The best of the Yorkton shorts: 
Mini-reviews

by Dale Winnitowy

YOUTH STRESS
d. Nicolas Stiliadis p. Syd Cappe, Nicolas Stiliadis
dsk. Health Media Distributors, Toronto. 24 min.

Because Youth Stress avoids becoming heavy-handed and institutionalized, it hits more nerve endings than others before it. It deals with the causes and consequences of youth stress as well as suggesting ways to handle it.

Narrator Don Francie's dramatic conviction is the thread that successfully pulls together this high-energy, but calculated, analytical documentary. Visual explosions from live rock concert footage to a splashy pop-artist album cover collage to a '50s clip of a black-jacketed Marlon Brando are used advantageously; Minoboni's first animated short is fascinating, mysterious and masterfully executed. His ability to depict height and motion with near magical use of perspective is what makes Trapeze unique.

A rope ladder falling to the ground offers a dizzying view as the trapeze artist ascends to his perch. As the figures begin to swing towards each other the viewer dangles in mid-air inches below their meeting point. The sensation of their movement plays with your equilibrium.

After the performance the trapeze artists metamorphosize into birds, are locked into cages, and then hung up in the back of the circus wagon. This mysterious ending is reminiscent of the fantastical delights often designed by eastern European animators.

Bonon could have eliminated the musical behind the curtains introduced without harming the deception as well as shortened the overly-long swinging mid-section. But it is his spell-binding animation that, like a trapeze artist, 'flies through the air with the greatest of ease.'

THE TEMPERATE RAINFOREST

What begins as a straightforward classroom-styled documentary exploring the environment and ecology of the Pacific Northwest's temperate rain forest evolves into a masterful photographic statement from Don White and his camera crew.

The narration takes a back seat to the fluid, near-poetic camera work and delicate soundtrack. The impish musical score accompanying a whimsical thread of events creates an unforgettable scene of a salmon stalker waking a worm choreographed to a doom-laden throbbing beat, and an impressive closing shot of the filmmaker hanging from a rising helicopter are only a few impeccable moments.

This is a film that grasps the enchantment of nature with the delicacy and power of a G.M. Hopkins poem.

NO VACANCY

Crisp shots of dynamite being planted in the walls of Vancouver's Devonshire Hotel open David Geddes' No Vacancy. Almost eulogistic, this film does more than examine the demolition of a 60-year-old building as it also questions the staircase upon which progress is ascending.

Black- and-white stills, perfectly scripted passages to fill in the flavor of the '30s and '40s, and sparkling big-band music slip in and out recreating the personality and dignity that resided in the hotel during its heyday. Geddes' camera mingles with excited young faces and wistful older people, but the most ambitious scene is a film inside the Devonshire past gutted rooms, frayed wires and tattered mattresses while a haunting soundtrack foreshadows its imminent demise.

The closing aerial shots are chillingly war-like; the Devonshire crumbles and performs the ultimateWalts of death amid clouds of dust and the appalling joy of destruction that fill the streets.

PASSING SHADOWS
d./p. Charles Konowal p.e. Charles Konowal, Regina. 15 min.

In Passing Shadows, Konowal attempts the seemingly impossible: to travel the inner pathways of soul poet Andrew Suknaski's creative impulses. Konowal's perceptive camera traces with acute visual detail the pain-inning methodology and at equal turns, happenssearch Suknaski undertakes to discover the images and emotions that fill his poetry. He wanders along bookshelves, across the${}\text{ empoweredly of the United Nations proposed a film highlighting the untold miseries of}$

DALE WALTHER, Ron Kennedy p. Dale Wartleben. 29 min.

In 1945 the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution stated, "Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that we can understand and solve the problem of peace."

The General Assembly of the United Nations proposed a film highlighting the untold miseries of
**FESTIVALS**

**DELICETO, VITA SERENA**


Magnatta returned to the southern Italian town Deliceto, his father's birthplace, to discover "la vita serena" (the serene life). The film crosses countryside, the postcardperfect narrow streets of Deliceto, and the effervescent spirit of the people makes this a warm-hearted travelogue coverning an innocent Italian home movie. What makes that excusable is Magnatta's ability to not dwell at length on any scene. In the end, the viewer is left wondering characters (is every Italian a born performer?) that Magnatta's camera meets in Deliceto are the life-blood of his film -- a happy, home-spun moment that has found a true friend in Italian serenity.

**ESTHER WARKOV: A SPIT IN THE HOUSE**


Esther Warkov has built an international art reputation from her North End Winnipeg home. She's simple, down-to-earth personality and environment contrasts delightfully with her complex work. She openly explains her endless borrowing of ideas from sources as far-reaching as the corner coffee-shop to the Today Show magazine liquor ads. Although she repeatedly claims "I don't work in symbols", her paintings overflow with pastel surrealism and the most enigmatic of filmic symbols. She tries to create unpredictable collages in her mind and then lets those feelings drift like dreams onto her mesmerizing canvases.

To understand Warkov's art may not be director Elise Swereheone's objective, but in an unusual way she has at last begun to investigate the Warkov's soul and art appear reachable.

**L'ESPRIT DES NEIGES (Snow Dream)**


Filmed in north-central Manitoba amid stark pre-Cambrian rock walls and a bleak snowscape, Grenier and his astute cinematographer, François Beuchemin, create a mythological masterpiece. Three passionate snow sculptors encounter a massive boxed block of frozen ice at writer's Delight, the near-religious intensity of the men becomes unerring as they create a cabbalistic snow monolith/totem that becomes as enigmatic as a surrealistic myth. Powerful close-ups, spell-binding night photography, and a mesmerizing soundtrack weave an air of mystery into each face of the sculptor's blinding. The contrast of nature's slowly eroded rock and ice masterpieces with the calculated work of the men leads into their search of the forest.

And when the rain begins and the fire erupts, questions about the impermanence of man-created art, the endurance of legends, and the innocence of primitivity drift like a spectrum across the final frames.

L'Esprit des neiges dwells in a country of legends and poetry.

**DREAMLIGHT**


An unusual computer graphics animated short. Dreamlight's precise lines weave and twist and dance to an inspired soundtrack mix of six classical compositions.

Hipi (an other-worldly stick character) travels in time as he views the creation of earth and journeys through the Eiffel Tower, across the Atlantic and past the Statue of Liberty into New York's Central Park where he encounters his dead mother. Although the 'it was only a dream' script is wanting, questions arise about the endurance of dreams and man's search for apocalyptic destruction. But the development of these ideas is left to imagination and unfortunately the answers disappear into the depths of Hipi's extra-terrestrial pond.

The seductive birth of our planet sequence, the starting revolving line recreation of the Statue of Liberty, the charming of human forms to an insistently imaginative use of common lines and shapes makes Dreamlight an exciting precursor of the computer-age of animation.

**A LEAP OF A THOUSAND YEARS**


Thousands of South East Asians have had to flee their homelands in the past few years because of attacks from tropical rain forests to the harsh seasonal changes of Canada. For the first ten minutes this documentary appears too self-congratulatory as public-sponsored films are examined. Their adjustment and success due to war-warmed one-on-one contact with sponsor groups seem affected.

Then we discover that government-sponsored families, who are often left on their own, are not fending with their problems. This is a particularly primitive Laotian hill tribe family's cultural customs provide adaptation and acceptance conflicts. In their society pre-marital sex and teenage pregnancy are permissible, but those values conflict with social service helpers and school authorities' attitudes.

The film attempts how to show the building of a bridge to cross a thousand years of tradition will not be easy task, but nevertheless a necessary one. As the credits run over a South East Asian teenager caught up in a winter street hockey game, a possible solution seems to be a goal within reach.

**BREAD**


Bread is a non-narrative visual gastroonomic success. From the wheat field to the mill to the kitchens and bakers Red is a mouth-watering, fast-paced documentary. Not only are the smooth, comparative cuts from bread being hand-made to production line machine-made appetizing, but exceptionally strong use of form and camera angles will sparkle the tastebuds of photography gourmands. And it may be the first and last time you get to sit down in an oven and watch bread rise. Bring your own peanut butter and jelly.

**A WAR STORY**

d./p. Anne Wheeler p.c./dist. NFB. Montreal. 60 min.

From 1942 until the end of the Second World War, Canadian doctor Ben Wheeler was interred in a Japanese POW mining camp on the island of Taiwan. In A War Story, his daughter Anne Wheeler recreates her father's story but an emotionally charged film about courage and power of human spirit. Fared down from the full-length 82-minute feature, the hour version of Wheeler's one-man struggle manages to represent the hardships endured by thousands. Editor Ray Harper deserves credit for his successful molding of archival footage (including rare Japanese propaganda scenes), exceptionally realistic re-enactments, and interviews with former POW com­rades. The words, moments and memories overlap elegantly.

Donald Sutherland's dignified, unobtrusive narrative reading from Dr. Wheeler's diary contracts effectively with the spy recollections of camp comrades whose stories are blessed with equal parts of gratitude, horror, humor, and philosophical distance.

Their stories range from memories of Dr. Wheeler's medical accomplishments in one case accompanied by a re-enactment of an operation performed with a razor blade as the only instrument available and no anaesthetic, to the gentle, restrained stories told by POWs after their liberation were sharing their campfire tea with their former guards, to the ironic horror of long-awaited supplies falling from the sky and killing the men below.

A particularly inspired re-enactment depicts the prisoners breaking into a re-enactment of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" only to be interrupted by a guard demanding quiet. After he leaves, a soft "Silent Night" slips from their lips. The story takes hold as the camera moves to Dr. Wheeler whose passionate words of hope and loneliness from the diary written to his wife are read over the delicate chorus.

The discriminating direction and the intensity of the emotions cannot be forgotten; Anne Wheeler has created an overwhelming tour de force.

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