Georges Dufaux's 10 jours... 48 heures

G eorges Dufaux's recent documentary 10 jours... 48 heures depicts the oppressiveness of East Coast fishing in the '80s - an entire community dominated and controlled by a single company whose main goal is the commercial exploitation of Newfoundland's codfish. The film is a contemporary reworking of John Grierson's 1929 film Drifters, a romantic and poetic treatment of Britain's deep-sea fishing industry. While Grierson's film focuses mainly on the people who go out to sea, Dufaux takes several steps further by avoiding the excessive romanticization of the role of the fisherman. Instead, he tries to show how large-scale fishing affects the entire community of Marystowns, a small fishing village in southeastern Newfoundland where 80 to 90 percent of its inhabitants are employed by one company, Fisheries International. In Marystown, the fishing industry permeates practically every aspect of people's lives. Dufaux illustrates this by taking his camera into places like the church, the radio station, and the houses where references to fishing are invariably present.

The title of the film refers to the pattern of 10 days at sea, 48 hours leave for the fishermen on the trawler 'Zamberg', one of the largest of the FPI fleet, and the mainstay of the processing plant at Marystown. Through interviews with two of the fishermen's wives we learn of the personal hardships a life of offshore fishing imposes on the lives of the fishermen and their families. Brief interviews with people involved in the administrative side of the industry and factory workers' committees add to the sense of how profoundly this single industry and company affects the people of Marystown.

The fishermen in Dufaux's film catch fish destined primarily for an American market. The fish, caught and semi-processed in Newfoundland, is sent to an FPI finishing plant in Massachusetts where it is transformed into a highly processed product. Dufaux doesn't, for instance, touch on the daily interaction of the various stages of production in the processing plant at Marystown. He never expands upon and their relevance to the film in general remains at best tenuously connected.

Unfortunately, the overall strength of the film is lost in Dufaux's subtle and distant treatment of the subject matter. This is further weakened by the unnecessary length of 85 minutes. In the end, the film fails to elicit a strong response from the viewer, and one is left feeling indifferent and apathetic to the issues raised by the film.

Mary Ledwell

FILM REVIEWS


PRAIRIE WOMEN

Late in June, the downtown branch of the Edmonton Public Library hosted a screening of award-winners from this year's Yorkton Film Festival. The featured presentation was a half-hour documentary called Prairie Women, winner of the Golden Sheaf for best of the festival.

National Film Board of Canada documentaries are not generally considered box-office boffo - but Prairie Women surprised everyone. It packed audiences in the 200-seat theatre for two consecutive nights. The NFB scheduled extra screenings to accommodate the overflow.

Barbara Evans, a graduate of University of British Columbia and the National Film School in London, created a textbook example of what NFB documentaries do - a complete feature length piece that covers the topic at some depth, giving a piece of history that hadn't been contained. The topic of this film was the women's farm movement of the '20s and '30s. The heart of the film was the spirit of the women it documented.

The difficulties of farming forced prairie settlers to circumvent a lot of discriminatory traditions. As one woman pointed out, "It was very much a co-operative situation... a complete partnership. It brought people together. Until it got too difficult. Then it drove them apart."

It was those difficulties - incredible poverty and extreme isolation - that spurred farmers into forming the reform movements of the Great Depression. Their wives, who were worse off in some ways, joined forces in the Women's Grain Growers and United Farm Women's associations.

Women who might never have left their children and gardens and livestock felt compelled to campaign for educational, political, and legislative reform. Unassuming, but forceful "We farm women should know considerable about this patching business", they petitioned for health care, educational reform, who made cameo appearances like it or not, there is only one way to distinguish truth from fiction in this film: the fiction is strange, the truth is very strange.
world peace, and birth control. Evans sketches this movement with deft strokes, drawing on letters, diaries, speeches and published articles. She intercuts them with interviews of seven women who were directly involved, and some well-crafted "reenactments"—all standard fare. Yet the story is unique and Evans doesn't simplify the situation. The women, anywhere between 65 and 93 years of age when they were placed in the tradition of Goya and Dix.

The ROAD TO ANSWERS are lucid and committed to enhance their expressive qualities. The first section uses footage of the Amazon River, and the primitive tribes which inhabit its borders, juxtaposed with a text which muses on the relationship of modern man to the primitive. The whole opera seems to be a meditation on the relationship between our technological society and nature. The images and music are beautiful but it always seems strange to me that artists can use a technological medium to put down technological doings.


The ROYTONKONBYRI

BYRON BLACK'N' BLUE-BLIND

Out Out is billed as "an opera video" with an original techno-pop score. Its style is close to that of an experimental film. It is comprised of four sections where the images are reworked through stop-printing and colour saturation processes to enhance their expressive qualities.

The video, Monsieur Leon, could be seen as a postmodernist, ambiguous narrative about miscommunication. It uses the form of the thriller genre in a fragmented story where a woman tries to deliver a mysterious package to a mysterious stranger. The visuals are very stylized, using an art-deco setting made up of pastel greens and blues. The artist makes an interesting use of the possibilities of video technology in his dissection of buildings thus turning the backgrounds into expressionist sets.