



Daccia Bloomfield and Stuart Stone are Pierre and Estelle, along with Heath Lamberts (St. Nick) and Dixie Seale (The Butcher) in *St. Nicholas and the Children*

ST. NICHOLAS AND THE CHILDREN

**P**ierre and Estelle live in a log cabin by the woods with their ailing grandmother, and their devoted dog. They are poor and hungry, but Estelle is convinced that St. Nicholas will come and help them. In another place, The Butcher is berating The Giant for being a rotten hunter and keeping her short of meat for her pies. And, incidentally, their other business of supplying children "to work in the North Woods" is also languishing. Pierre runs to the Haunted Forest to look for his dog, and Mr. Giant spies him and tries to catch him for child labour. Estelle searches for her brother and encounters a white-whiskered lumberjack driving a horse-drawn sleigh. Tootling a magic whistle, and divulging his magic saying that starts with "Wiggly wof, wiggly woo", he persuades Estelle that she can get what she wants - and then vanishes. The Butcher entices Estelle and Pierre into her shop, and they are imprisoned in barrels, and their dog is tethered. Things get creepy and look black, but the white-whiskered lumberjack comes to the rescue wearing a red coat (in the 'nick' of time...), and sends them home. At the little cabin, Grandmother is waiting in the candlelight, settled in her rocking chair by a table loaded with goodies - St. Nicholas has been, she says.

This little folk legend (a pilot for a series entitled *Wondertales*) boasts some high-powered actors having a high old time! The delicious Dixie Seale plays The Butcher, complete with blackened teeth, warts and a funny voice; Heath Lamberts twinkles behind his whiskers and contributes a really heartwarming presence; and Maureen Forrester is the (unseen) narrator. The story is adequate, but a mite soft - though it is well understood that wholesome "auntie TV" gets worried about gutsy nasties for the kiddies. The film looks good, with some picturesque sequences on location in the sparkling snow, and well-designed interiors lit to good effect. If the stories are juiced up a bit, and the production values are maintained, this series could be off and running. Shown on CBC during December/88, and already sold to BBC/TV.

p.c. O'B & D Films. exec. p. Don Haig. p. Tim O'Brien. co-p. Greg Dummett. d. George Bloomfield. d.o.p. Tobias Schliesser. ed. Tom Mather. cd. Steve Butler. 23½ mins. 16mm/tape. l.p. Heath Lamberts (St. Nicholas/Lumberjack), Dixie Seale (The Butcher), Keith Knight (The Giant), Stuart Stone (Pierre), Daccia Bloomfield (Estelle), Maureen Forrester (Narrator). Represented by: Producers Group International, 38 Charles St. E., Toronto M4Y 1T1 (416) 972-0555.

Back in September, Toronto's Festival of Festivals showed a number of Canadian short films - here's a trio worth noting.

THE SCIENTIFIC GIRL

**D**own a corridor to an office door with an upper half-glass panel, upon which appear the terse credits for filmmaker and actor. Inside, *The Scientific Girl* begins an interesting exposition of a link between Dr. Charcot's research into "hysterical" women in Paris during the 1890s, and the outbreak of 1940s Hollywood films in which heroines suffered from mental disorders. Dr. Charcot took thousands of still photos of his female patients - it was the time when the Lumiere brothers were, with others, developing the motion picture camera. These mute stills of women were published as "the doctor became famous and everyone wanted to know who the patients were" and, indeed, his treatment sessions became a popular form of entertainment. In the '40s films, doctors, lawyers and private detectives supply the talk, the "interpretation" of the women's problems - there are glimpses of a young Lew Ayres in white coat with Olivia de Havilland in *The Dark Mirror* (1946), of Tom Conway with a suffering Simone Simon in *The Cat People*, and soundtrack extracts: "... hitting with a candlestick... you cannot hear, you cannot remember..."

An intelligent attempt to span generations and cinematically tie together the treatment of hysteria in women as a form of entertainment. Experimental in approach, the film is a bit wordy and takes a roundabout route that needs some deciphering, but it's nevertheless an intriguing subject which perhaps deserves a longer, documentary study.

d.film. Kim Derko. ed. sd. ed. Paula Fairfield. art. d. Virginia Rankin. mus. performed by The Howling Red Flowers Chamber Quintet. l.p. Paula Wolfson (*The Scientific Girl*). Assistance from The Ontario Arts Council/The National Film Board. 16mm/tape. 15 mins. dist. Filmclips Distribution Inc., 508 Queen St. W., 3rd. Fl., Toronto M5V 2B3 (416) 861-1167

THE MILKMAN COMETH

**A** gently hilarious dark comedy touching upon an ordinary office worker, and the fateful day he went to the coffee machine, picked up a can of milk - and was transfixed by the bucolic rural scene limned thereon. The bright green meadow, the contented cow - he could smell the sweet air, hear the birds singing, and feel a tug towards this mythic countryside. Alas, his dream was to disintegrate, cruelly



Kerry Kyle in *The Milkman Cometh*

shattered... This great little first film, imbued with mordant humour and a quiet cutting edge, takes an approach reminiscent of John Cleese's business training films. It evokes chuckles not bellylaughs, is wonderfully wonky, and succeeds admirably.

A film by Lorne Bailey. l.p. Kerry Kyle. 16mm. 17 mins. Assistance from: Canada-Manitoba Cultural Industries Development/Manitoba Arts Council/Winnipeg Film Group. dist. Winnipeg Film Group, 304 - 100 Arthur St., Winnipeg, Man. R3B 1H3 (204) 942-6795.

I WANT TO BE ALONE

**A** comedy/fantasy about Red Greta and her search for paradise, and her encounters along the way. A lively commune, filled with dancing people including lots of kids, that works on a collective bargaining principle, leads Red G. into a lot of laundry. After a while she moves along to the gates of Movie City which open to let her into the spotlight. Meryl, the chief bad-movie producer, gets Red G. to sign a contract and she stars as a vamp in "Oh, Charles". Then it's all downhill decadence as Meryl puts her into westerns - tied to the stake, doused with liquids, a pie in the face. Working up to a crescendo, Meryl advances with the boots and whip... After a preview of her latest, "Cannibal Lovers", Red Greta escapes and gets on the Bus to Paradise - "... Sudbury, Moose Jaw... all aboard!" After indulging in an athletically passionate dance with the enigmatic bus driver (after all, it is Robert Desrosiers), she finally finds peace and contentment, of sorts, in her Utopia.

Cheerfully kinky and not too heavy, this lively offering moves along in a brightly-coloured never-never land. One's interest doesn't flag. The music has a delightfully twitchy Latin beat, while the blend of dance and surrealism, with a dash of humour, works well. It's a tribute to the collaborative team that it frolics along in such an endearing fashion. Also shown at the 1988 Vancouver International Film Festival and premiered on TVOntario during December/88.

p. Ira Levy/Peter Williamson. d. Ira Levy/Peter Williamson/Margaret Dragu. sc. Byron Avranoglou/Ira Levy/Peter Williamson/Margaret Dragu. d.o.p. Peter Williamson. ed. Robert Megua. orig. mus. Billy Byrns. l.p. Margaret Dragu (Red Greta), Jackie Burroughs (Meryl), Robert Desrosiers (Bus Driver). 30 mins. (approx.) 16mm/Tape. With the participation of Telefilm Canada/Ontario Film Development Corp., in association with TVOntario, and assistance of the Arts Television Centre. dist. Producers Group International, 38 Charles St. E., Toronto M4Y 1T1 (416) 972-0555.

By the way, back in November Jim Blokland presented the premiere screening of *Cries In The Night - The Trailer*. This ingenious idea from a young filmmaker (whose material has been reviewed a couple of times in this column) is designed to whet the appetites of investors for his TV feature movie. And this fast-paced four minutes could do the trick as it gives a taste of a disturbed teenager, her family anguish, her school problems, and combines the present with past flashbacks. Excellently shot on several locations, plus zippy editing and driving music, it may well start him on a road to fame...

Jim Blokland Film Productions (416) 234-8654



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