My Kind of Town is a film that virtually redefines low-budget to hitherto unthought-of depths. It was made, I am told, on the ends of an NFB documentary about the wall murals of Chemainus, B.C. This is: 'All unheard of, of course. Nobody Waved Goodbye began as an NFB documentary. As I understand it, director-scenarist Charles Wilkinson brought the documentary and the feature home for about $60,000. Actual any NFB budget is deceptive in about 47 different ways actually, all film budgets, are tricky, though institutional ones are the worst.

This is an admirable sort of achievement: while there are teenagers, there are no slashers in ski-masks, no Porky's type gags, nothing especially cheap-looking or stupid about it (well, one stupid scene, which we'll discuss later). There are moments of tremendous elegance and visual grace: Wilkinson is not an untalented filmmaker.

The chief problem with My Kind of Town is that the filmmakers seem to have made up the screenplay as they went along and cast it with whatever was handy.

The young hero, hanging around the economically declining mill-town of Chemainus, waiting to hear about a job application, is wildly unclear: his emotional age is about 16; he looks like someone who has spent a few years in a mental institution. His family seems sufficiently middle-class to have insisted on his completing high school, and when he gets on the phone to promote the town festival, he sounds like someone who has spent a decade grieving under David Novek. This is not to say that every character should be block-planed to the narrowest range of logical probability — people do have odd hobbies, obsessions and quirks — but there should be some consistency.

Then there is the stupid scene. This is a familiar stupid scene, and I cringe every time I see it. The hero, an honest working-class lad, discovers that his girlfriend, a member of the middle-class or better, is working at her job for fun or for the experience, or getting money from home (the case here). He then explodes in righteous class-rage and tells her to get out of his life. There is always something terribly false along this line: it's as if the writer is incapable of developing a real reason for a dramatic conflict, so he resorts to this one from the dramatist's first-aid kit. It is particularly mertostric here, where the girl is trying to make a living as a writer and artist. She's being in love with something other than the festival, so he resorts to this one from the dramatist's first-aid kit. It is particularly mertostric here, where the girl is trying to make a living as a writer and artist. She's being in love with something other than the festival.

It just never seems to occur to the makers of ultra-low budget films that a good story isn't enough. You need stars, at least people with some star quality, faces that can hold the camera. It could be that the process of assembling an independent production is so agonizing that the casting gets left by the roadside. Or the decor is more interesting than the faces of the actors, and this is a bad sign.

Yet My Kind of Town is a promising first feature, no more and no less. Judging the potential of director Charles Wilkinson is difficult: we'd need to see a film with a more completely developed screenplay, a semi-professional cast, and without the support of an NFB crew to make that judgement.

Don Hutchison's

Alex Colville: The Splendour of Order

Once described as "Canada's painter laureate," Alex Colville enjoys a visible popularity on magazine covers, postage stamps, record album covers, and on the coins of the nation. The man, however, is elusive. But this exemplary documentary is the first major film to follow the path of the artist and his work, and travels a fair way along the route. Alex Colville himself contributes handsomely: he talks knowledgeably, succinctly sums up his craft and is a fund of quotes. His paintings, some fifty of them, are shown in all their variety.

The story of Colville's life is presented engagingly, with the artist recalling his father and mother as visuals of family snapshots. Alex, interspersed with a few critical comments from contemporaries, is not necessarily in chronological order. Colville talks in and around his home in Wolfville, N.S., and is seen with his wife, with neighbours, with local merchants, on sketching expeditions, and sailing.

The artist's daily routine seldom varies. Each morning he walks the dog, and after breakfast goes to his attic studio and starts work, usually for a six-hour stretch. When I work I tend to be in isolation of other things that are happening.

"A sense of order is immensely important to me," says Colville and, in what must surely be the tidiest and cleanest of all studio of any artist, he dons a white coat to draw and paint. He is scrupulously accurate in his depictions of real things and he says: "I don't make life appear simple" and, at another point, remarks that in his paintings "a specific person is always a symbol for everybody else." Rhoda, his wife of 40 years, never goes to the studio. "I know that he would rather I didn't look." But she has been his model for many paintings, some depicting her in the nude, and jokes that she's sure people must say, "Oh dear, there's that immodest woman again!"

"When I was nine I got pneumonia," says Colville. "It was very bad and I nearly died, and I was delirious for something like a week." This experience changed him from a fairly extroverted boy into a very introverted artist. And when he started building models and drawing, he grew up in the Depression, enrolled in the Fine Arts Department of Mount Allison University in 1939, and enlisted during the Second World War. In 1944 he was shipped overseas as an official Canadian war artist. This absorbing portion of the documentary is covered by archive stills and film of action in Europe (with some rare footage of Colville painting amid scenes of destruction and devastation) and the actual drawings and watercolours he did on the spot, including the nightmare of Belsen concentration camp.

Alex Colville considers he did his "first good painting" in 1950. Nudé