... et de la Video
at the New Film Fest
Europe and the States, grouped according to thematic or stylistic similarities. Except on Canada nights. Then all the tapes were programmed together just because they were Canadian.

Thrasivoulos Giatsios, it seems, had chosen the international tapes from work he had found at festivals and during his extended travels over the past year. He is aware of the central dilemmas of video, such as its position between Fine Art and Mass Media, and he provided a good representation of various Western artists' approaches to television.

On the other hand, Claude Chamberlan, a man noted in many circles for his vision and dedication to independent film, chose the Canadian selection from which the selected tapes had to carry the extra burden of representing 'Canadian Video Art' in an international context. However, a handful of the year's best were present.

Frankly, Shirley, a fun, lesbian sex-fantasy-romp by Margaret Moores, was one of the highlights. It too well-crafted to be pornography, too funny to erotic and certainly too good to be true. Two women rekindle a relationship based entirely on clandestine sex. When the passion dies and the gap, they part amicably — again. Witty and 'video cool' combine to make this like a tape, even if it is too tongue-in-cheek to encourage deep reading.

Whether it is an advertisement for 'Girl Sex', the unburdened entanglement of the 'zipless fuck', or simply a more pleasurable world, this tape was made with good will and good taste.

Montréal Danse is an impressive documentary of contemporary dance works by choreographers Daniel LeVellé, Jean-Pierre Percevault, and Paul-André Fortier. Produced by François Girard and Bruno Jobin (and Velvet Camera, their latest, well-named company), this tape displays the level of video mastery these two have achieved. The camerawork, lighting and editing fit the dancers like a glove; only the most refined video effects are used, never competing with, always complementing the stark choreographic arrangements. The slow, intentional introduction of colour during the 24 minutes creates enough narrative glue to bind the three works into one riveting program.

Summer 86: A Neighbourhood Notebook was another highlight — an unassumingly collection of fragments, images and voices (in 10 minutes of St-Laurent). Edward Hiiell wanders and wonders through the histories of his neighbours, the unstoppable process of gentrification, and the fate of his neighbourhood. He is refreshingly deconstructive, giving a condo developer a fair chance to speak, and portraying the stoicism of the old-timers who have seen waves of development come and go. His own life seems disturbed by the changes however, and he has created this document as a keepsake of a place and a time which means something to him.

The Baby Drop, by John Cooke and Mark Owens, is a visually and aurally complex and cogent production. Subtle video processing and a highly appropriate, dominant music score (ranging from hymns to rock 'n' roll) compensate for the sad predictable plot: a 'drug addict' and a 'suburbanite' both desire each other's lifestyles — and the same man. But even as this premise flounders, the sentiments of despair, the struggle between Free Will and Destiny, and whatever else motivated Cooke and Owens to produce this tape, are strikingly conveyed on a sensual, intuitive level.

Hands Up by Jean-Marc Roy is a fairly funny, vaguely satirical short tape that seems characteristic of many of this year's entries. In this slapstick sketch, a young man dreams of robbing a bank and goes through the actions without waking up. A good performance, imaginative sound effects and stylized camera work make the tape entertaining and eminently watchable. But when it ends after five minutes, one is left with an impression of potential and an authentic tape that doesn't get on with the rest of the screenings.

Ne retenez pas votre souffle was an obvious choice in this year's lineup. It is a collection of interviews with participants in last year's Festival. Eddie Constantine, David Rimmer, Sara Driver, Maxi Cohen, Stefaan Decostere, et al. These 15 or so subjects discussed their involvement with film and video over the decades. As a document of a certain period at a certain time it is interesting, and producers Luc Bourdon and Louis Bronsard have made these dialogues with the stars of the event generally. As a document of a certain place at a certain time it is interesting, and producers Luc Bourdon and Louis Bronsard have made these dialogues with the stars of the event generally.
sights are not earth-shattering and so Ne retenez pas votre souffle is likely to have limited usefulness outside of the context of this event.

Première Edition is another one of the visually complicated, short tapes parked down at the 'form' end of the form/content paradigm. A version of The Pied Piper is jumbled up with some interesting model-sets made of vegetables and a chequer-board, as well as some not so interesting random video effects and close-up shots of hair or amoeba or something. Martin L'Abbé produced this tape during a 'creative workshop', opening the possibility that he originally conceived the piece as an exercise and only released it as a finished tape as an afterthought.

Christine Martin and Gisele Trudel each produced a 'female-doppelganger-with-theory-and-text tape'. In Martin's Twins, two identical young women slowly turn while engaged in a sisterly embrace. The text sets up a parallel between their differences and the differences between men and women. She assumes that there is a degree of cynicism or perversion in the audience and she concludes by addressing that. The strength of this tasteful tape lies mainly in Martin's strong attachment to the image of the twins, and less in her assumed responsibility as a social critic.

Trudel's La Théorie mordue, also has two revolving young women — except here they speak. Their basic dilemma stems from their paralysing self-consciousness — a dilemma which all theory-conscious artists need to resolve. Its conclusions seem optimistic — conveyed by the text sequence: Dance, Laugh, Reach, Rise, presumably, above the need for over-verbalizing.

Time Code was not one tape but seven — an international television project involving the collaboration of independent producers and broadcasters from seven countries. Artists from England, Spain, Holland, France, United States, Germany and Canada worked with their national television networks to create short pieces of 'television art' without dialogue. These were combined into a single, hour-long program which was available to each broadcaster. Video art which is designed for television works differently than that which is intended for other contexts — and all of this program works exceedingly well — as television and as art. Bernard Hebert and Michel Ouellette were the Canadian representatives, and their work continues to fascinate. Hopefully, other projects like this one are brewing, and these two imaginative producers will be involved.

In retrospect, perhaps dropping Video from the name of the Festival was a good idea this year. The tapes, as good as some of them were, could not generate the enthusiasm they deserved, precisely because they were appended to a film festival. If next year's project is going to continue as a film and video festival, hopefully the video part can be greatly expanded. Giatsios's European and American connections should be supplemented by Asian and Latin American selections. And the Canadian tapes, if handled separately, should be chosen to represent the full depth and breadth of our current national video activity.

THE ALTERNATIVE
Call us at 416/536-4827
NABET 700 Association of Film Craftsmen
National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians
1179A King Street West, Studio 102, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 3C5