

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS

Franco- La Storia di un Emigrante

d: Salvatore Greco, asst. d: Peter Campbell, ph: James Aquila, sc: James Aquila, Lesley Dobson, m: Giulio Volpe, sd: Ross Redfern, Steve Joles, Brian Hammond, a.d: Vince Pietropaolo, Laura Springolo, pc: Fine Film Productions, 1976, color, 16mm, running time: 28 min. (Italian, Eng. s.t.).



Franco (Carlo Crococo) summing up his Canadian experience

Franco - Storia di un Emigrante is a carefully and lovingly observed documentary-drama about the hardships faced by an Italian immigrant family struggling to adapt to a new life and culture in Canada. Unable to find work at his trade (machinist) the head of the family, Franco, works as a construction laborer in order to survive. Though he works hard and conscientiously, he suffers from a growing dissatisfaction with life in Canada that is inflamed by callous discrimination from a fellow worker.

Franco believes that he has made a mistake in coming to Canada: to him the food is bland, the wine no good and the people unfriendly, if not actively hostile. But it is his own inability to come to terms with the country that alienates him from the life around him. Franco's wife Teresa who is younger than he is, has adapted more smoothly into the new pattern of life. There is a tender, telling scene where Teresa, after discovering Franco's surreptitious plans to return to Italy, stares tearfully out through the window of their home to watch her eight-year old son playing a noisy game of pick-up hockey on the street with his Canadian friends.

Franco's problem is faced by every immigrant who comes to a new and strange country. He must find a way to embrace the unfamiliar customs of the new land, while preserving the

precious ties that bind him to his heritage. Some immigrants encounter only bitterness and disappointment by clinging too desperately to the old traditions and values without admitting any validity in the new. As a result, they, like Franco, are spiritually dissatisfied with the present and see no hope for the future. Franco allows his eyes and his heart to look backward, but it is a misty past he sees, where the rough edges of his former life (the reasons for coming to Canada) are obscured. Teresa asks him incredulously how he can even consider going back to Italy and working for her brother, a man he could never get along with in the past.

It is only after Franco discusses his feelings with an older immigrant who has lived in Canada for thirty years that he begins to realize that he is being unfair to judge the country and all its inhabitants by the actions of a few individuals. Through the old man, Franco sees how it is possible to adapt gracefully to a new culture, while retaining the best of the past.

This is the kind of film we should see more of in a multi-cultural society such as ours. It treats the immigrant experience with a tender passion that only someone whose roots began elsewhere can bring. The film's young director, Salvatore Greco, as well as the cinematographer and co-writer (with Lesley Dobson) James Aquila, both come from the same southern Italian village. Both Aquila

and Greco have lived in Canada for many years and both have become filmmakers who bring a serious-minded dignity to their art, believing that film can and should provide a forum to encourage understanding between people.

Greco maintains that by distancing himself from the Italian community while studying film and television production at Ryerson, he was able to gain valuable perspective on his heritage. He has risen out of what in some immigrants becomes a self-imposed ghettoization, and can thus perceive clearly the needs, desires and failings of the newcomer who remains locked behind cultural barriers.

Adding his own strength to the thesis is Carlo Crococo, veteran actor in over 64 feature films including **Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow** and **The Yellow Rolls-Royce**. Crococo, as Franco, gives a sensitive performance of a man desperately unhappy with the course his life has taken and confused over the possibilities inherent in a strange land. Less fortuitous was the choice of Marina Rabissi as the wife, Teresa. Despite a valiant attempt to convey the enduring strength and martyrdom of the Italian mother, the actress remains too stiffly remote to be convincing.

Cinematographer Aquila provides a graceful visual style, strong on composition, in which subtle details delicately embellish the director's ideas.

Franco - Storia di un Emigrante is the kind of film that allows us the opportunity to develop an understanding of the people that make up this country. In a time when we are faced with a crisis in national unity, it becomes more important than ever to recognize the other person's needs. It would indeed be encouraging to see more films like Franco being made by and about the Asians, Caribbeans, Europeans and all the other cultural identities that have come together in the Canadian mosaic to make for themselves a new and better life.

Günter Ott

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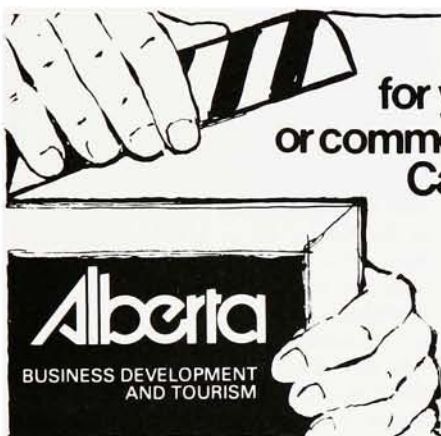
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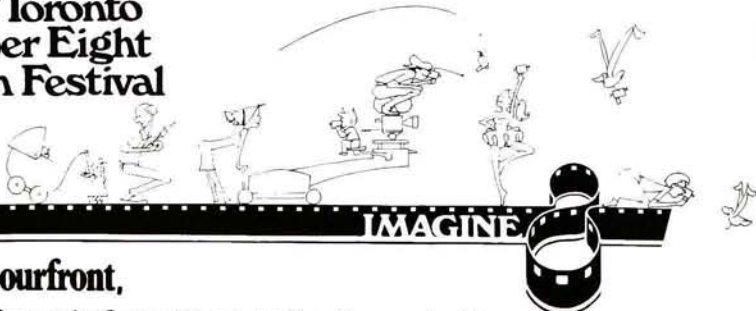
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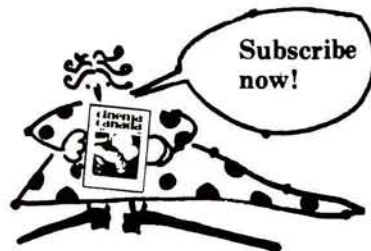


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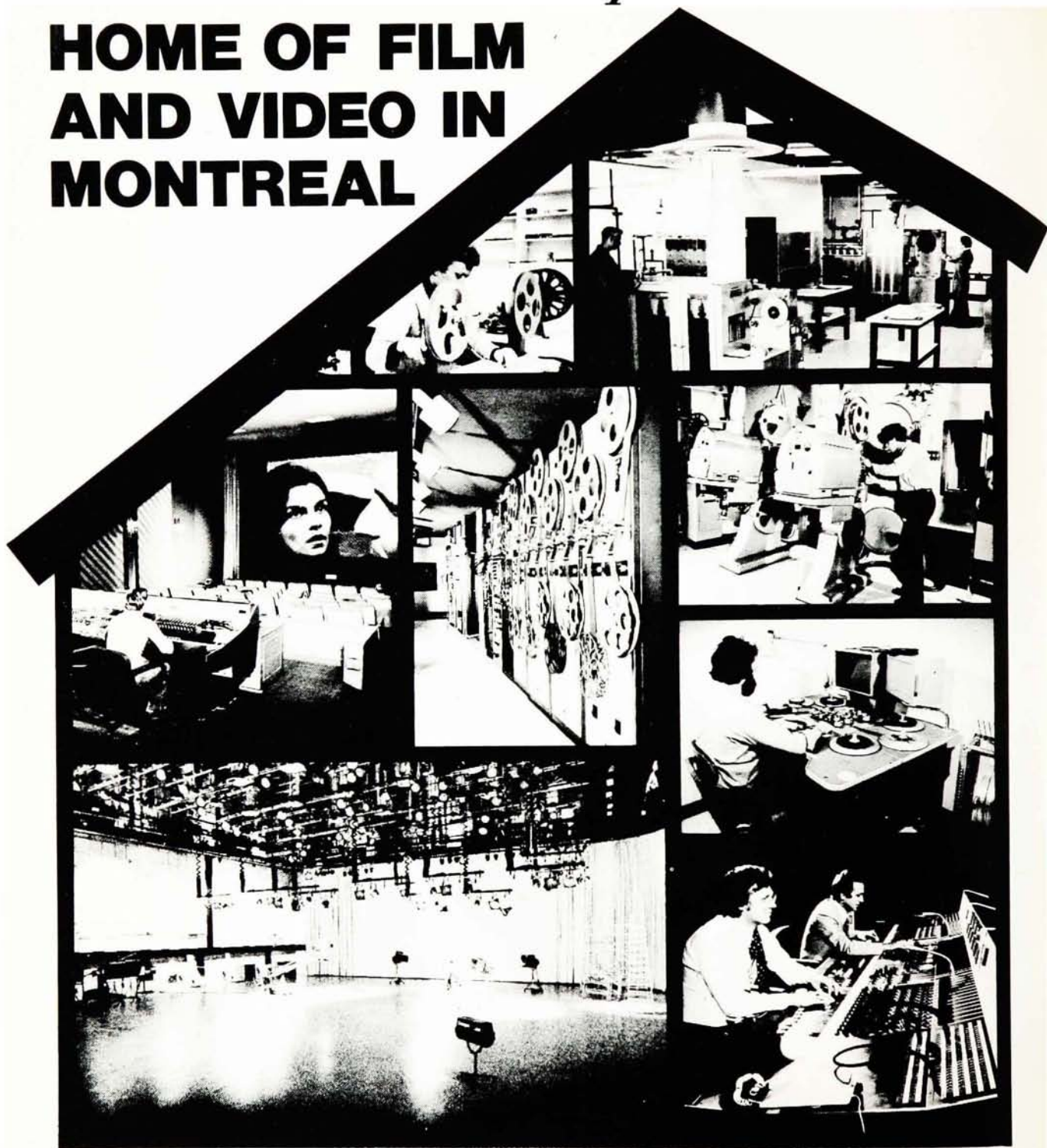
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