

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 (Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island) last summer, the \$2.6 million American production of Canadian author James Houston's novel *The White Dawn*, opened in Canada 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 Arctic 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 cinematography, editing and scoring, is a fine example of modern technology exploited to its utmost capability in capturing and evoking the tangibles and intangibles of Arctic existence. A rather conventional plot (three "civilized" men inadvertently destroy the peaceful life

of an Inuit community in the late 1890's) is an unfortunate handicap in an essentially visual film; the script often oversimplifies in words and dramatic action, issues already expressed visually in all their stark and glorious complexity. 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 commerciality. 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

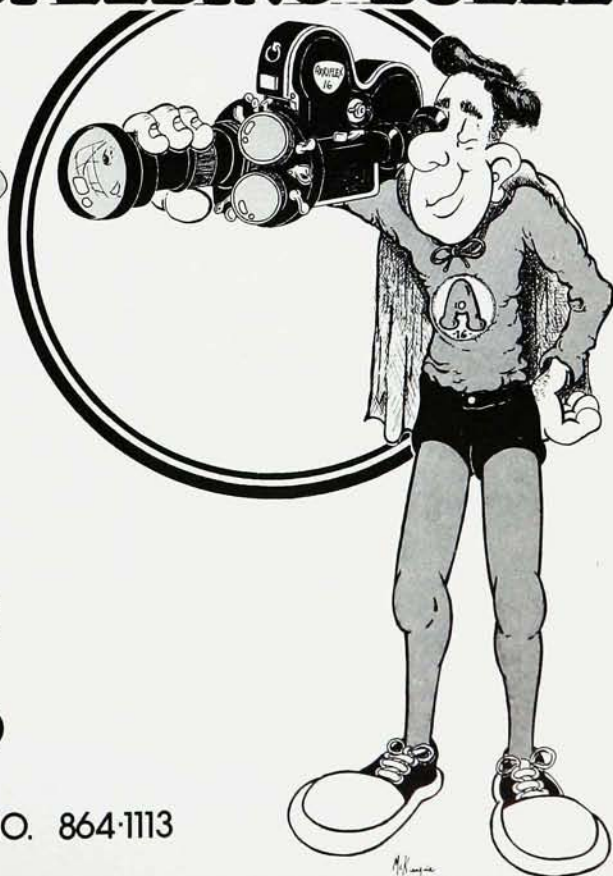
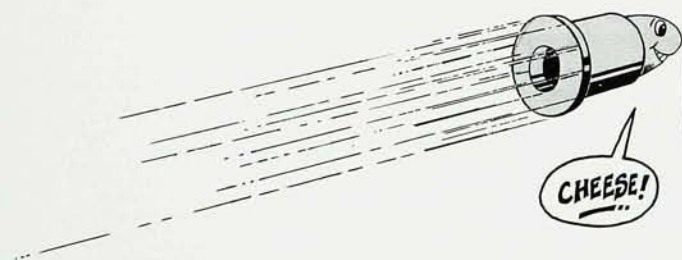
simply shine! Only American actor Timothy Bottoms' thoughtful portrayal of Daggett frequently manages to out-shine both the Inuit performers and the breathtaking landscape. Philip Kaufman's direction is sensitive and uncompromising; the cinematography, under the direction of Michael Chapman, is stunning 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



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