that gays are witty, supercilious fun-
people, sarcastic and superficial, and 
that everyone else knows their own 
sexual self.

This is a subtle, splendid film. 
-N.E.

White Dawn

Shot in Canada's Arctic region (Frobish-
er Bay, Baffin Island) last summer, 
the $2.6 million American production 
of Canadian author James Houston's 
new The White Dawn, opened in Can-
da and the U.S. in July. A Paramount 
Pictures release, produced by Martin 
Ransohoff, the White Dawn's associate 
producer was author Houston who co-
 wrote the screenplay with Thomas 
Rickman. The film is an enthralling and 
haunting experience. Unquestionably 
the finest feature film evocation of Arc-
tic Eskimo life to date, it even surpasses 
Flaherty's silent classic, Nanook of the 
North in style and insight. Neither a 
melodrama, nor a documentary, nor a 
simple-minded travelogue, The White 
Dawn with its superlative cinematog-
raphy, editing and scoring, is a fine 
example of modern technology exploit-
ed to its utmost capability in capturing 
and evoking the tangibles and intang-
ibles of Arctic existence. A rather con-
ventional plot (three "civilized" men 
inadvertently destroy the peaceful life 
of an Inuit community in the late 
1890's) is an unfortunate handicap in an 
especially visual film; the script often 
oversimplifies in words and dramatic 
action, issues already expressed visually 
in all their stark and glorious compLex-
ity. But it's the images, the sounds, the 
sensations you recall and savour long 
 after the end of The White Dawn. 
Ransohoff is to be commended for 
having such faith in the basic material of 
Houston's novel that he has permitted 
very few compromises due to commerci-
ality. Two of the film's American 
"stars" — Lou Gossett and Warren 
Oates — never really manage to out-pace the 
solid competition from the non-
professional all-Eskimo "supporting" 
cast including Simonie Kopapik as Inuit-
leader Sarkak; Pilitak as one of Sarkak's 
wives; and the young man who played 
Sarkak's son. It's their film and they 
simply shine! Only American actor 
Timothy Bottoms' thoughtful portrayal 
of Daggett frequently manages to out-
shine both the Inuit performers and the 
breathtaking landscape. Philip Kauf-
man's direction is sensitive and un-
compromising; the cinematography, 
under the direction of Michael Chap-
man, is stunning and measures up 
beautifully to the grandeur of its 
subject; and Henry Mancini's score is a 
masterful balance of primitive themes 
and subdued modern interpretation — 
it's his finest work ever. Aside from the 
NFB's excellent films on the Netsilik 
Eskimos, one wonders why the two 
greatest feature-length films on the life 
of the Canadian Eskimo (Nanook and 
Dawn) have been undertaken by 
American directors and producers. 
-Laurinda Hartt