

seemed to enjoy themselves," he says.

So, Raxlen's whole life will revolve around this locale for a few months, even to the extent of seeing and hearing himself on the screen. For Raxlen plays the 40-year-old Ben, a filmmaker-coordinator of the same *Main Film*. His real-life three-year-old daughter plays his screen daughter. "This is a somewhat autobiographical piece, but my own experiences are only a jumping-off point from which to explore common issues," Raxlen says. Nonetheless, his presence as the on-screen storyteller and central consciousness in the film is very similar to his actual role as director/editor. This makes the 'life-cinema' puzzle that much more complex. Art imitates life, but only the film can be put together in a whole.

Rick Raxlen describes his own career in terms of "a pendulum swing from a period making more conventional short dramas and documentaries for the National Film Board (1968-76) to a period of more personal work in freelance writing and graphic art in Los Angeles, and then experimental film and video in Montreal. Now the pendulum swings back to a more conventional drama, but always within my own personal style." His best known works from these periods are *Legend*, a short NFB drama which won a Canadian Film Award, and experimental work titled *Autobiographical Juvenillia*, and a new-tech video, *Divine Right*.

The final image I see on the screen draws me back to the film and away from concerns of its construction and execution: an early '50s car, crowded with an early '50s family, heads off for an *après-picnic* drive back to the cottage, down the long, dusty, country road and into the lush, green hillside of the Townships. Do I remember my family's picnics being too pretty?

Don Terry •

Shoot Me! Shoot

Re-exploring Vietnam war scars has been a hot topic on North American moviescreens recently, but it's a Canadian film that will examine the inner conflict some Americans faced when deciding whether to join the fight or not.

Shoot Me!, a \$3 million feature film from Toronto-based Lauron Pictures, examines a side of the war that left a social and psychological imprint in Canada as well as in the United States and Vietnam.

It's the story of Michael Posen, played by Canadian Denis Forest, a Harvard Law School student who comes to Canada for the summer of 1969 to work as a camp counsellor. It's a story that looks at his struggle of conscience as he faces the prospect of being drafted to fight in Vietnam.

During an interview with the blond, slightly built Forest, he explains that "it's an incredible pressure Michael goes through."

Forest says one way of looking at *Shoot Me!* is to consider it a counterpoint to the rash of recent movies about U.S. troops fighting in Vietnam. "What about the guy who didn't go to war?" asks Forest, who played a young Henry Ford II in the television mini-series *The Man and the Machine*.

Acting as a catalyst for Michael is troubled 12-year-old Ronald Schubert, played by Gareth Bennett, who ultimately helps his American counsellor



• The gang from *Shoot Me!* gets shot

photo: Elizabeth Feryn

find answers to his gnawing inner dilemma. A strong bond develops between the two as they struggle to resolve their problems.

The film's title is not a line from a rough-and-tumble combat scene as some might suspect, but from the game "Shoot Me!" Ronald plays with other campers.

Executive producer Ronald Lillie says the screenplay, which was written by Jay Teitel, is a story that needs to be told, particularly at a time when the United States is feeling good about itself.

"It's human nature I guess to forget the lessons of the past. I think America has largely forgotten how horrible it felt in Vietnam. I think that nation was sickened by it for a long time."

Lillie terms *Shoot Me!* the other side of the Vietnam story. But at the same time he adds it's a tale that outlines the development of powerful relationships between the principal characters.

Actress Kelly Rowan plays Cynthia, a Canadian counsellor who falls in love with Michael. Rowan, who played Lorilee in Alliance Entertainment's feature film *The Gate*, tries to help Michael solve his problem over the war, a problem compounded by the fact that his father is a law professor with strong pro-war opinions.

While Rowan explains in an interview that her Canadian character struggles to understand the political and social issues facing Michael ("We didn't have to face decisions about having brothers and uncles leave for war") she stresses that *Shoot Me!* is also a love story.

Director/producer Bill Johnston agrees that the movie works on many

levels including strong and realistic relationships between the counsellors and kids, while presenting a clear Canadian perspective on the war and U.S. draft resisters.

"At the time (of the Vietnam war) I don't think any of us knew how hard it was on any of them."

As you travel along dirt roads past deep blue lakes and damp forests on a typical fall day to view the making of *Shoot Me!* it's hard to equate the serenity of the Canadian wilderness to the bustle of moviemaking or, for that matter, to the horrors of the Vietnam war. But it's at fictional Camp Adawak, set in the western portion of Algonquin Park, that most of the shooting was done.

The crew has the cabins and halls of the camp awash with reminders of 1969 that along with a sound track featuring rock music from the period, will recreate the era.

Shoot Me! was made with the financial help of Telefilm Canada, the Ontario Film Development Corporation and about \$1 million from distributor Norstar Releasing Inc.

Lillie said a private investment group decided not to invest in *Shoot Me!* after proposed tax changes were announced June 18 by Finance Minister Michael Wilson. Lillie added that it wasn't an isolated incident within the film industry.

Sudden changes in the support and structure of the Canadian film industry are particularly harmful because it takes so long to put deals together, he explained.

Shoot Me! is due to appear in theatres in the fall of 1988.

John McClyment •

• Vicki Barkoff and Kevin Tierney in scene from *Horses*



photo: Achraf Chbib