

was also the one in which the differences between real Canadian television and the foreign stuff would have been the most unsettling. Jennifer Dale, despite her loveliness and vitality, does not have Kenneth Welsh's depth of characterization, and in this episode too early had to carry more than her share. Even Welsh's brilliance - *Empire Inc.* is largely a one-man show - takes getting used to: like the best of brandies, it requires a couple of shots before the glow gets to you.

For the second and third episodes, the statistical decline has set in: going down to 2.1 million and 1.55 respectively, then rallying for the fourth episode, with a slight rise to 1.8 million. Still hefty numbers, but one begins to shudder at the looming threat of the *Winds of War* opener which coincide with "Titans Don't Cry", episode five, the dramatic height of *Empire Inc.*, an episode of stunning lyricism which should, if there is any justice in life, keep the beautiful Linda Griffiths in work for the rest of hers.

While waiting to see if the Canadian Godots will massively support the finest dramatic television this country has ever produced, it is worth reflecting that the CBC and the NFB have with *Empire Inc.* lived up to the expectations laid upon them. Given enough heat, the public production sector can and does deliver. Somewhere in those endless corridors, there is room for hopeful undertakings. And at the very least Mark Blandford merits an Order of Canada for having wrought this miracle.

The collaboration between the CBC and the NFB would appear to have translated smoothly onto the screen. The joint direction of the six episodes (Douglas Jackson doing one, three and four, and Denys Arcand doing two, five and six) was so even-handed as to be unnoticeable.

More jarring was Douglas Bowie's occasionally appalling dialogue. Episode three for some reason was pregnant with dumb lines. For instance, C.D. Howe (with David Gardner excellently playing this colorless minister of the church of State) says to Munroe about the latter's Senneville estate: "Nice home." To which Munroe replies, with equal imaginativeness: "We like it." Or when the curiously vapid Mitch Martin, playing Amy, the least developed of the Munroe children, gasps at her paramour: "I'm afraid of what's in my head. Won't you hold me, like a woman, not a little girl."

Luckily this sort of thing is only intermittent. The acting throughout *Empire Inc.* is systematically first-rate, though imprisoned in the one-hour format and the vastness of a 30-year canvas, many of the characters simply never get enough room to develop fully. Gabriel Arcand is wonderful as the French-Canadian fixer who can never quite get over his astonishment at having become very rich. As Munroe's wife Catherine, Martha Henry is a marvel of taut restraint, an actress who shows only the slip of her abilities. And Donald Pilon as the Munroe chauffeur finally gets to utter a couple of lines in episode five.

Many of *Empire's* finest performances take the form of brief cameos. Robert Clothier (of the *Beachcombers*) undergoes a fortunate metamorphosis as the randy Lord Percy. George Merner, in a few brief minutes, does a matchless Mackenzie King. And Alexander Knox, in his equally brief portrayal of Lord Atholstan, proprietor of The Montreal Star, is a gem of incipient senility. In episode four, Jacques Thisdale has all

the meanness of Clint Eastwood as a snakelike Communist labor organizer.

Fanatics of verisimilitude may have been slightly puzzled by the numbers of cars whizzing across the Jacques Cartier Bridge in a scene in episode two - rush-hour in the midst of the Depression? And the towers of Westmount Square obtrude in episode five (set in 1954) about 15 years before their time.

The CBC gets plenty of nudge-nudge-wink-wink in its view of itself as the common carrier of Canadian culture. The Happy Gang radio show is momentarily resurrected in clips from the bowels of CBC Toronto's Studio Three, now the set for The Journal. In episode

EMPIRE INC. d. Denys Arcand, Douglas Jackson sc. Douglas Bowie story ed. Joan Irving-Herman exec. p. Mark Blandford p. Paul Risacher assoc. p. Stefan Wodoslawsky, Dorothy Courtois d.o.p. Alain Dostie art. d. Pierre Garneau cost. d. Fernand Rainville p. man. Connie Ballam 1st a.d. Louise Turcotte-Gerlache 2nd a.d. Hans Vander-sluis asst. loc. man. Yves Mathieu, Diane Thomas, Henri Boucher p. sec. Lise Gagné drama unit sec. Andrée Chamberland cast. d. Barbara Cartwright, Emma Hodgson cast. asst. Sophie Sénécal unit admin. Maurice Gingras, Jackie Van Echten, Yvon Payette admin. (NFB) Tamara Lynch cont. Johanne Pregent cam. op. Michel Caron 1st cam. asst. Daniel Jobin 2nd cam. asst. Nathalie Moliavko-Visotski stills Andre Lecoz, Attila Dory sd. Richard Besse boom Esther Auger gaffer Roger Martin elect. Claude Derasp, Normand Viau, Pierre Charpentier key grip Johnny Daoust, Emmanuel Lepine set. des. Hubert Poirier, Nicolas Sologoubov asst. dec. Robert Chabot, Serge Chapu, Jean Leroux set dec. Charles Boulay prop man Maurice Dumas des. coord. Raymond Decaire store keeper Prosper

Barry Lank's

Kelekis : 50 Years in the Chips

Kelekis : 50 Years in the Chips d. Barry Lank p. Jancarlo Markiw sd. Jonathon Kacki lights Frank Raven asst. Stewart Young/Terry Ludwig cam. Barry Lank asst. cam. Cindy Warner ed. Ken Rodek running time : 12 min.

John Bluethner's

The Historical Dramatic Comedy of Punch and Judy

The Historical Dramatic Comedy of Punch and Judy d. John Bluethner cam. Ian Elkin sd. Leon Johnson sd. ed. Michael Mirus ed. John Bluethner running time : 9 min. 30 sec.

Victor Dobchuk's

So Far From Home

So Far From Home p./d. Victor Dobchuk cam. Elise Swerhone sd. Ed Ackerman sd. ed. Lara Mazur lights Frank Raven ed. Elise Swerhone p. man. Deborah Barron-McNabb running time : 22 min.

So Far From Home, *Kelekis : 50 Years In The Chips*, and *The Historical Dramatic Comedy of Punch and Judy* are the latest films produced by the Winnipeg Film Group, the Manitoba version of similar active co-operatives of independent filmmakers across the country.

Started in 1974 with Canada Council support, which desired at the time to encourage film production outside cen-

tral Canada, the Group has not only produced a growing and impressive array of low-budget short films on its own initiative but has often taken on a project which the regional NFB office started and for some reason dropped (the *Kelekis* film is a good example in this regard).

The emphasis, says Group co-ordinator Merit Jensen, is on the independence a filmmaker must have in relation to his chosen subject. Experimental, documentary, and animated films are the main products from the coterie of filmmakers Winnipeg is fortunate to have working with the Group though a few dramatic films have produced as well. In fact, a 90-minute feature, a comedy, by Paizs is currently nearing completion. It signals the Group's first attempt at a film of such length.

The Group's activities, coupled with the steady stream of films produced by the regional NFB office in Winnipeg, bode well for filmmaking in the province for the present. One hopes the NFB continues and strengthens its presence. Winnipeg filmmakers are at a crossroads after nearly a decade of slowly building activity and confidence. Experienced filmmakers are more sophisticated and bolder in their efforts; new filmmakers are being given a chance.

In diverse ways, they are trying resolutely to explain their community to themselves and the rest of the world. It is worth an examination. These three films, in their clear, self-effacing way, are part of the attempt.

Take *Kelekis*, and *Punch and Judy*. At twelve and nine minutes respectively, both films are, though completely unlike in subject, elaborate vignettes in that each details a single, small event which implies a greater, multiple one.

In *Kelekis*, director Barry Lank, while using the 50th anniversary celebration of Winnipeg's most famous restaurant and noted North End landmarks, really summons the sense of community the customers, past and present, feel when they considered their living near and sometimes virtually in the restaurant.

Lank uses dry humorous details, deft intercutting of old photos and film with the present, and ad lib comments from people at the anniversary party to invoke a nostalgia which even someone who knows nothing about the subject will feel keenly. Every community, Lank implies, has its Kelekis, a centre of a community's energy.

This film, essentially about a Winnipeg phenomenon, like his earlier (and better) film, *It's a Hobby For Harvey*, a smooth, jocular document on Winnipeg lawyer and world-champion whistler, Harvey Pollock (another local phenomenon), is sympathetic and joyous in execution. Though Lank, finally, fails to detail the life of the restaurant or the fabled North End, let alone the history of the family, he is able to make us care at a distance about this place and its importance to people.

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Michael Dorland ●

And who couldn't respond to actress Helene Winston saying that a Kelekis' bag of chips "was the poetry of this place"? Not Lank who has offered, if not a poem, at least a valentine.

In *Punch and Judy*, the first film of John Bluethner, something is implied beyond its subject, a performance on a hot summer afternoon in a city park of the famous puppet play by two members of the Manitoba Puppet Theatre. Simple and seemingly casual in his approach, which is emphasized by a steady rhythm in the cutting, Bluethner shows us he isn't so much interested in the play as in the nature of theatre itself. What is the interplay between an audience and performer? What is the technique the puppeteer must command? How do performers and audience interact after the show? Two shots stand out: the intense gaze of a woman watching the play, and the exhaustion shown by puppeteer Randy Woods at the end of the performance.

The film isn't profound or moving, not only because the situation doesn't allow for that, at least on the surface, but also because Bluethner's cool style keeps us at a distance. Even so, it is a film worth a thought or two.

So Far From Home takes us into other territory. This is the first film by Victor Dobchuk, and an excellent debut it is. The film tells with compassion and insight the story of Hugo Torres, a one-time activist in Chile before Allende's fall, and his fellow exiles in Winnipeg.

Those who seek a leftist polemic will be disappointed; those who find a social document of complex human beings will be satisfied. The film contrasts the increasing Canadianization most of the Chileans are undergoing with Torres' own struggle to keep up the fight for political freedom in Chile from his place of exile while he resists the same Canadianizing. No 'solution' is posited to this problem since there is none.

Straightforward, assured in its telling, and without fawning sentimentality or hard editorializing, *So Far From Home* is a splendid film which raises questions about the nature of political commitment itself and the problem of anyone in exile from a desperate situation. Dobchuk's concern for the people comes through and we care. Dobchuk is a talent one hopes will develop, and quickly.

His opportunity to do so, and no doubt that of the two other directors discussed here, may come with the Winnipeg Film Group. For the moment at least, in Winnipeg, opportunity has met talent to the benefit of filmmakers and viewers.

Rory Runnells ●