

1988 / 89 B.C. Filmography

BY TERRY BEST

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

(working title)

Production Company: Back Seat Productions
Co-producer/Director/Screenplay: Sandy Wilson
Cinematography: Brenton Spencer *Leading Players:* Margaret Langrick, John Wildman, Richard Donat, Jane Mortifee, Tery Moore, Babs Chula

California Dreaming is the sequel to *My American Cousin*, Sandy Wilson's auspicious semi-autobiographical 1985 feature film debut, which garnered several Genies. That picture's young heroine, Sandy Wilcox, after complaining "Nothing ever happens", had a brush with glamour and romance in the form of her handsome, California-golden-boy cousin. 1965 finds Sandy 17 years old and embarking into the



PHOTO: ALEX BUKALY

adult world of campus life at Burnaby's brand-new Simon Fraser University. Still a restless spirit, she finds beer parties and credit courses unfulfilling. Fortunately, an invitation to her cousin Butch's wedding in Santa Cruz offers the possibility of adventure, excitement and escape. With two friends and a Volkswagen, she heads south into the American '60s of beach parties, protest music and love.

Shot on location in Santa Cruz, Vancouver, and the Okanagan, the film displays a wealth of '60s visual detail. Painstaking attention was given to hairstyles, cars, clothing, and locations; not only to convince the viewing audience, but to allow the actors to feel as if they had stepped into the period. The music underscores this feeling, with performances of '60s pieces by Vancouver bands Spirit of the West and Barney Bentall and the Legendary Hearts.

SAYS (working title)

Production Company: Lotusland Productions and Cineworks Vancouver *Director/Screenplay/Editor:* Fumiko Kiyooka *Cinematography:* Kirk Tougas *Budget:* \$70,000 *Leading Players:* Hettie Phillips, Dermot Foley, Marcie Goldberg, Peter Mitchell, Alan Morgan, Fumiko Kiyooka



The point of view in *Says* is provided by Mami, the Japanese-Canadian girlfriend of the youngest son in a Caucasian family. Relationships in this family are the focal point - the audience sees various daily dramas that reach their climax in the final scene, a wedding. Director Kiyooka hints at surprises throughout, and one of the film's pleasures is certain to be the incorporation of the work of three B.C. poets: Judy Radul, Daphne Marlatt, and Roy Kiyooka, who is Fumiko's real-life father and appears in the film. The poetry in *Says* opens the film to more avenues of interpretation, and serves to give events a wider dimension. During the procession to the wedding chapel, for instance, Judy Radul reads in voice-over poetry about "the couple" as a concept.

EMPIRE OF ASH III

Production Company: North American Pictures
Producer: Lloyd A. Simandl and John A. Curtis
Director: Lloyd A. Simandl and Michael Mazo
Cinematography: Danny Nowak *Leading Players:* William Smith, Ken Farmer, Melanie Kilgour

"A *Road Warrior* clone" says producer John Curtis of North American pictures, which has a mandate to produce low-budget B movies oriented toward the pay-TV and home video markets. A budget of just under 1/2 million dollars precludes union involvement, and the money "all goes to the screen" - in explosions, gunfights, and battle vehicle chases.



PHOTO: RYAN HELBORN

The story is a travelogue and almost identical to *Empire of Ash II*, with a post-holocaust setting and a brave young warrior rebelling against the religious sect which saved the world from "The Great Virus." Other rebels include Chuck and Iodine, whose pet project is rebuilding an old helicopter, which - not to give the ending away - shows up in the final battle sequence panicking everyone with its weird technology.

Empire of Ash III will be the latest in a string of commercially successful, 100% Canadian films styled after the American model and produced by this company. "We're not particularly concerned with Canadian culture" says John Curtis, "but we are supporting the industry."

THE TRAVELLER

Production Company: Bruno Pacheco and Lighthouse Productions *Producer/Director/Screenplay:* Bruno Pacheco *Co-Producer:* Raymond Massey *Co-Writer:* Jean-Pierre Lefebvre
Cinematography: Thomas H. Turnbull *Composer:* Daniel Ross *Budget:* \$500,000 - \$600,000 *Leading Players:* R. Lewis Morrison, Ginette St-Denis, Denise Brillon, Phillip Stewart

At times, regardless of how much one wants to bury the past, it breaks through and forces a confrontation. In *The Traveller*, Robert, a dealer in Northwest Coast Indian art, encounters his own past. As a white child raised among the Haida, he develops a close affinity with them, and marries Helen, a Haida woman. Knowledge of native culture leads Robert into teaching anthropology. Then, tired of "selling ideas," he begins to deal in the Indian art market. After Helen leaves him, he sells their wedding gift of marriage masks, creating a persistent feeling of betrayal within himself. In an effort to deal with his inner confusion, he embarks on a physical and spiritual journey from Toronto back to his childhood home, where he is increasingly affected by his memories and the raven spirit of the marriage masks.

Director Pacheco knew that he couldn't tell a story "from the native point of view", instead, he has shown the confused duality within Robert. Pacheco was successful in sensitively portraying the Haida because they were very involved in the filming, providing translators, actors, and lending ceremonial regalia. One remark was, "This film brings us up to date", referring to the scenes depicting carvers, one using traditional tools and the other wearing a Walkman, and shots of dancers wearing Adidas. Another favourable reaction came from the U.B.C. Museum of Anthropology, which does not normally allow movie shoots on their premises, but made an exception in this case because of the careful presentation of the Haida culture.

Although funding was received from the Canada Council, the NFB and CBC, wages were 100% deferred and people called simply to offer their help. At one point, donations of film stock meant more than any meetings about raising money.

Pacheco hopes that making films with a full budget would allow for the same creative control, and the same enthusiasms and energy that went into making *The Traveller*.

THE FIRST SEASON

Production Company: Orange Productions
Producer: Robert Frederick *Director:* Ralph Thomas
Cinematography: Richard Leiterman
Screenplay: Brain Ross, Victor Nicold *Budget:* \$3.3 million
Leading Players: Kate Trotter, Christianne Hirt, R. H. Thomson

The First Season chronicles the experiences of Alex Cauldwell, a widow whose fisherman husband has left her deep in debt. She decides to take over the operation of his commercial troller in an effort to reclaim her losses. Unable to find local crew, she and her audacious teenaged daughter team up with an old friend. Despite this man's loneliness and indolence, Alex's determination pulls the three of them into a strong and trusting relationship.

The First Season was funded by BC Film, Telefilm, SuperChannel (by equity investment) and private investment (by cast and crew deferrals). It was shot on location around Tofino.

LIGHTHOUSE

Production Company: Erin Films *Producer:* Jim Cole
Executive Producer: Harry Cole *Director:* Paul Tucker
Cinematography: Tobias Schliessler *Budget:* \$1.7 million
Leading Players: Ryan Michael, Deborah Wakeham

This love story has a modern-day couple leaving their urban lifestyle behind in an attempt to revitalize their relationship and "find themselves." The lighthouse they choose is, like most in B.C. nowadays, fully automated, and the couple need only concentrate on their relationship. However, the coastal environment and haunting atmosphere soon take effect and the wife has visions of another couple, lovers who inhabited the lighthouse in the 1900s. These spirits affect her dramatically, as does the lighthouse, which acquires a character of its own.

Principal photography has been completed on the picture, which has suffered its fair share of problems. Six months of rewrites, the physical condition of the lighthouse (on Sherringhead Point on the west coast of Vancouver Island), and the ever-changing weather conditions made it a difficult project. According to Cole, shooting wrapped one and a half days early, and although the director is no longer involved with the editing, post-production is proceeding in Toronto. Cole says that *Lighthouse*, made with the participation of BC Film and Telefilm Canada, will come in one month overdue and underbudget. The initial distributor has dropped out, but other distributors may be interested, and the film will be shown at Toronto's Festival of Festivals and has been sold to First Choice.

QUARANTINE

Production Company: Apple Pie Productions, Vancouver
Producer/Director/Screenplay: Charles Wilkinson
Cinematographer: Tobias Schliessler
Budget: \$650,000
Leading Players: Beatrice Boepple, Garwin Sanford, Jerry Wasserman, Tom McBeath



Society, weakened by an infectious disease, has crumbled. The all-powerful government has designed a quarantine system which identifies carriers, puts them on trial, and ships them off to concentration-style quarantine camps, never to be seen again.

Although parallels are sure to be drawn between the disease and AIDS, production coordinator Mary Ann McCarthy says that the more valid comparison is between today's monolithic government institutions and corporations and fascist governments ruled by expediency and riddled with corruption. The age-old philosophical question of the value of one life measured against the good of society is posed by the hypocritical and fanatical Senator Ford (played by Wasserman), who sums up the state's attitude "One life, what is one life? You think it means so much because it's yours, but it means nothing."

Security is the only highly developed structure in a city where the infrastructure has fallen apart, but the viewers won't see the high-tech future of *Star Wars* here. Instead of cars, people ride horses; the roads are not good enough to drive on anymore, and no one who can fix cars anyway.

Rebellion comes in the form of Ivan Joad (played by Boepple), daughter of Dr. Jim, who has been arrested and is in danger of deportation to the camps. Senator Ford has discovered that the quarantine system, no longer really necessary to control the disease, proves an effective tool for controlling dissidents instead.

Shot on a shoestring budget in New Westminster, *Quarantine* was a union shoot, with most of the deferrals made above the line. The bulk of funding went to below-the-line production - locations, wages, equipment, and raw stock. And, according to McCarthy, the film shows it. Its great look is due largely to the compatible team of writer/director Wilkinson, director of photography Tobias Schliessler, art director Robert Logeval and, gaffer Chris Meakes.

Quarantine has the first Dolby stereo mix ever done in Western Canada.

AFRICA: A BLACK COMEDY

Producer/Director: Marek Cieszewski
Screenplay: Marek Cieszewski, John Hautman, Ileana Petrobruno
Cinematography: Tobias Schliessler, Danny Nowak
Budget: \$12,000

A shoot spread out over a period of four years creates some interesting continuity problems, and *Africa: A Black Comedy* stands as testimony that determination and desire get films made. Deferrals, money from friends, and Cieszewski's pot-washing stints up north financed the project entirely without the benefit of government sponsorship. Location and continuity headaches included actors' haircuts, hair transplants, dental braces, a set torched by an arsonist, and a private house used as a location sold to owners unsympathetic to filmmaking. It is therefore fitting that the theme of the film is how hard it is to get anything done.

Dirk Blast, a young man believing himself an altruist, decides to go to Africa to help the starving population there, but finds his path obstructed at every turn by ridicule, hostility, and government apathy. But it is not for lack of ingenuity that he fails. At one point, he approaches the office of the Kanadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (K.K.K.K.K.), arguing that it is in the best interests of the Klan to alleviate suffering in Africa, the result being fewer refugees to Canada. He confuses, but fails to convince the Grand Wizard; in fact, no one seems to share his urgent feeling about his mission and he is continually beset by visions of the starving, the homeless, and the mass killings of elephants. Of course, the film is not called a comedy undeservedly. Dirk sees nothing hypocritical in continuing to drive his red Volvo, or feeling victimized when his sister throws him out of the house after he has wrecked her car, or attempting suicide, ironically, by ingesting food chemicals to protest the famine in Africa. Unable to realize his dream, Dirk settles for a blow-job administered by a black prostitute under a bridge.

Absurdist in tone, the film is an experimental piece, both in the duration of the shooting, and in the use of a collage cutting effect, which visually juxtaposes Dirk's Burnaby with Africa. "We can't save Africa," says Cieszewski: the problem is with ourselves. Witness the actions of a young onlooker who offered to "protect" the crew while they were working and proceeded to beat up three overenthusiastic drunks in the area. Standing over an unconscious body, he turned to the spectators and said, "What's the matter? It's only a movie!"

MATINEE

Production Company: Summit Entertainment, Vancouver
Executive Producer: Richard Davis
Producers: Kim Steer and Cal Shumiatcher
Director/Screenplay: Richard Martin
Cinematography: Cyrus Block
Budget: \$1.5 million



During a horror festival in the small town of Holsten, a teenaged boy is murdered and the crime goes unsolved. Two years later, at another festival, another murder is committed. As Detective Al Jason attempts to find the culprit, he discovers that guilt and innocence are almost inseparable. The line between fantasy and reality gets increasingly blurry: the murders take place behind the film screen while horror films play its front.

Scenes from several classic horror films of the '20s, - *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, for one - were reshot by the Matinee crew for inclusion in the festival "screenings".

Producer Kim Steer said the shoot was a very enjoyable one. Morale was high, and support from the residents of Chilliwack was tremendous, with people bringing in their own "muscle" cars for street scenes. One gaffer even got a round of applause from onlookers when he finished a demanding chore - lying down behind the movie marquee in the rain waiting for the cue to unplug an electrical cord in a special staggered lighting effect.

Geared toward the young adult audience, *Matinee* never shows the actual murders, providing a welcome relief from today's stalk'em and slash'em pictures.

KINGSGATE

Production Company: One Productions
Producer/Director/Screenplay: Jack Darcus
Cinematography: Doug McKay *Budget:* \$1.1 million
Leading Players: Christopher Plummer, Allan Scarfe

A dark comedy focusing on the lives of six people, their failures at loving, and all the pain generated by that failure: it's not surprising that Jack Darcus mentions Ingmar Bergman and Denys Arcand when describing *Kingsgate*, his sixth feature.

Most of the action takes place in a farmhouse in B.C.'s Fraser Valley. The location was a nightmare for sound recordist Rob Young since the farmhouse was situated between two airports. A crew member sat in the control tower with a walkie-talkie coordinating flights and shots, but even so on one day alone, 384 aircraft passed over.

Darcus tends to identify what "feels right" and go ahead with it in an effort to "divest himself of whatever confusions are going on." Very much a process, writing is a way of "nosing yourself through to what's true."

COLD FRONT

Production Company: The Beacon Group Ltd.
Producers: Ed Richardson, Sean Allan
Director: Allan Goldstein
Cinematography: Tom Burstyn
Screenplay: Sean Allan, Stephan Arnglim
Leading Players: Martin Sheen, Michael Ontkean, Kim Coates, Beverly D'Angelo *Budget:* \$4.9 million (est.)



PHOTO: JACK ROWLAND

Vancouver is known in the international intelligence community as the "cold front" – a neutral area between Russia and the United States. The setting of the film is the underbelly of picture-perfect Vancouver, where an international terrorist has been sent to "chill out". After a job in Hong Kong for the KGB, he is being hidden while awaiting transfer to the CIA. Local police are expected to turn a blind eye, and everything proceeds smoothly until two cops – an American and a Canadian who are paired on an investigation – discover the coverup.

Now in post-production, *Cold Front* stars Martin Sheen as the American, and Michael Ontkean as the Canadian, the latter in a departure from his traditional nice-guy roles.

Directed by Allan Goldstein (*The Outside Chance of Maximilian Glick*), this political thriller gives Vancouver a distinctive yet characteristic "look" – it's always dark, always raining.

TERMINAL CITY RICOCHET

Production Company: E. Motion Films Ltd.
Producer: John Conti
Director: Zale Dalen
Screenplay: Ken Lester, Bill Mullan, Phil Savath
Cinematography: Paul Sarossy *Budget:* \$2.8 million
Leading Players: Peter Breck, Mark Bennett, Lisa Brown, Jello Biafra, Germain Houde

Alex Stevens, onetime "subversive" rock musician, now in the "acceptable" position of corporate paperboy, is finally shaken out of his apathy and cynicism by Beatrice, an activist performance artist. Her "Intensithons" are the only organized resistance to Morton Downey-like Mayor Glimore, whose new order includes running the city council meeting as a media event and employing a nattily-dressed psychopath as an enforcer to ensure that Terminal City's complacent and intellectualized citizens don't rock the corporate boat.

Writer Ken Lester feels that there is a cultural renaissance happening in Vancouver, and the Intensithon is the voice of the filmmakers, who sincerely want to provoke a response with this film – "to break through the mush and the mest." Audiences will get their chance to respond when the film premieres at Toronto's Festival of Festivals.

DETERMINATIONS

Determinations is an experimental feature film which attempts to "rejuvenate the documentary form" and has as its overt subject the Vancouver Direct Action Anarchist Group. The film brings into question issues surrounding this group's activities and subsequent arrest. The V.D.A.A.G. was responsible for destroying a hydro substation on Vancouver Island and also for attacking Litton Systems in Rexdale Ontario, an industrial plant involved in constructing American Cruise missiles.



Determinations incorporates factual material, innovative cinematic techniques, drama, symbolism, and poetry – presenting information in an anti-news style not usually associated with the documentary form. Director Oliver Hockenhull believes that this experimentation marks a departure from the conventions of documentary, but that the unusual style should not preclude the viewer's engagement.

He cites pop music videos as a point of comparison – amazingly experimental, yet widely accepted in mainstream media. Videos present ideas using the principles of collage rather than linear narrative.

A radical work, *Determinations* has received little exposure in Canada, but was well-received at the Montreal World Film Festival in 1988 and subsequently in Holland and Germany.

BORDERTOWN

Production Company: Alliance Entertainment (Canada) / Tele-Images (France)
Producer: Lionel Siegel
Director: various
Cinematography: Rene Verzier, Marc Champion
Budget: \$500,000 per episode
Leading Players: Richard Comar, John H. Brennan, Sophie Barjac

Despite the mud, cold, and rain, the mood on the set of the TV series *Bordertown* was enthusiastic and committed, according to producer Lionel Siegel. There were days so cold that the actors cooled down their mouths by holding ice-cubes in them so their breath wouldn't show in the shot. In the winter scenes, however, seeing the actors' breath on-screen added a note of realism to the re-created,

authentic 1880s Western town. All the buildings – the usual collection of bank, dentist/barber shop, saloon, general store, etc. – are solid and complete log constructions, not merely false fronts. The mud on the road was also authentic. In fact, actors and crew dealt with ankle-deep mud throughout the October to March shooting schedule.

Bordertown premiered on CBN, the U.S. family channel, to favourable response. A Canadian-French co-production, it has yet to be scheduled for release on CTV in Canada and Tele-Images in France.

The bordertown of the title is situated directly on the 49th parallel separating the U.S. and Canada, making law administration in a wild age a nightmare for the two law officers who run the town jointly and come to some kind of consensus regarding tricky cases. John H. Brennan plays the "by-the-book" Canadian Mountie, whose stuffy demeanor has been only slightly softened by his life in the wild, wild West. Richard Comar plays the U.S. marshal. Somewhat of a maverick, he has a more freestyle method of laying down the law and the conflict between the two lawmen forms the central theme in the series.



Their rivalry is not restricted to justice administration – both are in love with the same woman. Marie Dumont is a former Parisian who learned medicine from her husband and stayed on to become *Bordertown's* doctor after his death.

Sound stereotyped? Perhaps, but the producers hope that *Bordertown* presents these characters more imaginatively than has been the practice of previous Westerns. Ideally, a modern-day perspective would focus on issues typically overlooked or trivialized in the Western genre, such as the positions of women and Indians.

French-Canadian composer Henri Lorieau adapted Sibelius' 3rd Symphony for the series theme, using the banjo and harmonica. The show resumes filming in the Mission area in late June.