

We are particularly tuned to the nuances of music and light. The music that drifts in through windows is, we discover, sung by a balladeer character who seems to have only one song, a modern *chanson de geste*. It is a convention used rarely in film but it becomes both ironic and humorous in this film as we see the character and listen to his song over and over again.

Lefebvre seems to be exploring a passive posture. In this film it is represented both by the notes that Abel writes himself on a black board, "Paris ne dort plus" (Paris isn't sleeping anymore), he scribbles when he gets up one morning, and by the static camera. This passiveness or distance might be explained only in terms of Abel's being out of himself, out of Quebec, but I think Lefebvre, though there is slight evidence of it in this film, is groping for something deeper. Perhaps he's saving it for the third part of the trilogy, *La mort du père prodigue*, scheduled for shooting sometime next year.

However important *Le vieux pays où Rimbaud est Mort* is to the Quebec Lefebvre knows and cares about, the film falls short of representing more than cultural wounds.

Joan Irving

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS

The World of Wizards

d. Pen Densham, John Watson, ph. Robert New, Pen Densham, sc. Pen Densham, James Randi, sd. rec. Richard Nichol, John Megill, Bryan Day, sd. ed. Robert Grieve, Patrick Drummond, p. man. Nancy Falconer, m. John Mills-Cockell, p.c. Insight Productions Inc., 1977, color, 16mm, running time 50 min.

Coming up on CBC television on October 8 is a fascinating look at *The World of Wizards*. No longer the fear-



ed practitioners of obscure diabolical sciences, moulding the powers of life and death, time and space to their whims, today's wizards weave their spells of enchantment to create wonder and delight. Magic is used to entertain and amuse, as well as to intrigue an audience. It is a means by which we rekindle the mysterious wonderment of the child in us whose entire world is woven with the cloth of enchantment.

The World of Wizards fully captures the fascinating subject of professional wizards plying their trade in all of its magical mystery. Two years in the making, this "docutainment", by Toronto's innovative Insight Productions, offers up a strange land peopled by exotic men in long robes and peaked hats, who carry gleaming-eyed cats and speak in the mystical language of the ancients.

The camera takes us on a tour of magic and illusion in North America, from the spooky Magic Castle in Los Angeles where world famous sorcerers come to relax from their labors, to the sombre 50th anniversary Houdini seance in Niagara Falls. The oldest magic store in America is conjured up for us, as is a behind-the-scenes look at a magic factory. We also visit the annual magicians' convention held in the unlikely town of

Colon, Michigan, the Magic Capital of the World.

Throughout the magical hour, we are treated to famous and unknown magicians practising their craft in lavish theatres, in parks, small town squares and on the streets of lower Manhattan — wherever a crowd might gather to stare and wonder. Even the simplest of conjurers gets an enthusiastic round of applause whenever the audience feels mystified. In a sometime harshly real world, an audience craves enchantment. In the faces of the people on the street, you can read this need to believe in magic.

At one point, Canadian wizard Doug Henning sums it all up by saying that when you watch how a great magician moves his hands and how he talks, you finally realize that it is magic you are seeing; magic is everywhere.

Numerous feats of prestidigitation, levitation, occultism, necromancy, conjuring and manipulation are sprinkled like magic dust throughout the program and it is a singular delight to watch the slick, the humble and the casual magicians of today perform their marvellous craft. But even more engaging is some of the vintage footage discovered by the Insight crew on three continents; footage which shows geniuses of the art such as Harry Blackstone Sr. and the incomparable Harry Houdini, actually performing some of their death defying stunts.

Hosted by the Great Randi, a Canadian magician well versed in the misty world of Wizards, the hour moves along at a delightful clip, never becoming too involved in the technical mechanics of the sorcery craft but preferring to dwell on the light heartedness, the humor and the childlike sense of wonder evoked by magic.

In all, *The World of Wizards* is a marvellous romp through a magic land that boasts some fine old footage of past masters, excellent documentation of modern magicians honing their skills, and a hair raising finale where a modern escape artist is suspended over a frigid Niagara Falls in sub zero weather and attempts to escape from shackles and a strait jacket. This feat, staged especially for the film, took place last February under a heavy blanket of secrecy. The revelation of the mystery escape artist's identity offers us a surprising glimpse into the tremendous abilities of the wizards that move among us.

Günter Ott

FILM REVIEWS



Statistics

Statistics, a Logical Step into the Void

d: G. Philip Jackson, sc: Jackson, ph: David Lorriman, sd: James Orr, l.p.: Carl E. Harvey, p.c.: Jackson-Lorriman Films, 1977. col.: black and white, tinted, 16mm, running time: 6 minutes.

For six minutes the viewer watches a mauve and purple screen, like an uncorrected TV picture, while a talking head relates what director Jackson describes as an "absolutely rational argument for the most absurd idea."

It's an interesting idea, but it isn't exactly a visual treat.

The talking head of Carl Harvey relentlessly pursues his subject, concerning the relationships of life and death or their non-existence, while we watch, bored and fascinated, as the head slowly becomes larger and larger, until, like a lectured child, we find the words drifting past our unresponsive ears as we examine nostril and whisker, and wonder why the speaker looks off to his left rather than at us.

The argument is framed in an introductory and closing statement of stat-

istics concerning the number of times a cat's back must be stroked in order to generate sufficient electricity to light a bulb. The irrelevance is the point. Even the accompanying shots are irrelevant.

But the point is not well taken.

The film illustrates to a startling degree just how hard it is to translate ideas into film, and how much harder yet to make that succinct, witty, choice comment that's so desired.

Asked about the inspiration for the argument in the film, Jackson replied, "I took two philosophy courses, otherwise there's no way I could have written the script."

He sees it as a tool for classroom use in debunking the debunkers of life: a stimulation for debate on logic and manipulation of language.

Possibly. At any rate it will reintroduce the slow zoom (so effectively used by both Snow and Wieland in early experimental films), and illustrate the technique of producing color effects by printing black and white film on color stock using filters, as well as provide an example of how a simple set-up, some dedication to work, and an idea may be all that is needed to make a little film which after all offers a learning opportunity (as they say) to both audience and artist.

Natalie Edwards

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