

FILM REVIEWS

125 Rooms of Comfort

A long review of a film you'll probably never get to see.

In Canada we probably see a far larger number of First Features than do the devotees of cinema in other countries. There are relatively few established directors, and, given the scarcity of work being produced, we take more notice of first efforts than might otherwise be the case. This situation has its positive side: we have the opportunity to watch a film-maker's career from its very outset, often from his or her earliest shorts. But it may also mean that we bring our heaviest critical guns to bear on quite tentative works. Few directors launch themselves into features with a major achievement. Those who do – Jutra, Almond, Shebib – usually have a lot of experience in non-feature work, although occasionally a virtual beginner will undertake a manageable story and make a sturdy, sensitive work out of it, as witness **The Hard Part Begins**, directed by Paul Lynch.

But Patrick Loubert has bitten off rather more than he can chew. Only a very experienced director could realize a successful film out of the raw material behind **125 Rooms of Comfort**, and watching Loubert's effort one recognizes again how terribly hard it is to make a movie. Not that he has anything to be ashamed of; **125 Rooms** is serious, honest, difficult, and has some fine things in it. Its shortcomings are not those sins of vulgarity, stupidity, and pretentiousness that have earned years of purgatory for the makers of some much more expensive projects (supply appropriate titles for yourself).

Aware of its weaknesses, the film comes equipped with a defensive rationalization, viz. that the script was sent back two or three times by the C.F.D.C. for re-working, and that its final state represents the uneasily combined work of several hands. The original story, we are told, focussed upon Leo Basho (played by, and to some extent based upon, Toronto performer Les Barker), a night-club comedian who visits the Grand Hotel in St. Thomas, Ontario for a professional engagement which turns out to be the job of hosting a stag

evening for the guys from a nearby factory. In the finished film, Basho's role is secondary to that of Billy Joyce, a burned-out ex-rock-singer whose father, recently dead, used to own the Grand Hotel. An aggressive, young, self-made American, Oscar Kidd, is negotiating with the manager and part-owner, McKeaghan, to buy the hotel, and Billy has been summoned from the Mental hospital to sign the necessary papers. Wrought up to a highly excitable state, Billy resorts again to the drag-queen costume in which (as flashbacks show) he had scandalized everyone at his father's funeral, and is brutally attacked by patrons of the stag evening. Finding the young man in a side alley, Oscar Kidd deliberately lets him die, in order to simplify his business deal. In recognition of the fact that these two stories don't have much organic connection, the film-makers are now tending to emphasize as protagonist the hotel itself – hence the latest of several titles – and to suggest that the action is a metaphorical rendering of U.S. Imperialism in Canada.

Now it must be extremely irksome to have a government agency ordering artistic changes as a precondition for funding, and its right to this kind of intervention is certainly debatable. But I will suggest the possibility that in this case the C.F.D.C. was *justified* in demanding re-writes, and should be condemned not for deflowering the original script, but for failing to insist upon its further development. (Slogan: Otto Lang for Sec. of State; prevent cinematic abortions!) **125 Rooms of Comfort** may well have been finalized at a really inopportune moment. It has been pulled from the shape of its original, but perhaps rather thin and undramatic conception, and never organically recreated around a new centre.

It is because the film has come adrift in this way, that it lacks a sure principle of coherence. It is structurally unsound, as any construct must be when its engineers cannot locate the centre of gravity. Lacking such coherence, it is difficult (pursuing the mechanical metaphor) to decide where the stresses should fall, what parts of the structure are load-bearing, and how they are to be connected.

Essentially there is no positive reason for combining Leo Basho and Billy Joyce into the same action – hence the rather desperate ruse of hiding the stories behind the facade of the hotel itself. As for the notion that the film works as a metaphor of American domination – that is surely wishful thinking. True, there are some suggestive possibilities: the Canadian characters are all, in their various ways, crippled by the strains of trying to ward off hostility and win approval. The tired comedian, the conciliatory hotel manager, and the freaked-out singer all go to pieces in the face of the hard American buyer. And is Billy's transvestism an image of the total "feminization" of the son and heir of the Canadian mansion, an expression of an unconscious desire to be raped? This might be very challenging stuff, and it points towards a daring and sophisticated work. But without asking that the film become either a symbol-equation or a political thesis (depending on the direction of development), one must insist that clearer analysis would have made this element of the script more potent, and would have distinguished the dialectically relevant images from the trivially distracting. In this way, **125 Rooms** could have been like some of those Quebec films in which the condition and behaviour of the leading female character stand in a real sense for La Belle Province in her dealings with the men who variously exploit and liberate "her".

Given this confusion in the script, it must have been difficult for the actors to understand their roles. Les Barker evinces an intelligent awareness of the pathos of his type, and gives a performance with real inwardness. But Tim Henry seemed not to have had the internal coherence of his role as the transvestite explained to him – probably because the writer-director was none too clear about it either. A rather perfunctory flashback hints that Billy's father, who looks like an amalgam of Burl Ives and Col. Sanders, implanted in the boy a sex-role identification with his dead mother. But for the most part Tim Henry clumps around in a long dress, without knowing or feeling why.

Almost inevitably, the not-fully-

realized quality of the screenplay is reflected in the film's visual style. Henry Fiks' photography is often, in individual shots and sequences, dramatically expressive. The hotel milieu provides natural visual images which are employed to advantage: the stairwells, the empty foyer, the corridors and the frosted-glass fire doors. For a low-budget movie it's often pretty good-looking. But there's a tendency to resort fitfully to various contradictory cinematic modes: heightening effects without point, using dramatic angles on insignificant events, and, paradoxically, failing to handle effectively scenes which call for visual excitement. Examples of this latter weakness are the hide-and-seek sequence in the hotel basement, the scenes of Billy's female impersonation (he wears a blond wig about as indifferently as he might borrow an old hat), and the culminating frenzy of the gang-assault. Apparently some scenes so completely failed to come off that they were cut from the final version, notably a scene of Billy's sensational appearance in drag in the St. Thomas carnival parade.

By contrast, or perhaps by necessity, the editing of *125 Rooms* is consistently crisp and professional, a credit to Tom Berner and Gordon McClellan. The opening sequences and a very classy title-montage deserve special mention. When you have a low budget, limited experience, scanty resources, and no opportunity to extend the shoot, stop and rethink, or take whole sequences over again — a resourceful editor, who can take what you came back with and make it work, is your most valuable asset.

This was my 100th Canadian feature film. I'm grateful to the producer, Don Haig, for arranging a screening for me, and must say that he seemed like a wonderfully humane and realistic person for a young director to be managed by. Despite the generally critical tone of my remarks, I believe that the film deserves exhibition and the attention of Canadian audiences. The future of a worthwhile Canadian film culture remains with the Patrick Louberts and the *125 Rooms*, rather than with any number of *Rocking Boats*, *Children under Leaves*, and *Black Christmasses*.

Robert Fothergill

*This review first appeared in Canadian Forum

Will the Real Johnny Canuck please stand up?

When does the hard part begin? When an empty dream and a few bruises are all that's left to show for forty years of a man's life. When he must face the truth and live with it.

Jim King once had a dream. Like so many others before him and so many more to come, he saw fame and fortune in the world of Country and Western music. Goodbye West Eden, Ontario. Lookout Nashville, Tennessee. And now, years later, he is a singer, the King of "King and Country, the Best in Country and Western". But Nashville is still looking. King hasn't made it yet. This week he's playing West Eden. It's a return engagement.

The Hard Part Begins is something of a road film. And true to that tradition, King indeed finds you can't go back. He takes the gig with some understandable reluctance, knowing that he's due midweek in Toronto to talk contract with Hurricane sound, the most important recording company in the country, and knowing too that it could be both his first and final big chance. And yet here he is, after all of these years, heading right back where he started as if nothing had ever happened. Not an encouraging sign.

He has paid his dues, living the sad little life that he sings of in his sad little songs. Country and Western music has always had an acute, if somewhat sentimental sense of the harder realities, a sense which is clearly reflected in Paul Lynch's direction of *The Hard Part Begins*. It's blue-collar existence. Of necessity, he has become a bit of a con-artist. And taken by his personable charm and persuasive optimism, others have been quick to tie their dreams to his star.

There are the women. Jenny Frame, for one, is his girl-friend and King and Country's "other" singer. She's not just some chick that he picked up on a whim, inevitably to be kicked out of his life on the road between one gig and the next. She is, if he only knew how to accept it, their ticket to Nashville. Ironically, she doesn't share his passion for singing; she's happy just to be a part of his life, hoping someday that they might settle

down together. Someday when he has finally made it. For a long time she wants to believe that he will.

There are the men. Duane Eccles is King and Country's steel guitarist and although he's too busy enjoying himself to be much of a musician, he faithfully believes that King will take him along when the time comes. Together with the band's dope smoking drummer, Roxon, the hard drinking Eccles personifies the conflict between Country culture and the Rock culture which is gradually replacing it on the beer hall circuit and dooming Jim King to obsolescence should he fail to leave it behind.

There are others too, old friends and enemies from West Eden who view his return with some, if only passing interest. A bitter ex-wife, a troubled son, a dying friend: all have shared King's dream of success at one time or another. And optimist that he is, King doesn't hesitate to let them all know that his time has come. Nashville, by way of Toronto, awaits. . . . It simply remains for him to learn the truth, that it is Jenny Frame who has caught the ear of Hurricane Sound. Young, pretty and vulnerable girl singers are popular these days. Has-beens, so they say, are not. For a moment, King handles the truth badly, the old charm suddenly wears a little thin, the confidence has been shaken. He still has his pride though, as much in his music as in himself. And there will always be other dreamers who are eager to jump on his bandwagon in pursuit of their own fame and fortune. The show will go on.

* * * * *

So, what in the name of John A. Macdonald are we going to do with all of these Johnny Canucks, so often and so conveniently thought to be "losers"?

Enjoy them perhaps. And forget this business about losers. It's an easy label and says as much for the Canadian sense of individualism as it does for the Canadian hero. Irrepressible and irresponsible, Jim King and others like him, *The Rowdyman* Will Cole and a *Paperback Hero* Rick Dillon, to name but two who are remarkably similar, are some of the very few truly colourful characters that this country

has created. For better or worse. Dreamers all, they're just slightly out of step, uncompromising individuals and good-natured misfits. And for that reason, they frighten Canadians with their dreams: King's for the Big Time, Cole's for the Good Times and Dillon's for some other Time, ten years ago or fifty. In a country where "why rock the boat?" seems to perfectly express the National Philosophy of Life, it's easy to laugh at these "town fools" with the people of Smalltown, Ontario, Newfoundland or Saskatchewan. And it's reassuring to dismiss them as losers.

But listen to Jim King philosophically writing off an eventful week in West Eden as just a test of his staying power. He has learned something of himself and is prepared to live with, or perhaps in spite of the truth as he now knows it. And watch Will Cole, after all that he has been through, wandering down the road in search of the ol' times and kicking up his heels in anticipation. A loser? Convince *him* of that. Or Rick Dillon, shot down on Mainstreet, Delisle, Saskatchewan, living and dying a crazy dream. If they should suddenly give up on their dreams, if Jim King were to return to West Eden's tire factory, if the Rowdyman were to shake more than just flour out of his hair, if Rick Dillon were to die as any other than the Last of the Big Guns, would that change anything? *Then* they might indeed be losers, true to no one, least of all themselves.

Johnny Canuck as dreamer. It's something to think about. Duddy Kravitz to the contrary, it's really not how you win or lose, it's whether you play the game. Win or lose, Johnny Canuck continues to play the game. Just look at Sir John, our National Dreamer.

* * * * *

Leo Bachle might once have had a dream. But he's a little older though not necessarily any wiser in his own way than Jim King. He too is an entertainer, a stand-up comic. And very likely he has seen a dream of the Big Time fade as the years pass and the bar circuit that he has so long and often travelled bringing "joy into the hearts of the inebriated" becomes ever more familiar. Now, he has few delusions. He's a different breed of Johnny Canuck, a Canadian Everyman. He's just doing his job, taking the bookings as they come from his Toronto agency. This week it's St. Thomas. The Grand Central Hotel. One hundred and twenty-five rooms of comfort.

Like *The Hard Part Begins*, 125 Rooms of Comfort follows a tradition of sorts. It's the well worn Hail! Hail! The Gang's All Here approach, drawing an assortment of characters together by chance within the confines of the Grand Central. They're not together long, just a day or so, but it's long enough to change the pattern of at least one life. (And yes, it may sound familiar. *Hotel*, however, was never like this!) Leo Bachle is but one of those characters, and like the others plays a specific role in the proceedings. There's something about the man that makes him seem respectable. In any other Canadian film, a night-club comedian would probably be immediately suspect of something. But it may well be that the other characters, a strange and desperate lot, show him in a particularly reputable light. (Of course, anyone who has played the *Juliette Show* can't be all bad.) He is, in a sense, the first to arrive and the last to leave and acts only as a witness to the other's actions, never to become personally involved. Is this the Johnny Canuck we all know and love?

He watches without really understanding. How would he know that the Grand Central Hotel is supposed to be bought by American business interests? That the callous but smooth talking American, Oscar Kidd is here to close the deal. That the Hotel's manager is helping things along. Why would he care that the hotel's present owner, Billie Joyce, is a retired Rock singer. That he's a transvestite and he's cracking up. That he has decided not to sell the grand Central and the old tradition, his father's tradition and, yes, the Canadian tradition that it represents. How would Leo Bachle perceive such a fascinating world when he remains a soul apart, not even obliging a rather condescending offer to get involved from Kidd's more than willing wife. To her, he's just little Johnny Canuck. He's probably the only Canadian she has ever met.

Politics are seldom very far from the surface of 125 Rooms of Comfort. (In fact, change a few names and details, dub in a certain other language and voilà! A Québec film. Well, almost. . . .) But would Leo Bachle realize the significance of all these things around him? How is he to understand the scene which greets him outside the Grand Central? Billie Joyce in drag, beaten by St. Thomas thugs, lies in an alley. Oscar Kidd and his Canadian friend, the hotel manager, stand over him. Waiting for him to die. Waiting for a man, metaphorically the cultural split-personality of

this country, to die. (Director Patrick Loubert readily admits that the metaphor is forced.) And Johnny Canuck looks on. The American pays him off. Of course, it's just the balance of his fee for a night's entertainment, but there's no denying the meaning of the exchange. Johnny Canuck hesitates a little longer and then walks away. Does he understand the truth of what he has seen? Will he be able to live with it? Will we?

—Mark Miller

Les Dernières Fiançailles

Perhaps the first love story of an *old* couple in film history, *Les dernières fiançailles* is devoid of story line. But what it lacks in subject matter, it gains in depth and intensity. The film does not stress the whims and turmoil of a young, or even mature modern couple struggling to stay together, as in Maurice Pialat's *Nous ne vieillirons pas ensemble* or Mike Nichols' version of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but rather the degree of harmony Rose (Marthe Nadeau) and Armand (J.-Léo Gagnon) have reached after 55 years of marriage. Their lives, from early sunrise to sunset, are a series of simple activities rather than events, each one accomplished as a ritual, with a gravity reminiscent of monastic life. Their modest living quarters, a cottage rather than a house, are located in the unperturbed countryside. The rusticity of the interior may offend the taste of city-dwellers and suburbanites spoiled by an excess of comfort and luxury. But material concern is not of prime importance here. And what a refreshing approach to life since the cheap ill-matched tableware pieces are transformed and enhanced by Rose's noble gestures as she sets the breakfast table. A privilege granted only to those living an undisturbed life close to nature, which is omnipresent in this film. Weather, for instance, is an important factor in the life of the couple, on account of the crops. Never hermetic, indoor scenes always encompass a glimpse of the outdoors, through the many large windows of the dwelling. And many scenes take place in the open air, such as the couple taking a slow walk in their apple orchard, chatting and teasing each other, while attentive to nature's beauty, or the rainy day that Rose plants seeds in the earth, which she caresses with the palm of her hand. Surprisingly touching moments, because we are reminded of a fact that is too often

forgotten: that simplicity is the apogee of grandeur.

The tragedy of old age is at the heart of this film. Its inevitable attributes are precisely those which tend to deepen at that late stage of life. One is the problem of solitude. Apart from being cut off from society, Rose and Armand have no posterity, having already lost their only child, whom we are reminded of in a particularly moving scene at lunchtime. Another is an emotional problem. Not that love has disappeared with time; on the contrary, it has become immutable. But love may not be as explicit with lost ardour, an afflicting situation summarized by Armand in these terms: "Pity we are too old to even exchange words of love." And death, the infallible outcome, is not the least of embarrassments to the couple. At one point, Armand has a heart seizure as he is working in the fields. Lying in bed, he will try in vain to recuperate. One morning, he gets up and walks to the veranda. Rose wakes up instinctively and follows him outside, sitting next to him. The time has come. They die as they have lived, together and in harmony.

A sad film? Not really. Rather a deeply moving film. In spite of its tragic implications, old age is not presented here tragically, but rather as a normal consequence of a fulfilled life — after all, they have loved each other for more than 50 years. In fact, the film looks so natural that the most alert *cinéphile* will believe it was achieved through the *cinéma-vérité* technique. But all is illusion here: *Les dernières fiançailles* is pure fiction, not a documentary (viz., Pierre Perrault's trilogy based on another old couple, the Tremblays.) Two main factors account for this effect: the impeccable acting, since everything said and done is *felt*; and the slow-paced rhythm of the film, well-attuned to the movements of the two main characters, by making constant use of static shots.

Les dernières fiançailles has the rigour, restraint and clarity of the French literary classics. Yet, it is emotionally dense. In that respect, director Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's touch is a beautiful blending of Jan Troëll and Robert Bresson. The film also evokes the purity of Bach. Its silences are priceless, only intermittently interrupted by the sound of a clock, a reminder of the erosion of time. Lefebvre's twelfth feature film is his most accomplished, and a normally refractory topic to a 33-year-old filmmaker is maturely rendered here. Shot in ten days with a budget of \$35,000,

Les dernières fiançailles proves that ideas, imagination and talent are still more important in films than money: the presumably essential criteria and guarantee of creation and quality. Lefebvre is profound, and a master of nuance and tenderness. This is a truly fine film and a memorable one.

René Rozon

Bingo

Bingo a film by Jean-Claude Lord, opened a year ago in Quebec and promptly became a big hit, drawing raves from the French and English press. It's easy to see why. *Bingo* has captured the elements of the October 1970 crisis and put them into a fast-paced, well-structured story. The story is not of the events of the period when the War Measures Act was in effect, but of the fabric and feelings of those events.

It's not necessary that Quebec produce the definitive, or any version of the October Crisis now; that's a tall order, and maybe not possible after only a few years. But dealing with the origins, effects, resonances of such a crisis is important, and it's entirely valid to invent a story as a means of presenting those ideas.

The father of a photography student, (Réjean Guénette) loses his job and the boy joins the strikers at the factory. The union leader persuades him to help the workers by taking pictures to publicize the cause. Before long he finds himself implicated in kidnapping, bombing, and other terrorist acts. Within this story framework we see his working class parents, the relationship with his girlfriend, his idealism and growing dismay at the extremism he is caught up in. What some may object to in Lord's script is its frequently obvious form. It's all there, laid out for us to see, almost academic in plot development, juxtaposition of scenes and climaxes. And there is a line or two that indicates all too clearly that it is more the director-author speaking than the character. It's a very "commercial" movie. Still, commercial values never harmed a good picture and this attention to craft and narrative is what we have come to miss in recent movies. There is a certain delight in seeing the form realized so well, like watching a good actor and being aware of his performance.

Making us believe in a variety of characters is pretty hard to do in any movie, and especially difficult where different political sympathies are

present. The characterization is excellent here. None of the people are simply drawn; their motives are mixed. We begin to understand why they behave the way they do, idealistic, frightened, bitter, or confused. At the end it really is an outrage to see the lovers killed, even though it's been made to seem inevitable. The movie has taught us to care about them.

Bingo is a melodrama, but it's a superior one. In a picture dealing with gunplay, idealism, and young love, there are surprisingly few clichés. Instead, there are little touches that make it a personal and moving experience: Denys Pelletier in a cameo role, playing the distraught wife of a kidnapped businessman, making an emotional plea on television for her husband's safety; the jobless father (Jean Duceppe) raging drunkenly in his disappointment; a bingo party coinciding with the climax of terrorist acts. *Bingo* has been called "the best Canadian film of international caliber". In as much as the film deals with Quebec experience and makes it accessible to a large audience in that province and the rest of Canada, that judgement may well be accurate.

David Roche

Janis

Remember the days when you used to get so high, man, that you couldn't help but boogie along with whatever psychedelia was blared at you on underground FM? If not, chances are you don't fully remember Janis Joplin, either, the first lady of San Francisco rock (sorry Grace, but premature death *does* add a certain kind of mystique), who used to blow her own and our collective minds with Southern Comfort fumed gut music, delivered straight from her non-Presleyan pelvis. Of her black forebears, Aretha, Billie and Bessie, only Franklyn is around, the other two immortals are with Janis in that Big Blue Soul in the sky, their ball and chains dropped forever.

Janis' throaty sounds and soul linger on, most recently in the Canadian produced feature documentary, *Janis*. Budge Crawley deserves credit (see elsewhere in this issue for more details) for spending close to a quarter of a million over a four year period securing rights to the choicest available footage of her performances. The best concert scenes in the film are those captured by Clarke Mackey and other local cameramen along the 1970 Festi-

val Express trek across Canada. This footage brought on rushes of recognition in those of us fortunate enough to have experienced at least one of those hard-driving shows.

Co-directed by Howard Alk and Seaton Findlay, and completely edited by the gifted Alk, *Janis* is a credit to Crawley Films of Ottawa, both on a financial and (ahem) the ol' artistic level. (That's the one that those who look for stiffs never care about.) The film does not attempt to eulogize, it merely relies on the singer herself to unfold her own story through performance and some interviews. The nostalgia trap of endless associates telling of knowing her when, is blessedly absent.

Concert footage for the most part is skillfully blended with Joplin interviews in various parts of the world, which work on both the superficial level ("You came from Port Arthur, Texas, didn't you?") as well as allowing us intimate glimpses of what stardom was doing to this free spirit and how she was riding the wave to the very end. We see her audiences briefly, but meaningfully, as in the very powerful closing sequence, filmed in Germany, where short haired GI's with peace medallions around their necks get on stage to form a grotesque yet thoroughly American tableau of dancing figures around her, completely fitting to a small town Texas girl turned superstar.

Sprinkled with humourous and insightful anecdotes from Janis' own lips ("If you wanna get a piece of . . . talent, you gotta start hustling your ass early in the morning. . ."), enough free language to earn a restricted rating in the States (seven "fucks" by Budge Crawley's count) and catching her off-guard many times during the long hours of rehearsing, recording, performing, the film *Janis* is itself a hard driving show, its pace being set from the outset by the rollicking Joplin beat. The three supporting bands she had at various times during her skyrocketing career (Big Brother, Snooky Flowers, and the Cozmic Bluez Band) were all composed of very high if not superb musicians, and some of the guitar solos are remarkable, as is Janis' soulful duet with Snooky at Woodstock.

Being a compilation documentary, *Janis* does have its shortcomings. That happens whenever footage from various media are mixed to produce a final film. Heads get chopped due to the different ratio between 16mm and 35mm theatrical image and the unity of the experience is jeopardized. Yet



2-inch colour videotape from an old Dick Cavett show is blown up to 35mm with excellent results. The sound on any rock film tends to cause problems with theatre management reluctant to install a good sound system, but Budge is following the movie around making sure that enough decibels reach enough perceptive ears through professional quality speakers. (How long have we to wait for quadraphonic sound on all rock films?)

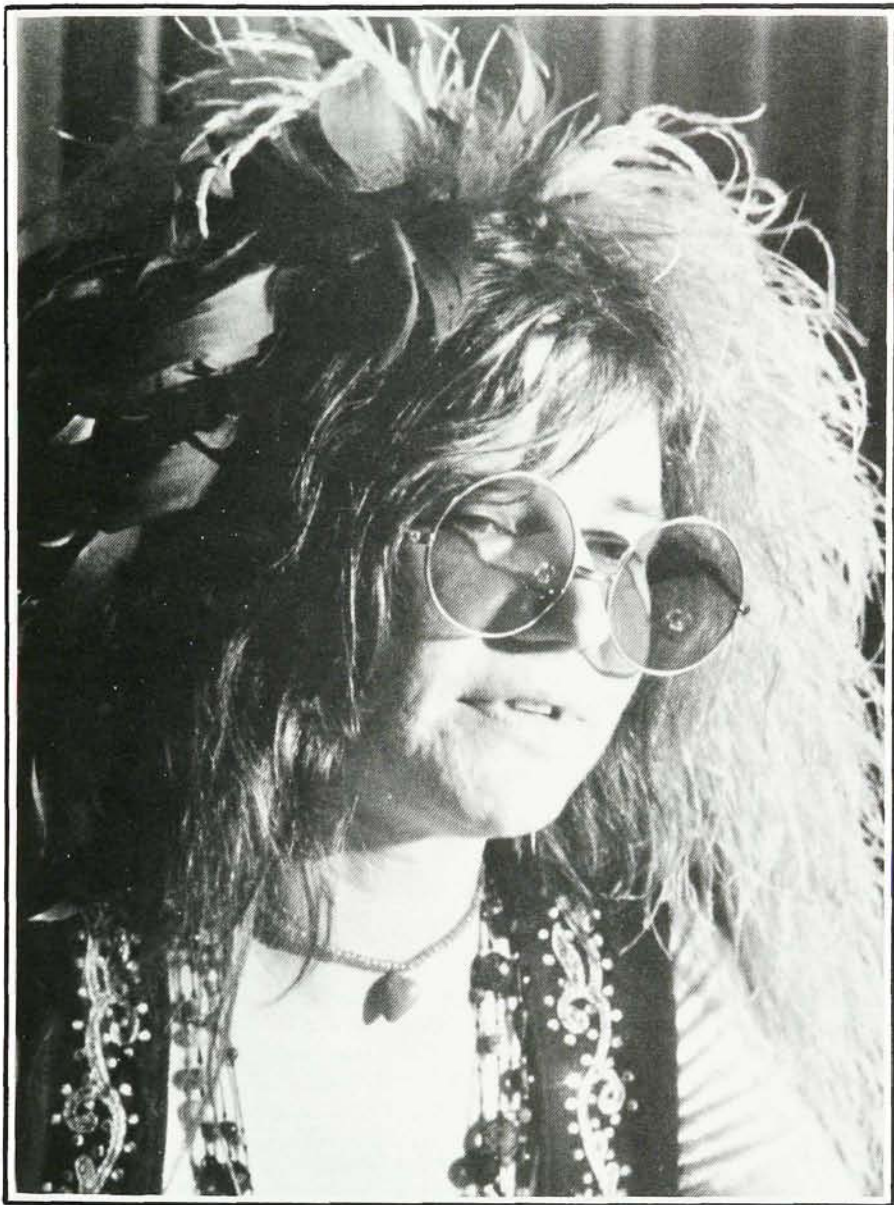
Janis' own philosophy of a life without bullshit permeates this capturing of her heart and soul on celluloid, most memorably in the sequence showing her triumphant return to Port Arthur to attend the tenth reunion of her high school graduating class. Once a reclusive student with hardly a friend, she makes the most of rubbing in her success and chuckling at the storm created by her contagiously explosive presence. "What do you like about Port Arthur?" she is asked by the local TV reporter. "Er . . . no comment," replies the living legend with glee, adding later: "I'm glad to see that Port Arthur has loosened up a bit. There are even signs of . . . drug use. But I prefer to live in San Francisco, because what place could be looser?"

She even has a funny story about a member of her band being busted in "Vancouver, England. Oh, no! Canada, but it's part of England, right?" and laments the "assholes" who would hassle a human being for such a minor triviality as dope in a hotel room. These linear interviews are kept short in the film, and Janis the woman grinding her liberated pelvis with the maniacal striving of an amphetamine freak for satisfaction, her hip clothes and feathers, her outrageously colourful frills and jewellery, are allowed to dominate the film, and the viewer has Crawley, Alk and Findlay to thank for it. We just boogie along with "Try," "Cry, Cry, Baby," "Cozmic Blues," "Summertime," "Ball and Chain," "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz," and "Me and Bobby McGee," without a single morbid reminder of her death, as if she had never died and we were all back in San Francisco slugging Southern Comfort with a truly remarkable lady.

—George Csaba Koller

Janis

With the current fascination of pop stars, (last year's film of Jimi Hendrix and this year Dustin Hoffman's interpretation of Lenny Bruce) Crawley



Films has released a documentary on one of the greatest blues singers, Janis Joplin.

Janis had its Canadian premiere on December 1 at the National Library auditorium in Ottawa. The premiere was organized by the National Film Theatre of Canada (a division of the Canadian Film Institute) and Crawley Films. That evening, the 400-seat auditorium was packed and the audience loved the film.

Janis opens with a shot of Joplin's psychedelically painted Porsche, as the soundtrack plays "Mercedes Benz". Most of the film is Janis and her music, there are a total of 15 songs including some not previously released. The film follows Janis from Calgary to Toronto in 1970 on the Festival Express tour and includes her



performances at Woodstock, the Monterey Pop Festival and a concert in Frankfurt, Germany.

Brief interviews with Janis are interspersed throughout the film. At one point she is asked if she enjoys performing and responds, "It's real, not a performance, but it only lasts for a moment".

The film exposes Janis at her best. Onstage she was an uninhibited raspy singer torturing herself with song lyrics that erupted from her heart. She was a wild child floating in the frantic pace of her career.

She had soul but wouldn't admit it. She referred to Billie Holiday and Aretha Franklin, "they're subtle, so subtle, all I've got now is strength".

The film has an hilarious exchange between Janis and America's own intellectual charm boy, Dick Cavett. After finishing a raucous song on his television show, she saunters back for the standard trivial interview. Cavett, trying desperately to be hip, says, "I guess your engines are all revved up after that number". Janis later catches Cavett off-guard snapping, "with shoes like that (suede boots) you must be a real swinger".

Janis is a crisply edited and loving portrait of Janis Joplin the singer. But little of Janis Joplin the person is adequately revealed in the film. Glimpses of Janis' remembrances of her youth are briefly seen in a sequence where Janis returns to her home town of Port Arthur, Texas for a class reunion. She sadly reflects that "they laughed me out of school, out of town and out of the state". When asked whether she attended the senior prom she simply replies, "no, nobody ever asked me".

Howard Alk, a co-director along with Seaton Findlay, has assembled a vast amount of material into a compact running time of 96 minutes. Alk is primarily known for his documentary, *The Murder of Fred Hampton*.

Janis is a rousing documentary made with true dedication and sincerity, full of good music and humour. The film never bogs down in overlong interviews, they are all kept short. The film is total Janis, upfront, and at her best.

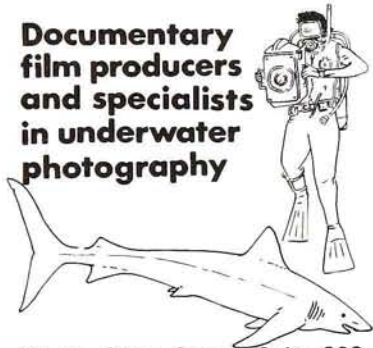
At the end of the film as the numerous credits appear, Janis begins to sing "Me and Bobby McGee". Then, still photos of Janis as a little girl are flashed on the screen. As the photos fade away, we sensed that we never did get to know or understand the real Janis Joplin.

- Tony Lofaro

MAKO FILMS

We don't have to go underwater to give you a thoroughly professional job, we're just as good on the surface as well. Shorts or documentaries of any size are our speciality and our quotes are highly competitive.

Documentary film producers and specialists in underwater photography



25 St. Mary Street, Suite 902,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4Y
1R2 (416) 922-2457

York University

**FACULTY OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF FILM**

The Department of Film of York University has openings to begin July 1, 1975, for the positions of:

- (1) Basic Still and Cinematography Instructor
- (2) Film History, Theory and Criticism Instructor.

Both of these positions require extensive background in film production and/or scholarship and teaching experience.

The Department currently has 220 undergraduate majors and a full-time teaching staff of 9. The programme integrates studies in production, screenwriting, history, theory and criticism and is strong in interdisciplinary work with the Departments of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.

Letters of application, resumes and the names of three referees should be submitted not later than

MARCH 15 1975

John S. Katz, Chairman
Department of Film
Faculty of Fine Arts
York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 1P3



WORLD-WIDE INSURANCE MARKETS FOR THE MOVIE & TV INDUSTRIES

Special packages for Commercials, Documentaries
TV Series, Short Subjects



1255 KINGSWAY, VANCOUVER, B.C. V5V 3E2 • TELEPHONE (604) 879-6594
INSURANCE • CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT • INVESTMENT CAPITAL

All-Canadian Answering Service



THE FILM ARTISTS "EXCHANGE"
A NEW CONCEPT
FAST, RELIABLE, SLICK

Inquire about our special discount rates to freelancing film artists

Radio, Television, Film and Theatre Production Academy of London

Day, Evening & Weekend courses, one pound sterling for prospectus.

Film Production 16mm
Television Direction/Production
Photography

Television Broadcasting and interviewing

Drama Classes for T.V., Film and Theatre

Scriptwriting and Play Writing

Musical Composition for T.V., Film and Theatre

Journalism

41-43 Fouberts Place, Carnaby Street, London W1. Tel. 01-439 2520 B1

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone.....

**A lot can happen
before you get it in the can
Let's discuss it
Arthur Winkler C.L.U.**

Insurance for the Film Industry

— CONSOLIDATED INSURANCE AGENCIES LTD. —

3130 BATHURST STREET, SUITE 206, TORONTO, ONTARIO M6A 2Y1,

TELEPHONE (416) 787-0304

FILM PRODUCERS:

A CHARACTER STUDY



IS NOW AVAILABLE

IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR FREE COPY

of Canada's first "updatable and constantly current" photo-resume album of professional performers

CALL NOW (416) 863-1411

THE

CHARACTERS

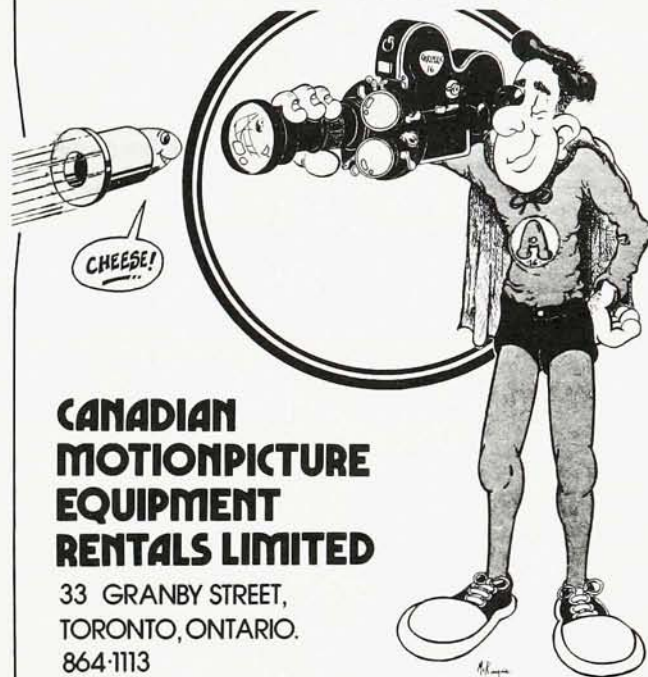
TALENT AGENCY LTD

107 Queen St. E. Toronto M5C 1S1



FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET

THE HIGH SPEED ARRI 16 AND WE'VE GOT IT!



CANADIAN MOTIONPICTURE EQUIPMENT RENTALS LIMITED

33 GRANBY STREET,
TORONTO, ONTARIO.

864-1113

cinéaste

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OFFERING A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CINEMA

**VOL. VI, NO. 3
(FALL '74 ISSUE)**

Kung Fu Movies, THE EXORCIST, Leo Hurwitz talks about NATIVE LAND, an interview with Cine Manifest, Cinema in India, SPARTACUS, the Montreal 'New Cinema' Conference, plus film and book reviews.

**VOL. VI, NO. 4
(WINTER '74/75 ISSUE)**

Interview with Jane Fonda, a critique of Christian Metz and the semiology fad, a feature on porno films, interview with Swiss director Alain Tanner, plus reviews of American independent, Hollywood and foreign films.

\$4 for four issues

Special Pamphlets Subscription, \$10
333 Sixth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10014

Quality and Service



**for any
Film Maker.**



alpha cine service ltd.

and

NORTHWEST SOUND SERVICES LTD.

1195 Richards Street
Vancouver V6B 3G1, B.C.
Tel. (604) 688-7757
Telex 04 50-7757

916 Davie Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 1B8
Tel. (604) 682-4646