

# IMAGING Expo 86



by Ray Hartley

Expo 86, the International Exposition on Transportation and Communication which opened in Vancouver in May, has an estimated 50 theaters devoted to some form of cinematic or audio-visual presentation. Omnimax, Showscan, Imax 3D, Holography, Trimax – the list of new techniques of imaging is long, varied, rich and diverse.

Soaring above the dark waters of Burrard Inlet, the crisp, white sails of the Canada Pavilion are separated from the rest of Expo by Vancouver's downtown core. Hyped as "the largest pavilion ever created for a world exposition," it is located within Canada Place, the permanent federal-government complex on Vancouver's inner harbour, that contains, among other facilities, a cruise ship terminal and the new Pan Pacific Hotel. A variety of theaters, amphitheaters, presentations and displays introduce the Expo visitor to Canada and highlight Canadian achievements in transportation and communication. Five of the theaters show films three of them forming a sequential introduction to the pavilion, and the other two providing feature-length productions on the two main themes of Expo.

Bernard Léveillé, who acted as coordinating producer for the Canada Pavilion on two of the productions, explains that the intent was, as much as possible, "to have producers from all of Canada involved," so that the whole country

could participate, and not just select regional representatives.

## NEW DIMENSIONS

Norman Hay, Creative Director for the pavilion, describes the overall communication and transport theme. "The idea was that we would no longer look at Canada in a linear way, that is, coast-to-coast. We wanted to convey a new way of seeing Canada, one which would give Canadians a sense of joy and a sense of pride. All material (in the pavilion) is intended to develop this notion of the 'new dimensions' of Canada." The idea of a "Canada of New Dimensions" combined with the "Canada in Motion, Canada in Touch" themes of Expo to provide the basic concerns from which the productions in the pavilion developed.

The three introductory presentations, viewed in sequence when entering the pavilion, are meant to give the visitor a sense of Canada from three perspectives: the People, the Land, and the Future. The first of these, **This Is My Home**, in the 500-seat Canada Celebration Theater, is an eight-minute audiovisual presentation produced by Creative House of Vancouver.

As the audience lean or sit back against padded railings, 42 computer-programmed projectors synchronize some 1,500 images onto 14 screens while an original score by Vancouver's Brian Gibson fills the semi-circular theater. The 1,500 images were selected from 30,000 shot by 33 photographers who travelled across Canada, on assignment, on Canada Day, July 1, 1985. Paul Smith, the man behind the original concept, was the creative di-

rector responsible for selecting the images and developing the format for presentation, as Robin Lecky, executive producer and a Creative House partner, explains:

"The original tender called for an introduction to Canada for Canadians and visitors, something that would be positive, uplifting and people-oriented. Paul's concept was unique. Photographers were coordinated across the country, in small towns, big towns – north, south, east, west – on Canada's birthday. The presentation moves across the country geographically from east to west, dawn to dusk, starting at 5:03 a.m. in St. John's, Newfoundland, and ending in Victoria, B.C. with the end-of-day cannon. This geographical movement however, is secondary to the overall sense of celebration, of Canadians participating in their country's birthday."

The "sense of celebration" comes through in the images selected by Smith. Beauty queens, farmers, tattooed men, businessmen, babies, and older people all mix and mingle in the varying pastoral and urban landscapes which open up on one or more of the 14 screens ringing the front of the theater. Beginning in the clouds and sunrise of St. John's and ending in fireworks made more real by strobe lights mounted above the audience's heads, the production is stunning. Gibson's original song and score add to the uplifting feeling and the audience moves on to the second part of the introductory trilogy with a lighter step, some of that Canadian sense of joy and pride that Hay called Canada's new dimension.

Originally, the theater was designed so that the audience would slowly re-

volve into the second film in the Earthwatch Theater without having to leave their seats. But a tragic accident in which a young girl was fatally injured has at least temporarily, stopped this. The visitor moves to the second theatre on-foot.

## AWESOME LANDSCAPE

**Terravision**, the film shown in the Earthwatch Theater, is meant to introduce the visitor to the physical dimensions of Canada, emphasizing the Canadian experience in mastering the challenges posed by our geography and climate. Produced by Claude Godbout of Les Productions Prisma of Montreal, and directed by Donald Brittain, the film employs the Showscan technique developed by Douglas Trumbull. Showscan uses 70mm Panavision film and shoots and projects it at 60 frames per second. The result is a film projected two and one-half times faster and four times brighter than usual onto a curved screen that measures seven by 16 meters. "It has the quality of a slide show in motion," says co-producer Léveillé.

The film opens in the dark with the soundtrack preparing the audience: "To be here at all and to be joined together...that is the miracle." As an image of an enormous iceberg fills the screen, the soundtrack continues: "It began as an awesome landscape, born in fire...carved in ice." The audience is then taken on an eight-minute journey through time and space that gives a breathtaking sense of the breadth and diversity of the Canadian landscape and the ways in which the people of Canada have learned to live within it.

Ray Hartley is a Vancouver freelance writer.



# Omnibus

## State of the art computer graphics

The 30-second brightly colored animation of the Expo '86 fairground that you've seen unfolding on your TV was actually completed when the Vancouver site was still a heap of mud, scaffolding and construction debris.

Produced by Omnibus Computer Graphics, and delivered to the advertising firm of Baker Lovick Ltd. in October 1985, this television ad represents the state of the art in computer-generated animation.

The key word to understanding this technology is "art" (as in the manipulation of colors, motion, textures, lighting all within a computer), says Omnibus (Toronto) executive producer Ron Rimer. The artist has replaced the white-smocked computer technician and the computer mouse has replaced the graphic artist's pencil and air brush.

In order to reach a stage where a Los Angeles team of animators could combine their talents with the three-dimensional image-capabilities of the computer (imagination and software) some interesting preliminary work had to be completed in cooperation with the designers and planners of Expo.

Three hundred architectural drawings of the unfinished site were secured by the Omnibus people. Photographs of models and buildings under construction were taken and long consultations were held about the cut and design of the finished (actual) site. The Omnibus production team retired to Los Angeles where eight weeks and over one bill-

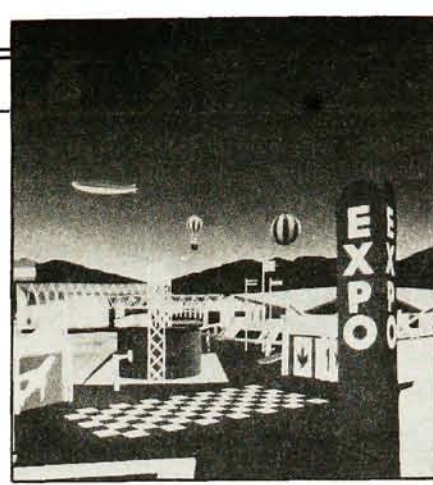
ion digital calculations later, a computer-generated 30-second animation of the fairground was completed. This computer-generated Expo includes 10 high resolution buildings (the Canadian pavilions and major sponsor pavilions), the Expo monorail, train, gondolas, balloons, hot-air balloons, over 75 separate flags, kiosks, the Expo sign and flag, booths, sidewalks, pools, platform, train tracks, sky mountains and more. Meanwhile, at the Vancouver construction site, work droned ahead slowly.

According to Rimer, the commercial has sold heavily in Canada and throughout the United States. One of the more saleable features of the finished product, he explains, is the use of "matted in" windows within the animated image in which live action can be changed to appeal to specific market interests within these windows.

In the end, it took a team of 13 animators using five computers to do the job the cost of which, Rimer says, is in the six-digit dollar range.

"Eventually it will be much cheaper to produce this work than traditional ads," says Rimer, who produced the full graphic for CBC among other projects currently seen on television.

The Toronto-based Omnibus Computer Graphics Ltd., with offices in New York and Los Angeles, is also involved in motion pictures, having created simulated images for the *Star Trek* series and a Paramount feature film entitled *Explorers*.



Cinematographer Leonidas Zourdoumis has captured images of snowfields, oceans, forests, plains, and herds of thundering bison to produce a sense of understanding the landscape faced by early man, followed eventually by the pioneers and settlers. New ways of traversing and transforming the country are shown developing until finally the voice of Marc Garneau informs us that "It is a great honor to represent Canada in space."

The film ends by completing a full circle, returning to the original images of the land and animals where "always, the enduring mysteries, the wild horses of Sable Island...running on through the timeless landscape."

The third of the three introductory presentations is a multi-media production set in the New Frontiers Theater and highlights Canadian technological achievements in sea and space. A combination of film, video and lighting effects is mixed with actual models of sunken ships, aquanauts descending from the ceiling in high-tech Newtsuits, and astronauts attached to an enormous Canadarm moving slowly across in front of the audience. While all this is taking place around and in front of the viewer, dual-screen video-monitors scattered throughout the theater (three visitors to a monitor) display footage taken in space and from ocean vehicles, with text and graphic data attached. (If this sounds a little overwhelming, it is, especially after the previous two productions. A second visit allows a deeper appreciation of Canada's extraordinary technological accomplishments.)

Directed and produced by G.S.M. Design Inc. of Montreal, with audio-visual production by Les Productions du Versseau, the undersea and midspace film footage combines with the other-worldliness of the floating models to create a kind of high-tech theater.

### SURVIVING WEAKNESS

After the introduction to the pavilion, visitors head for the Great Hall where a vast array of displays and exhibits beckon, including the 108 video-monitor Vidiwall. Other viewing possibilities are the two feature presentations, *The Taming of the Demons* and *Transitions*. *Taming of the Demons* is being shown in the new 273-seat Teleglobe Theater. Paul Krivicky of Applause Communications in Montreal, acted as producer/administrator for the project, which included both construction of the theater and production of the film. Directed by Emil Radok, the founder of multi-screen audio-visual systems, this production uses nine rectangular screens of varying sizes arranged architecturally against one wall of the theater, with a revolving circular hoop forming a sphere and the tenth screen in the center of the wall. Ten 35mm film projectors present the imagery, while a nine-track sound system provides the ambient sound. The result is a 21-minute exploratory journey into the processes of communication.

Describing the production, Radok comments that "We begin with the first communication, which is inside one's body, and go on to show how if man was the weakest being, he is the one who has survived."

"We show how communication has developed with the basis of language-writing, how different civilizations were founded through communication, and how man has created a society that is based on and directed by communications."

Strongly influenced by the work of S.M. Eisenstein, Radok creates a kind of sculptural montage, a connected mosaic of images that run, not just sequentially, but simultaneously, to create in the mind of the viewer the kinds of associations the director has intended. Symbolic representations move the audience through time and space, providing the linkage between image and idea.

Brilliant slashes of lightning, streams of molten lava, and massive ocean waves move across the 10 screens in unison to give a sense of the primeval power and chaos of the world into which man was placed. Primitive dancers writhe to the pulsing rhythms of drums to communicate the magic and



• *Earthwatch* director Don Brittain, left, with Prisma producer Claude Godbout



• *Earthwatch* d.o.p. Leonidas Zourdoumis shooting in Quebec



mystery of early man's understanding of the world. Molten steel, formed into rigid shapes, is crushed to represent the coming of the industrial age. An enormous antenna reaches endlessly out into space to show the final frontier that man had to conquer.

The totality of the experience is completed by the soundtrack which ebbs and flows with the rhythms of the images being presented on the screen. At times almost overpowering, it both complements and completes the film, forming an undulating harmony between what the audience sees and hears.

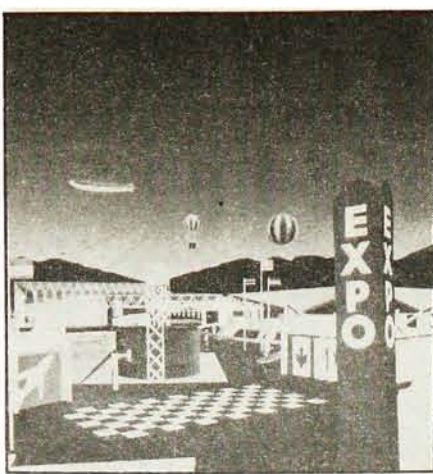
"I have never created an abstract piece simply to show colors and shapes. I am primarily interested in the contents. It is more difficult to take the audience down a road which leads somewhere meaningful," Radok said before the production was completed. The striking visual imagery of the film combines with its background rhythms to develop an understanding of the importance of communication in man's growth, development and continual evolution.

#### CINEMATIC MIRACLE

**Transitions**, an Imax Systems/National Film Board collaboration, is the second feature presentation offered in the Canada Pavilion. The subject is transportation, the other side of the two themes of Expo. Shot in the new Imax 3D process, developed by the NFB in conjunction with Imax Systems Corporation, it is the first of its kind in the world.

Imax 3D involves the use of a polarized system with two cameras using 70mm film, two prints, two projectors and an enormous 70 x 100' screen. To view the film the audience wears special polarized glasses. Director Colin Low describes the experience: "The right eye takes in the image from one projector, the left eye takes in the image from the other, and the two are put together in the viewer's mind."

The filming of **Transitions** required the development of a new and highly sophisticated camera assembly wherein two cameras were mounted perpendicular to each other, with one camera filming the subject directly and the other camera indirectly through a two-way mirror mounted at a 45-degree angle to the subject. The cinematographer viewed each shot remotely through a special video camera/monitor system. The technology behind the filming was worked out by Ernest McNabb, director of photography and



director of stereoscopy, in conjunction with Low. Their interest in the possibilities of Imax 3D had developed in an earlier collaboration at the Board, but it took some convincing on their part to gain access to two of the only nine Imax cameras in existence to bring their ideas to fruition. Tony Ianzelo was brought in as co-director and a production team was assembled.

The fruit of their labours is a 21-minute film which brings gasps of delight even from today's sophisticated audiences. Described by Low as "a lyrical impression of modes of transportation and communication in Canada," the film makes maximal use of the 3D format. In the opening image, a branch appears to reach out from the screen and waver above the heads of the people in the theater. The audience "ahhhs." As the film carries them forward on a short junket through the history of transportation and communication, Imax 3D, under the careful guidance of Low, McNabb and Ianzelo, repeatedly works its illusory wonders. When a train moves magically off the screen and into the theater, one is reminded of the Lumière brothers' similar experience with some of film's earliest viewers in a Paris café 90 years ago. When an egg hovers above the heads of the audience, then cracks suddenly into their collective laps, the murmurs of enthralled appreciation are testimony of the pleasure this new cinematic miracle offers.

The fact that these five productions are Canadian, made by Canadians, some using technology developed in Canada seems of relatively little importance to the thousands of viewers who see them every day. There is however something to be said for Norman Hay's thoughts on the Canada Pavillion's overall theme — to see Canada in a new way, "one which would give Canadians a sense of joy and a sense of pride." Canadian nationalist sentiment has its paradoxes, but in an industry that so often has to struggle to maintain an identity and style of its own in the shadow of a larger and stronger neighbour, a sense of joy and pride in its accomplishments definitely has a place.

## Surrounded, by Canada at Telecom Expo Theatre presentation

One of the requirements of a Disney Circle-Vision 360 presentation is that the audience must be able to turn around to see behind them. The solution at Telecom's Expo 86 "Portraits of Canada" is simply to have everyone stand or lean against the metal railings that divide the circular room from the entrance on one side to the exit on the other. The theatre holds up to 1,300.

There is nothing wrong with standing, except that in three notable high-speed travel shots you have the sensation of standing while moving forward (or backward if you turn around) with nothing to hold onto. So you hurtle downhill and around a corner in a small Quebec village as if seated (standing up?) on a racing bicycle. Or find yourself standing in a helicopter over a wheat field, and, later, in a floatplane taking off from a northern lake.

But Telecom's new national ode (they encircled you first at Montreal in '67) is more than spectacle. The process is, of course, as good as 35mm direct, no-keystoning projection can be; that is, crisp and brilliant. This makes the Arctic snow scene and the mountain helicopter alone worth the 20-minute stand.

The back-view is subtly less eye-catching than the front in helping you orient the action, but, in a brief hoedown, with folks standing all around a-fiddling and a-clapping, you feel very much part of one big scene.

Exteriors and obviously spacious interiors work well for movies in the surround, less well for interiors that portray spaces of smaller dimensions. The old-fashioned parlour, the

# Canadian rate

family supper in the dining room, the space capsule, the helicopter cabin are all stylized, pushed-out, unreal. On the other hand, a finished igloo with sunlight glinting through the snow-blocks (don't ask DOP Bob Ennis how he lit that one!) was quite acceptable. The difference may have something to do with the scale of objects we are familiar with. What would it have been like to trundle into a man-made structure as big in scale as Roy Thompson Hall, or a potash silo at Esterhazy, or just a big, cool, log-framed barn?

But anyone can second-guess and what-if a film after the answer print. Suffice to say that Producer-Director Jeff Blyth has been making Circle-Vision 360 films for Disney in all corners of the world for some time and certainly should know what works.

However, while nit-picking, I might add the wish that we could learn to know Canada without the benefit of narration. Christopher Plummer has the voice for it, but phrases like "uniquely Canadian" or the final challenge-and-destiny sentiments are much more eloquently stated with one shot of the Canadarm stretching out from the NASA space shuttle.

The audio that lifts you out of your seat (or makes you stand taller) complements a very grand score by Leonard Rosenman with, of course, all the advantages of surround sound in a room with no opposing flat surfaces to create pockets of confusion.

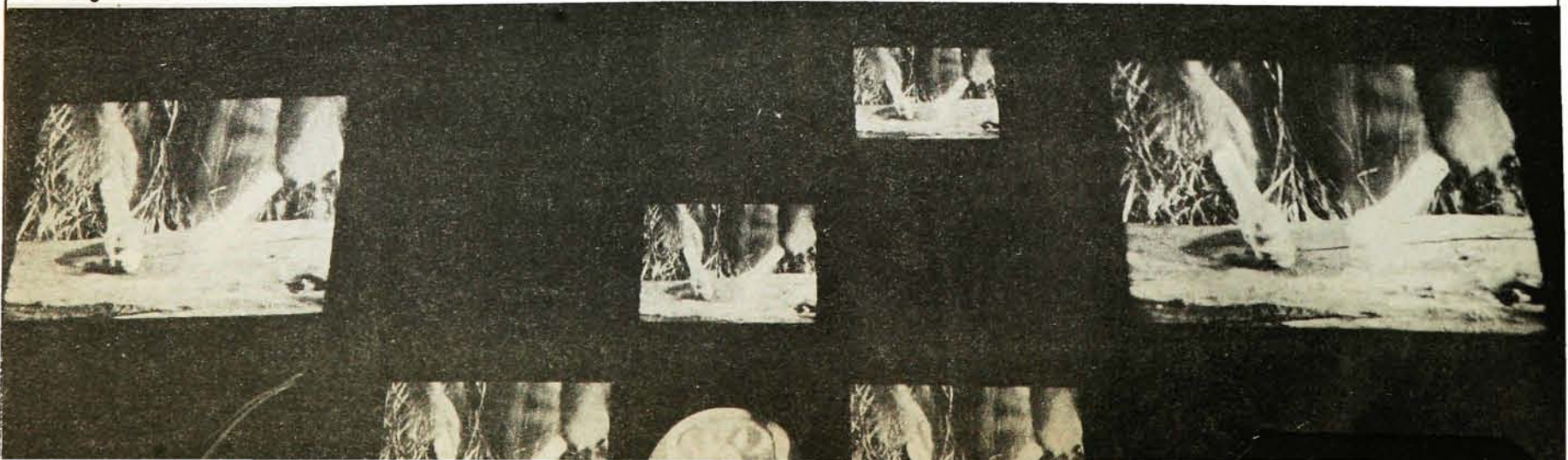
And the portraits are strongly Canadian, in picture and in dialogue, a comfortable balance of languages and accents. There are more than 60 feature faces, and scores of back-up bodies, from bike racers to ballerinas.

From the opening title to the final credits, the time span did not not feel like 20 minutes, and that says a lot.

Incidentally, what a medium for credits. Nine screens all working furiously; beats the high-speed crawl anyday.

**Keith Cutler •**

• Taming of the Demons: the look





# filmmakers the Expo films

## A film for the Saskatchewan Expo Pavilion, by Zale Dalen

Prior to Zale Dalen's film, we are introduced to Saskatchewan in dry, simplistic terms. Via lectures, slides, and a brief film we learn that the province is noted for agriculture, potash and fibre-optics. Then we are ushered into the main theatre. The Dalen film then counters these first impressions with a warm statement about the province's people, their affection for each other, and the land they love.

But it is difficult to review this as a film, because it is also a performance piece, requiring the presence onstage, below the screen, of a young actress playing the part of "Karen", who exchanges dialogue with the mega-sized characters on the screen above her. The film could not stand on its own as a statement, and trying to watch both at once is disconcerting. I found the screen characters tended to win.

The film is a relentlessly positive vision of a family, and they are all there: grandpa, grandma, dad, mom, friend Sandy, and boyfriend Eddy talking down to (live) Karen in front of us, telling her news of home and how much they miss her (she having taken this job at faraway Expo). The screen characters are meant to do double duty in that they are also used to demonstrate some of the breadth of Saskatchewan life. Grandpa, in a boat, tells a fishing joke. Mother stops adding figures on a calculator and takes a freshly-baked pie out of the oven. We dolly past a selection of creative arts, including a piece that looks remarkably like one of Van Gogh's self-portraits done up in clay, to find Eddy working at a potter's wheel. There is even Uncle

Roy, a man of obviously native Indian extraction who talks down to (live) Karen while leaning on a rock decorated with pictograph paintings. This character, as a representative of the province's native Indian heritage, was, I take it, also intended as a charming comment on the cosmopolitan genealogy of the young blonde girl playing Karen below the screen (or maybe he was an uncle by marriage). In any case the message was clear: the Saskatchewan family includes everyone. Including positively everything (and everything positively) the film takes on a slightly surreal aspect. A man (Eddy?) abused a bull at a rodeo by trying to ride on it; it got very angry and chucked him off. There was a wedding. Eddy was seen canoeing. Brother Gary went fishing. And Karen's friends, including Eddy, were seen having a happy time in a pub while writing a postcard to her.

The film/performance finally takes on a circular form. It begins with a romantic image; a pair of young lovers, at sunset, by a stream aswarm with some kind of insect. I thought they might be blossoms or something vegetable blowing in the wind, but no, they were flies (as a nearby lady with a loud voice informed us all). The film then culminates in a family reunion, with all characters present and all attendant warmth and love and good food. And they all talk down to (live) Karen and tell her how much they miss her. And she talks back up to them and tells them she misses them too. And while they are up there having all that fun she (live) dances sadly by herself to the music. Then Eddy abruptly leaves the party and drives away in his sporty TR6. Then (live) Karen can't stand it any more and runs away offstage. I knew exactly how she felt. The nearby lady with the big voice announced that she was going to go to him, and sure enough, up there on the screen they are reunited, in another sunset. It was all, as intended, very nice.

This is not a film which can bear the weight of serious criticism. It is



simply and unfortunately only a stimulant: a commercial meant to sell Saskatchewan by positive association with human warmth and family values. And one can't fault Dalen for this, as the sponsors of the piece didn't want anything as complicated as real life up there on the screen. Soap ads sell soap by depicting happy homes; they are not meant to be believed, and neither was this. Beyond the silly, trite writing, the film is well-made. Performances and directing show Dalen's usual good taste. A minor production quibble would be grandpa's post-syncing, as he was never quite "in". But I look forward to something tougher and deeper from Zale Dalen – the kind of statement for which he has shown such promise for in the past.

Jack Darcus •

## Discovery, a B.C. Pavilion presentation

Discovery is one slick travelogue, featuring big B.C. vistas brought to you by 'Showscan' – 60 frames per second of 70mm film. The wide-screen visuals, not to mention the sound, are rendered superbly, and if, like this reviewer, you're a fan of those tilting, rising and falling, helicopter shots, **Discovery** brings you what may be the best

ever. Certainly they're faster moving than any I've seen before. (Fortunately, the 'angle of incline' for the theatre seats is somewhat less precipitous than that in the Omnimax Theatre, and so the sensation of motion, or rather, motion-sickness, is rather less alarming.)

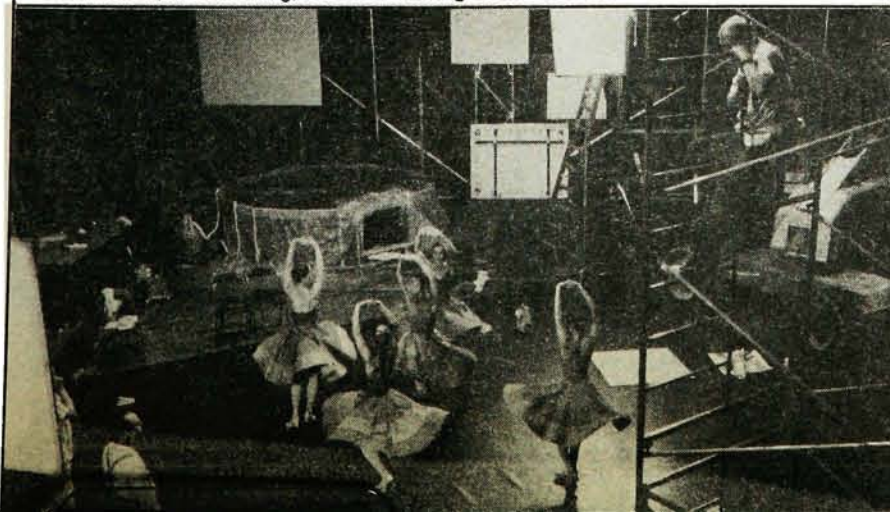
Storywise, there's a cute, almost 'kids story' concept thrown over the basic travelogue format. Young Zargon is a truant extra-terrestrial. He's also a bauble-like vehicle. He and his computer-buddy E.Q. team up with Molly (Vancouver's Fairuza Balk, previously Dorothy in the '80s version of *The Wizard of Oz*) in order to see "a place that has everything" – B.C., of course. They do the deluxe tour, from cowboys in the Cariboo to the Parliament Buildings at night. And the Michael Mercer/L.S. Strange script adds a few laughs.

**Discovery** was produced by Peter O'Brian's Independent Pictures Inc. (*The Grey Fox, My American Cousin*). Vancouver's Circle Productions Ltd. contributed director Rob Turner. Douglas Trumbull, the California-based filmmaker who invented the Showscan process reputedly arrived at the 60 frames second 'optimal' film speed after mega-research. He strapped untold number of subjects into chairs, hooked them up to bio-medical devices, then ran films by them in a sort of technical *Clockwork Orange* in reverse. The "breakthrough" came with the discovery that pulse and heart rate peak at 60 frames/second – exactly 2.5 times faster than regular film projection speed.

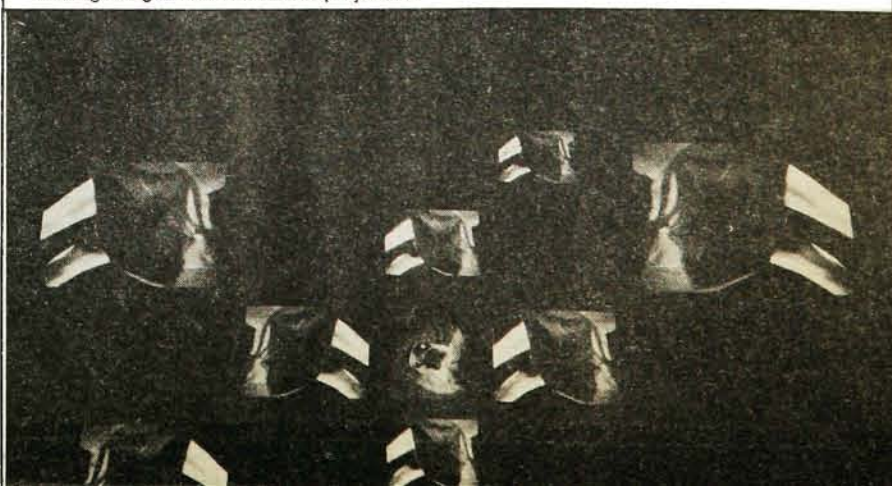
God only knows (and we probably never should) the film ratio that **Discovery** was produced at. The amount of 'magic hour' footage alone must have required weeks of shooting. But Fairuza is charming; the home province has never looked better; and even the computer graphics at 60 frames per second are a treat. It's those helicopter shots that make it though. Hang onto your seats.

—Ric Beirsto •

• Emil Radok, in scaffolding, on set of *Taming of the Demons*



• *Demons'* nine rectangular screens and one spinning hoop form a sphere reflecting moving images from 10 35mm projectors





## Rainbow War, by Bob Rogers. A Canadian Pacific presentation

**R**ainbow War is a wonderfully conceived and executed fantasy about the possibilities of universal love and peace inherent in a good rapid-transit system. Produced and directed by Bob Rogers, this live-action allegory is told not in tongues, there is no spoken dialogue, but in a battle of colours, an attack of semi-glossolalia in space with buckets of paint as weapons.

Each of the feuding kingdoms of Red, Blue and Yellow fears and despises any colour but its own, which does not present much of a problem until transportation through space is invented by Yellow Boy (Gary Carre) who, undoubtedly inspired by Leonardo Da Vinci's study "Human Figure In A Circle", steps into his hula hoop and magically blasts off to the Red Kingdom where he lands at the feet of the Red Princess (Saffron Henderson). They gaze enraptured at one another, in a state of wholesome ecstasy unequalled since Bambi met Flower the Skunk. He presents her with his yellow aviator scarf; she responds with a red rose. They are discovered by the Red Guard and he returns home in disgrace.

Meanwhile, the Blue Kingdom, inspired by their wonderfully foppish blue-knickered king (Simon Webb) has set forth in an armada of blue bathtubs, armed with a cargo of blue paint. The Red Kingdom's defence system is an enormous red fire-hydrant which, like the trojan horse, carries concealed warriors, brandishing, not spears, but paint brushes.

The Yellow Queen (Gillian Barber), a wicked take-off of Margaret Thatcher, in black sparkle lipstick, leads her assault of hula-hoop-riding storm troopers who unleash a yellow blimp dog on the fire hydrants. A vigorous battle ensues, primary colours splashing among the combatants until — leapin' lizards, Sandy! — blue and yellow make green, red and blue make purple, and multiculturalism wins out in a blaze of secondary hues and tints as the combatants gleefully start redecorating themselves and one another.

Rainbow War has the look of storybook illustration. The pop-up set and Parrish-like cloudscape are a delight to the eye. A gentle sense of humour pervades throughout, well supported by an inventive use of sound effects in place of spoken



dialogue. The music score is somewhat predictable, but for the greater part, the optical effects and animation more than make up for this in terms of originality and quality of production.

Unfortunately that this originality does not extend to the relationship between the Red Princess and Yellow Boy, which was embarrassingly sexist and unimaginative.

As an exhibition film, **Rainbow War** is refreshingly free of sponsor-message and is part of the well-organized and entertaining Canadian Pacific presentation at Expo 86.

Haida Paul •

## The Emerging North / In Search of Balance, a Northwest Territories Pavilion presentation

**I**ntroduced as "a glimpse of our people and our land" the 10-minute montage film in the Northwest Territories Pavilion was a huge disappointment. Touted in the media as one of the best pavilions (I couldn't see why until I'd seen the others), and after waiting in line for an hour, my expectations ran high. The result was a film that looked like it had been pulled out of a stock-shot library — and a mediocre one at that. Grainy, banal images of cute animals and flowers intercut with modern technology and Indian or Inuit people dancing and making merry did not give much of a sense of the Northwest Territories, though the excellent slide/tape show in the next room did.

On the positive side, there was a fascinating image of two Inuit girls writing on a graphics computer in the Inuktituk language (or the missionaries' visualization of it) and having a very good time doing it. Also of interest was the fact that not a single word of English was spoken, and no whites were visible except for one mixed couple at a dance. Such observations were overwhelmed, however, by the rest of the images that we have seen far too often as CBC filler.

Most upsetting was the audience response: oohs and ahhs and "Never seen a picture like that before, eh" or "Fox!", "Musk Ox!" Films like this do a gross disservice to furthering audience awareness of good filmmaking and the distinctly indigenous and

creative film community that exists across Canada. Expo '86 is an opportunity to show massive Canadian and foreign audiences the range and quality of films we make. But this is not happening in the NWT Pavilion (or any others I have been in).

No filmmaker was credited for the film; at the end only the production company, Yellowknife Films, and their Petrocan sponsor were mentioned. That leads me to believe there was no artistic direction to this film. It certainly shows.

Peg Campbell •

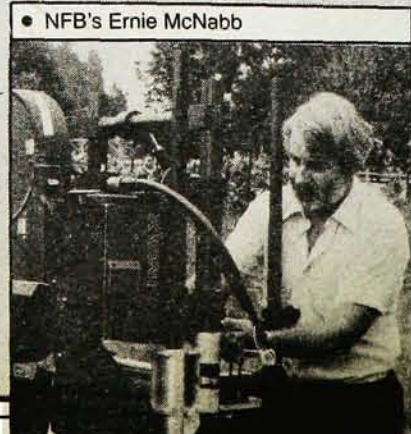
## Transitions, by Colin Low & Tony Ianzelo. NBF/IMAX

**T**he Canada Pavilion offers a wide range of audio-visual fare that includes a multi-screen slide show, a Showscan film, a wall of video monitors, a superb multi-screen film entitled **The Taming of the Demons**, and **Transitions**, the spectacular 3D IMAX film sponsored by CN and produced by the NFB. **Transitions** should be on everyone's list of things not to be missed at Expo '86.

**Transitions** marks the first time that IMAX and 3D have been brought together. If 3D has come and gone over the years, most often as a gimmick to lure viewers back to the big screen, IMAX is now the biggest of screens.

The subject matter of the film is the fair's theme, transportation and communication. Directors Colin Low and Tony Ianzelo have chosen to forego the use of a narrator, a good choice since 3D IMAX is first and foremost a visual spectacle that has audiences reaching out to touch the image floating in front of them. With the visual experience so new and exciting, having an audience pay attention to the theme of the film is not easy.

The film begins with a visual his-



• NFB's Ernie McNabb

tory of transportation in Canada from the canoes of the voyageurs to the trains of the sponsor. A shot of grain being loaded into a train car is followed by a humorous scene in a bakery. A later sequence has teddy-bears on the assembly line instead of loaves of bread. One of the bears leaves his place in line and magically floats above the heads of the men keeping track of production and into the outstretched hands of the audience. Many other scenes in the film combine a warm sense of humour with well thought-out images. There is a brief departure from the stated theme into the realm of robotics. With a look of intense concentration a woman manipulates an egg in the fingers of a mechanical arm while others observe and take notes. Her concentration turns to disgust when the egg breaks and drips into the laps of the delighted audience.

The animated portion of the film is unlike anything I've ever seen. A satellite orbiting the earth becomes a vortex of blue lines that draw the viewer into the center. This is followed by a sequence in which a man in a floating chair in a swimming pool watches a TV suspended over the water. The shot is framed so that the TV screen is not visible. The man has a remote control device in his hand, a glass of champagne at his side and a satellite dish in the background. He changes channels and becomes absorbed in the image on the screen. This allows the directors to cut between the image the man is supposedly watching and his reaction to it. This leads to one of the few shots that is familiar to viewers of 3D films from the '50s. The man in the chair changes channels and finds himself in a fencing duel, and so the audience finds itself threatened by a fencer with a foil pointing directly at them. But the channel is changed again and we are instead presented with an Oriental woman performing a balancing act. The sequence alludes to the way communications technologies can appear to deliver the world to you in the comfort of your armchair.

I came out of the film thinking that the spectacle of 3D IMAX made more of an impression on people than the story. It made me think of the film made by the Lumière brothers entitled **Train Arriving At The Station**, a shot of a train doing just what the title says. When it was just shown in the late 1890s to people who had not experienced the marvels of cinema, many audience members ducked in their seats or attempted to get out of the way of the arriving train. With 3D IMAX, cinema is new again — but since the Lumières, the audience has learned to stay seated and enjoy it.

Steven DeNure •



# Emil Radok

## Inventing a new language of cinema

*Emil Radok is the originator of multi-screen cinema. He premiered the first multi-screen film for the Czechoslovak Pavilion at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. With his brother Alfred, he also combined film with theatre, touring with the **Laterna Magika**. Multi-screen films directed by Emil Radok have been presented at Expo '67, the Epcot Centre and other expositions. His most recent work is **The Taming of the Demons**, produced by Paul Krivicky of Applause Communications for Teleglobe Canada and is now showing at Expo '86 in Vancouver. Radok emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Canada in 1968; he lives in Montreal. Influenced by many factors in creating multi-screen cinema, Radok spoke to **Cinema Canada** about the origins and the language of this other cinema.*

When I started working in film, as a scriptwriter for feature fiction films, I became aware that cinema, i.e. the projected image, had qualities that had not been exploited. I wanted to marry cinema with painting and even with architecture. I wanted to find another means to work with the rhythms of images.

"The Cubists were a great influence; they analysed and destroyed reality, then reconstructed it, creating a new reality. I had started my career as a mathematician and as a chemist. In chemistry, we take apart

a molecule and reconstruct it into another molecule: something becomes something else, a metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is the change of one kind of matter into another kind, one meaning into another meaning, one reality into another reality I was profoundly attracted by what the Cubists were doing.

"Secondly, there were the great artists in cinema. Griffith, in his film **Intolerance**, presented the theme of human intolerance, comparing one era in history with another. This was already a basis for future visual mosaics and composite images. And Eisenstein, the great Russian director, created a new rhythm, visualizing reality in a way absolutely unheard of. Eisenstein's observation of reality from all sides could be linked to Cubism. It was also a basis for composite images.

"So when I started working with images, I found that with collage we can grasp something of reality that interests us and compose it and manipulate it to create a new reality. I discovered that I could constitute the image to destroy its reality. Photography takes a section of reality and shows it as it is, whereas I minimize the theme within reality by taking a bit of reality, its details, and filtering out all that is redundant. For example, if I take a flower in nature and only photograph the petals, I create, by many images, a fantastic flower that is impressive and lasting.

"As I had been interested in architecture, I began to compose this reality, not only on a surface, but in three dimensions. I conceived a system that projects these pieces of reality in such a way that the reality has tension — as in Cubism. The separate small pieces of reality have no meaning, but, together, we can start to



create in space a single image which is a composite. In other words, it is like a building in which the images are bricks.

"Between the images I put empty space. When you project a piece of reality in empty space that is not surrounded by a frame, your imagination is severed. You see nothing but this piece of reality. Whereas, if you project on a screen that is framed, be it only by black, you imagine what is outside the screen. The Expressionists showed, for example, a clenched hand with a revolver, and we imagined that it was a criminal's hand or the hand of a desperate man about to kill himself. We even imagined his body and his face. If we freely suspend this piece of image in space, the senses and the brain signal you that it is really in space, that it is free; there is no frame, only volume. You see it just like the clenched hand.

"But if you put another hand in another space you start to compare things. By themselves the hands are not logical, but if you project a rock in the space in-between, a link is created and you start to imagine something that does not exist — that, for example, this is a giant that has a rock in his hands. You see the human hands very far away holding the rock and you start to feel the weight of the rock and the human physical force holding it. You realize you are creating a symbolic reality, a reality that has semantics, that has meaning, but is totally different, because it shows human force. If, all of a sudden, an electrical charge ran between the two hands, you would see a symbol of man's ingenuity and realize that man can create many forces and forms of energy. So this begins to tell the history of man differently than does ordinary cinema.

"It is not sufficient to exploit the image just to show new graphics, new values of colour or perspective. Above all, this new way of seeing creates a new reality that shows ideas in a form not communicable in ordinary cinema.

"I was not happy with the development of cinema when I took the first steps toward composite images. Filmmakers were always using techniques to enlarge reality. The first films were silent, then sound was added and cinema became more the reproduction of reality. Aesthetically, the first sound films were a step backward. Filmmakers had a lot of work to do to increase the quality of films; they had to find another language, an audio-visual language. Even today, you rarely find such artistic, such strong films as the silent films of the Expressionist era.

"Then came colour and the anamorphic lens and we started to widen the image. We were so obsessed with expanding the image to reproduce more of reality that visual composition lost its values. In my first film in Cinemascope, I composed completely differently, putting the action to the left or to the right to create a disequilibrium, a dynamism. Then, all of a sudden, came Cinerama, where three projectors projected one large image, and filmmakers fell upon effects where everything is described, and there is a lot of information. It was so close to reality that we felt sick when the camera moved. This was interesting; the effects were sensory (i.e., physical and psychological). But to feel as if you are on a rollercoaster, as in Cinerama and today with the Imax and Omnimax films, is a powerful amusement for children, even for adults, but it is still only amusement and amusement for its own sake does not really interest me. My goal is not to show new visual effects, nor to show new forms, but to find a new language, a new art that will speak differently — not like a film, not like a painting, and not like architecture.

"I succeeded because when I compose the image in such a way that though you have 20 screens, 10 screens, or three screens, there is really only one image in the human brain. If on each screen you show a man standing up, this is not repetition; what you show is a symbol of a crowd. If you show the roofs of houses, and you are composing in many perspectives, the roofs form a plasticity, and if this plasticity is supported by the different depths of the screens, you obtain a very interesting and attractive image. At the same time you realize what the roofs are, not many roofs but a symbol — of a city. So you can create a symbolic language where reality is represented by images that are very simple and, at the same time, very monumental. I think I am creating a new language of cinema — that is to say, a monumental cinema.

"I believe I have purified this new language of cinema in **The Taming of the Demons**. New means of production were required to realize this work. It would not have been possible without my creative and technical collaborators especially, because the production and creative aspects were closely linked. To elaborate a new aesthetic language is one thing, but to turn it into a reality is quite another. The producer had a very complex undertaking: **The Taming of the Demons** was organized always bearing in mind a sense of the creation of something new and capable of novel work and organizational means to answer its unusual needs. These complex methods of work have no precedent in traditional cinema.

"Finally, this project could not have been realized if we did not have a sponsor that wanted to contribute something to culture."

Stephen Reizes •

