

Salty the Sea Lion

A name that crops up often in Cinema Canada's CANADIAN FILM NEWS pages is that of Toronto's VISION IV PRODUCTIONS. This past spring, Gerry Arbeid produced that company's second feature film, *Black Christmas*, which will be released this coming December 24. In the meantime, production carries on with a first rate television series in co-operation with ABC. *Salty the Sea Lion* is reputed to be the first case of a TV series being accepted for U.S. network sales without having shot any film. *Salty* carries on where *Flipper* left off as being the kind of kid's show with enough adventure and action to carry on an adult audience as well. The demand for family entertainment has caused the American Film Theatre to produce a series of Saturday cinema matinee films that will be booked in series like last year's dramatic adult series. A Canadian company will distribute it here.

Salty has the qualifications — a name cast, a great centre attraction in the character of *Salty*, and being a terrific document on the capabilities of the animal. The writers' handbook for the series quotes a list of tasks for writers to *not* assign him: He can not smile knowingly, stare menacingly, look quizzically, sigh with relief, light up with recognition, be shocked at a suggestion, laugh at a joke, nor can he carry a story by himself. He can, however, talk on command, stop, turn, enter and leave a scene, nod approval, or shake his head

on cue. He can fetch, carry, and pick up in his mouth, exhibit shame or embarrassment by tucking his head under his fin. He can sit or lie down in a car or boat and wave on cue. He can dance, clap his fins and spin in circles, balance objects on his nose, climb steps, collapse, cry, body surf, play with fish, all very sea lion-like behaviour, with no small amount of training for the cues.

The trainer, Ricou Browning Jr., owned and trained *Flipper*, and in another incarnation was the man inside *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. A recent visit to the set found *Salty* to be a most considerate lead performer, delivering actions on cue, and busy making friends between takes after he's hosed down if the scene is on a sandy beach. The scripts I've read and rushes that I've seen show that the writers are holding on to the idea of *Salty* not carrying the story by himself, throwing the plot advancements to the rest of the cast.

The lead character is a successful Bahamian marine lawyer who decided to retire at home to his own marina on the island of New Providence after years of a successful practice in New York. Clancy is warm and understanding, played as the first "nice guy" character in the career of Julius Harris, who played "Bumpy" in *Shaft*, "Scatter" in *Superfly*, and "Tee Hee" in *Live and Let Die*. Julius feels that the part is the one which most fulfills him as an actor, and from that base he delivers a solid character.

Taylor and his younger brother Tim, age twelve, arrive in the Bahamas to live at Clancy's marina after losing their parents in a Southern U.S. hurricane. Clancy has adopted the two and is giving Tim a home and Taylor a chance to work on preparations for (what else) a career in marine law. Taylor is played by Mark Slade who appeared in *The High Chapparral* for many years. Tim is played by John Doran whose short career includes Broadway and commercials, and the only Canadian in the cast, Vincent Dale, plays his friend Rod, who lives on the same cove.

All the characters work well together and with the sea lion. The production company is not in the least defensive of the choice or qualifications of the cast, figuring that more than the names, the abilities of these people will contribute to the imminent popularity of the show. It was found that the only way to achieve a co-production with a major studio and therefore sales to a major network was to provide every advantage possible to the production. The use of these people would work to guarantee the audience, said the US distributor, and so the show stands to make money. At the outset the crew consisted of 90 Bahamians, 24 Canadians and 6 Americans. Agreements with the newly independent Bahamian government call for the percentage of local employment. Mike Lente CSC is Director of Photography, Des Dollerey is on sound, Tim Rowse is First A.D., and Joe Scanlan was directing the episode currently

Backlot set for the Marina scenes



Salty the Star Seal

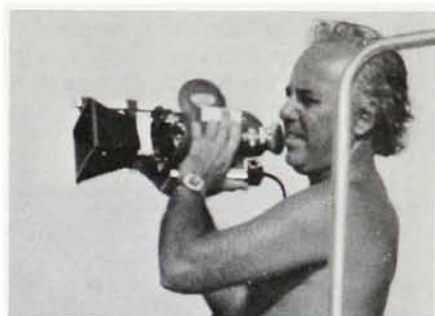




Franz Russell (centre) in "Salty"



Salty and friend between scenes



Mike Lente CSC, Director of Photography

underway. The staff also involves a highly professional team of Scuba divers who spend much of their surface time dreaming up underwater action to be incorporated in the series. Everyone I met on the cast and crew feels that *Salty* will emerge on the air this fall as a definite winner.

They also hope that *Salty* carries on for many seasons so that they can spend more working time at Kobi Jaeger's "Shangri-La" studios located in what used to be Nassau's Montagu Beach Hotel, an immense pink building overlooking the West end of New Providence Island. Cast and crew are accommodated in what were, five years ago, luxury hotel rooms that still maintain nice standards. The grand ballroom has been made over into a sound stage which currently houses the interior set of Clancy's house. Lighting equipment is from William F. White in both the stu-

dio and on location with a grip trailer that always has just what's needed and a blimp generator allowing use of 10k brutes to fill-light the heavy shadows of the Caribbean sun. Arri 16's and accessories are from Cinevision. The studio contains a swimming pool with underwater windows allowing a view into the pool from the bar and dining room, where hotel-type accommodations carry on in first class style. New Yorker Jaeger is planning to add a video studio to the complex and keep the place busy with productions. A large back lot with a man-made lake allows shooting at "The Cove" regardless of ocean conditions.

Screenings of complete *Salty* episodes are still in the future but rushes show great potential. The editing team, headed by Chris Dew, is working through the episodes right on the premises, allowing Chris to get out and

direct the segments he needs for stock shots, cutaways, and alternate angles. With attributes like that, the job is helped along.

There is sufficient Canadian content in terms of crew and guest stars to fulfill CRTC standards for this year, so the show has always been guaranteed sales in Canada. The producers have hopes of getting more series in front of the camera and at some point they would like to make it a Canadian show. For this first effort at a series, they found it necessary to have the support of a U.S. co-production.

All aspects of the production of *Salty* point to it working out quite well come the fall. From a stool at the SALTY BAR, gazing into the chrome blue water of the swimming pool, it looked mighty good indeed.

— Harris Kirshenbaum

Super-8 Film Festival

Organizers of the National Capital area's first Annual Super-8 Film Festival have termed the event a success — despite having been plagued by technical problems and low audience turnouts.

Held August 23 and 24 in Ottawa's new Public Library building, organizers had to contend with problems ranging from failure of a key stereo tape system to unsynchronized sound-tracks on many films.

But, said co-organizer Mark Harada, despite the technical problems and the dismal audience response, the event can legitimately be termed a success because of the interest it generated among area filmmakers.

Mr. Harada said, "the basic purpose behind the event was to see what was available and happening in Super 8 in Ottawa".

The audience reaction was disappointing and only about 50 people were at the Friday night showings. "There was no real interest in the films", said Mr.

Harada. Calling the audience "snob-bish", he said they seemed to be annoyed at the poor projection facilities. No one however, volunteered to help the organizers. A mere 20 people attended the Saturday afternoon screenings and the reaction was the same.

Films came from as far away as Quebec City and also from Stittsville and Cornwall as well as the Ottawa-Hull region.

A total of 25 films were submitted in the Festival. Some of them included; *Colour Dance* by Harriet Pacaud, *Steam* by Sissy Grove, *Let A Tree Be Free* and *Pollution Isn't The Solution* by Brian Stoller, *Sportorama* by l'Atelier Populaire, *Sans Titre* by Emil de Longue Epée, *Cri* by Danielle Allaire, *L'Univers Infini* by Jean Pierre St. Louis, *The Cage* by Anselmo Suarez, *Vasarely* and *Microsomie* by Guy Baillargeon.

Co-ordinators of the event were Carleton University Journalism students, Mark Harada, Rhonda Raven, Greg Miller, Jim Cochrane and Maureen Lynn. The Festival was staged on a

budget of only \$200 — which came out of the organizers' pockets. "It was too late for sponsorship of the event because it was started in June", said Mr. Harada.

Mr. Harada added, "the French-Canadian films were technically better with better storylines". Two films in particular, *Cri* and *L'Univers Infini* possessed a distant Quebec filmstyle. The English-Canadian films were mostly experimental and animation films (*Colour Dance* and *Let A Tree Be Free*) which, according to Mr. Harada "were not representative of Canadian films".

"If we do try it again, we will get money for the Festival and then it would be a lot better", he concluded.

The Super-8 Film Festival was a breakthrough for the film community in Ottawa. It proved there are interested young filmmakers working in Super-8 in the Ottawa area. It is unfortunate Ottawa film-goers haven't appreciated or at least become aware of this new medium.

Tony Lofaro