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Eastern Wave

CHRIS MAJKA

I've crossed the Northumberland Straits many times in my life. As a child I used to peer over the bow of the old Abegweit (the "Abby" as Islanders called it) as it lurched over thick pans of ice crushing a passage through them, on its way to Borden. In the spring I watched the passing schools of porpoises and in the winter looked at the orbiting Iceland Gulls. Last week though, I saw the Strait through different eyes. Could a tunnel or bridge soon replace the M. V. Tourist Tincan on which I was now sailing? Would it be feel the same?

The main reason, however, was that I had just seen Dave Ward's *Retrieval*, a curious and haunting film about the carvings of sometime P. E. I. sculptor Don Tryhurn. Tryhurn is an enigmatic fellow and the short (15-minute) film doesn't try to unravel all the mysteries about him. Like the elusive creatures which writhe and emerge from the Island sandstone which Tryhurn uses as his medium, the film suggests much and explains little. Who is Tryhurn really? Why does he labour day and night on a bizarre sculpture? Will Tryhurn, as he suggests in the film, actually take it and drop it from the ferry into the Northumberland Strait? Where does Tryhurn disappear to? How is it that the sculpture itself later vanishes? All these are touched on but not answered in the way that some of life's mysteries also have no definitive answer. A fine production from the Island Media Arts Co-op (IMAC).

I had the opportunity to see the film at the Atlantic Film and Video Producer's Conference in Charlottetown (see the article elsewhere in this issue) as part of a showcase organized by the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Atlantic (CFDA). Also new to me, and a delightful bit of visual fun was *My Shadow*, an animated film from Gail Snedden of the N. B. Filmmakers Co-op.

Far less interesting were *Homecoming*, a monotonous and ill-conceived video by Valerie LeBlanc of the Center For Art Tapes (CFAT); *Sirensong*, a kind of video home-movie with conceptual-art voiceover shot on a trip to Arizona by Jan Peacock from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; and *Girls Just Want to Have Funds*, a cleverly-titled short drama by Cathy Busby and Melody Calvert of CFAT, but without much substance or direction.

I had an opportunity to chat with Ken Pittman from Newfoundland who has just finished editing the feature film which he shot last summer called *Finding Mary March*. A kind of metaphorical search for Mary March, the last of the Beothuck Indians, it has just gone away for blowup from super 16mm to 35mm. Ken has very ambitious plans for a number of festival showings followed by theatrical release, but specific plans await the return of an answer print when everyone involved can finally see what the finished product looks like - something difficult to do any earlier in the case of super 16. He's already in the thick of negotiations for a second project which he has written; a contemporary drama about a group of siblings who reassemble in their hometown in Newfoundland, drawn there by their father's illness and imminent death. Only thus reunited after many years do all their differences and sympathies begin to emerge. A Newfoundland approach to *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*? Ken told me that although he hoped to start shooting in the fall, all the continuing work with *Finding Mary March* means that an early spring date is now more likely for the commencement of production.

I also talked with Brian Pollard, independent producer and member of Island Media Arts Co-op whose film, *Milton Acorn's Wake*, has recently been released. He has also just completed a half-hour video production on the natural history of Prince Edward Island for the Island Nature Trust. He's busy working on all kinds of other projects including his proposed film on the issues associated with the famine and drought in Ethiopia. Various political and logistical considerations have delayed the start of the film but Brian is still hopeful that it will go ahead in the near future.

Intrepid fly-in-the-ointment filmmaker Neal Livingston is now on tour in Sweden with his films *Herbicide Trials* and *Budworks*. Sponsored on his trip by environmental groups there, Sweden is the home of Storra Kopparberg (recently renamed as just Storra) the corporate target of *Herbicide Trials*, and the oldest continually functioning corporation in the world. They are celebrating their 700th(?) year of existence and Livingston is there to remind them of various environmental concerns with respect to their operations in Nova Scotia. Who knows what new production might emerge as a result of this trip?

Various features seem to be in the works here. First Choice is putting money into Leo Deveau's project *Flare of the Match*. The script was written by former Haligonian Terry Williams, based on a book of the same name, published by Breakwater Books in 1983. Williams is currently in Toronto where he is attending the Centre for Advanced Film Studies. The film is budgeted at around \$1.5 million and preproduction will take place this fall with shooting in 1989, to be released in 1990. Deveau also says that he has two other feature scripts based in Nova Scotia in the process of development.

First Choice also recently announced that it has put money into Red Snapper Productions' (a.k.a. Lulu Keating) feature drama *Africa Chronicles*. The script was written by Ms. Keating herself based on experience which she had in Africa as a young aid worker. A location scouting trip has already taken place and plans currently call for the film to be shot in Zimbabwe during the next fall-winter season. Picture Plant is also gearing up for a shoot this fall on another feature production of Bill MacGillivray's.