

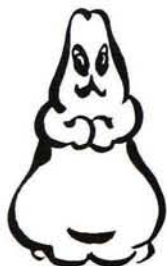
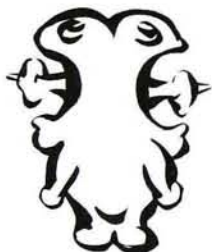
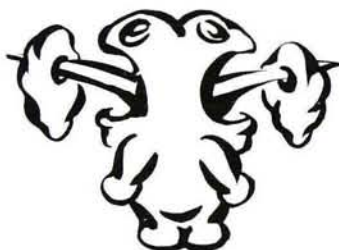
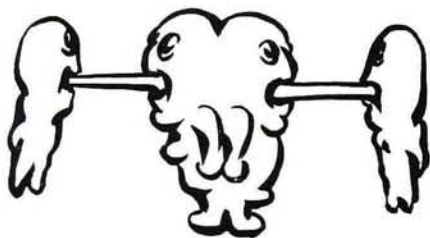
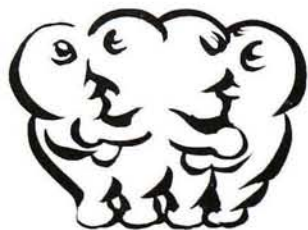
# FILM REVIEWS

## Rien Qu'un Petit Chanson D'Amour

The National Film Board, a microcosm of the country it represents, is split down the belly button between French and English. Even in the cafeteria at noon, tables are divided into the red and the blue and perhaps the only contact between the two cultures occurs in the washrooms waiting for a free towel dispenser.

One of the more amusing manifestations of this xenophobia is in the fact that there are two animation departments at the Film Board; each with separate autonomy and distinctive styles; located at opposite ends of the huge building and light years apart in sensibility. A sad consequence of this split is that while the McLarens and Ryan Larkins and Don Ariolis get widespread and well deserved publicity, not much is known about their franco-phone counterparts. A case in point is the work of Vivienne Elnécavé and her recently completed film *Rien Qu'un Petit Chanson D'Amour*, (Just a Little Love Song). This particular love song is drawn in a black and white style reminiscent of the Krazy Kat cartoons of the thirties but it is not a cute or pretty or colourful animated film. Using what must be an animated equivalent of psychoanalytical free association, the film takes us on a ten minute odyssey through the terror and pain of love; from an infant's desperate attempts at closeness with its parents to an adult's relationship with a cruel and isolating world.

The film begins innocuously enough with a rocking chair oscillating to the country sound of a five-string banjo. When the rocking chair metamorphoses into a man, we are not surprised. So far it just looks like good animation. But then this first level of reality is shattered as the arms of the rocking-chair-man smash through a wall and pull out a struggling bird. It is like some form of raw energy has been pulled up from the unconscious. Later in the film, the bird becomes a child, a child who is killed by its parents, its chest split open by a dagger, as we go deeper into the chest and are plunged into a deeper level of the unconscious. The pulsating heart metamorphoses into a man crucified by a nail to the relentless rhythm of a flamenco. The film now becomes a dance, perhaps one of the most painful dances ever choreographed on film. The man becomes two and then four. The



dancers swallow each other, regurgitate the meal, come together and then split into four. The splitting and fusion continue. A dancer removes the heart of his partner through the mouth and the heart splits and reveals two more dancers. The action becomes faster and faster and the process continues into a blinding infinite regress of broken hearts.

Searching for Vivienne Elnécavé's predecessors, one does not think of Disney or McLaren. The names which come to mind are Dali, Buñuel and Edgar Allan Poe. She uses the medium not just on the level of cartoon or moving abstraction but, through the metamorphosing of shapes and personae, as a reflection of what is going on deep in the subconscious. It is a personal statement and yet universal enough to trigger powerful emotional reaction, sometimes attraction, sometimes revulsion but with the universality of one's own dreams.

Ronald H. Blumer

## Coming Home

The concept of applying use of media to an intense, personal situation is not brand new, just new enough to make further attempts in the area interesting to the viewer. Allan King's *A Married Couple*, and the PBS Series *An American Family*, each demonstrated the technique and its possibilities. *Coming Home* works on many levels as a tool for improving the difficult relationships inside this particular film, and the film itself is helping others to gain insight and understanding in their own family relationships.

Bill Reid left a Ph.D. programme when he realized that academia would teach him no more about what he felt were the important aspects of life. He started off as a production assistant at the NFB and while there, had access to a Portapak video tape outfit. That outfit accompanied him on a trip home to Sarnia where he again found himself caught up in his unpleasant relationship with his family, specifically his father.

The Portapak recorded a family argument of some 20 minutes duration, and that tape sparked the idea for a more detailed film project that would capture the family in its natural state, and work as a tool to assist in settling its long-established differences.

# Blumer, Kirshenbaum, Edwards, Fothergill, Hartt

Photo: Baltazar



Bill Reid

Bill's father is the Chrysler dealer in Sarnia. He built his business from the ground up and has obviously had hopes that one of his sons would carry it on for him. Neither Bill nor his younger brother is inclined in that direction. The father is also upset with the fact that Bill wears his hair long, and dresses in blue jeans. This problem of Bill's appearance is the major stumbling block, it seems, to any kind of communication between Father and Son. Bill asks why his father cannot talk to him as an equal; in fact, can not talk to him as a human being, and rather than discuss the point, a monologue begins on how Bill's looks make his father ashamed (or words to that effect).

The mother is caught in the middle of the situation, and can be understanding of both viewpoints. Above all, she is mediator of the dispute and the force moving to keep both men from shutting off the whole process of communication.

The younger brother at 21 is just coming into the problem of feeling that he cannot relate to his parents. He expresses the thought that he feels a conflict in not being able to carry on the same behaviour in the company of his friends as in the company of his parents. This duality is forming into his own identity crisis.

As an 84 minute documentary, the film does not attempt to solve the problems of the Reid Family. Rather it documents the group in discussion and attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible. The only way that Mr. Reid would consent to the experiment was for Bill to promise to get a haircut, and since that seemed to be the central pivot of

the argument, Bill felt the concession to be part of the process. It was, of course, not the magic key, and the father's reaction was even less than it might have been. But the film covers some ten days of personal interaction, and when it's over, there is very little improvement in the family's situation.

The film stands as a statement of the situation as it began, and the various attempts to break down barriers to communication at conversations over meals and at less formal times as well. It has been working very well as a conversation generator at meetings of family counselling groups and the like. This seems to be its function to others, in letting them see how their own problems look as they happen in other families. For the Reid family there were positive results to the project, but these did not come about until after they saw the film. The first screening brought no reaction from them. No comments, and no attempts at reconciliation. Months later, at a second screening, things did begin to happen, and the overview which the film gives, on an intense personal level, did allow a base for discussion. Apparently, with the passage of time and considerable discussion of the events in the film, many of the Reids' family problems have been successfully worked out.

Reid sees film as a tool which, applied to sociological reality, can work to help give a view of the situation that will help both those directly involved and others who watch the study. It has worked in this situation and there is no reason why it shouldn't work in others. As the kind of tool that is useful in therapeutic counselling, it is an indis-

putable success.

There are elements in each character of the drama that allows some form of identification for each member of the audience. The sad realities of the film blended with the lighter moments involving small-scale successes in the ongoing battle make the film an enjoyable experience, especially for a larger audience that usually sees such material on TV, in smaller groups.

Harris Kirshenbaum

## Diary of a Sinner

Comment from Iain Ewing, 29 year old producer of successful skinflick *Diary of a Sinner*:

**"If I ever go to Hell what the Devil's going to make me do is look at that film for one thousand years."**

... Ewing.

Iain Ewing is absolutely determined to make movies. And in fact he has been making them, learning the craft, the art, and even the businesslike aspects of the trade, ever since he made his first film, *Picaro*, an attractive 27 minute short in 1966 while at McMaster.

But *Picaro*, though a pleasing little film, never got any distribution and neither did his next film, *Kill*, a conversational off-beat work involving a disgruntled young man who'd like to kill his father. Despite some grotesque and bizarre suggestions which Ewing says a college audience really digs, the film is basically philosophical and totally non-commercial.

One of the major accomplishments of this film was simply the process of getting it made. With a borrowed \$500 and several thousand feet of professionally unusable film stock that had spent five years in the Arctic, and with bargain rentals from Janet Good of the Canadian Motion Picture Equipment Rentals on Granby, and owing money everywhere, getting everything done on credit, and editing the film while at UCLA, he finally got it made. It represented some \$1500 in hard cash and a lot of hard work.

Ewing's next film was somewhat shorter and more successful. Called *A Short Film* it was a three minute student exercise at UCLA which his professor termed "perfect." Twenty-three at the time, Ewing decided after two semesters at the famous University of