

IN PROGRESS...

Prom Night

d. Paul Lynch asst. d. Steve Wright sc. William Gray ph. Bob New sp. ph. effects Al Cotter ed. Brian Ravok, cfe sd. Brian Day stunt co-ord. Terry Martin set dec. Joanne Chorney cost. Kat Moyer l.p. Leslie Nielson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Casey Steven, Eddie Benton, Antoinette Bower p. Peter Simpson assoc. p. Richard Simpson pub. Elizabeth Blomme/David Novek, Berger and Asso. Inc. p. manager Daniel Nyberg p.c. Simcom Ltd. 1979.

It was pitch black, but you could feel the energy and anticipation in the air. They had just loaded a van full of explosives and gasoline and were about to push it over the Scarborough Bluffs. Everyone was tired after the long, intense shoot, but you could tell that they were up for this. Stuntman Terry Martin carefully went over his game plan: by the time he reached his cut off point (marked only by a tiny light) he had to jump clear of the van before it was pushed over the cliff. Al Cotter had so much nervous energy that he was biting the end of his hammer. It was his job to rig the van with explosives and a radio detonator, so that the van could be exploded in the air. The question was, Could he make it work? A retake would be very costly indeed.

The cameras were hauled down the slope with a huge crane and the crew precariously scrambled down after them. Bob New was in charge of arranging the four-camera set-up. He, of course, picked the hot seat, and placed his Panaflex down the bluff where the first and largest explosion was to take place.

Finally, after every detail has been checked a dozen times they're ready to shoot. The luxury of a rehearsal is impossible. Steve Wright, the first A.D. calls for the cameras to roll, and when they are all turning over he motions the van for action. It almost gets up to speed, then jumps out of the special track that was designed to keep it on course. The take is cut and everyone takes a deep breath.



Casey Stevens and Jamie Lee Curtis in a pensive scene from the musical, mystery thriller, **Prom Night**: a moment camouflaging the horror that awaits...

When Paul Lynch, a part time graphic artist and two-time feature director, roughed out a graphic ad for **Prom Night** and stuck it on the wall in his office, he had little idea that it would be the springboard to his third feature production. "It all happened in a couple of weeks. Actually, we only started preparing at the beginning of March. The script was written in about six weeks..." The film which commenced principal photography August 7, under D.O.P. Bob New, was scripted by Bill Gray from a story by Bob Gouza. **Prom Night** is being produced by Peter and Richard Simpson of Simcom Limited. Simcom is the organization that was responsible for producing the **Sea Gypsies** and **The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams** in the U.S. **Prom Night** is their first feature in Canada, and although they refer to it as their only Canadian production, rumour has it that they might be responsible for at least three more features in Canada next year.

Prom Night seems designed, primarily, to fill the feature gap that occurs

between the April to May slump. During that time the major distributors are caught between their large pre-Christmas and summer releases, and the hope is that **Prom Night** will fill the product shortage that occurs then. It is also slated for release when most of the proms take place across North America, and this could be a factor at the box office.

The story is set in Ohio, and involves a group of teenagers who are attending their high school graduation. During the day that surrounds the prom a number of the students are murdered by a mysterious killer who is seeking revenge for an accidental death that occurred years before. The killer plans to murder all those that he feels were connected, or responsible for this death. Major roles are being played by Leslie Nielson (the principal of the school), Antoinette Bower (his wife), Jamie Lee Curtis and Michael Tough (their children), as well as Casey Stevens and Eddie Benton.

Lynch was delighted to work on the project because it allowed him to do some



Twenty-year old stunt girl, Karen Pike of Toronto, plunges to her nine-year-old "death" in *Prom Night*

interesting shooting. After directing *The Hard Part Begins* and more recently *Blood and Guts*, it has given him the opportunity to approach a story with the challenge of unusual angle compositions in order to build a significant amount of terror for his audience. Sections of the film have been directed with a broad slash

of colour and violence, reminiscent of gruesome headlines splashed across national tabloids. What Lynch hopes to come up with is a terror picture that is sheer entertainment. A firm believer that people go to the theatres to experience a wide range of purging emotion, he has constructed a thriller that will be immensely entertaining as well as a box office success. The director feels that time is the most important element that you could buy on any shoot. "The script is relatively complex (seventeen principle performers) and requires a lot of sensitivity during the filming." With a budget of 1.5 million dollars, and only a 28 day shooting schedule, I don't think that he had quite the time he would have liked. None the less, he was very satisfied with the special effects and impressed with the performances of his actors. "Usually

there is at least one weak performance, but from what I've seen in the rushes all our characters are strong."

Finally, the bullhorn pierces through the darkness and a hush falls over the crew. The van has been thoroughly checked to avoid mishap. It has been about an hour and a half since the last attempt at this very tricky effect. When Steve Wright is satisfied that his crew and equipment are ready he again calls for action. A small jeep propels the van over the cliff at about 30 miles per hour. For a brief moment the van is airborne, a graceful free fall, then it bursts into an incredible corollary of colour and sound. The dark cliffside is suddenly aflame as the twisted wreck tumbles into the black lake. Bob New was so close, I think he singed his eyebrows.

Larry Mooré

Final Assignment

d. Paul Almond asst. d. Pedro Ganbol, Pierre Poirier sc. Mark Rosen ph. John Coquillon p. designer Harry Pottle a.d. René Petit cost. Nicoletta Massoni cast. Danny Haussman l.p. Burgess Meredith, Geneviève Bujold, Michael York, Brooke Adams, Colline Dewhurst exec. p. James Shavik, Arnold Kopelson p. Larry Hertzog co-p. Gail Thomson loc. man. Cary Ross p. man. Monique Mercier asst. p. man Daniel Louis p. sec. Jacqueline Wanner p.c. Cinema One, 1979 unit pub. Denise DiNovi pub. David Novek, Berger and Asso. world sales: Inter Ocean Films (L.A.), Ann Feinberg.

"Has anybody here seen Geneviève?"
 "Where's our Brezhnev? We need him on the set!"
 "We already have a Russian advisor."
 "She's in her trailer."
 "What? Who cast a woman as Party Secretary?"
 "No, not Brezhnev: Geneviève! Geneviève is in her trailer!"
 "Brezhnev, Geneviève, what's the difference? A tyrant's a tyrant."
 "Brezhnev is on the phone, he's been waylaid at the Saydie Bronfman Center."
 "What, is he defecting to Israel?"
 "No, he got lost."
 "I'll say he got lost."
 "Where's Geneviève?"
 "Who cares? Send a driver to pick up Brezhnev, and also ten boxes of croissants and two dozen bananas and uh... oh yes, and today's script."
 "Which one?"
 "Draft number 14478.0092"

"..."
 "Well, get on it!"
 "We don't have any goffers left."
 "Paul wants Geneviève!"
 "Tell him to take a taxi."
 "But her trailer's just around the back."
 "Tell her to take a walk."
 "Hey, you, with the baby face."
 "Me?"
 "Yea, you. Here take my car and go get Brezhnev at the Saydie Bronfman."
 "I'm sorry, but I can't."
 "A refusenik, eh? Well, take a walk."
 "You can't fire me, I'm James Shavik, the executive producer!"
 "Weren't you fired last week?"
 "No, that was Narizzano."
 "Where's Geneviève?"
 "Quiet, please, we're rehearsing."
 "Well, James, old buddy, heh-heh-heh, did you hear the one about the juicer, the grip and the scriptgirl?"
 "Shhh!!!"
 "Where's Geneviève?"

So began another day on the set of *Final Assignment*, a \$6.5 million political thriller produced by Cinema One of Montreal. For a change, the crew began the day well-rested, fresh from two days of R&R following a hectic weekend of shooting in Mont Tremblant, north of Montreal. But it was not only the last weekend that had been hectic for the cast and crew of *Final Assignment*. The film had been beset with problems since its



An arch Geneviève Bujold listens to Burgess Meredith on their **Final Assignment**

inception: like a reportedly ill-prepared and talky script, coupled with a shooting schedule involving several distant locations that would blow the budget through the roof and imperil the film's certification as a Canadian feature (since most of the costs of the original shooting plan would have been incurred — and paid for — abroad). These problems, hampering the production's smooth sailing, eventually culminated in the ill-mannered dismissal of director Silvio Narizzano, a week into the shooting. The producers became embroiled with the Directors Guild of Canada over the affair, eventually resolving it with a cash settlement to Narizzano.

Amid all this brouhaha, Paul Almond was parachuted in, presumably behind enemy lines, with forty-eight hour's notice. Rising to the occasion with characteristic style, Almond has, by all accounts, turned a patchwork flick into something approaching cinema. "If it weren't for him," one crew member was heard to say, "this production would be flat on its ass. He's really the only one holding it together." On this particular morning, Almond alternated between conducting rehearsals, setting up the afternoon's work, calling his agent, directing shots, and re-writing the script from start to finish.

The day's work — with the oak panelled interiors of Montreal's neoclassical city hall doubling as a Kremlin annex — involved a scene in which a Russian press attaché lectures foreign journalists — Geneviève Bujold, Michael York and

Richard Gabourie -- on the virtues of abiding by Soviet rules of press decorum. Renowned D.O.P. John Coquillon bemusedly watched over a crew of grips and assistants as they tried to keep up with a constantly-revised shooting schedule. For many **Final Assignment** is their baptism of fire; with the present proliferation of productions, Montreal's pool of experienced technicians has been seriously depleted and many positions have been filled by first-timers. While not a bad thing in itself, it does make for a certain amount of confusion on the set. Nevertheless, things were readied on time, with the principals being called for rehearsals.

Michael York, one of the more congenial and self-contained persons on the set, paced about snapping his fingers and going over his lines. Geneviève Bujold, in marked contrast, displayed an inordinate interest in her fingernails and a propensity for taking refuge behind the nearest closed door. These mannerisms aside, the rehearsals went smoothly and the scene was ready for the camera. But, sensing that the cast of extras had stiffened in their seats, Almond suddenly called a time-out and instructed his charges to walk around the room and relax. This exercise evidently paid off with the next scene being shot in three takes.

The general impression from the day's shoot was that the production has been able to keep its head above the water in spite of the constant script changes. Explained one of the crew, "The script's

been changed so much, who knows what we're doing today." This is substantiated by the fact that on one occasion the crew scouted a location for a Soviet detention center scene at ten o'clock one morning and, by two o'clock in the afternoon were already shooting the scene. In all fairness, such an incident also reflects the crew's efficiency and ability to work quickly. Nevertheless, most of the work is still ahead. One can only hope that Almond and his crew will pull it off. So far, the prognosis is encouraging. Meanwhile...

"I'm ready for the staircase shot."

"That's great, but we're only doing that this afternoon."

"Hey, I've got today's script."

"It's okay, we rewrote it while you were gone."

"They didn't have ten boxes of croissants."

"So where's Brezhnev?"

"I thought he took a taxi."

"Think again."

René Balcer



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Circle of Two

d. Jules Dassin asst. d. Timothy Rowse sc. Thomas Hedley ph. Laszlo George sp. effects Bill Woods ed. David Nicholson sd. Owen Langevin cont. Patty Robertson p. designer Claude Bonnière a.d. François de Lucy elec. Kenny White m. Paul Hoffert cost. Theony V. Aldredge cast. Karen Hazzard Ltd. l.p. Richard Burton, Tatum O'Neal, Nuala Fitzgerald, Robin Gammell, Patricia Collins, Donann Cavin, Norma Dell'Agnese, Michael Wincott, Kate Reid, Leo Leyden exec. p. William Marshall p. Henk Van der Kolk unit pub. Patricia Johnson p.c. Circle of Two Productions Ltd. (1979) col. 35mm

I'm on the set of **Circle of Two**. The chair I am sitting in says RICHARD BURTON, but I do not think I am Richard Burton. He's about eight yards to my right sitting with Tatum O'Neal. All the fifty-odd people here are waiting for silence.

Silence is the problem on this sunny Center Island shoot because of the proximity of the island airport. Takes are continually interrupted by the sound of passing aircraft.

Henk Van der Kolk is the producer of this \$5.7 million Film Consortium of Canada production. I ask him how he came to select this property for production.

"I don't think in terms of exploitation," says Van der Kolk, "I just go by what turns me on." The basic question, he says, is "Am I prepared to live with this story for so long?" He emphasizes the many intensive hours which elapse between a film's inception to its release. Van der Kolk also cites compatibility with the writer as critically important. Meeting and getting to know the writer (Thomas Hedley) preceded the selection of the property.

"**Circle of Two** is a love story." Everyone on the set keeps telling me that. The film, based on the Marie-Therese Baird novel *The Shinning Furrow*, traces the relationship between a sixty-year-old artist (Richard Burton) and a sixteen-year-old girl (Tatum O'Neal) and — as the synopsis reads — "interweaves their lives with the byzantine manipulations of the international art world."

I ask D.O.P. Laszlo George (whose last picture was **Running**), how the film was shaping up from his end. Any special problems? "No problems," he smiles. "Rushes look good," he adds with easy confidence.

What is his visual approach to the film? "This is a love story," he responds "the eyes are important." He requires sharp definition and has consequently abandoned the popular low contrast filter.



Raising a few eyebrows, sixteen-year-old Sarah Norton (Tatum O'Neal) and sixty-year-old Ashley St. Clair (Richard Burton) in **Circle of Two**: an odd couple falling in love over their sodas

Two giant arcs are on location to soften the sunny light and give the effect of spring.

Laszlo emphasizes that this is a "people story," so the visual style must not be obtrusive, must not distract from the players.

None the less, director Jules Dassin

employs a lot of movement on the shoot. Laszlo compares this film with his experience on **Running**. "**Running** was very moody," he says. "The camera should change style with every movie."

I ask Van der Kolk some questions about the process of raising funds for this film. He says that having become an



Poised for action in a rubber dingy are : Jules Dassin, director (third left); Laszlo George, director of photography (centre); David Kelly, first assistant cameraman (above camera); and Michael Kohne, key grip (lower right), shooting **Circle of Two**

established company since the production of **Outrageous** was enormously helpful in putting together the financial package. "If this was the last year of the tax writeoff, it wouldn't hurt Bill (Marshall) and me."

The Film Consortium went to public placements (the sale of securities on the open market) to finance the production. Once the budget is beyond one-and-a-half million, it is simply no longer practical to assemble private backers, says Van der Kolk. Going public is itself an administratively expensive process, in this case

accounting for close to thirteen percent of the total budget.

Canadian talent in **Circle of Two** included Kate Reid, Tudi Wiggins, and Patricia Collins.

Rex Bromfield (writer/director of **Love at First Sight**) is on the set as a paid observer. His presence on location evolved from an agreement between the producers and the CFDC to give younger Canadian directors the occasion to study first hand the method of an established director.

Bromfield describes the experience as

"very valuable," particularly insofar as he can compare his own ideas and approaches to upcoming scenes with Dasin's, and, evaluate their differences in technique. Bromfield also feels that he is in a privileged position to evaluate the relationship between the director and crew. "The whole crew is in on this film" he says, "there is no sense of alienation."

Circle of Two will probably see a May-June '80 release.

Philip Jackson

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