

## Do It With Joy

d: Nicholas Kendall, ph: Nicholas Kendall, ed: Robert Seright, sd: Robert Seright, m: Simon Kendall, p: Nicholas Kendall, p-man: Doug Cowell, col: 16mm, running time: 54 minutes.

Occasionally a film appears to grow directly out of an actual experience or milieu. Much of the strength of Flaherty's films, for instance, depend on a viewer's apprehension of that filmmaker's enthusiastic response toward a human lifestyle, evolving out of his direct contact with it. **Do It With Joy**, Nicholas Kendall's documentary about a reforestation project in the Nass River Valley of northern British Columbia, depends on a similar apprehension for its strength.

Foregrounded throughout the fifty-four minutes of this film, are the giant stands of spruce and Douglas fir, indigenous to the Canadian northwest. These provide mute testimony to the huge clearing of their numbers by repeated inclusion in a camera angled ostensibly to capture only the vast acreages emptied by loggers and ready for reforestation. Despite this observation, there is no hazy attempt at anthropomorphic metaphor, and the filmmaker's sensibility is less that of pointing an accusing finger at a logging industry, than it is to show the process of reforestation and, referentially, the reaction to the life-generating process of the planters themselves.

that he can get co-operation from a certain individual because "I've done everything for his brother - that guy owes me something", making his previous promise empty rhetoric. He seems to be everywhere there is a crisis. Eddie appears on the scene during a development that might take votes away from Flora. Premier William Davis and his cabinet had decided to remain neutral and not show public support for any of the candidates. A rumor circulates on the floor of the convention that Roy McMurtry, a member of the Davis cabinet, is showing open support for Brian Mulroney. Eddie quickly locates Roy McMurtry and persuades him to put his Mulroney badge back in his pocket.

Flora sees Eddie as a morale booster, but Eddie is incapable of boosting Flora's morale when she places a disappointing 6th after the first ballot. A tight close-up on Flora shows a shocked and disillusioned woman. Again, Eddie becomes a key figure in the drama by assuming the role of persuader. He tries to persuade Flora to give her support to Joe Clark since she would need at least 300 votes to be in contention. With the second ballot Flora receives 234 votes, and she finally concedes her support to Joe. Flora's response to the political necessity of the decision "You are continually accepting compromise."

Using what I would call an eavesdropping style of cinematography, director Peter Raymont sensitively captures the human responses to political gamesmanship. The personal drama of political defeat is caught in a close-up of a dejected campaign worker with his head buried in his hands responding to a question about what he thought of politics by saying, "I don't know if I like politicking very much." This was the response of one of Flora's workers who represented one of a group of idealists on her team. Her team wanted to bring about a renaissance in Canadian politics by getting a woman elected as party leader, and couldn't comprehend the defeat since Flora had such popular appeal. A tangible proof of this appeal was evident when she asked for individual donations of one dollar to support her campaign and she received more money than was given to the Conservative Party in the previous year.

Peter Raymont's intimate and revealing camera work and editing is reminiscent of Richard Leacock's filmic style in the classic political

documentary **Primary** that recorded the Kennedy-Humphrey primary that led to John Kennedy's being elected to the U.S. presidency. Both Raymont and Leacock use the language of film creatively to frame the truth as they see it. Both films show the politician's tendency to use contradictory rhetoric - that is, making promises that sometimes conflict with previous promises. In **Flora** the politician is Eddie Goodman, and in **Primary** the politician is Senator Hubert Humphreys. Both films allow the audience to be in the middle of the action with the camera in the crowd on the floor of the convention in **Flora**, or in the crowd engulfing a charismatic Kennedy in **Primary**.

Although the film's title does not reveal the main theme of the film - a study of convention politics, it most certainly concerns itself with Flora's valiant struggle to gain the leadership of the Conservative Party. In a scene from the film, Flora is talking to a group of supporters about women and leadership. She explains why women tend to shy away from positions of leadership by stating that, "women do not perceive themselves as leaders, but, as more leadership positions are given to women, that myth will explode." Flora, by her own example, is doing her part to explode that myth.

Robert Hookey



A communal meal under a plastic tent after tree planting

## FILM REVIEWS

Kendall's film treats of a creative community in isolation; gathered, outfitted, transported to a work site and abandoned for the several months of a spring planting season. Once arrived, the crew assembles and builds its own living and cooking quarters. Here, the blaze from a wood stove and an absence of electricity register a Spartan atmosphere. Unlike a logging crew, the tree-planters live at the site, and are of both sexes. The work is shared equally and a flat rate of ten cents a tree makes arduous labor nicely remunerative, if one considers an average daily planting to be in the area of 400 to 1000 trees by a single individual.

Most of the planters are west-coast young people and they are from widely different backgrounds. They are (or have been) musicians, artists, loggers, transient construction workers. These reflective individuals, each in their fashion, tend to describe tree-planting as a "feeling" act - a positive and necessary work. Their concern for the trees they plant is whether they will thrive - whether, in fact, there is sufficient mineral in the soil of a burned-out site to enable a sapling to take root. They are the 60's generation with some of its metaphysics scrubbed off. For all of them, tree-planting is a source of dependable income, just as for all of them these few months in a wilderness appear to provide an opportunity to stretch themselves, for a time, away from the rest of their lives. "Do it with joy" sings one of the crew as he strums a guitar at the work site. They do.

Nicholas Kendall's documentary employs a kind of filmic text of the trees. His camera habitually seeks out those elements necessary to the nurturing process, and that is what this documentary is all about. Implicit, of course, is the contrasting function of the logger. Beginnings (not endings) are highlighted in this film, and an initiatory process is juxtaposed, at least by implication, with a logging operation's terminal aspect. Visually, elements essential to gestation and growth take precedence in Kendall's selective imagery. In such a context, even the planters' comparative youth and search for lifestyle contribute to a "beginnings" motif, paralleling, strengthening - indeed framing the film in terms of its ideas. Its title, **Do it with Joy**, correctly gauges Kendall's tonal approach to his material, while at a more obvious

level, it serves to indicate the tenor of this tree-planting subject, alone.

A well-articulated work, the film prominently features the spacial reality of the site itself, the river bordering it, and a wide expanse of sky - a constant backdrop to the timber stands edging the valley in which the work progresses. The motions of planting are closely observed and their rhythm is noted - hand: to dig in the earth, foot: to seal a planted sapling. Again and again - eight feet apart - these motions are repeated through the long days. The camera adopts and retains the planters' rhythm. Its lens, reluctant to give up its focus, trains once more on hand foot and earth, no matter that the planter rests for a time from his work. His physicality, no less than the topography of his work site, is a thing to be observed in contemplation of the nature of both.

It is a Bazinian notion that for the cinema reality must consist of those things that are tangibly, physically real - things like Kendall's B.C. saplings and the planters that tend them. Their growth, like Bazin's ethos, is contained by this physical reality, but too, elements of reality's transcendence are present. **Do It With Joy** mirrors these.

Alice Smith

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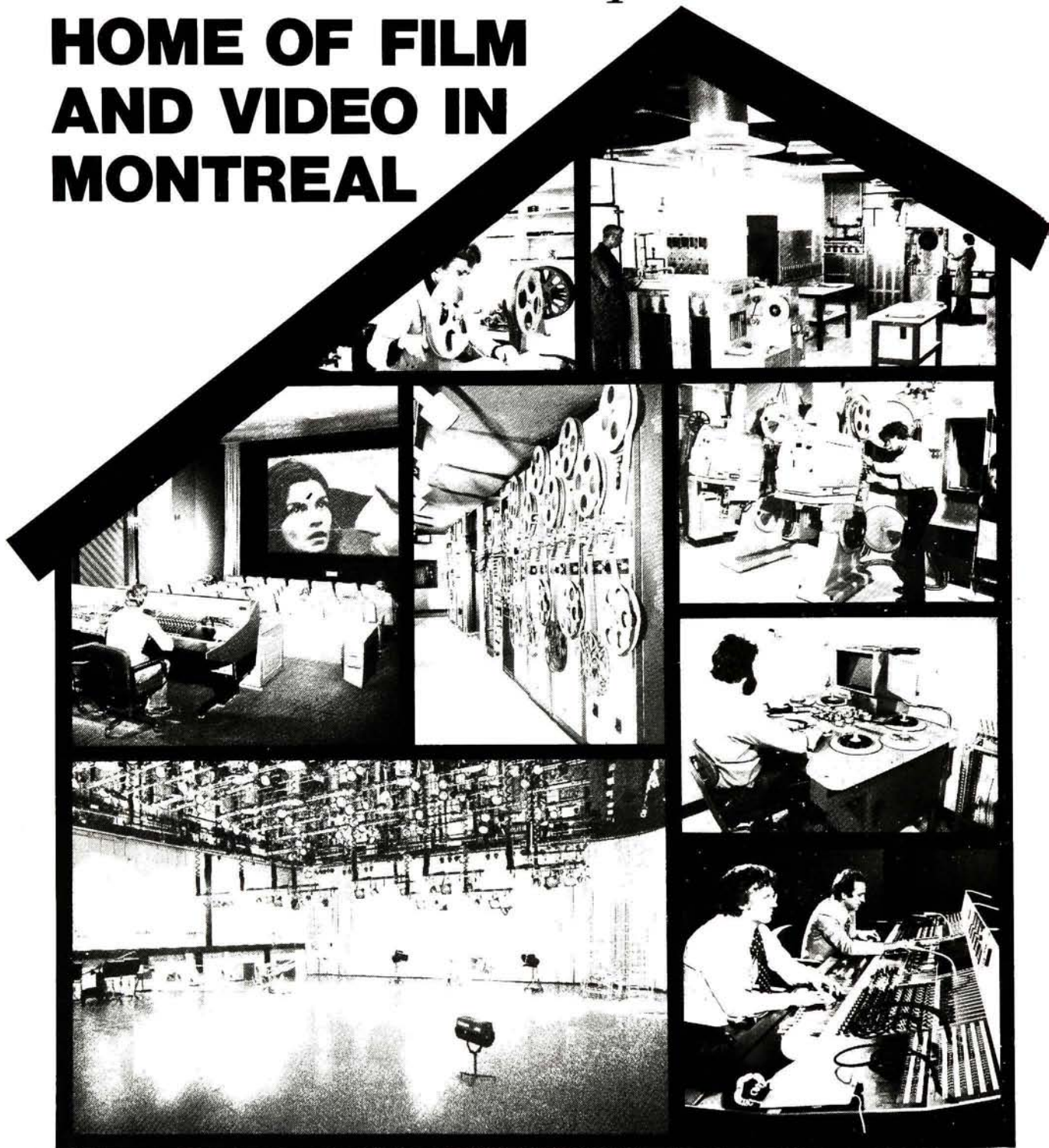
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