

tual Working Time) set by the computer. All these workers talk of the psychological stress of being monitored by a machine which "spies on you and reports everything." One woman candidly admits about her home-life that "I yell a lot these days."

But it is precisely this spark of protest that *Quel numéro/What Number?* conveys and honours. In their interviews and discussions for this film, the women workers are wonderfully alive and witty and incisive in their assessment of the technological revolution. Whether in pooling their talents to write the theme song for the film, or in acting out satirical skits that reveal the pressures of their jobs, these women consistently convey a spirited energy that resists defeat. As Bissonnette has written in her production notes for *Quel numéro/What Number?* "Where does hope reside in this film? For me, it lies in the strength, the humour and the desire for change of the women who participate in it."

Yet the very fact that this film dares to challenge the dominant ideology of computerized "progress" is in itself grounds for hope. By its point of view and structure, it does more than inform. It enrages and energizes, reminding us that (as the women's song says) "When the machine has hands/I won't be needed anymore."

The film reaches its moment of supreme irony in a sequence devoted to one of the nine new computerized machines now used to send out unemployment insurance cheques. As the technology writes out the cheque, places it in the envelope, addresses and



'licks' it, and applies proper postage, we realize that not only do machines have hands and tongues, they also increasingly have all the jobs. What's left for human beings to do seems to be epitomized in the film by the computer convention salesmen who dutifully sing the praises for their new technological masters.

Joyce Nelson •

**QUEL NUMÉRO/WHAT NUMBER?: THE ELECTRONIC SWEATSHOP**

Sophie Bissonnette p. Jean-Roch Marcotte, Bissonnette cam. Serge Giguère ed. Liette Aubin res. Sophie Bissonnette sd. Diane Carrière, Claude Beaugrand mus. Jean Sauvageau, Denis Larochelle, Clémence Desrochers 16mm., color, running time: 81 minutes, 1985 dist. (English Version) DEC Films, 229 College, St., Toronto, (416) 964-6901, (French Version) Cinema Libre, 4872 rue Papineau, Montréal, (514) 526-0473.

MINI - REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson



• The camera just loves Linda Griffiths in *Passion*

*This month, films from two recent festivals. The first two were at Toronto's Festival of Festivals, and the third one at the Montreal World Film Festival.*

**PASSION: A LETTER IN 16MM**

Anna, filmmaker, delivers a cinematic message to a departed lover. Her monologue to the camera, intercut with flashbacks as she recalls the "obsession, passion and ecstasy," exposes some of the problems and dilemmas of today's woman. Full of energy and talent, wanting to make a mark in her profession - yet striving to preserve a private, intimate personal life - Anna struggles and suffers.

The camera loves Linda Griffiths (the *Maggie and Pierre* actress) and, without her, one's attention would flag. This good-looking debut film from Patricia Rozema falls down on its script. Such florid phrases as "an exquisite ache," "the sublime madness," and "perhaps what it is all about is my being able to say to you without fear or blame, it is over," at the finish, serve to emphasize that the writing leaves much to be desired.

Griffiths' shining performance is the mainstay here - a lesser actress would have foundered in the words. It's to be hoped that the interpretation was decided upon between this talented player and the director. However, it's fair to say that this ambitious first film, with good production values squeezed out of (one guesses) a small budget, certainly engenders an anticipatory feeling for the next one.

d./ed./sc. Patricia Rozema, cam. Peter Mettler, lighting/asst.cam. Doug Koch, art.d. Barbara Tranter, cast. Maria Armstrong, l.p. Linda Griffiths, 16mm, col., running time: 26 mins. Availability: Vos Productions/Toronto (416) 461-8874. Produced with assistance from the Ontario Arts Council/National Film Board/The Canada Council.

**THE AGE OF INVENTION**

A short sharp overview of the transition from The Age of Innocence to The Age of Invention. The fascination of this piece is the skillful editing of archival material - a wide variety of still photographs plus early film - into a smoothly cohesive and interesting whole. The soundtrack is particularly artful, utilizing to great effect old phonograph records, voices from the past, and the wonderful clackings, rumblings, ringings and hissings of machinery.

Covering the steam engine, the typewriter, and up to the movie camera,ewriter, and up to the movie camera, radio and the aeroplane, with the final horrors of the machine-gun and tank in World War I, this snappy, evocative presentation manages to impart a lot of information (coupled with a dash of social comment) in an engrossing and lyrical vein.

Note: The NFB have prepared an attractive little illustrated information folder on this film, giving a few details and dates relating to the inventions, which is worth reading.

p./d./ed. Albert Kish, exec.p. Adam Symansky/Barrie Howells, cam. Andy Kitzenok, loc.sd. Bev Davidson/Hans Oomes, mus. Ben Low, running time: 10 mins. 45 secs., col. 16mm/videotape. p.c. & dist. National Film Board.

**THE BIG SNIT**

In the city, an odd married couple play Scrabble. She keeps taking off her eyeballs (rather like pince-nez!) and shaking them during the game. He shuffles his letters endlessly and, since he's dithering about, she goes off to vacuum. With great glee, the husband turns on the TV to his favourite program, *Sawing for Teens*. With saw in hand, he watches in utter delight. Falling asleep in front of the screen, he misses the emergency announcement of a worldwide nuclear war!

The husband awakes and ignores the noise of panic in the streets, and the noise of his wife vacuuming the bathroom, including tub and taps, and the inside of a large cupboard. She returns to the Scrabble game, and accuses her husband of looking at her letters. He counters with yells of, "You're always shaking your eyes!" She bellows, "Stop sawing the table," while the husband attempts to conceal his pet saw.

The shooting match peaks, the wife rushes out in tears. Attempting a reconciliation, the husband goes into the hall and plays his concertina to soothe and serenade her. Overcome with loving emotion, they make up and, unaware of the disintegrating world, open the door to go outside...

Another winner from Richard Condie, the talented animator who gave us the procrastinating teenager in *Getting Started*, and the prolific bugs smuggled through Customs in *Pigbird*. The wonderfully detailed drawing and bizarre characters serve to heighten and punch across the idea of what really constitutes *The Big Snit*. The human emotions displayed, though small in comparison, are every bit as earth-shattering as shattering the earth. That's one easy interpretation, but there are many others to be deduced from this little animated film, which may even lead to a new national diversion - sawing!

d./sc./anim. Richard Condie, p. Michael Scott, Condie, anim.cam. Gordon Manson, inker: Sharon Condie, sd.ed. Ken Rodeck, mus. Patrick Godfrey, voices: Jay Brazeau, Ida Osler, Randy Woods, Bill Guest, running time: 9 mins. 49 secs., col. 35mm/16mm/videotape. pc. and dist.: National Film Board.



• The wife with the removable eyes in *The Big Snit*