

to the deal with Suissa's 3 Themes Inc. (Canada), had been in the process of producing *Sentiments*, a series of nine made-for-television movies co-produced with nine other countries. Just as the Australian contingent's project fell through, Suissa swooped in with *No Blame*.

The screenplay of *No Blame* went through 'seven or eight' rewrites before it was deemed ready to shoot. Suissa respectfully refers to Martin as "not a jukebox writer." Her definition of the term: "You put money in and they write." Forming a tightly knit creative team, Suissa and Martin evolved as co-writers, 'enjoying' 6:00 a. m. script conference calls and sharing views during production. On the set, Martin as writer, stands near Suissa with headphones on, available at all times for consultation with her and the actors. Martin makes a point of never offering advice to the actors unless he is asked to give it, so as not to interfere with Suissa's direction.

Suissa seeks strong and lasting collaborations. Martin is set to co-write the second of the twinning projects. With *No Blame*, director of photography René Verzier marks his seventh project with Suissa. Interestingly, Suissa makes use of a video-assist for every shot, something which does not sit well with all d. o. p. s. Explaining, Suissa refers to the mutual trust that she and Verzier have that allows them to move past the nuts and bolts of devising a shot and on to an advanced creative interplay.

Helen Shaver agreed to play the role of Amy Donaldson early in her current pregnancy but she was almost seven months pregnant when the cameras began to roll this summer. In light of her advanced pregnancy, the screenplay was revised, substantially changing the dramatic import of the scenario as a result. Helen, on set having her hair put up and watching the work of the hairdresser for continuity, looks healthy and vibrant and says she does not feel any exceptional strain working so far into her pregnancy. She talks about her energy being lower than usual (and adds that it is usually higher than most people's), the fact that she has to eat more and eat more carefully, and that her body temperature is higher so that under the hot lights there are times when she feels some discomfort; nevertheless, she has encountered no real difficulties with the situation. Shaver states that she'd always intended to work through the entire term of her pregnancy if there was work to be done.

Shaver, with a hint of incredulity, says that the shoot of *No Blame* has gone well. She refers to herself and Suissa as both "strong and opinionated" women and that, somehow, out of their creative disagreements, they have arrived at mutually agreeable decisions without having to compromise. Shaver speaks of being "challenged" by Suissa's direction. Asked what differences there are for her as an actress in working on a made-for-television movie versus a feature, Shaver points to her hair and asks that it



Danièle Suissa is down on her knees while Marie-Christine Barrault is rather laid back about things

be redone as it had been done the day before.

Suissa, an admitted workaholic, is scheduled to fly to Morocco four days after the wrap of *No Blame* to begin work on a project she first conceived of over 20 years ago. *Kame Yama Kane* (meaning 'once upon a time' in Moroccan) is a meandering adventure tale for children; a project to which Suissa seems quite endeared. Also in the works, a production with Henry Jaglom of the script Suissa wrote for Anais Ninn while the author was still alive, and a production with Pat Ferns of Linda Griffiths' adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*.

Suissa thrives on her work because she "loves" what she does. "I am so happy. I just turned 48. It feels great!" Ironically, two years ago, while slightly disillusioned by producing, she thought she would only direct. "It was the waiting by the phone that I couldn't take." With energy to burn, the situation didn't last long. Now, Suissa and her company 3 Themes Inc. are more active than ever before. Suissa recently hired a business administrator to handle the reams of paperwork which any producer must shuffle through. Although Suissa prides herself on her business acumen, she was quite relieved to have this administrative aspect of producing taken out of her hands. On *No Blame*, Suissa

functions as executive producer, producer, co-writer, director, and will distribute the project in association with Gordon Guiry Enterprises. Needless to say, Suissa does what she wants. Kudos for bravado.

Toby Zeldin •

The Unspoken Unspeakable acts

The last time I interviewed Bill Sorochan, he was promoting his repertory cinema The Screening Room. The room was located in downtown Edmonton, in an avant-garde theatre company's venue. Every Saturday night, Sorochan would present offbeat film fare. The building was old and somewhat decrepit; audiences sat on a motley collection of couches and chairs, and when they were fully occupied, there was an old mattress to recline on. During the interview, he was specifically promoting his latest choice in films, which he had dubbed Edmonton's First Annual Distorted Film Festival. Sorochan didn't have a great deal to work with. He had virtually no

budget, and yet he was managing to attract a fair amount of publicity. The resulting festival was a success (the mattress was always crowded). The Distorted line-up was a cult classic extravaganza, which included *Homicidal*, *The Corpse Grinders*, *Shock Corridor*, *The Mysterians*, and *W. R. Mysteries of the Organism*.

This time around, Sorochan is making the film; it's entitled *The Unspoken*, and his influences are a bit more, shall we say, 'sophisticated'. Orson Welles' *Magnificent Ambersons*, Douglas Sirk's *Tarnished Angels*, Raoul Walsh's *Strawberry Blonde*, and Fritz Lang's *Moonfleet* are the four major influences on Sorochan's present project, a film he wrote and is directing in Edmonton.

The Unspoken revolves around a 40-year-old car salesman who learns he is dying of cancer. He feels that his life has never amounted to much, but then he meets a teenager who is dying of the same illness. The script focuses on the development of their relationship. Sorochan describes the film as "a comedy-drama, with the accent on the comedy."

Wait a minute. A film shot entirely in black and white about a dying used car salesman - a comedy? "Yes," explains Sorochan, "A subject like this can become very maudlin in its presentation, so I want to accent the comedy. It's a film about dignity, but also hopefully, a very funny film."

Sorochan is working with a limited budget: \$150,000. He is managing, he says, through deferrals, a lot of hard work, and "a very understanding cast and crew."

"Shooting has been very hectic, but I'm very proud of the way everyone is working. Technically, things are a bit rough, but we seem to be overcoming that with our enthusiasm, dedication, and energy." More succinctly, he adds, "Everyone is working their butt off. With a lower budget, says Sorochan, "You must shoot a lot quicker than usual. You have less rehearsal time. However, this can be positive - it can create a sense of spontaneity. It is extremely important for a film to have this freshness, this vitality."

Sorochan is also dealing with what he calls the "Isolation Factor." "In Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, there's far more energy and activity. There are far more individuals doing what you're doing, it's far easier to get work on a shoot. Thus it's easier to make a living. Sometimes, when you make a film away from the major centres, your work is overlooked because of that. The film *Crimewave* (by John Paizs) was overlooked, I feel, because of where it was made (Winnipeg)."

"Then again there are many pros to working here. In Toronto, there are hundreds of people trying to do what I'm doing. Here, there are only three or four. This means less competition. I believe Alberta gives more money per artist than any other province in the country. If you really are committed, you can do things here. And of

course, the rent is much cheaper."

Sorochan saves most of his praise for the Alberta Cooperative, Film and Video Artists Society of Alberta (FAVA). The co-op's main role is a social one, and Sorochan says he never could have started making films if it hadn't been for the people he's met at FAVA. He now serves as fundraising coordinator within the organization, and arranges an annual showing of FAVA work at the Fringe Theatre Festival every August. By no coincidence, Sorochan's first film, an experimental documentary entitled *Chimera* (reviewed in *Cinema Canada* #154), premiered on the same evening FAVA celebrated its fifth birthday (Sorochan bought the liquor for the bash). His loyalties are clear: Sorochan wants to stay with FAVA for a long time.

Sorochan is excited about the recent showing of *Chimera* at the Troia International Film Festival in Troia, Portugal. Having his films seen is very important, he says, and very difficult. "Maybe I'll just trek across Canada and show *The Unspoken* city by city." When asked about the idea of Canadian content quotas being set for distributors, Sorochan sounds like an old Hollywood flick: "You're talking about the big boys now, and the big boys play by different rules than guys like you and me."

Sorochan admits that it would be nice to see more Canadian films in Canadian cinemas.

Will Edmontonians see a Second Annual Distorted Film Festival? "I'm afraid not," replies the writer, producer, and director. "I simply don't have time."

Matt Hayes •

Malarek Stop the presses and print that

"Motor... Speed... Action..." Actor Mark Hellman enters into frame with pipe in mouth and newspaper in hand. "Cut" shouts director Roger Cardinal.

The left side of Hellman's jacket collar is turned up, a faux pas in terms of continuity. With eight years of stage experience to his credit, this is Hellman's first feature film. He plays the role of Dan, co-worker and poker buddy of cub reporter Victor Malarek (Elias Koteas) at the fictional *Montreal Tribune*, circa 1971.

Malarek, the film, is based on *Globe & Mail*



Roger Cardinal lines up a shot with Elias Koteas (Malarek)

reporter Victor Malarek's autobiographical novel "Hey Malarek" which details his involvement with a teenage fugitive and a mass coverup of a series of suicides at a local juvenile detention centre during his days at the now defunct *Montreal Star*. Although the author himself did not have a hand in adapting his novel to the screen, he has been present on the set as an advisor.

Producer Jamie Brown's (Telescene) attraction to the project lay mainly in its being "such a powerful story". When asked if the film is part of a new trend in Canadian features, i.e. the juvenile delinquent theme as seen in *Train of Dreams*, Brown dismisses it as mere coincidence and goes on to praise director Cardinal who originally approached him with the book. "He's making this film look like \$5 million instead of four" says Brown. "This is an opportunity for Roger to show what he can do... his experience as an editor, as well as in commercials, working at such a fast and steady pace is exactly what was needed for this shoot."

So far on the 20th day of this 31-day shoot they are on schedule and on budget, able to take advantage of the federal tax shelter which expired at the end of June. Art direction and salaries are what take up most of the film's budget, adds Brown "If you want good people you have to pay above scale."

I asked Roger Cardinal why he's waited so long before directing another feature, his last one, his third, was *L'apparition* (1976). He jokingly mentions David Lean's 12-year hiatus from film before his return with *Passage to India* and goes on to say, "I've never really stopped working, I do a lot of things." And indeed he has; Cardinal spends most of his time winning acclaim for his commercial work as well as for his short subjects and documentaries. In 1984 he and Brown worked together on the short *You've come a long way, Ladies* which was a finalist at the 1985 Gemini Awards.

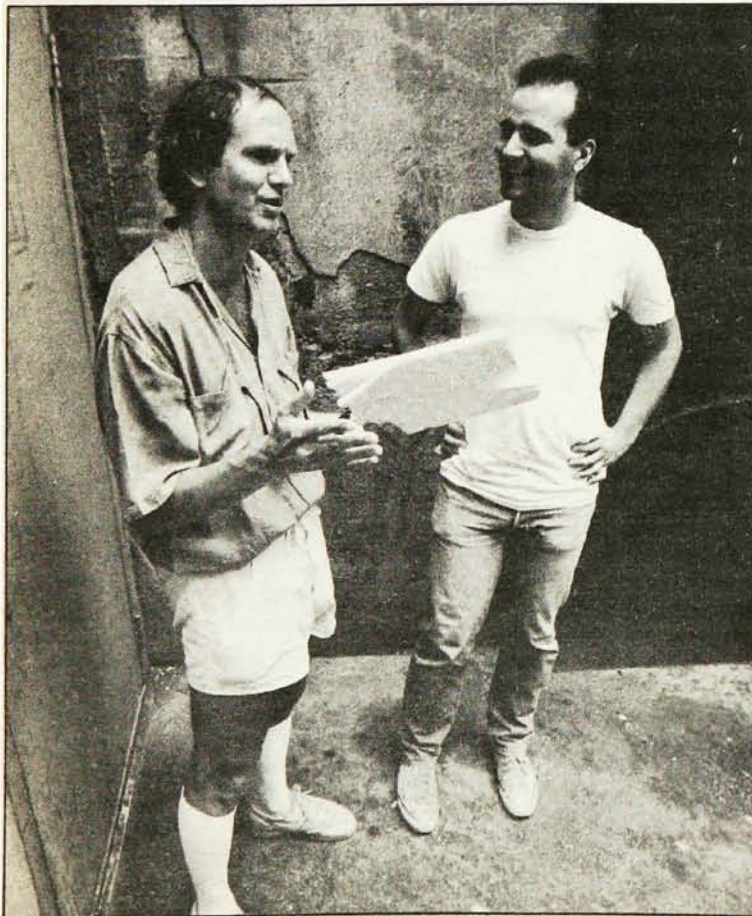
D. O. P. Karol Iké works closely with the art department putting particular stress on natural lighting. "I try to keep away from trends" says Iké, who has worked on such diverse projects as *The Campbells* and a series of commercials directed by Denys Arcand for the Provigo Supermarket chain. Iké introduces me to cameraman Daniel Jobain, inventor of the paniflasher—a device which allows for less fill-in light and less or no contrast filtration on the lens. This is only the second time it has been used in Canada, and to his knowledge the first time on a steadicam.

Soundman Richard Nichol (*Pin*) who has just finished telling me about the time he put his Nagra in the dryer after it fell in the lake, talks enthusiastically with another crew member about the previous day's rushes—in particular, a travelling shot using the paniflasher. Nichol, like Iké, is not into elaborate setups. He believes in the minimum amount of equipment necessary, preferring the crisp clean sound of a wire as opposed to cordless mikes.

The crew then set up for the scene where Claire (Kerrie Keane), the crime desk editor, rejects Malarek's first story, convinced it is not factual. The glass partitioned office (reminiscent of a fish bowl) is a new addition to the St. Jacques Street space which has played host to the ill-fated CTV series *Mount Royal*, among others. Starring in the film, along with Keane, are Al Waxman, Michael Sarrazin and Montrealer Elias Koteas in the lead role.

Koteas, who has landed roles in two Francis Coppola films: *Gardens of Stone* and *Tucker*, is being touted as the 'new DeNiro' in much of the popular media. This kind of hype, which may work well as a promotional tool, may also do a disservice to the actor; the danger being that he may try to live up to the comparison.

If all goes well at the lab, Brown hopes to have *Malarek* out by Christmas.
Jim Levesque •



Actor Larry Musser (with script) and director Bill Sorochan on the set of *The Unspoken*