

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 Cusiell 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