

The fantastic reality of twins

After the final take, the corpse dons a green bathrobe and makes her way to the director's chair. David Cronenberg graciously obliges the extra's request and provides an autograph while thanking her for a job well done.

The much-publicized Toronto shoot of *Twins* has the city (or at least the tabloids) enamoured of its stars, Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold, is finally in the works. Several false starts, including last year's pullout by the de Laurentiis Entertainment Group, delayed the production. With the participation of Telefilm and advances from 20th Century Fox and, in Canada, Astral Films, producer Marc Boyman rescrumbled the picture's financing and cameras started to roll February 1st.

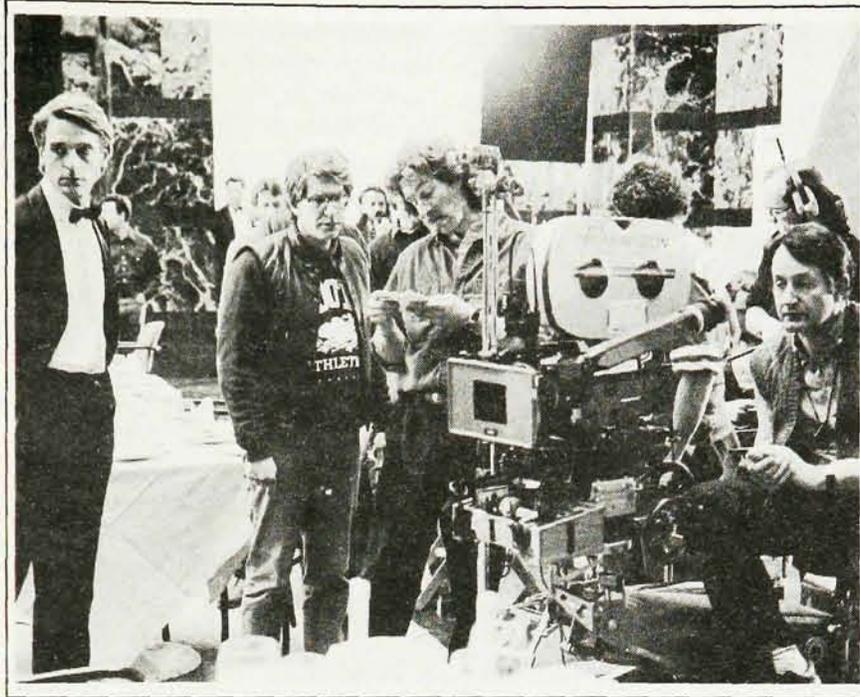
They won't stop rolling until mid-April. Part of the reason for *Twins'* extended shooting schedule is the fact that Irons plays two roles, the title characters. Simply, some scenes have to be reshot with Irons playing the other role.

Other complications include, of course, the problem of technology and special effects, by now a requisite of Cronenberg's films. The twinning effect will be created by the tried and true split-screen method. By updating the existing technique with multiple splits in the screen rather than the standard vertical split down its centre, as well as computerized motion control which enables the camera to retrack its movements with a high degree of precision, the film's special effects and optical experts, Gordon Smith (*Near Dark*, *Platoon*) and Lee Wilson (*The Fly*), will achieve a sophisticated, perfectly reduplicated image with newfound mobility for both actor and camera. It'll be possible for a standing Jeremy Irons to bend over a seated Jeremy Irons during, say, a pan or tracking shot, and offer himself a drink. Nuances to be sure but a far cry from *The Patty Duke Show*.

Twins is about the ties that bind the lives of identical twins, brothers Elliot and Beverly Mantle, renowned gynecologists. A beautiful actress, Bujold, problematizes the brothers' bond, complicating the relationships into a love triangle that results in their destruction.

As a psychological thriller, *Twins* is somewhat of a departure for Cronenberg. As he says, "the challenge is the reverse - to make the realistic seem fantastic." According to some, his fascination with the phenomenon of twins dates back to more than a decade. Part of the research included a visit to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where a massive study of twins was and still is taking place. *Twins* the movie has itself been in development for seven years.

In Casa Loma, Lady Pellat's Blue Room has been rearranged to look like a hotel suite. Two identical sisters playing twin prostitutes prepare



On the set with Jeremy Irons, David Cronenberg, Marvin Midwicki and Peter Suschitzky

for their scene with Elliot, the urbane and extroverted brother. While make-up personnel fuss with the actresses' porcelain complexions, Cronenberg and DOP Peter Suschitzky (*Empire Strikes Back*, *Falling In Love*) fuss with the eyeline and the blocking of the actors. "Jeremy! Jeremy! Have you seen Jeremy?" Between takes, Irons has taken to roaming the castle.

"It's like peeling an onion - the layers in Jeremy Irons' performance," remarks Brigitte Berman. The beneficiary of the Canadian Centre for Advanced Film Studies fledgling Director Observer Program is finding the experience on the \$10M U.S. production an invaluable one. "It's very important to me to watch how he's working with the actors, how David and Jeremy interact - together they create the role. When two people click creatively and run on the same track, nice things begin to happen - little bits of magic. They give each other the space to find it - David gives it with his actors and his crew."

Cronenberg is "very giving," Berman continues. "He explains patiently." The sci-fi master is everything a megalomaniacal director is not. Although he is generally soft-spoken on the set, Berman maintains that his presence is pervasive. Cronenberg's calm demeanour and meticulous attention to detail help him gain a command of pressures, she thinks. "If I can do even a third as well on my first set," she says, "I'll be really happy."

What initially intrigued Berman about the story were its subtleties and Cronenberg's and Norman Snider's tightly written script. "It's an interior film." For Irons, switching roles sometimes several times daily, the part invites a particular acting: playing off himself, two characters just a shade apart. And from all reports, he was more than approving of Bujold's involvement in the project.

There's a minor spill on the set: the twin actresses rise simultaneously from the velvet-upholstered chesterfield and Irons, leaning on the sofa's back, jostles the wineglass in his hand. Props assistants and set dressers descend upon the disturbance - it's between takes anyway.

Even amid the chaos of shooting a film, Boyman, like Cronenberg, seems remarkably serene. The production, he says, is an incredibly smooth one with a happy, unified crew. With ample studio support and distribution deals intact, things couldn't be better. After a troubled history, *Twins* is finally being born. The baby is due this fall.

Helen Lee •

Urban cowboyz

Following his most recent production, *Platinum*, which achieved modest success at the Montreal World Film Festival, Peter Evanchuck has launched himself into yet another controversial new film, *Cowboyz*. This film, budgeted at \$300,000, is an energetic black comedy about dreamers and their inability to make their dreams come to fruition. A story of hope and despair, *Cowboyz* vacillates between powerful fantasy and hard reality.

The most recent shoot took place in Kingston at the home of one of Evanchuck's friends. Within an hour of arriving, he had transformed the front and back parlour, the porch and the upstairs landing into a studio. As is his usual custom, he decided to use the house's occupants as actors, along with the female lead Helene

Lacelle, and quickly briefed everyone as to the effect and mood he wanted to create. He tossed out a few lines to get things rolling, started the camera and recorder, and 'voila', action.

On location in Kingston, Evanchuck says of his most recent production, "I'm trying to make documentaries that look like dramas. What I mean is that before I write a 'script', I wander around the clubs, taverns, streets, stores, and wherever else one finds interesting people, looking for people and their stories. When I think that I've met the right individuals whose stories are interesting and fit into the idea I want to document, I design the sequences loosely. I don't tell them what to say but rather suggest the general topic of conversation, which ultimately leaves them with the final draft work. Scripts by proxy - but it works. For example, I know that Len thinks he's the reincarnation of Hank Williams and the 'King of Country Music' when he's drunk. I then adapt all these things for the appropriate sequence. I do the same for all the characters, since I've known them all for at least three years or more, and have a reasonably good idea of what they're capable of handling in terms of playing themselves, what they like and what is essential to the movie." Evanchuck goes on to explain that in order to "clean up some of the loose ends, a narrative element has been developed between Cleo and the cowboy. It more or less resembles the kind of conversational dialogue you'll find in films like *My Dinner with Andre* or *Hiroshima Mon Amour*."

Helene Lacelle comes through the door and shouts, "Warren, Warren?" Then Evanchuck shouts, "Slate it. That's it!" The shoot took several hours to prepare but only about five or 10 minutes of film was shot. Time to move on to the next location, Ottawa then Montreal, then back to Toronto, and all in three days! The following weekend Evanchuck is off to Maniwaki in Northern Quebec, Wakefield, and Hull, just across the river from Ottawa. The list goes on as this road picture goes from place to place to create the right atmosphere and location.

"We're a very small crew. Often there are only two crew members and the performers. Sometimes I'll do the shot myself and the actor will handle the sound. This is just one of the realities of low-budget filmmaking. You just do what has to be done." Next Evanchuck, his crew and actors, (who are often one and the same), are off to Nashville and the Eastern United States where they will do the necessary pickup atmosphere shots. "I guess it's many a cowboy's dream to make it in Nashville. I know that Len thinks that if he gets the chance to go there, he'll end up in the Hall of Fame without any doubt. That's his dream. That is what a lot of this movie is about."

Last month they were at Tic Toc Stables near Luskville, Quebec. "It was very interesting," Evanchuck begins, "because it proved that if a low-budget producer / director can't adapt, he's in a lot of trouble. I was told by all these sidewalk