluralism that characterizes the street on which it is housed. Comprised primarily of anglophones, the co-op has resisted any type of ideological or political slant. Like the multi-ethnic face of St. Lawrence that incorporates diversity into one of its greatest assets, Main Film members are encouraged to pursue and share their individual filmmaking styles while fortifying the collective as a whole.

"I don't think there's any real ideological slant that holds the thing together," says Jason Levy, who also sits on the production committee. "It's more practical considerations. The idea is more that people will be free to do what they want within the framework of us working together." Echoing this attitude, chairperson Mary Armstrong stresses that the only mold the co-op won't fit into is a commercial one. "Whether people want to make films that are politically important or art films, I don't think there's a real restriction, except that we don't want to compete with private industry. We want to make the equipment available for us to make the kind of films we want to make," she says.

In preparation for the first co-op films to be made, the question of creative control is a contentious issue that Main Film is grappling with in its formative stage. "We're really new," says Armstrong. "The production policy is new, the production committee is even newer and so, at this point, we've set some guidelines and we'll have to see what happens. We know one another. What we're asking from members who make a submission is for as much information as they can give us in terms of sources of funding. We're going to find out, given the scope of the project somebody has and the sources of funding they have, what degree of creative control they're going to have. We're going to have to play it by ear as we go along."

While it may be some time before the co-op's first film is screened, film buffs have not been left in the dark as to the varied filmmaking styles that one could expect to find at Main Film. Eleven short films directed by co-op members were shown to a full house at a one-night screening this fall at Montreal's Cinéma Parallèle. Among the films were Armstrong's *Everybody's Business*, a documentary on a Saskatchewan greenhouse cooperative run by people who are physically and mentally handicapped; *Cherries*, Robert Rayher's six-minute silent close-up of someone pitting cherries; Peter Sandmark's *Moebius Strip* and Dale Walsh's *À la ligne*, two animated films that are respectively conventional and experimental; and *Va t'incer l'oeil*, Geoff Bowie's film on male strippers that received a "special mention" at the 1981 Canadian Film Festival. Armstrong contends that the films reflect the diversity that's involved in the co-op. Vice-chairperson Marie Potvin attributes part of the success of the screening to a kind of aesthetics that correspond to the young generation. "The people in the co-operative represent a new generation whose formal ideas are different from those of the people who started making films ten years ago," she says. "Compared to what is made in Montreal generally, maybe our tendency is a little more experimental than most of the things that have been done."

The success of the fall screening and other ones that Main Film has held is indicative of the results it can achieve by virtue of its collective input. Armstrong laments the plight of the independent filmmaker who makes a film geared towards a certain audience, yet at the same time wants to expose the film to as large an audience as possible. Main

but it's an expressive sort of howl, and it's your howl.

Film your experiment in aural aesthetics, show it to me; and if not for the fact that I thought of it first, I'd give it a good review. For what I'm looking for in experimental film is something that's new, and something that works.

Robina Rose's *Nightshift* was the most noteworthy experiment that I saw. It was the film equivalent to Brian Eno's ambient music... by slowing the pace to that of a hotel attendant's night shift, she demonstrated that there is an attenuated impact to what stimuli the hotel guests' activities provide.

It may not sound like it, but it was a treat to the eyes, and the narratives embedded in the guests' activities were fascinating. Only one criticism. The attendant whose point of view we shared was an icon of complete passivity, the guests were very real people... there was a contradiction there that was more annoying than illuminating. Then again, it was a memorable image of the definitively alienated worker.

Secondary Current by Peter Rose was an arch experiment in using words on the screen and a soundtrack to demonstrate that there is a humanistic message to be derived from the fact that a universal language exists. It was also a pretty friendly, good-hearted film.

Michael Snow uses just letters and words on the screen in *So Is This*, so perhaps it is a purer experiment than *Secondary Current*. But I found Snow's film a lot less interesting; to be blunt, other than reviewing the state of affairs in semiotics, I don't know what the point of it was. Perhaps there was on the screen some nuance of a new notion about self-reflexive discourse, or the possibilities of the minimalist screen image. But I didn't see it.

Plowman's Lunch by Lawrence Weiner was a botched experiment in applying Godard's techniques to illuminating the semiotic investigations of a bunch of shallow Dutch punkers. It never had a chance of working, but amid the wreckage of the film there were some funny moments, and some tender ones.

Distance, by Jean van de Velde, was the strongest film in the realistic mode that I encountered at the Festival. Clever use of the subjective camera gets us into the skin of the protagonist, a filmmaker who compulsively uses the camera to distance himself from the world, but who is struggling to close that distance. The photography was excellent, the storyline tight as a drum. Perhaps the friend the protagonist spends so much time filming is more of an archetype than a real character, but then any more depth to him and we would have been distracted from the protagonist. In a milder form, it's the same kind of problem as in *Nightshift*.

Paul Morrissey's *Forty Deuce* was also outstanding, but I suspect the credit probably goes more to the off-Broadway play upon which the movie is based, and the cast who are remarkably convincing. With one classic film already to his credit (*Heat*), Morrissey's direction here is flawless. It's just that this tale of male prostitution in Manhattan doesn't call for the director to do much more than stand back and let the story and the cast do their stuff. Of course, displaying that kind of discretion is in itself no mean feat on the part of Morrissey.

Michael Oblowitz' *King Blank* wavers in and out of realism; sometimes wandering off-track into rock video flashiness, sometimes zeroing in relentlessly

to present à la Hitchcock the claustrophobia and terror of a borderline psychotic girl trapped in a relationship with a man who has been refused induction into the U.S. Army because he is completely mad.

Rosemary Hochschild gave an intriguing performance, and Oblowitz has some interesting scenes where the characters don't talk, or talk very little, even while the sound track has them pouring out a stream of words. It was fun seeing someone getting serious use out of horror-movie techniques, and Oblowitz showed a lot of technical skill. Still, he seems to have been aiming at skulls cracked with shock, really epic horror, and his story line was a little too confused for that. He can't expect us to put ourselves totally in the story when he isn't sure exactly what he thinks of his characters; that is, whether they're totally frightening, slightly ridiculous, or just good folks with big problems.

When I was little, my mother told me the story of the little Spartan boy who was so ashamed of being caught with a stolen fox under his cloak that he let it gnaw him to death rather than admit it was there. The story made several impressions on me; among them was the notion that if Spartan mothers went around telling their kids that the little boy was to be emulated, then there are definite limits to how well you can ever understand truly different cultures.

This by way of introducing a Vietnamese film called *Rencontre des Nuages et du Dragon*, by Lâm-Lê. A fable, realistically told, it tells the story of a magician who lives through the French and American occupations. It's in black and white, 33 minutes long, it leaves you marveling that out of such tragic events such a compelling tale can be woven. I don't know what I can add to that, since the central metaphor of the butterfly has a resonance I can only note without defining. In the same way, the acting style is pretty broad, in the manner of some Chinese films I've seen. It seemed like good acting to me.

Sayat Nova, Couleur de Grenade is another film I feel very cautious about, especially since its stately procession of stunning images finally drove me from the theater. It's a majestic film which tells the story of a famous Armenian bard who took refuge in a monastery, but I just wasn't up to the effort of watching it. Serguei Paradjnov, the Soviet director of the film, has tremendous visual power, and it's a film I want to see again. Paradjnov has suffered at the hands of the Soviet authorities; I signed the petition on his behalf, and I urge others to do so. I may have reservations about understanding other cultures, but Soviet paranoia and brutality is something I can grasp.

I caught a couple of documentaries at the Festival: Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams* and Frederick Wiseman's *Model*, which were so perfect they leave me with nothing to say. It doesn't mean that I was wildly enthusiastic about either one; I wasn't; but they were both right out of the textbook on how to make compelling documentary film. *Burden of Dreams* follows Werner Herzog through the trials and tribulations of making *Fitzcarraldo* in the Peruvian jungle, and it certainly underscores the vanity-to-the-point-of-madness involved in the project. There's a lovely shot that comes just after one of Herzog's most embarrassing ravings, when we see an insect struggling to carry a leaf that's just obviously too big for it to handle. *Model's* great strength is its exquisite

• The founding meeting of the Main Film co-op in November, 1980

