



photo: Ron Diamond

• Sharing a special moment – Duncan Regehr and Linda Smith in *Little White Lies*

creating a rhythm of tension out of which romance can evolve from suspense." She pushes the styrofoam cup away and looks at her watch. It's almost time to resume filming and there's a camera shot she wants to discuss with the cameraman. The lighting director has a suggestion about the pots and pans. He also mentions that if the lights hit the statues a certain way, their shadows will look like pregnant women.

I am delegated to the room with the heat generator. There are others there who have returned from their lunch-break. They stroll around wood frames and workbenches. Some take their position on the set. The heat generator is turned off. The man with the walkie-talkie and the headset standing guard on the street says "Stand by one-two-three." A voice by the set hollers "Here we go – quiet!" Nobody moves by the workbenches. Another voice is heard, "Ça tourne Un, deux, trois" and Susan Martin whispers "quiet". "Stand by. One Two Three. Ça tourne – Rolling – quiet please." Nobody told the horse outside to trot softly. Cut. "Calèches and tourists" a man beside me mutters.

Everybody in the workroom takes the opportunity to change places or shift before the countdown makes them immobile again. "Ça tourne. Rolling. Quiet please." I can now see into the set. Scene: His kitchen. The pots and pans glow warmly. He opens a bottle of wine and pours a drink. She takes the glass and looks up into his eyes. He takes off his sweater and sits down as she sips from her wine and says, "What do I know about... Give me a plea-bargain injunction..."

A guy beside me, wearing a line of clothespins around his neck, makes knots and plays with the pins. A woman on a rocking chair reads her lines. Her chair creaks once. She looks up but nobody seems to have noticed.

The boom mike moves above the set and the actors have changed position and have become invisible. The slats separating the set from the workroom are in my way.

The knot-maker wants to sneeze. He looks sideways and around the room. Nobody else is making a noise. He holds his nose and his sneeze. His eyes water. "O.K. Cut" Susan says softly. I missed the magic of the first kiss.

But the knot-maker relaxes and, miraculously, loses his urge to sneeze.

Ana Arroyo •

## Not Just a Hooker Movie

It's round midnight in Toronto's well-heeled Annex neighbourhood. A fine drizzle adds an unusual chill to the mid-October air. Two transvestite hookers, Joe-Anne (David MacLean) and Rocket (Stan Lake), attempt a tango by a back-alley wall. They giggle and stumble under the lamplight, dreaming of lives played out in safety – and romance.

They are miles away from the 'track' where tonight, no doubt, real whores shiver and dance. Rocket and Joe-Anne, along with their neophyte friend Janet (Valerie Buhagiar), are the main characters in the movie *Dear John*, produced by Ordinary Films and shot in Toronto last fall.

Between takes production assistant Malcolm Tweedy rushes over like an insurance agent with an umbrella to shield the actors from the rain. This is his first film shoot and he is obviously delighted to be on the set. A few months ago he was still in Vancouver shooting video for a local cable TV station. Now, as an aspiring director of photography, he watches every set-up with intensity. A few feet away from the actors, the camera operator gives a gaffer some technical pointers.

"Not another hooker movie!" was the initial reaction writer/director Cathy Ord received when she first showed potential distributors the script of *Dear John*. But the quality of the writing disarmed them. The story of *Dear John* may be set among prostitutes but it's really about gender social roles and the various masks people wear in their different relationships. A deal was eventually struck with Norstar releasing.

The budget is just over \$400,000 with more than 85 per cent coming from Telefilm and the OFDC. *Dear John* is Ord's first feature but it was developed from a 20-minute dramatic short, also called *Dear John*, made by Ord several years ago. That film, filled with flashbacks, was mostly concerned with the unhappy pasts of Rocket and Janet. The focus of the full-length movie is on how the characters relate to one another in the present.

The laid-back atmosphere on the *Dear John* set was no accident. Ord selected people not only for their technical capabilities but also for their ability to contribute creatively to the project. "I didn't want to leave behind the kind of atmosphere I was trained in," she says. "Film is an art but it's also attached to a complex social situation and it's also tied to money."

Four weeks later, on the 26th and final day of shooting, there is no danger of precipitation as a cold sun burns amidst a chilling wind. Rocket, Janet and a few crew members are stuffed into a small and claustrophobic west-end laundromat. Ord confers with cast and crew, rehearsing the actors, adjusting the blocking, scrambling onto a couple of washers to peer into the camera, then over to talk with d.o.p. Doug Koch (*I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*). Both Ord and Koch are tall, wirey and red-haired; they could be twins.

Outside, several would-be patrons have to be rerouted to another laundromat. Most passersby don't mind standing on the sidelines while the camera is rolling, such is their conditioned respect for the status of filmmaking. But two elderly women, all in black, refuse to wait, even for a minute. They chatter angrily at us in their own language as they trundle slowly down the street. Theirs is a gesture of ownership and permanence marked against the film crew's fleeting intrusion.

A couple of doors down from the laundromat is a secondhand store-cum-repair shop. Crew members truck in and out in search of warmth and bargains. Everyone admires the leather briefcase Malcolm copped for a dollar.

At the sound of his name the best boy, Terry, bounds out of the shop, dust flying, the price tag flapping against the lens of his new dark glasses. "You need these because you are in the movie business," the proprietor had told him. "Only 50 cents." It was a deal.

Now that it's a wrap, Ord is in the editing room working six days a week. She hopes to have everything in the can in time for Cannes.

Randi Spires •

• Janet and Rocket try on new roles at Rocket's birthday party.

