

# Film Reviews

## Ron Mann's Comic Book Confidential

The art of comic illustration developed almost simultaneously with the art of the motion picture at the turn of the century. They are inexorably linked by notions of image-making, storytelling, framing, movement through time and space, editing, and both are, of course, responsive to the whims of popular taste.

Georges Méliès' comical shorts were little more than magically moving comic strips. American Winsor McCay, the innovative illustrator of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, created the first animated film, *Gertie The Trained Dinosaur*, to accompany his vaudeville act in 1910. Comic strip heroes such as Zorro came to life on film while cinematic creations like Chaplin's sublime Tramp became the subject of popular comic strips.

There is a great film to be made of this symbiotic relationship. Ron Mann's *Comic Book Confidential*, however, is not that film. Nor, to be fair, was it intended to be, which is more the shame.

Mann has limited his scope to the development of the American comic book form, from the *Famous Funnies* of the '30s to the present. The film moves chronologically through this narrow frame of reference, placing the greatest amount of emphasis on the most contemporary of comic artists working today. This framework not only excludes the contributions made by the Europeans, British and Japanese to this much-maligned form of popular entertainment, but also completely ignores the larger, and arguably more interesting relationship that has developed between the cinematic and comic art forms.

What Mann offers instead is a respectful and lighthearted tribute to a handful of American artists who made a difference in their chosen field. *Comic Book Confidential* begins with an interview with William F. Gaines, publisher of the seminal *Mad* magazine and author of many of the '50s' most lurid and unrestricted comics, such as E. C.'s celebrated *Weird Science*, *Tales From The Crypt*, and *The Vault Of Horror*. Next up is Will Eisner, the celebrated creator of *The Spirit*, with his groundbreaking moody, cinematic style.

From the '40s and '50s, when the comic book was despised and reviled by parents and educators alike, the film moves into the breakthrough years of the '60s. The hyper-imaginative and prodigious storytelling abilities of Marvel Comics' Stan Lee, combined with the distinctive, powerful style of illustrator Jack Kirby, attracted a whole new readership to comic books. The kids who had read their *Tales*



Scary stuff kiddies: that despised but worthy art form, comic books

From the *Crypt* in secret, away from their parents' disapproval, now turned to a dizzying array of titles with names like *Spiderman*, *The Fantastic Four*, *Dr. Strange*, *The Silver Surfer*, *The Incredible Hulk*, and many, many more. Comics became acceptable reading for baby-boom college students.

The film then moves to the underground style of *Zap Comix*, with its psychedelic graphics and brilliant satirical talents of Robert Crumb (*Felix The Cat*), Bill Griffith (*Zippy*, *The Pinhead*) and Gilbert Shelton (*The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*). Mann concludes with a look at the postmodern comics such as *Raw* and *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, which is a novel-length comic set during the Holocaust. In the words of Sue Coe, *Raw* artist and politically committed painter who exhibits in galleries, comics now have become "precious art".

*Comic Book Confidential* is strongest with this later material. Robert Crumb and the other *Zap* artists give the film its off-beat humour and insight into the temper of the times when comics were an important part of the Underground Movement. Crumb, who left a steady but boring job drawing greeting cards in Cleveland, began

selling his own *Zap Comix* from a baby carriage in the Haight Ashbury district of San Francisco during the height of the "psychedelic revolution". He created *Mr. Natural* and coined the phrase "Keep on truckin'" which the Grateful Dead turned into a generational anthem. In fact, the Dead might very well have been the inspiration for Shelton's *Freak Brothers*, those wonderful, wacky, stoned icons of the '60s. However, Mann spends a disproportionate amount of time with the postmodern artists who run limited editions of very specialized comics for the collector and connoisseur. These are generally well out of the range of the average pre-teen, who still makes up the greatest readership for comic books.

The film is weakest in covering the so-called "straight" commercial artists of Marvel and D. C. Short shrift is given to Jack Kirby, surely the most influential comic artist of the '60s, and Neal Adams, whose cinematic style revolutionized the *Batman* series for D. C., receives no mention at all. Indeed, it was Adams who forced D. C., after intensive lobbying, to give credit to Spiegel and Shuster, the original creators of *Superman*, an act which brought

dignity to all the illustrators and artists who toil in the million-dollar business of selling comic books. *Comic Book Confidential's* biggest omission is Carl Barks, the prolific talent behind the Disney comics of the '40s and '50s, *Donald Duck*, *Mickey Mouse*, and especially his brilliant creation, *Uncle Scrooge*.

Mann frames his documentary with footage from a '50s black and white television show which is much like the *Reefer Madness* of comic books. An earnest commentator warns parents about their children going blind and committing violent acts, concluding that "there ought to be a law against them". Scenes are shown of comics being burnt by kids, just like the religious right burned copies of Beatles albums when John made his famous pronouncement about Christ. Mann has even come up with footage of a young, crew-cut William Gaines defending his comics during a Senate Committee Hearing on Juvenile Delinquency. Subsequently a National Code was adopted which effectively put an end to the gory cycle of comics and gave rise to the bland, but approved titles like *Archie* and *Millie The Model*.

*Comic Book Confidential* is, without question, a slick and well-produced documentary. Mann's thesis that comic books - though they might have been a despised form - have had an undisputable impact as popular entertainment and satirical commentary, is well taken. He combines the original covers with original animation and bold graphics, thereby creating a cinematic equivalent to the style of comics. It, along with *Imagine The Sound* (1981) and *Poetry In Motion* (1982) form what Mann refers to as a trilogy of works on North American culture. It is slicker than the previous two, but lighter and less interesting. His historical approach makes the film more accessible to the uninitiated, but leaves too many gaps for the film's best audience, the fans of great comic art.

Paul Townend •

**COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL** p. Ron Mann co-p. Martin Harbury exec. p. Don Haig d. Ron Mann prod. exec. Charles Lippincott ed. Robert Kennedy, Ron Mann asst. to p. Sue Len Quon art d. Gerlinde Scharinger d.o.p. Robert Fresco, Joan Churchill sound record. David Joliat, Tod A. Maitland, Brenda Ray filmograph design Steven Lewis, Gerlinde Scharinger, John Halpenny, David McIlvaney, Ellen Besen, Marjorie Reemeyer, Chris Armstrong filmograph camera Meta Media, Film Effects comic book consultants bpNichol, Mark Askwith additional consultants: Art Spiegelman, Dennis Kitchen sound ed. Steve Munro supervising eds. Bruce McDonald, Gordon McClellan, Peter Wintonick asst. ed. Sue Len Quon original music Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet, Keith Elliott, Gerard Leckey and Nicholas Stirling of Strange Nursery, Dr. John asst. to the d. Robin Brown, Marina Jimenez, Eden Ashley, Jessica Forman, Monika Spudas stock footage research Michael Tompane, Mary Dore, Aleen Stein, Jeff Sheftal rock 'n roll input Elliott Lefko consultant Emile de Antonio narrative captions written by bpNichol lettering by Let'er Ring! Graphics processing Medallion Labs optical blow up Film Effects post production Film House Group; produced by Sphinx Productions with financial assistance from The Swann Foundation, The Ontario Arts Council, The Canada Council, Telefilm Canada, The Ontario Film Development Corporation, City TV, Cineplex Oden Films.

William MacGillivray's  
"I Will Not Make  
Any More Boring  
Art"

"I will not make any more boring art" is the title, appropriated from a 1970s conceptual art piece by American artist John Baldassari, of William MacGillivray's new film. It's an ironic title for a talented director and recipient of many tributes for such works as *Stations* and *Life Classes*. Has he been accused of something we didn't know?

On its hundredth anniversary, MacGillivray pays tribute to his alma mater, the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design (NSCAD), a centre of international repute for radical experimentation in art education.

Concentrating on the period between the 1960s to the early 1980s, MacGillivray explains that hundreds of artists came to experiment in various arts disciplines with an emphasis on video and performance, all under the banner of conceptual art. Conceptualism takes many different forms while concentrating essentially on the ideas of the artist rather than their physical object/product, as exemplified in this film.

Before the title, the film opens with a close-up of a television screen. A hand reaches in, clicks on the switch and we are greeted with a wild-eyed, raving English character. "We all need our super hero. We all need our 007. I believe in fairy tales. I believe in Arthurian legends. There might be for one brief shining moment something that the world never forgets; something seen that we can all share in, ... it might already be taking place here in a place called Halifax."

Cut to some grainy b&w footage of the legendary German avant-garde artist Joseph Beuys being awarded an honorary degree from NSCAD. (This, by the way, is three years before the North American general public "discovered" him at the hugely popular Guggenheim retrospective in 1979.)

Beuys is introduced by the soft-spoken Garry Neill Kennedy, the arts administrator/artist responsible for turning the conservative NSCAD on its ear in the late 1960s. Kennedy seems an unlikely revolutionary. In a television interview, shortly after he arrived from the United States, and in MacGillivray's interviews, we meet a shy, soft-spoken man who rarely looks up to face his questioners.

Yet this is the man who attracted an impressive stream of artists to NSCAD as teachers and students. Many have since made their mark in the art world. Rare footage of Vito Acconci, Sol Lewitt, and Joseph Kosuth is blended with current interviews with Dan



Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko with director Bill MacGillivray

Graham, Les Levine and Robert Frank.

Original documentation of "performance art", "body art" and "video art" is used extensively and effectively. Certainly some of the early-dated video and performance pieces are self-indulgent, reinforcing the general notion that conceptual art is boring. *Heartbeat*, for example, records the sound of a... you guessed it. But most of the art produced in this time period is a visual or intellectual treat. In *Camera in Jeopardy*, a 16mm camera is turned on and placed in the middle of a road to record the oncoming busy traffic. A car comes straight at it (and us!)-smash! The end of a film about the subjective viewpoint in the extreme.

*Art Sucks* by then-student Martha Wilson discusses art as a process that sucks identity, as she eats a photograph. We cut to the contemporary Wilson, who left NSCAD to set up Franklin Furnace, an important artist-run space in New York. Wilson continues to do performance work, with a marvelously-silly characterization of Nancy Reagan, who talks about the "value of appearance and the appearance of value". After all, "if the picture is okay, the facts will fade."

Former student Ian Murray is represented by a clever film loop from 1969. *Waves in a Row* is compelling as each frame repeats a crest of water which constantly bombards the viewer. From his Toronto studio, Murray sums up: "Until I was nine years old, I was either going to be an artist or a priest. That's when my mother brought forward the argument - You can become a Jesuit and be both!"

The film shifts to Germany's "Dokumenta",

the most important international contemporary art event held every five years. With his large, multi-panelled canvas as backdrop, Eric Fishel recalls his days at the college when he first explored figurative and narrative painting. (A good beginning to a lucrative career - his paintings can now fetch up to \$200,000 each.)

Interviewed in Germany and also from the graffiti-lined streets in Soho, Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko remembers how when he was a young student in Poland NSCAD was talked about as the exciting centre for art. On his own work (high-beam slide projections on buildings) Wodiczko is boring in a formal European academic manner.

Meanwhile, back in Canada, in a cluttered studio lined with videotapes, dirty ashtrays, and coffee cups, video/artist and teacher David Askevold describes his Visiting Artists program. MacGillivray's voice-over states that, for better or for worse, this program had a profound impact on the college. But when asked to describe his own work, Askevold smiles slyly. No clues are given as the film cuts to footage of his enigmatic tape called *Nova Scotia Fires*, an eerie piece with close-ups of flames and a haunting synthesized sound track.

On the other hand, Dara Birnbaum speaks forcefully about her action-packed video installations that deal with suppressed political news footage and women stereotyped in the media. As a teacher at NSCAD, she and artists like Jeff Wall and Martha Rosler were encouraged in their analysis of the media.

Part of the charm of "I will not make any more

boring art" is the fact that it's almost like a scrapbook, a family album of poignant memories. It's clear that MacGillivray feels very close to the material and he treats his subjects with due respect. In his easy, personal manner MacGillivray is often in front of the camera, chatting comfortably with the artists. The film is smartly-shot by Lionel Simmons (whose cinematography credits include another Festival favourite *La boîte à soleil*) who often allows his camera to be as informal as the situation.

Perhaps most importantly the artists are allowed to speak for themselves and much of their art is featured. Sculptor June Leaf has a particularly charming scene, as she rattles on about why the two men in her mechanized sculpture are linked at the groin. "I figured out the reason why men don't get along with each other. It's because they have two dicks!"

MacGillivray adds his own artistry with several layers of texture, with solid results. A well-researched range of stills pepper the pace, beginning with a vintage portrait of the college's founder, Anna Leonowens (the same "Anna" whose relationship with the King of Siam is fictionalized in the *King and I* - another quirky and little-known fact from this east coast phenomenon).

Editors Angela Baker and MacGillivray slide and bump the scenes together with improvised musical threads. Later, we learn the rich score was composed by CCMC, Toronto's own much-acclaimed sound group including artists Nobby Kubota, Al Mattes and Michael Snow.

Counterbalanced with the beginning, the film wraps up in 1987 with Garry Neill Kennedy once again bestowing an honorary degree on filmmaker/visual artist/musician Michael Snow. He accepts the award graciously, congratulating NSCAD for its involvement with something "as ambiguous as art. My sincere congratulations and very best wishes to those of you who are graduating in ambiguity".

Cut to Snow performing with the CCMC and then a finish with Brian MacNevin's early-1970s videotape/performance *Audio Visual Feedback*. A close-up of the monitor, a hand reaches in to turn on the switch and that crazy world of art keeps on going and it's anything but boring ...

Jan Perdue •

**I WILL NOT MAKE ANY MORE BORING ART** p. Terry Greenlaw exec p./d. William D. MacGillivray research David Craig d.o.p. Lionel Simmons cam. assts. Dominique Gusset, Philip Hering sd. rec. Alex Salter add. sd. Arthur MacKay p. sec. David Craig p. assts. Alan MacLeod, Charles Clark, Robin Sarafinchan ed. Angela Baker. Bill MacGillivray sd. ed. Alex Salter asst. sd. ed. Angela Baker mus. ed. Bill MacGillivray neg cutter Malcolm Buck, Atlantic Film Services titles cut by Erika Wolff re-rec. George Navotnay, Sound House mus. rec. Sandor Ajzenstat, Paul Hodge prod. stills David Craig, Eric Walker projectionists David Middleton, Dan Gowan orig. mus. by CCMC: John Kameyaar, Nobby Kubota, Al Mattes, Michael Snow, Casey Sokol, and guests: Paul Dutton, Jimmy Jones. Produced in association with the CBC, with the assistance of the Canada Council, the NFB-Atlantic and NSCAD, with the participation of Telefilm Canada.

Jacques Godbout's  
**Alias Will James**

The relationship between Quebec and America has been of great interest to Jacques Godbout, writer and filmmaker, for many years. His latest film, a documentary, called *Alias Will James*, tries to investigate this relationship through a study of the Western writer, Will James, who was really Ernest Dufault, born in St. Nazaire d'Acton, Quebec. Will James had fabricated for himself an identity true to the image of the authentic cowboy, born and bred in the far West and this even in his autobiography. In the last years of his life, when some of his books had been made into successful Hollywood films, he was terrified that his true identity would be found out and that he would be accused of being a fake. But, even so, he still came back to Quebec, to see his mother and eat tourtière. Like another well-known "American" Québécois writer, Jack Kerouac, he became an alcoholic at the end of his life and died of sclerosis.

To tell this story, Godbout has adopted a form of filmic collage which is becoming quite prevalent in the new documentary films coming out of Quebec. In these films there is a collage of different cinematic modes being used, both in the visuals and in the soundtrack. Thus, some of the soundtrack consists of an actor (whom we sometimes see on the screen) reading from Will James' novels and his autobiography.

Sometimes this voice-over is superimposed on images of the places concerned, the wide-open spaces of the far West or the jail in Carson City where he spent time for cattle rustling. We also see images of the little village in Quebec where he was born, old photographs of Montreal in the '20s, and over these we hear another voice, one which relates the true origins of Ernest Dufault, alias Will James. And to mix-up our sense of reality even further, there are also clips from old Hollywood Westerns (I presume made from Will James' stories) which are cut in throughout the film. It is here that one of the basic questions of the film emerges. That is, what is the relationship between reality and fiction, life and myth? Here was a man who fell in love with the myth of the West and first, through his drawings and then through his writings made of that myth a reality to millions and of his life a legend which had little relation to his own identity.

Godbout explores the questions further through a series of interviews with representatives of Quebec in the West. There is a discussion with Ernest Dufault's relatives about who he was and his roots in Quebec. There is an interview with Ian Tyson, the well-known folksinger, who was inspired by Will James' books, which he read as a child, to become a cowboy and we listen to a song which he wrote



A latter-day Will James, Dan David, with Ian Tyson

about his hero. There are also interviews with two contemporary Québécois cowboys, who, like Will James, could not resist the lure of the West and became bronco riders.

What is this lure of the West? What motivates someone like Will James to leave his family and culture behind and try to find himself another reality? Ian Tyson, at one point in the film, says that he tried to write a verse for Will James' song where his mother warns him that he dreams too much and that dreams are dangerous. In the process of trying to become a cowboy, Ernest Dufault killed a man in Western Canada, fled to the States, got caught rustling cattle and spent time in prison. It is here that he decided to settle down and try to make it as an illustrator of Western scenes. In other words, he decided to fabricate the dreams rather than be led astray by them. That this relationship between Western myth and Western reality still exists is shown in an interview with one of the Québécois bronco riders. He too is artist, a sculptor, and as in Will James' drawings, his subjects are mostly horses and their riders. Of course, Ian Tyson is also an example of an artist cowboy.

What is the myth of the West and why should it exercise such fascination on non-Americans? Presumably, this is an American myth and little related to our national identity and presumably even less to that of a Québécois. The film never really answers this question except, maybe, through its images. The collage technique of this film gives us bits and pieces of information but, as in an Eisensteinian montage, it is up to the audience to put together the pieces and find an answer. What stays in the mind is the coldness, the closed-off quality of the environment as shown in the images of the small Quebec village and even of 1920s Montreal. This impression is

reinforced by the sequence where we see one of the bronco riders moving out of his sterile Montreal apartment to escape to the wide-open spaces of Alberta.

The views of Ian Tyson's ranch with the horses walking through the mist, the views of Will James' ranch in Montana which he tried to make into a natural paradise, serve to make us aware of what the lure of the West means. The basic conflict in the American Western is between individual freedom and the restrictions imposed by society. The lone cowboy at one with his horse and nature recurs throughout the film. Yet, as in the American Western film, social values come into conflict with this freedom and the film constantly reiterates Dufault's mother's warning. Godbout seems to see in Will James' life and death a sort of parable, a warning to the Québécois that to succumb to the lure of America, and its individualistic ideals and dreams of freedom, can mean a loss of identity which will ultimately be deathly, not only for the individual, but also for the Québécois nation.

At least these were the thoughts and reflections that the film brought to my mind. Jacques Godbout has certainly made an interesting and thought-provoking film.  
**Mary Alemany-Galway •**

**ALIAS WILL JAMES** p. Eric Michel d. lsc. /research Jacques Godbout cam. Jean-Pierre Lachapelle ed. Monique Fortier mus. Robert M. Lepage sd. rec. Richard Besse, Diane Carrière n. d. Serge Lalortune cam. asst. Seraphin Bouchard animation cam. Raymond Dumas mus. rec. Louis Hone mixing Hans Peter Strobl the song of Will James Ian Tyson voice of Will James Jean-Guy Moreau mus. ed. Suzanne Bouilly add. narr. Réjean Lévesque add. sd. Vital Millette rec. Christian Fortin p. admin. Johanne Carrière, Gaetan Martel p. sec. Carol Gagnon t. p. Michael Bénéard, Carole David, Daniel David and Ian Tyson. Produced and distributed by the NFB.

Morley Markson's  
**Growing Up in America**

In the interest of honesty it must be admitted that the critic comes to this film with certain skewed preconceptions. My wife comes from Worcester, Massachusetts, and has had to battle all her adult life with the furrowed brows of Canadians who have never heard, much less can pronounce, the name of her home town. To get around this she has developed a kind of capsulized Worcester history that she can spew out in 89 seconds.

Worcester is where Freud gave his first American lectures; it is where Goddard started the U.S. rocket program; it is where the inventor of the birth control pill comes from (well, actually, he comes from the little town next door), and, my wife finishes with a triumphant flourish, Worcester is where Yippee Abbie Hoffman was born.

Abbie Hoffman is always at the end of the listing because she can add, for those who want to know more, that he was good friends with her next-door neighbour (now lawyer to the Rock Stars); and for those who are really interested, she notes her family knew the Hoffman family from long standing. What she doesn't generally reveal is the pursed-lipped analysis which her family indulges in when the A. Hoffman name is brought up. The word, from one and all, is that "he broke his father's heart". By this they mean a literal heart attack and a more figurative attack on the heart.

I indulge in this discursion because its images – a montage of Worcester-related things and grieving Hoffman parents – kept reappearing in my mind during Morley Markson's cinematic remembrance of times lost if not entirely past. Twenty years after the height of hippiedom the grouping together of the film's star subjects, including the famous Mr. Hoffman, is as eerie as my wife's Worcesteriana.

What Markson has done is go back and visit a number of the people who originally appeared in his 1971 documentary *Breathing Together: The Evolution of the Electric Family*. Then they were all adjectives: hairy and hip, druggy and revolutionary, sexy and poetic; men (interestingly not women) whose media-hogging politics put them less on the same side than in the same (maybe outer) space. Now they have become middle-aged occupational nouns: social activist, lawyer, father, poet, student, and businessman. Only Black Panther Fred Hampton escaped the slow, grammatical drift out of youth by fixing his future under the career heading of "dead".

The technique the movie uses to revisit its past is both an intercutting of the earlier film and a



Abbie Then and Now: tales of Hoffman



reshowing of that incarnation of themselves to the film's subjects. Their reaction to themselves *perdu* is often quite hilarious. Former White Panther John Sinclair admits that the doped-crazed boy he was would frighten the family-crazed father he has become. "If somebody walked up to me today and started talking like this, I'd probably be frightened, you know. Get this guy outta here." He laughs. Har. Har. Har.

Allen Ginsberg tries to forgive himself for saying the "wrong mantra all along". Jerry Rubin talks about waking up one morning in 1974 and finding that the whole scene he has been involved in had disappeared. Everyone had disconnected their phones and moved away.

The saddest confrontations of then and now are revealed in the lives of the two blacks in the film. Don Cox, a Black Panther who fled the country and now lives in Paris, speaks a kind of French-English, English-French no-man's language. He has had none of the 'life's second chances' which seemed to have abounded for the whites and, not surprisingly, views his life as a kind of shadow of reality. "Nobody cares as long as I don't break the law. I'm satisfied here. I really don't want any attention," he says. We have no idea how he survives except as a kind of Kafkaesque Hunger Artist made up to look like God's lost Watusi.

Fred Hampton's wife and son have plunged from the poetry of the Movement into the reality of the '80s. The political dreams of the Panthers have been replaced by street rapping. What is most interesting is that those of the '60s who changed least, Abbie Hoffman and movement lawyer William Kunstler, come across in some sense like the film's true conservatives. They found a space for themselves and a truth and it has protected them from worrying about the siren lure of other realities.

"I have been doing this for 27 years. I could do it for another 27 years. I don't have to change," brags Hoffman, endearing nonetheless as a kind of aging Peter Pan counter-culture politician.

What is also fascinating is the realization that the political actors of the '60s are absolutely great television. Unlike the rest of us they don't fumble much for words or speak like drones when the camera is turned on. There is a kind of dramatic sweep to their personae which radiates back at the camera. They are comfortable with being either famous or infamous or simply notable. Maybe the '60s were only about images and 15-minute sound bites.

What is irritating about the film is its cultishness. There is an assumption that the audience is supposed to know, and, what is more, feel some kind of historical understanding for the men who are being chronicled. It's more than a "yeah, we were there, man," '60s mantra of nostalgia. One feels that there are certain questions which couldn't be asked. How does Hoffman support himself? Does Tim Leary still take drugs? How is Fred Hampton's son surviving in the ghetto?

They are not asked because there is a kind of film vision of what constitutes intelligence at work in the movie. What is happening is what you see - what has been edited in and makes the most gripping images. What is not there is the uncinematic rest of the lives; the parts where they are not famous; where they have poorly edited their own existences; the parts where they have broken some father's heart in several ways and with several meanings and have to live with it. This turns what is, in many ways, a gripping and interesting film ultimately into something a little too cinema *cutsie-verité*.

Stephen Strauss •

**GROWING UP IN AMERICA** exec. p. Don Haig co-p. Joan Schafer p. Morley Markson d. Morley Markson based on a theme suggested by Don Haig and George Miller consulting assoc. p. John Board cinematography Andreas Poulsson, Leonidas Zourdoumis, David O'Keefe, Yves Billon, Joseph Friedman, Morley Markson asst. camera Leonard Farlinger location equip. P. S. Production Services, Doug Dales sound Aeryn Weissman, Reynald Trudel, Mike Lecroix, John McCormick, Agnes Guerin p. man. Joan Schafer loc. man. Leonard Farlinger prod. asst. Joanna Markson original music score Marty Simon pic. ed. Morley Markson asst. ed. Louise Lebeau cons. eds. Tom Berner, Don Haig sound ed. Karl H. Konrny asst. sound ed. Louise Lebeau Foley Reid James Atherton re-recording sound mixers Mike Hoogenboom, Tony Van Den Akker post-prod. Film House Group, Film Arts neg. cutter May Bischof neg. inner Ricardo Olivero title design Eli Barr Associates titles Meta Media research Claire Weissman, Zoe Thurling, Shari Segal, Paula Draper, Cyril Levitt stills Leonard Farlinger theme consultants Prof. Ron Levaico, Joan Schafer new york liaisons Alan Meislin california liaisons Ken Beckman trans. n. y. The Vanmen northampton mass. video Don Abrams travel Perly Travel, Tic-Toc Tours insurance Arthur Winkler prod. accountant Rowie Walker; with the assistance of City TV, Louise Lebeau, Michael Macina, Ellen O'Leary, Houghton-Mifflin Publishing Co., The Palladium; produced by Morley Markson and Associates with the participation of Telefilm Canada, Ontario Film Development Corporation, Film Arts, P. S. Production Services.

## Nettie Wild's A Rustling of Leaves: Inside the Philippine Revolution

**A** *Rustling of Leaves*, Nettie Wild's feature-length documentary about political conflicts in the Philippines, is a riveting film experience. It's beautifully photographed, dramatically constructed and overflows with the sort of spontaneous footage that sticks in the mind weeks after viewing. Unfortunately, it falls a little short of providing the complete picture we need to understand the complexities of Third World power struggles.

Cinematographer Kirk Tougas headed up a crew which collected an astounding 64,000 feet of film, much of it during two months of living 'underground' with left-wing guerrillas (the New People's Army). From the opening shots of grossly underpaid workers harvesting bamboo it's clear the filmmakers were on the front line of the conflict. Even the talking heads are alive, especially in a disturbing interview with right-wing radio announcer Jun Pala who, when he's not talking with Wild, is broadcasting the names of suspected leftists. This is public service radio with a gruesome twist: those named are

about to be decapitated by the 'tad tads' or death squads.

The camera also crouches behind a bush as guerrillas wait to stage an ambush. The attack fails and, to his everlasting credit, Tougas keeps the camera rolling as he, the crew and the guerrillas flee for their lives.

Wild follows the debate as the guerrillas decide whether to execute a member-turned-traitor and cuts away only as the trigger is pulled. The respite is short; moments later she films the executioner consoling the father of the dead man.

Her support and affection for those of the left is unmistakable, perhaps no surprise after weeks of shared hardship and political action. But she's sold them a little short.

The opening moments of *A Rustling of Leaves* promise that "the six o'clock news will never be the same again", implying that what we're about to see is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is not, however, quite whole. For example, Wild makes early mention of the six families who for all intents and purposes control the Philippines and are therefore the ultimate enemies of the leftists, legal and illegal. Yet that's the last we hear of the power-brokers. She doesn't tell us who they are, how they won the power or how they manage to hang onto it. Nor does she talk to them. Instead we see their presumed mouthpiece, Jun Pala, at work. He's a frightening individual but, ultimately, one-dimensional without some explanation of who he represents and how the hell a radio station can be used to make before-the-fact death announcements. Granted, the evening news rarely tells the full story of what's going on in lands far away, but even the most cursory television journalism involves giving the bad guys a chance to strut their stuff.

And, apart from a few distant shots of Cory Aquino being presidential, we don't see evidence of any changes the 'People's Revolution' might have achieved. Is her government nothing more than the military puppet show Wild implies? If so, such a startling revelation needs to be backed up by more than the animated graphics she uses to portray the evils of capitalism, imperialism and other philosophies this film so clearly opposes.

It's not that Wild and her crew don't have the skills. Their comprehensive coverage of leftist Bernabe Buscayno's unsuccessful attempt to win the election is superb. Sequences shot at his rallies leave the viewer damp with perspiration from both the tropical heat and the ever-present threat of violence (Buscayno survived an assassination attempt).

*A Rustling of Leaves* is worth seeing. Even with the flaws it's a gripping two hours made all the more worthwhile by the four years it took Wild and her crew to complete the project. She's a filmmaker with imagination, tenacity and social conscience who deserves encouragement. If future projects make a greater effort to penetrate



Nettie Wild in the Philippines with members of the New People's Army

that with which she disagrees, then she'll do credit to Canada's reputation as a nation of documentary makers.

Mark O'Neill •

**A RUSTLING OF LEAVES** p. 14. *Director* Nettie Wild *exec. p.* Christopher James *ed. assoc. p.* Peter Wintonick *cam.* Kirk Tougas *cam. asst./2nd. unit cam.* Jojo Sescon *asst. ed.* Gael MacLean *loc. sd. rec.* Gary Marcuse, Paul Morales, Jeanne Marie Hallacy, Nettie Wild *orig. mus.* Joey Ayala, Salvador Ferreras *post. sd. ed.* FX Motor Sisters *sup. sd. ed.* Haida Paul *sd. ed.* Gael MacLean *sd. asst.* Michael Paul *re-rec. mix.* David Cochrane *aidm. cam.* Nettie Wild, Steve Griffiths, Joseph Fortin *p. man.* Susan Lord *adln. mus.* Martin Gotfried *musicians* Joey Ayala, Salvador Ferreras, Martin Gotfried, Barry Muir, Ken Newby. *Manila crew:* p. man. Renuie del Rosario *p. assts.* Corie Concordia, Bob Roldan *cam. asst.* Jo Cuaresma *driver "Lito" Mindanao crew:* p. man. Mario Castillo *translators* Maria Victoria Maglana, Anita Sescon *driver* Tony the Vulcan *Mountain crew:* *facilitator* "Inday" *translator* "Ocoy" *Vancouver crew:* p. man. team Betsy Carson, Tom Braidwood *translator* Emmanuel Sayo *p. asst.* Geoffrey Rogers *Post Prod:* *graphic des.* Joan Churchill, Robin L. P. Bain *animation cam.* Robin L. P. Bain, Pierre Landry *2nd. asst. ed.* Monika Mannke. Produced with the support of the NFB (Montreal and Pacific centres), the Canada Council, Channel Four, G. B., R. G. N. Laidlaw 1984 Trust, United Church of Canada, Alpha Cine Service. Produced by Kalasikas Productions in association with Channel Four Television.

## Janis Cole's and Holly Dale's Calling The Shots

Some are called bitches. Others are accused of being too weak. These are the women in the film industry who have given up the subordinate positions of continuity and production assistant to become "bosses", directors and producers; and they are the latest subjects to come under the scrutiny of documentary filmmakers Janis Cole and Holly Dale. Over 30 women, with a wide variety of interests and styles, are interviewed in different parts of North America and Europe. However, they all have one goal in common – they are determined to make films in an overwhelming

male-dominated, highly-competitive industry.

The opening interview with actress Katharine Hepburn sets the tone of the film when she announces that the legendary Dorothy Arzner, one of the few female directors from Hollywood's golden era of studio domination, was one of the first "to prove that women are not completely foolish".

Themes are developed and tales unfold from the impressive list of directors interviewed by Cole and Dale. Some of Europe's finest such as Agnes Varda, Chantal Ackerman and Jeanne Moreau compare experiences with their American "rebel" counterparts: Donna Deitch, Lizzie Borden and Penelope Spheeris. Claudia Weill, who co-directed the documentary *Joyce At 34*, said her reason for getting into films was because "documentaries were my passport into the world". Karen Arthur, film and television director of *The Mafu Cage* and *Cagney and Lacey*, enthusiastically describes how, in the business, "you can meet kings and judges, prostitutes and junkies. The cornucopia is there for you."

*Calling The Shots* is about women who understand the power of the medium. They are very comfortable behind and in front of the camera. A vivacious and bubbly Sandy Wilson, director of *My American Cousin*, actually gets up, leaves her chair empty (the camera keeps rolling) and returns with a prop in hand, a dainty purse. She recalls how she planned for her first day as director by packing the purse with the essentials for any good moviemaking – lipstick and cab fare. Anne Wheeler, director and producer of *Loyalties* and *Cowboys Don't Cry*, confesses to her foolishness as a first-time director when she shot some footage with the camera held upside down.

There's also a very funny and spontaneous scene when Penelope Spheeris, director of such violent films as *The Boys Next Door* and *The Decline of the Western Civilization*, is interrupted midsentence by a telephone call. She exclaims, "It must be my mother!" It's a wonderful moment, and one that not many professionals admit to on camera – except maybe someone like Woody Allen!

It's clear that Cole and Dale are sensitive to and respectful of their subjects. Emotion and vulnerability are understood. As Margareta Von Trotta (*Marianne and Julianne, Sheer Madness, Rosa Luxemburg*) explains, "If you are a woman, you know the inside and outside as well." Joan Tewesbury (screenwriter of *Nashville*) talks about having to give up her children in order to succeed in the industry. Sandy Wilson becomes a little unnerved when she talks about her marriage breakup over her determination to make a film. Spheeris reveals her own vulnerability with childhood memories of family violence. "Women aren't supposed to deal with violence," she says. "I got slapped around when I was a girl. Why didn't they slap my brother around if women are not supposed to be involved with violence?"

However, the main thesis throughout the film is the discrimination against women in the film industry. Lizzie Borden, director of the controversial *Born in Flames* and *Working Girls* is particularly astute in considering the various types of censorship that confront women. She contends that women filmmakers very often choose subject matter that is marginal, and so are, in fact, faced with "box office censorship". "Low sales are almost impossible to fight for and this type of economic censorship is ironic. At least with a censorship board, you can make an appeal."

Genre censorship is another form of discrimination according to producer Barbara Boyd (*Desperately Seeking Susan*). "If you do well in one genre, then one is always offered the same kind of film. She can do this, but can she do that?"

Determined to beat the odds, these women have to contend with downright hostility. As Sandy Wilson says, "People are not accustomed to working with women who are ambitious. They are used to working with women as actresses, secretaries – women that people can dismiss or divorce!" Karen Arthur speaks about her first opportunity to direct for which a friend put his job on the line to guarantee the money. "People, with cigars in hand, came around to the studio to see this 'broad' direct".

But as much as one might want to be

sympathetic to the cause, *Calling The Shots* is ultimately disappointing. It is a premise that has great potential but regrettably it does not succeed beyond a competent, rather dull film documentary. Cole and Dale selected some of the most intelligent and creative talents in the industry, and then treated them in a very traditional manner. They use the endless "talking heads" method, with precious little additional texture by way of background, or atmosphere to differentiate one filmmaker from another. Only short film clips are shown as introduction.

Cole and Dale seem so delighted to meet some of these women – many of whom, presumably, are role models – that they counted on their subjects' personality and intelligence to carry the film through. Very little discussion is initiated about their diverse styles and feminist perspectives, although this is hinted at near the end of the film by Martha Coolidge (*Valley Girls*) and Lizzie Borden.

Unfortunately, *Calling The Shots* is for the converted. One suspects that Cole and Dale decided on their thesis and then set out to prove it. Claudia Weill told them that she got out of making documentaries because she got "so sick of following people around, trying to get them to say things, then spending months, trying to get the film to say what she wanted it to say". Cole and Dale could be accused of doing the same in trying to show how difficult it is for women to succeed in the industry. So what else is new?

We all know that the film industry is a tough business that discriminates against any lack of experience, money, and the right connections. But as Jean Arthur points out, "Ultimately, it doesn't matter. If you are an orangutan, and you can direct, then the crew accepts you."

Jane Perdue •

**CALLING THE SHOTS** p. 14. Holly Dale and Janis Cole *cinematography* John Walker, Sandi Sissel, Judy Irola *sd.* Aeryn Weissman, Alan Barker *ed.* Janis Cole, Holly Dale. Produced by *Women in Cinema Inc.* with the financial participation of Telefilm Canada, the OFDC, The Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman and Woodlawn Foundations. With assistance from the NFB, Studio 'D' and the Ontario regional office. 16mm/video running time 118 minutes. *dist.* Cineplex-Odeon foreign sales Films Transit.



Ida Lupino (left) *Calling the Shots*



Being at home with Norman.

## Bob McKeown's Strangers in a Strange Land

On a muggy day at the beginning of June of last year, cinematographer Michael Boland arrived in the barren Chinese village of Yan'an, plunked his camera down on one of the most remote film sets in the world and immediately began filming. The scene that day on the set of *Bethune: the Making of a Hero* was a historical re-enactment of the meeting between a Canadian doctor by the name of Norman Bethune and the venerable leader of the Chinese revolution, Mao Tse-tung. What Boland and his director, Bob McKeown, would end up with in their film *Strangers in a Strange Land*, however, was Canadian film history in the making.

McKeown and Boland certainly didn't lack for subject matter. The story of the *Bethune* project over the last 40-odd years has assumed a life of its own - nothing, it seems, will kill this uniquely Canadian dream. On the set, though, the shoot turned into something of a nightmare. The food was at times so awful that the crew went on strike until the situation improved, the script was continually being revised to the point that production was often delayed for lack of a shooting script, and the Canadian and Chinese producers differed on so many points (both major and minor) that the shoot ended a month

behind schedule. McKeown does a good job chronicling all these events and placing them in a narrative which glides as effortlessly as the actual production was sluggish. The only real problem with the film is that it touches base with so many aspects of the production that some of the more contentious issues surrounding the shoot, such as the disagreements between screenwriter Ted Allan and the film's star and director (Donald Sutherland and Phillip Borsos), are only acknowledged, but never fully investigated.

Enough has already been written and printed about the making of the *Bethune* saga to destroy a reasonably sized forest. There are so many stories surrounding this picture that McKeown can easily be forgiven for the lack of focus in his film. McKeown, however, does manage to capture some moments of undeniable power. When boom operator Veronique Gabillaud talks of her friendship with a Chinese set decorator and of the crew's general unwillingness to get to know their Chinese co-workers, the documentary veers away from the logistical mechanics of making a movie and reveals the human face at the heart of the production. Likewise, a segment of the film devoted to Zhou Shu, an 85-year-old Buddhist monk living in the remote Wutai mountains who has never known electricity, let alone the marvels of movie magic, and whose home, an abandoned monastery, becomes the basecamp for the crew, does more than anything else in the film to illustrate the vast cultural gulf that exists between the Canadians and their Chinese hosts.

Films which document the making of movies hold a dubious position in the realm of cinema - their main function is to generate enough interest in a film so that people feel compelled to

shell out money to see it. But *Strangers in a Strange Land* is not a film which should be confused with the generic "making of" promotional fluff pieces to which we have become accustomed. While McKeown is careful not to take sides in the many arguments which arise during the shoot, he does little to hide the differences between the parties concerned.

In its advance publicity, *Strangers in a Strange Land* has been compared to Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams*, perhaps the most accomplished film of its kind. Blank's film, a chronicle of the trouble-plagued shoot of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* deep in the Amazonian jungle, manages to equate Herzog's artistic and emotional burden with that of the German director's central character. The two films, which both depict obsessed individuals attempting to move a boat over a mountain, are thematically identical, with Blank's documentary being arguably the stronger of the two by virtue of having real people as its protagonists. The stories of Dr. Bethune and the cinematic retelling of his life are similar in many ways, but they are not identical.

*Strangers in a Strange Land* goes to great, though not unreasonable, lengths to compare Bethune's pilgrimage to China in 1937 to last year's expedition by the Canadian film crew. To commit Bethune's life to celluloid, the production had to retrace the doctor's footsteps to remote locations throughout the country where the problems of food, hygiene and transportation are still in evidence. Whereas *Bethune* (the movie) tells a story of an individual's singleminded determination to help the cause of the revolution, the story of the film's production has much more to do with the incessant wrangling that was needed to achieve some sort of consensus that would allow the shoot to continue. Although McKeown alludes to this difference, the film fails to provide a clear connection between Bethune and his modern-day biographers.

*Strangers in a Strange Land* comes across more like a really good segment on the *Fifth Estate* rather than the chronicle of human emotions and character that it might have been. It is balanced, professional, and even insightful at times, but by adhering to a purely journalistic format, it is largely unable to shake off its dependence on the source material. There is, however, enough drama and tension contained within the film to give it a life of its own.

Greg Clarke •

**STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND** p./d. Bob McKeown assoc. d. Michael Boland assoc. prods. Don Haig, David W. G. Mackenzie, Shelagh D'Arcy McGehee cam. Michael Boland ed. Michael Morningstar orig. mus. Terence McKeown sl. rec. Ao Loo, Terence McKeown research Tom Puchniak narr. Bob McKeown. A McKeown/McGee Films in association with Filmline International Inc., The August First Film Studio, Beijing, The China Film Coproduction Corporation, Belstar Productions, Eiffel Productions and the CBC. A Cinephile release. running time 83 minutes.

## Dying To Be Perfect/ Breaking The Chains: A Story of Recovery

There are probably as many ways of looking at unhealthy or dysfunctional human conduct as there are manifestations of such behaviour. What Eileen Hoeter's *Dying to be Perfect* shares with Teresa MacInnes and Alexis Macintosh's video production, *Breaking the Chains: A Story of Recovery*, is a desire to understand certain types of self-abuse. Both feature the accounting of experts - not clinicians or academics or social scientists, but people who have lived the disorders and speak from experience.

Hoeter's film (which she calls "an awareness film") deals with the eating disorder, anorexia nervosa. *Dying to be Perfect* proceeds through the histories of three women, two of whom (Erin and Molly) are survivors of the disease, and one (Audrey) whose daughter died from it.

Each of the three discusses her involvement with anorexia - from the initial stages through its development, to treatment and the disorder's consequences on their lives.

Their stories are grim testimonials to the power of this affliction. Erin describes how in the beginning losing weight gave her a feeling of control over her body, ironic in light of the lack of control she had over the disease. Even when she weighed less than 90 pounds (she's five feet, seven inches tall), she still felt she was overweight.

And as Molly explains, "This is damage for life." The repercussions of anorexia - kidney and heart damage, loss of menstrual period, etc. - do not disappear with recovery.

Audrey's attempt to understand the reasons for her daughter's death brings another perspective to the film - that of the third-person victim.

These women are remarkably articulate and insightful about their relationships to the disorder. The interviews with Molly and Erin move smoothly back and forth, and are interspersed with a dance sequence by C. Lee, a dancer outraged at the prevalence of eating disorders among her colleagues.

Spliced into the latter part of the film are stills of the three anorexic women in the advanced stages of their disorder, which reinforce their stories, especially juxtaposed with the not-unusual appearance of the women today.

Throughout the film the editing is tight and thoughtfully paced. The framing of the single camera is uncluttered, effectively simple.

Unfortunately, the dance sequence adds little to the film; it is less direct and immediate than the interviews.

*Dying to be Perfect* is a nicely-constructed presentation of the problem, the victims, consequences and insights into anorexia.

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MacInnes and Mackintosh's 45-minute-video, *Breaking the Chains*, is an examination of recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. It is composed of interviews with men and women who are in, or have been in, recovery houses which follow a 12-step program.

The major focus is on individuals in a men's house in Vancouver, and particularly on a step meeting there. These are tough individuals who generally have approached the problems of their lives with fists and *fuck yous*. The straight world might categorize them as bikers, greasers, punks, junkies, or just plain trouble. But what is outstanding is their ability to speak with intelligence and understanding about the struggle to overcome their problems.

The people interviewed in this film explain what it is like to be an addict. How your entire life comes to revolve around satisfying that addiction, which is, as one young man puts it, only a symptom of the disease. And as one woman says, "When you wake up you don't know who you are, where you are or where you've been."

But they are equally articulate about recovery. And it soon becomes obvious that a large part of the process is this ability to communicate honestly, learning to face life and not hide from it, even to be able to laugh about their struggles (one man jokes about hearing bottles of beer and syringes call to him, "Come on, let's go for a walk downtown").

*Breaking the Chains* is structured in a series of questions, such as "Why does a drug user enter a recovery program?" Each question is followed by sequences of interviews in response.

The first question, "What is the cause of drug addiction?", is answered by well-intentioned non-addicts who can only speculate. This contrasts with the subsequent approach of only interviewing people with direct experience of addiction.

This film is powered by a dynamic of possibility that is as charged as the people in it. It might be useful in encouraging others to break the chains of their addiction. As one fellow in the house described his experience there, "I feel I could help anybody, now."

Calvin Wharton •

**BREAKING THE CHAINS:** Co-produced and co-directed by Teresa and Alexis Macintosh; Assistant dir./Kathy Lake; Camera/Colin Gregory; on-line editing/Greg Vallieres and Brice Dowd. Prod. assistance from B.C.'s Knowledge Network and Pacific Region NFB.

### BREAKING THE CYCLE

This film is dedicated to "the silent victims" – the battered wives who look at the camera and say: "He cut me up with a carving knife. I stayed because I was so damned scared..." and "The children sat on the sofa and my husband beat me."

A chilling document, it probes many aspects of this appalling social problem—the shame, the fear, the inherited violence – and also touches upon the therapy, the role of the police and specific advice to the victims.

As the litany unfolds, both beaters and victims paint a sad, desperate picture. The women, youthful and mature, say "He saw his parents beat each other up..." "I was programmed to put up with it. You were married – you make your bed and you lie on it" and "...I woke every day with bruises." A young man: "I was my Daddy's pet... I saw him dragging my mother across the room by her hair" – it goes on and on. "My girl friend is like my mother and I hate her... I broke her ribs – I was so mad, it was anger." An older man who is receiving treatment, admits, "I always felt so bad afterwards – after I beat my wife..."

The police role in domestic situations is described by an officer as "very dangerous," but changes in attitude have occurred, and things have apparently come a long way in two years. If the police lay a charge, the woman is more likely to follow it through and, also, the courts take it more seriously.

The solutions include awareness and education. The best advice is to touch base with somebody – a teacher or a neighbor. A victim says that children in violent families should not blame themselves and pleads with fellow-victims, "Come out of the closet, come out of the house and say 'This is happening to me!'"

A straight-forward, feisty little documentary, where the strong content overcomes most of the warts. This is the film that had a Warhol-like fleeting moment of fame and glory at the 1988 Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival – the National Film Board/Kathleen Shannon Award for Documentary was torn from its grasp along with a \$1,000 cash prize (*Cinema Canada* #154).

P./d. Debbie Cartner. cam. Elias Petras/Doug Bailey/Tom Lee. ed. Greg M. Darling. mus. Bill Roberts. With the assistance of: Ontario's Women's Directorate, NFB Ontario Region, Employment and Immigration Canada, Dr Peter Jaffe, Ph.D. 25 mins. 16mm/tape. Availability: Esprit Films, P. O. Box, 2215, Stn. B, St. Catharines, Ont. L2M 6P6 (416) 685-8336.

### SHOOTING STARS

Allan Stein was luckier with his film at Yorkton '88, where it won the Award for Best Sports and Recreation...

The Grads (Edmonton Commercial Graduates Women's Basketball Team) was formed in 1915. Some of the graduating girls from the Commercial High School wanted to continue with the sport, and asked Percy Page to keep on

coaching them. They were called "Canada's Wonder Team," an amateur women's team and for almost two decades the unparalleled queens of basketball. The Grads made headlines throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and travelled widely. Early in 1925, when international championship basketball was prominent in conjunction with the Olympic Games, The Grads went to Europe, sponsored by the Government of Canada. They despatched their opponents with ease and won all of their games. The Grads remained the undisputed world champions for the next 16 years.

Memories of this unique sporting team are evoked through newspaper headlines, newsreels, home movies of The Grads and, especially, by interviews with some of the "old girls," while their final tense game and its dramatic highlight is recreated. Betty Bawden Bowen, Babe Belanger and Margaret MacBurney are some of The Grads who go to reunions and feel "one unit again." Their sprightly reminiscences cover the modernization of their playing kit – "We had knee-pads and bloomers and were all covered up" but, in the 20s, after playing a team from Cleveland which "had really modern costumes," the serge bloomers were thrown out! As amateurs, by night they were famous world-class athletes, but by day they worked as secretaries and in department stores and were glad to have a job in the Depression. They would play 10 games in 11 nights without pay, and no federal money to help. They idolized coach Percy Page who never missed a game and never raised his voice – "...he expected a lot but he was a gentleman."

By the 1930s the end was in sight. At the outbreak of World War II the arena was taken over by the military and the chain was broken. The Grads exciting game with the Tulsa Stenos is recreated – It's 39-39 and one minute to play, and the winning point is scored at the gun! Wildly cheering crowd scenes and freeze game... The end came on June 5, 1940. In 25 years The Grads played 522 games, won 502; were North American champions 1923-1940; attended four World Olympics and won all 27 exhibition games they played. Coach Percy Page died in 1973.

An interesting look at Canadian women's early sporting. The history, neatly resurrected and served up in modern style. The archival material, the reminiscences from the remaining Grads and the dramatization don't quite work together, and the flow does drag at times. But there's no denying that this is an engaging, heart-warming document that looks good, and a few nips of editing might remedy the rhythm.

dir. Allan Stein. sc. Mairi MacLean & Allan Stein. ed. Marke Slipp. cam. James Jeffrey. sd. Clancy Livingston/Michel Lalonde. mus. George Blondheim. 49 mins. 16mm/tape. With the assistance of: Alberta Motion Picture Development Corp./Telefilm/NFB North West Centre. Availability: Filmwest Associates (Edmonton) (403) 488-9182, and National Film Board.



The Edmonton Grads get a pep talk

### A GAME OF DEATH

A terse little experimental black comedy which evokes the atmosphere of wartime London in 1943 in a story of espionage and murder. Divided into segments by titles, and using the sights and sounds of the era – Churchill's voice, Pearl Harbor, newspaper headlines – the film wends its way to a laconic conclusion. Clyde is tracking Simon Marquette (a sinister double-agent who murdered his brother), while his lover, Charlotte, warns him of the danger. Tinkling piano music, a lamp, pages being turned, a table setting and some conversation over brandy. A telephone rings, "Taxi"; "Ah, Mr. Marquette", a moving wheel; shots! Footsteps... a door opens and woman's voice "Clyde! Come in. You have found him?" "Done, finished. Never knew who I was."

A really smart little epic, from its excellent titles on a mock-up of the front page of *The Times* newspaper to the succinct handling of the elements through voice-over and a first-rate sound track. A filmmaker to watch!

d./sec./ed. Jeff McKay. cam. Perry Stratyckuk/Frank Raven. sd. Michael Mirus. mus./guitar Ian Hodges. Voices: Ann Hodges (Charlotte), Christopher Sigurdson (Clyde), Darrell Baran (Simon Marquette). 5 mins. B&W. 16mm/tape. Availability: Winnipeg Film Group, 304-100 Arthur St., Winnipeg, Man. R3B 1H3 (204) 942-6795.