

# 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

California at Los Angeles film school (where Don Shebib also studied) that he had no need for a degree and it was time to get to work.

Back in Canada he made *Eat Anything*, a film he loved making but found the reception to be "a real disappointment." "It's a good film," he says, "a really beautiful honest film about human beings." Made in 1970 it presents about 25 people he really liked, doing natural things like playing the guitar or talking about their marriage, interspersed with Toronto shots and concluded with comments they make about their feelings about God. The CBC turned the film down.

This film is with his others at the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre waiting for viewers. Ewing couldn't care less about how much money he makes on it, but he would like people to see it.

Ewing continued to accumulate experience. He worked on David Sector's *The Offering*, Don Shebib's *Goin' Down the Road*, starred in David Cronenberg's *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future*, acted and sang his own music in Clarke Mackey's *The Only Thing You Know*, worked on a film in India as a soundman, and returned to photograph his sister, Judy Steed's, film *It's Going to Be All Right*, and make a 20 minute short for the CBC *Bo Diddley's Back in Town*, (of which they ran seven minutes one Weekday).

And still he couldn't get a feature film underway or convince the CFDC to part with some of the \$120,000 he needed to produce his love-story script.

So he decided to make a skinflick.

He found a friend who agreed to foot \$4000 for film stock, and a real estate entrepreneur who finally invested some \$20,000. And with director Ed Hunt, another filmmaker whose heart wasn't really in the filmflesh business, *Diary of a Sinner* was shot right on schedule in 13 days last summer at Kew Beach and a rented Toronto house with a total budget of \$65,000 of which only \$23,000 cash was actually spent.

The deferrals and debts will be cleaned up if the film makes money. Danton distributor's Dan Weinzweig thinks they may make enough right in Canada to break even, and has already confirmed bookings for Hamilton, Oshawa, London, Winnipeg, a drive-in chain and Montreal in the fall.

So now that producer Iain Ewing and director Ed Hunt have a success with *Diary of a Sinner* will they do much more than establish good credit ratings for future films with it?

Not likely. Intrinsicly the film is weak, and as Ewing modestly admits, "... has a lot of flaws due to inexperience and the conditions under which it



Scene from "Diary of a Sinner"

was made." Oddly enough, though the story line is a far different thing, the virtues and weaknesses in *Diary of a Sinner* are similar to those in Ewing's early *Picaro*. Again there are sequences that seem strangely out of place, and swift style shifts in which disturbingly honest revealing scenes are interspersed with unreal and fantastical episodes too suddenly. It continues to suggest a potential for something better.

In the *Diary* at one point two girls talk frankly about their feelings about death and suicide, while the pimp and ex-priest wait in the park outside impatient with evil intentions. The girls, photographed and lit with spectacular beauty by Jock Brandis, seem to be an insert from some other, fascinating film.

The audience of carefully distanced single males watching the film when I attended, seemed engrossed and satisfied. But what they saw was innocence itself compared to the fare the serious film buff finds in every second film.

For instance in a shower sequence two couples slather soap on each other as enthusiastically as ten year olds, giving the scene a wholesome playfulness that is a far cry from the sensuous lathering scene in Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes*. Ewing mentioned that the censors cut about five minutes. They cut the end of the shower scene for example though he couldn't see why, since the end was the same as the beginning. "Maybe," he suggested, "they just felt, 'That's enough of that!'"

Anyhow, any skinflick in which a jaded nearly 30 pimp (played by Ewing) in confessing to his lusty ex-priest pal begins with, "I love Union Station", can't be all bad. And the shots of the station, the city, the lake, and the Kew Beach district as well as the girls and the beautiful pink-glowing body of professional Calla Bianca doing a gorgeous strip, keep the visuals always interesting.

To top it all, Bo Diddley, a friend of Ewing's, made music, and the music is fine.

—Natalie Edwards

## Diary of a Sinner

Sophisticated audiences have many defences against the moral appeal of a work of art. Popular audiences, on the other hand, are suspicious of artistic pretentiousness. So the artist with an urgent moral vision of the world is forced to choose between artistry, which will alienate the vulgar, and morality, which will be wasted on the cultured. Faced with this dilemma, writer-actor-producer Iain Ewing and his faithful director Ed Hunt have chosen to preserve the integrity of their moral vision and to risk neglect by the art-house crowd. Like a Salvation Army band, they play a simple tune for simple ears. Following *Pleasure Palace*, a drama of redemptive love in the sordid underworld of nude modelling, their second film, entitled *Diary of a Sinner*, opened recently at the Coronet Theatre on Yonge Street.

The simple story, told in a series of abruptly disconnected episodes, concerns a suicide pact forced upon a lonely and sex-starved ex-priest (Tom) by his debauched but world-weary fellow roomer (Dave). Perceiving in Tom the death wish that lurks in all humanity, Dave (played by Iain Ewing himself) proposes a week of unbridled sexual licence, to be followed by the suicide of whichever one of them the toss of a coin shall decide. Tom consents and asks to wallow in sex until he is sick of it. And wallow they do, in every beastly vice that Toronto can offer, from the body-rub parlours of Yonge St. to Discipline and Bondage in a basement in North Rosedale. But before the week is up Tom has grown weary of the fruitless quest for self-abandonment in pleasure. Out of his nausea and chagrin he is entranced by the image of Simone, a pure and lovely woman in the thrall of an evil heroin pusher and abattoir operator. To win her love he offers to kill this monster, in which undertaking Dave readily assists, since his own true love (Joan) was debauched by the very same man. None the less, Dave still demands fulfillment of the pact. Proving his manhood to the newly-won Simone, Tom accepts the challenge. Dave loses the toss and promptly plunges into the polluted waters of Lake Ontario.

Regarded as a low-mimetic fiction, *Diary of a Sinner* might appear somewhat implausible in conception and more than a little crude in execution. But such a view would fail to recognize the archetypal skeleton concealed in the