

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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