

Although features *The Vacant Lot*, *George's Island*, and *Justice Denied* and the newest *Codco* series have vacuumed up virtually every filmperson in the Maritimes into their vortex of activity, there are other shows running in town too.

Haligonian Peter Daghish has been a rare sight on the streets of the city lately. That's because he's been spending every free moment for the past four years in some of the most poverty-ridden, drought-stricken, famine-afflicted areas of the world. In 1984 when Daghish was at Dalhousie, the world was suddenly alerted to impending famine in Ethiopia. Daghish promptly became involved in emergency airlifts of food and medical supplies and therein found his calling. Working at first for the World University Service in Ethiopia, he later transferred to UNICEF in the Sudan before organizing his own group, Street Kids International, in Khartoum.

In the course of his relief work in this region of east Africa, Daghish has noted with alarm the spread of the AIDS epidemic. Amongst the hardest-hit are his street kids who are driven to prostitution by their poverty and lack of education. Searching for an inventive means of educating these often illiterate children, Daghish came up with the idea of an AIDS cartoon which could be shown on the VCRs which seem to have become omnipresent even in the Third World. With the assistance of the NFB, Daghish now has a rough version of the cartoon with illustrations by animator Kai Pindal. The hero is a karate master modeled after Bruce Lee, chosen after Ronald Reagan and Sylvester Stallone, other role models who were considered, proved unsuitable or unavailable. To gauge its effectiveness, Daghish has test-screened the film to street kids in Kenya, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and New York City.

The cartoon is very direct and pulls few punches. Says Daghish: "There's no sermonizing in this film. Kids who survive through prostitution or petty crime don't need a morality lesson on premarital sex or theft. They need staying alive."

Bringing another perspective to the difficulties of development in African nations is Red Snapper Film's Lulu Keating (*City Survival*) who has just returned from six weeks filming on location near Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. Flying under the tongue-in-cheek banner of 'Missing Piece Productions' Keating and producer Chris Zimmer were there to shoot her first feature film, *The Midday Sun* (Coward fans take note!) formed called *Africa Chronicles*. The film evolved from Keating's own experiences as an aid volunteer in Zaire in 1971. In it a young, idealistic Canadian woman arrives in an unnamed African country determined to 'help' and finds herself confounded by the reality of Africa and, finally, at odds with all those whom she was determined to aid. She is ultimately rescued from this quandary by being deported. Says Keating: "It's about what happens to her when she shows up in Africa trying to live with her Canadian freedoms."

Keating gathered Canadian actors Isabelle Mejias, Robert Hockstael, and Jackie Burroughs as well as ex-Ugandan George Seremba for the film. Keating, Zimmer and executive producer Don Haig put together the \$2.3 million budget of the film from Telefilm, First Choice, Nova Scotia Film Development Agency and private monies. Back in Halifax she's getting ready to throw herself into post-production and plans are to have the film ready for release by next April.

Having nothing to do with Africa or with Third World aid and development, but a great deal to do with peace, disarmament and the threat of a nuclear holocaust is *Mile Zero*, the newest film by Bonnie Sherr Klein (*Not a Love Story, Speaking Our Piece*). The film follows four teenagers who spent a year crossing Canada speaking to, animating and empowering their peers at high schools across the country. One of them was Alison Carpenter, who spent a few days in Halifax as part of a promotional tour to kick-off the film. Over a cup of coffee she told me about some of her experiences on the trip. Above all she and her colleagues (Maxime Faille, Seth Klein & Désirée McGraw) discovered how informed and aware high school students were about the issues of peace and nuclear war but yet how powerless they felt in the face of this knowledge. As a consequence they felt the focus of their trip change from one of informing to one of empowering and motivating to action. She is pleased with *Mile Zero* as a film and with its epistemological thrust. The film was completed by Ms. Klein despite her suffering a serious stroke.

A 20-year-old major in Anthropology and Women's Studies, Carpenter is a dedicated, articulate and serious proponent of important issues. "Is she going to become a politician?" I ask her. "I very much want not to," she says breaking into laughter, "but circumstances seem to be pushing me in that direction."

Another film which will shortly get its kickoff is John Brett's *Rivers to the Sea*. This is Brett's third foray on the CBC's *The Nature of Things* series following *The Sea Raven* (1985) and *Where the Bay Becomes the Sea* (1984) and cements a developing relationship between the NFB and the CBC in this area. The film shows a virtual cornucopia of the living creatures of Atlantic area rivers. The cycle of the seasons is the structural wheel round which the film revolves and the spawning cycle of the Atlantic salmon is a kind of narrative device that holds it all together. Gilbert van Ryckevorsel's underwater photography is simply outstanding. There are extraordinary sequences of beavers, Atlantic sturgeon, gulls and lampreys to name only some. There is a good emphasis on the interrelationship of organisms and a gentle environmental edge to the film. The study of various river systems, plants, animals and seasons give quite a good composite look at the fresh waters of Atlantic Canada, their fragile nature and the forces which threaten them. John is currently completing work on a CBC special based on Farley Mowat's book, *Sea of Slaughter*.

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