

IN PROGRESS...

Cries in the Night

exec. p. Barry Allen, p. William Fruet, d. William Fruet, sc. Ida Nelson, ph. Mark Irwin, p. asst. Goff Martin, a.d. Susan Longmire, wardrobe Mary Jane McCarty, ed. Ralph Bunjes, stills Rick Porter, sound Ian Hendry, continuity Marie-Thérèse Boily. l.d. Kav Hawtrev, Barry Morse, Lesley Ann Donalson, Dean Garbett, Harvey Atkin, Peggy Mahon, Alfred Humphrys, Jack Van Evera, Les Rubie, p.c. Incident at Northampton Production.

Cries in the Night may be the smoothest, most serene of the more than a dozen shoots going in Toronto this summer. Despite weather that's shuffled clear skies, cloud and rain like the pea in the old shell game, the picture is on budget and on time.

A good part of the credit for this must go to the crew, led by Dop Mark Irwin. Most of them have just finished five weeks together in Puerto Rico, shooting *Tanya's Island*. They're thoroughly used to each other and, judging from the comments they made when I visited the set at Lakeshore Studios (where they'd moved after three weeks at the main location in Markham), they've become quite fond of one another. They all seem to work together quite efficiently.

However, legendary gaffer, Jock Brandis tells me the efficiency is all illusion. He suggests that if I listen to the same people communicating on the same subject five minutes later, I'll hear them being just as firm and sure about totally contradictory information. Jock Brandis, however, is a world-class cynic and three-times winner of the Liberal Party of Canada's Lying to the Press Competition. He may be right, but if he is, the chaos is eliciting panicky responses from no one and the work proceeds apace.

The other major factor in the success of the shoot is the schedule itself. Seven weeks (from July 23rd to September 7th) seems a generous schedule for a traditional horror film that doesn't rely heavily on special effects.

Cries in the Night is a horror film of the madman-with-an-axe variety. Teen-aged Heather arrives at her grandmother's funeral home to help turn it into a tourist home. It's the only way the old lady can hang onto the place since her husband, the undertaker,

died. There's one guest already, the affable Mr. Davis, but two others arrive, Harry and Florie. At first they appear to be married but, in fact, they are a salesman and his floozie on a hot weekend. They're murdered. Heather begins to hear voices in the night. Grandma denies that there's anyone in the cellar. More murders. Could it be Hibbs, the grotesque and horny handyman? Is Mr. Davis as affable as he seems? Finally, Heather becomes the target and that leads to the shattering climax in the embalming room.

The script is by Ida Nelson, whose previous credits are in television and include *A Cosmic Christmas*, and producer/director William Fruet is quite pleased with its traditional qualities. He feels that audiences associate more with reality than with the science fiction/fantasy of *Alien* or *Hallowe'en*, making *Cries in the Night* a "marketable commodity." The rumor on set is that he's going for a GP rating, a move that will enhance the film's marketability in a season filled with Restricted horror movies.

The special effects for the film are being done by Dennis Pike and include the shovels that, later that afternoon, are to bludgeon Barry Morse (as Mr. Davis) to death. Pike's problem was to

create something light enough to do no damage, yet strong enough to seem real and not to break. He solved it by casting his shovels in urethane, a lightweight fiberglass. Since urethane can't be painted, he created a realistic look by coating the inside of the plaster mold with a mixture of black paint, latex rubber and aluminum. The resultant rough, dark, metallic finish looks quite realistic.

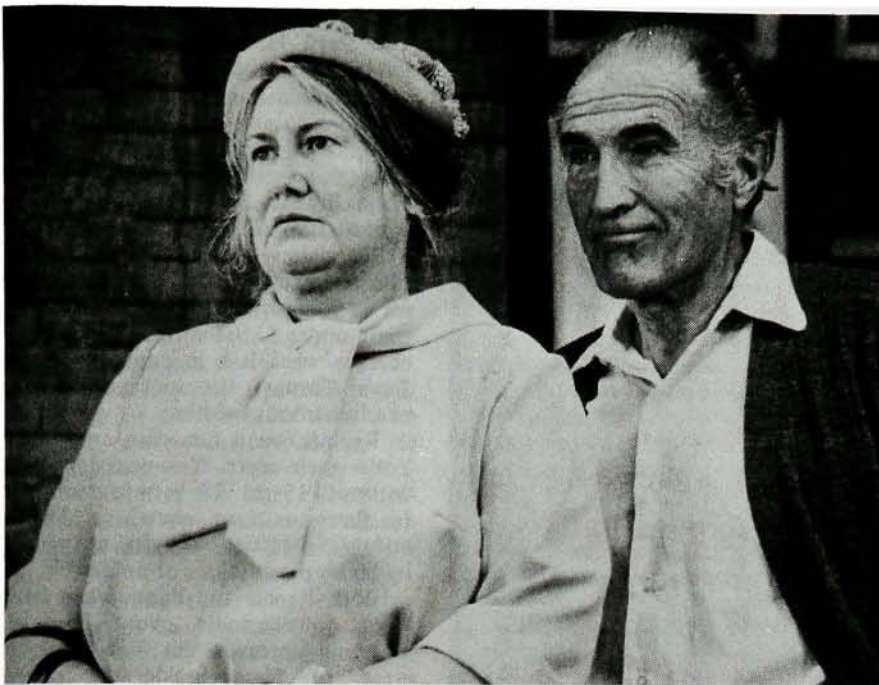
The look of the picture will be "Ontario Gothic." Mark Irwin is using lots of soft lights and no camera filters for an effect he describes as "Muted, mellow, contemporary low key." The mood will be enhanced by a lot of motivated tracking and deep focus. He adds that the murders are receiving a lot of time, energy and coverage.

Cries in the Night boasts an all-Canadian cast. Grandma is played by Kay Hawtrev, Heather by newcomer Leslie Donalson and Mr. Davis by Barry Morse.

When I mentioned that Mr. Davis appears, in the script, to have little character, Barry Morse replied, "That's very interesting to an actor because it provides a framework into which you can put almost everything. What I chose to do, in conjunction with our director, Bill Fruet, is to make him a seemingly contradictory person, so that one says at one moment, "Well, he's a very good-natured and soft-hearted and sentimental and rather befuddled old chap." Then another time, one thinks, "Well,



A tense moment between Hibbs (Stephen Miller) and Heather (Lesleh Donaldson) on the set of *Cries in the Night* photo: Rick Porter



Grandma (Kay Hawtrey) and Mr. David (Barry Morse) on the Elora, Ontario set of *Cries in the Night*

is he exactly what he seems?" The script, I think deliberately, leaves a lot for the actors to do and it's noticeable that a great many good scripts of this kind, in this genre, also leave a lot for the artist to do."

With distribution deals not completed, William Fruet and associate pro-

ducer Patrick Doyle wouldn't reveal the budget, but other sources inside the company put it at around 1.5 million. The film is also undergoing a little change, but that, too, remains an official secret.

Andrew Dowler

The Squad

p. André Link, Marie-José Raymond, d. Claude Fournier, asst. d. Avdé Chiriaess, Michèle St-Arnaud sc. Claude Fournier, from an original idea of John Dunning and André Link ph. Daniel Fournier art. d. Anne Pritchard cost. François Laplante l.p. Harry Reems, Jeff Bowes, Daniel Pilon, Jean Lapointe, Fiona Red, Gilles LaTulippe, Nicole Morin, Monique LePage, p.c. Squad Film Ltd.

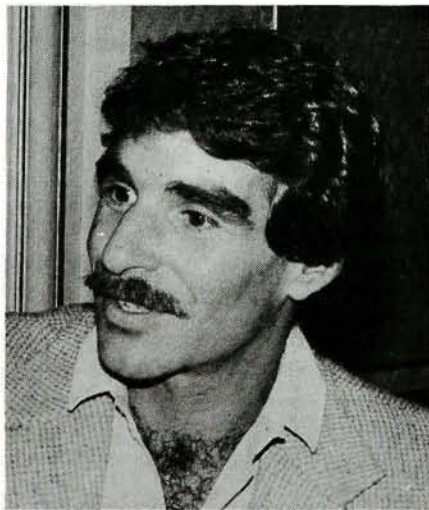
The Squad, due to wrap Sept. 7, began shooting July 21.

"We're on schedule," says veteran Quebec director, Claude Fournier. Then he chortles, "And within budget — this far anyway."

Marie Josée Raymond, producer, production manager and Fournier's partner in Rose Films and real life, permits spontaneity to poke through her cool, artful elegance to explain their success. "We've got a great crew! It's a lot of hard work but a very pleasant shoot."

On set, crew and cast morale is high.

Atop Mont Royale, against a "Giotto Sky," soundman Richard Nichol delays a take to find a "dead" spot for his



Harry Reems stars in Claude Fournier's latest comedy *The Squad*

Nagra. Bent in the cold wind, he shuffles the machine around, aware everyone is waiting. Instead of curses, someone yells, "Don't look for water; look for oil." Soon, a pleased Fournier jigs atop a rented truck. Later, when stunning black newcomer, 6 ft. plus Maggie Crooks (Fast Annie) is prone on a patrol car front seat, one foot out the back window, the other out the front, she'll be asked for some foot expressions. Her curling and uncurling toes straighten the kinkiest hair of most male onlookers. Someone mutters her legs are so long they meet at her chest; it's a sight when 5 ft 4 in. Fournier stands before her.

The Squad's budget is closer to \$1 million than the rumoured \$800,000, according to Irene Litinsky of Cinepix/DAL films. They, the CFDC, L'Institut Québécois du Cinéma, and Rose films are financing, though percentages are confidential. Private investors are involved, too; all \$5,000 units were snapped up within four days of the offering.

Daniel Pilon (Frank, "a cop who gets paid to get laid") says the film is "bawdy but not dirty." Purportedly a fast-paced comedy, it was co-authored by Raymond and Fournier. Mr. Clean (Harry Reems) is invited to rid Montreal of sin, having done so to Toronto. The morality squad he heads is corrupt and inept. Each cop's misadventures are depicted as he works under Clean's strait-laced supervision.

In one sequence, Reems and Swanson clumsily search a skyscraper foyer for clues. Suddenly, Reems points down.

Reems: "Pick it up."

Swanson: "But it's only a piece of lint, sir."

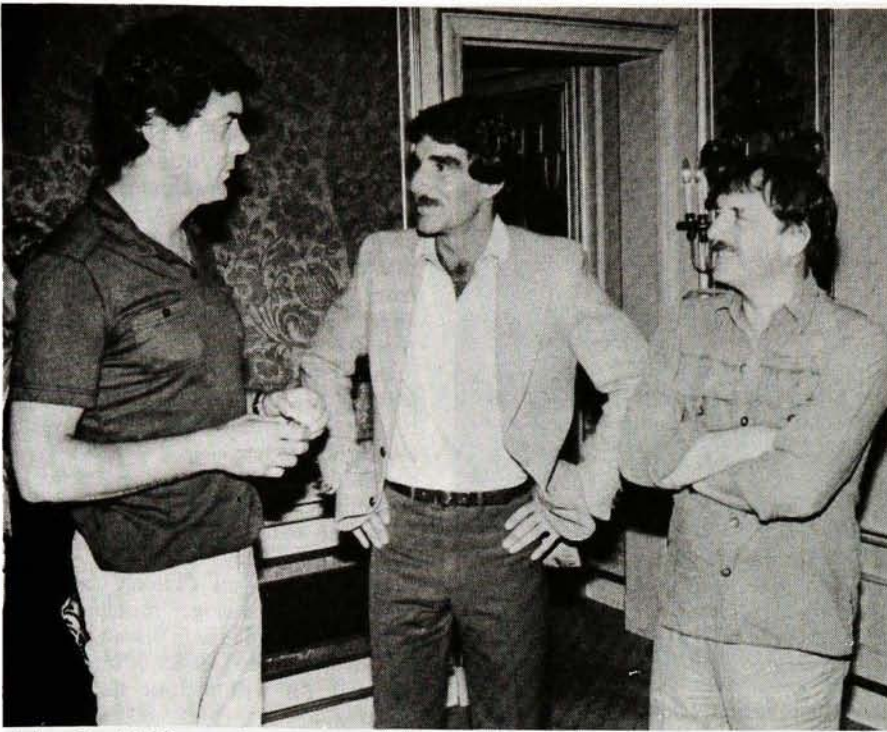
Reems: "Pick it up. We've got to start somewhere."

(Exasperated, Swanson wraps it in an oversized plaid handkerchief.)

Reems (taking Swanson aside): "We want the cold hand of the law in this man's pocket."

The "man" is Harry the Flasher (Gilles LaTulippe, praised by all). In the sequence prior, Deborah Weinstein has fainted after slipping a hand into the Flasher's pocket. The pocket has no pouch and everyone knows what's under a flasher's Aquascutum.

Much research has been done, since the authors originally had written a serious vice-squad corruption drama. It was DAL's John Dunning and André Link's suggestion that led to a transformation into comedy, which Fournier has done before (*Deux Femmes en Or*; *La Pomme, la Queue et les Pepins*; and *Je Suis Loin de toi, Mignonne*).



Actors Daniel Pilon and Harry Reems discuss the shooting of *The Squad* with director Claude Fournier

The film is entirely in English, but will be dubbed in French and released in that version in Quebec, before the English is shown there. A Christmas

release is planned, though this could change suddenly, according to Ms. Raymond.

Much publicity has been milked

from porno star Reems's (*Deep Throat*, *The Devil in Miss Jones*) top billing. Publicists are claiming this is his first attempt at less horizontal cinema.

"That's not quite true," Reems said in a mid-night telephone interview. "I've done relatively straight films in Italy, France, Sweden and, in Tokyo, a pirate film in Japanese."

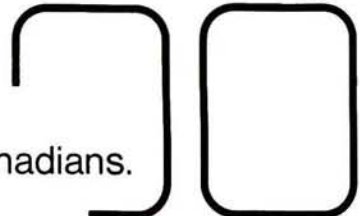
He claims to have appeared in 150 films. However, *The Squad* is his softest in English, and his first since being tried under U.S. conspiracy laws after charges were laid in conjunction with *Deep Throat*. His successful defense nearly bankrupted him.

Reems found Canadian crews really knew their craft. Not one day passed without 15 to 25 set-ups, compared to three or four elsewhere. This he said was because "they're not spoiled by lavish productions or unions."

Both Reems and Pilon, when asked, were quite candid about Fournier's directing through the viewfinder, instead of from beside the camera. Though favored even by Stanley Kubrick, Reems felt this style disturbs actors, working with them is sacrificed for framing and camera wizardry. Pilon suggested actors are insecure; to do well they need the director's undivided attention. "The director

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doesn't have time to take care of everyone and everything."

First assistant director, Avde Cheriaeff, was less severe. "When Fournier does it all, he's anxious to work. It's also faster than explaining things to 25 people, in two different languages. Claude's old school: small budgets, small crews. Then, over-specialization was a liability."

Fournier, 20 years a cameraman, explained, "It's the only way to see what the actors are doing, the only way to get what you want."

Last year he tried the more traditional way of directing but found he spent too much time explaining. He was being surprised — not always pleasantly. "I'm after the story, not beautiful pictures. The audience doesn't care about beauty, but what tells the story."

As for doing everything, "It's fun and it helps to 'decompress.'"

The production is as bilingual as a

box of breakfast cereal. When Fournier shouts, "Cut!", Cheriaeff echoes, "Coupé!" Although like bus drivers shouting, "Rue Peel, Peel Street," not all cast or crew members are bilingual. The first cameraman, Jean-Marie Buquet, according to Ms. Raymond, "the best focus-puller in the business," doesn't know a word of English.

Fournier said, "It causes a bit of uneasiness in the actors. When crew members speak French, the (monolingual English) actors think it concerns them, especially after a take when they are looking for approval. But nothing drastic has arisen. It does mean explaining things two or three times."

Nevertheless, on sked Harry reams clean and Pilon piles on. But the last quote belongs to Ms. Raymond, "The rushes are very nice."

"We, and the actors, too, will have to wait 'til Christmas or later for a peek and hopefully a giggle." **Doug Isaac**

Happy Birthday Gemini

p. Alan King, Rupert Hitzig co-p. Bruce Colman d. Richard Benner ph. Jim Kelly ed. Donald Ginsberg art. d. Ted Watkins sd. Ingrid Cusiell sc. Richard Benner based on the play Gemini by Albert Innaurato lp. Rita Moreno, Madeline Kahn, Robert Viharo, Sara Holcomb, Tim Jenkins, David Grant, Alan Rosenberg. p.c. Birthday Productions.

Happy Birthday Gemini began shooting in Toronto on June 20th and should have wrapped on August 3rd. Thursday, August 9th, the crew is setting up to do a major scene in an alley just off King and Bathurst — a week behind schedule and so far over their two million dollar budget that nobody's keeping up the polite fiction of calling it "a little over" or "slightly over."

There have been some problems. What they are depends on whom you listen to. Lisa Wilder, demon continuity woman, blames the weather. In a film with a lot of night exteriors, where every night brings its own blend of clear skies, cloud and rain, the need for matching backgrounds is served by standing and waiting. Gemini is a union film: waiting at night costs money.

Happy Birthday Gemini is the property of executive producers Alan King (the comedian) and Rupert Hitzig. They took the original play, a howling success on Broadway, to director Richard Ben-

ner (Outrageous), who adapted Albert Innaurato's script for the screen. Release will be through United Artists.

The story, as recounted by Lisa Wilder, production manager John Quill and others is this: Francis and Judith were lovers in college. When she and her brother visit him in South Philadelphia

during the summer, she thinks the relationship will continue. But Francis thinks he's gay. The pressures he feels from Judith and his macho father, Nick, lead him to destroy his 21st birthday party. Judith and her brother leave for California. Nick talks to Francis about the need for friends. Francis chases Judith and her brother down and the three of them go off with his sexual identity still unresolved. The plot also involves Madeline Kahn as Bunny, the neighbourhood glamour girl (somewhat faded), her asthmatic son, Herschel (Tim Jenkins) and Lucille, Nick's traditional Catholic girlfriend, played by Rita Moreno.

Francis is played by Alan Rosenberg, who can be seen in *The Wanderers*. Sara Holcomb, who plays Judith has appeared in *Animal House* and *Walk Proud*.

It may not sound like much on paper, but Phil Akin, a bit player in the film who has been involved with the play, says that something happens to it in performance that lifts it well beyond the thin plot line. Phil's had his own problems with the shoot. He's been wrapped off the film twice and then called back for shots that had been simply forgotten. He thinks there are major organizational screw-ups and cites another bit player who's been through the same thing.

The scene is ready to rehearse. It's Francis telling Judith he's gay. While Benner runs his actors through blocking, DoP Richard C. Brooks of New York, lines up the shot. Brooks is not the original DoP. He'd been called in two weeks previously to replace Jim Kelly who had shot *Outrageous* and who,



Happy Birthday Gemini: a coming-out party of sorts

according to John Quill, had become sick and had to leave. According to others on the crew, he was fired; either as a scapegoat or because he actually was responsible for the slow pace. Nobody knows, or will say, which. As I'm writing this, Jim Kelly is said to be shooting in the States and, therefore, not available for comment.

Quill, himself, is a replacement for Barbara Laffey, the original production manager who was fired as a result of personality conflicts. She was said to be quite happy to leave the film.

There is talk that there have been other firings, but John Quill won't discuss those. His big problem is that some of his talented and experienced crew members have left to fulfill other commitments and that there just are not enough experienced replacements around. An experienced crew is a speedy crew. He says that the Canadian government has done a fine job of attracting production, now he would like to see them set up an apprentice program so there would be the craftsmen to meet the demand. Without them, he suggests, the boom for making features in Canada could die.

They're ready to shoot, or, they would be if the planes would leave. The



Rita Moreno, Sara Holcomb taking direction from Richard Benner on the *Happy Birthday Gemini* set photo: Gary V. Holiff

location is about a mile and a half due north of Toronto Island Airport. With other locations in Kensington Market, Beverley St. backyards, a trolley graveyard and a banquet hall on Dufferin,

sound recordist Ingrid Cusiel has had her share of problems. But right now, Benner is more concerned with being able to match the noise in post-production that went with a noise-free track, so they roll sound.

Alan Rosenberg does his part basically the same for every take, but Sarah Holcomb plays around with her timing and delivery. Richard Benner watches, makes suggestions and encourages the experimentation. They all three seem involved and unhurried — lots of mutual trust and respect here. An hour later, with the scene in the can, Benner will take John Quill aside and scream at him in the low earnest voice of a man on the verge of murder about some third party on the set who is consistently harrasing him about time.

Despite these hassles, and more besides, the crew is showing a lot of enthusiasm for the film. The rushes are well-attended and more than one hardened techie has praised Benner's handling of the actors and confided that there are at least four scenes in the picture that will leave not a dry eye in the house.

And that makes it all worth while.

Andrew Dowler

Pinball Summer

p. Jack Murphy line p. Bob Presner asso. p. Fred J. Fox d. George Mihalka sc. Richard Zelniker sd. Donald Cohen ph. Rodney Gibbons ed. Ion Webster l.p. Michael Zelniker, Carl Marotte, Karen Stephen, Helen Udy, Thomas Kovacs pub. David Novek and Mary Trees p.c. Criterion Film Productions.

It is rather unusual for business people in the feature film industry to take a chance on young filmmakers, but it is very commendable.

The producers of *Pinball Summer*, Jack F. Murphy, president of Criterion Films, a 16mm distribution company, and Bob Presner, line producer, have taken such a chance. In August, 1978, Murphy approached Presner with the idea, marketing concept and strategy for a low budget picture. Their \$750,000 feature about high school students on the loose during summer break, is scheduled to appear in April. It was shot in 29 days with a crew primarily composed of filmmakers only a few years out of university. In fact, 37 of the 45 crew members had not worked in key positions on feature films previously. *Pinball Summer* gave them their chance to prove themselves.

Presner explains, "I've been in the business 11 years, and I remember how difficult it was for me at that time when there was no feature film industry. I graduated from Loyola in 1969 in Communications Arts with a major in film. The doors didn't open for me. It was a closed shop. My film background didn't help. I was coming up against people who had started in the industry. That's why I try to listen to anyone who comes to me for a job.

Presner, not unlike Roger Corman,

goes to student film festivals. It was at such a festival at Sir George (now Concordia University) in Montreal that he first saw *Pizza to Go* in 1977. The 24 minute color film, quite slick for a student production included an impressive 30 locations, locations that were well chosen and well lit, with a variety of mood and appearance.

The creators of this student film were George Mihalka and Rodney Gibbons, two aspiring filmmakers.

These same two filmmakers were approached by Presner as director (Mihalka) and cameraman (Gibbons). Gibbons had only shot about 800'

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in 35mm prior to **Pinball**.

"School gave us the background we needed — the familiarity with film equipment and taught us how to do everything with nothing," Mihalka says.

Donald Cohen, soundman, Walter Klymkiw, lighting electrician, Chantal Ethier, make-up artist and Otta Hanus, 2nd A.D. from the **Pizza to Go** crew also worked on **Pinball**. Altogether about 20 former Sir George and Loyola students worked on the crew.

But how does a film like **Pinball** go about saving money?

"Someone inexperienced will often waste his time, takes longer to perform a task or will ignore something important," Mihalka adds.

"It was a trade-off," Presner states, "We did not have to pay the same rates for our crew as we would have for people with 5-10 years experience. In exchange, the inexperienced were given the chance to prove their abilities."

"Instead of buying everything, such as \$40,000 worth of motorcycles, we contracted 4 bike owners to be on the set when we needed them. We paid a daily rental fee for the bikes. Therefore, we were able to secure heavy-duty chrome-engined Harley-Davidsons at \$1500 a bike for 6 weeks.

"In addition we required water front locations. Because of a union rule we had to shoot within a 15 mile radius of the Beaubien Metro Station. Anything beyond this area would cost more and include travel time and meals."

Trying to create a wide water coastal look would have been much easier if the crew could have taken off for Maine... But the unit manager, John Desormaux, came to the rescue.

Dressed in a suit and tie, he approached 12 municipalities and took the time to talk to the people in charge. The city managers were met formally with story outlines and details of all the requirements of the production. They were invited to the set prior to filming, and the result was full cooperation and then some.

"On big money pictures producers feel they can buy anything they need," Presner asserts. "Money replaces courtesy and respect."

"At one point during filming we were rained out with massive oceans on our locations. Within a half an hour the City of Dorval helped build us a new road. They brought in truckloads of gravel and a bulldozer."

The filmmakers also proved adept at finding locations. One old broken-down house on St. Joseph Blvd. in



Steve (Carl Marotte, left) and Greg (Michael Zelniker, right) would like to order more than just hamburgers from waitress Sally (Joy Boushell)

Lachine was transformed into "O.J.s," an orange Julip-type restaurant. The place was so convincing that people kept driving off the road to order food, thinking it was real and open for business.

The spirit of the production seemed to be an incentive for everyone to pitch in and help. The people at one old age home liked the crew so much that they kept feeding them, and cops would come off duty to work on **Pinball**.

Casting: It's not easy doing a picture which involves actors who play bikers when the actors don't know how to ride motorcycles. (The bikes for the shoot were choppers weighing-in at a mere 800 lbs.) But the people were right for the parts, so the **Pinball** team

decided to ignore this slight problem and to teach them to ride and move like bikers. Tow rigs were built for close-up shots, and stunt doubles were found for the long shots.

Another unique insert is that 7 of the main talent hadn't acted in film before. And one actress, Joy Boushell, was found by casting director Arden Ryshpan late one night at the disco 1234.

It's not easy to cast roles in the 17-19 age bracket in English in Montreal. Contacts were established with high schools, CEGEPS, universities, amateur theatre groups — 160 people auditioned for 8 leads. It would have cost three times as much if the production had gone to Toronto to fill these roles.

"In Montreal, for prestige, they way 'Hey man, we've got all the heavy-duty folks from Toronto.' In Toronto say 'Hey man, we've got all the heavy-duty folks from New York.' We were discovering heavy-duty folks in Montreal," stresses Mihalka.

These young filmmakers are perhaps a new breed. As Gibbons insists, "Film-making is a process, not just a job where you pick up your check and run home."

When he decided to make **Pinball**, Presner was personally told not to have anything to do with it. People thought he was crazy.

"Uncle Bob believed in all of us," the crew says.

Perhaps he will prove something to the industry.

Lois Seigel



The winner of this game of "strip pinball" between Sally (Joy Boushell) and Wimpy (Joe McNamara, centre) will soon reveal herself — in more ways than one