

Anyway he smells something fishy (not surprising considering all the depraved things the locals do with fish) and with an AK-47 assault rifle and his bike retrofitted to cruise the waves, he heads off to seek vengeance...

Snake Eater – a new action/adventure shot in New Brunswick and co-produced by Cinepix and Carota Films. Allow me to ask a rhetorical question? Why does anyone bother to write or produce such nonsense? Why does anyone (does anyone) go to see such schlock? I know, I know – it's escapist entertainment written to appeal directly to the adolescent midbrain. The infantile jokes, references to masturbation, beer bottles in the groin, gimmicks with condoms, etc. appeal to the adolescent sense of humour. All the knives, guns, blood, gore, fights, shootouts, imaginative ways of killing people, etc. appeal to the sense of action and adventure. Gets the adrenalin flowing. And the barely clad, semi-clad, and un-clad female bodies, wet T-shirts, and bestial sexual attitudes of the uncouth hillbillies – well I don't know what lurid fantasies they're supposed to appeal to.

And they make them in the U.S. and if we want to show we're every bit as good (or bad) as the Americans then... And they have them on the back racks of the video section of the convenience store where they rent for a couple of bucks and make money for someone but, but, but... seriously, why bother? Is it too idealistic to believe that one can make other hip stuff which will appeal to teenagers without the veneer of violence? That turning this material out into the community just reinforces sexist stereotypes and exploits the female body? That all the money and time and effort and talent that go into making *any* feature film could be employed in better ways?

The only thing, in fact, that can be said for *Snake Eater* is that it avoids the very worst excesses of the genre. There is some humour, the plot, while not actually credible, at least hangs together. The climactic shootout is sparse on anything other than rounds of ammo and the film dribbles to a conclusion with an after-the-fact filmic aside in a warehouse involving an arsonist-cum-bug exterminator and a condom full of lighter fluid. Try and figure that one out. The cinematography is passable and the art direction creates a certain appropriate ambience. Lead Lorenzo Lamas of *Falcon Crest* fame manages to cultivate some character and Ronnie Hawkins and Josie Bell have a moment or two. *Snake Eater* is only slightly less appetizing cuisine than its name might suggest. Avoid it like a pit full of vipers.

Christopher Majka •

SHAKE EATER ex.p. Andre Link p. John Dunning d. George Erschbamer ior. Michael Paseornik & John Dunning d.o.p. Glen MacPherson music John Massar l.p. Lorenzo Lamas, Josie Bell, Robert Scott, Ronnie Hawkins, Cheryl Jeans, Larry Csonka, Ben DiGregorio, Mowava Pryor. A Cinepix/Carota Films co-production.

A few short films and videos in two of the programs, Childhood's End: Working on the Family and Family Secrets, in the overflowing cornucopia at the Images '89 Festival of Independent Film & Video in Toronto, May 3-7/89.

QAGGIQ

This impressive work is the one against which all others viewed at the Festival were judged! Zacharias Kunuk wrote a script, and then members of the Igloodik community improvised the docudrama under his direction. This story of home life in the Arctic in the 1930s centres on a young man who wants to marry a local girl. Her father won't give his consent, his wife favours the match, but to no avail.

The community prepares for the annual Qaggiq games, and builds a large igloo to house the gathering. People come by dog team for the singing, the telling of stories, and the games. The young man hopes to win over the girl's father by displaying his courage and strength.

Right from the large-screen video opening shots, one's interest is caught and then held throughout the unfolding of the story. The sheer "foreignness" of it all is overwhelming – the unending open spaces of ice and snow; the unfamiliar language (accompanied by adequate English sub-titles); the Inuit seen not as we know them today, but as they were in the '30s with authentic clothing and large and beautiful dog teams. The slight storyline is fleshed out by the daily round of living in a male-oriented, harsh environment.

A visitor brings a new pipe for his friend – the father of the girl who's desired by the young man – and there's much talk about its merits as it is passed around. When the sun shines, the children play outside and good humour abounds with everyone saying that it's a fine day – when the temperature must be way below zero.

The staging of the games event starts with the building of the large igloo, and here the camera is right inside the edifice with flakes of ice raining down on the lens as the work progresses. When the igloo is filled with people, the storytelling and singing and drumming starts, and is soon followed by the young bucks displaying their skills and staying power. Wriggling out of their large jackets, stripped to the waist, the youths indulge in good-natured

From *Quaggiq*, by Zacharias Kunuk: in a direct line from Flaherty's *Nanook*.



competition in such exotic sports as mouthpuling (complicated to describe precisely...).

Qaggiq is in a direct line from Flaherty and, assuming its authenticity, is a rivetting glance over the shoulder into the past. Director Zacharias Kunuk was unable to attend the screening, but sparse information gleaned indicated that he has made about eight films, and *Qaggiq* will be shown on the Inuit Broadcasting Channel this year. Would that a wider audience could see more of his work.

A video by Zacharias Kunuk. (1989) N.W.T. 58 mins.

FARM FANTASY

Elizabeth shows us her family at work on their potato farm in southern Ontario – but with a twist. This short video charmingly portrays family members animated and larger than life, working steadily, and looming over the horizons of their acreage as the seasons follow each other. A pleasant little piece with a specially composed and agreeable C&W soundtrack.

A video by Elizabeth Van der Zaag. (1989) B.C. 4 mins. Distributor: Video Out

MATEUS – FIFTY YEARS A COALMINER

The filmmaker's grandfather, Mateus Pieszchala, came to Canada in the 1920s from Poland looking for a better life. Through his children's memories and his painfully sparse disclosures, Mateus's hard life and battle against poverty, hardship, and discrimination emerges.

An interesting record of an immigrant family's struggle during the Depression years, contrasting vividly with today. The children are outgoing, comfortably settled and fluent in English, while Mateus appears lost and uncertain and, at times, unintelligible in his adopted tongue. One is acutely aware of the large gulf between children and father in this family.

A 16mm film by Rock Whitney. (1987) B.C. 25 mins. Distributor: Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution West (604) 684-3014

ZOE'S CAR

The avalanche of advertising gets a drubbing in this somewhat entertaining send-up. Zoe's parents enjoy looking at ads and dreaming about a life far from their own humdrum existence.

Giving into her pleas, they order a farm set for Zoe, which turns out to be a teeny-tiny tackey

version of the one depicted in the come-on catalogue. But, in this electronic age, it results in the family name and address being added to endless mailing lists, and so the glossy, seductive material rolls in to tempt and to upset the family balance.

Though lighthearted in style, with cut-out ads worked into a number of collages, the underlying message is a dark condemnation of the divisive nature of advertising.

A video by Ardele Lister. (1986) B.C. 8 mins. Distributor: Video Out (604) 688-4336

BORN TO BE SOLD: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby SM

The video artist relates the details of the famous surrogate mother case in the U.S. and, in the process, manages to analyse, dissect, and have a certain amount of highly entertaining fun with a serious issue that turned into somewhat of a circus.

With the aid of written material and TV clips, plus added pseudo-dramatizations, Rosler zeroes in on family rights and class attitudes and cleverly turns them on their collective ears. A mite too long, but gruesomely amusing nevertheless.

A video by Martha Rosler. (1988) U.S.A. 28 mins. Distributor: V/Tape (416) 863-9897

PRETENDING WE WERE INDIANS

A small video speculation by a walking woman as to a perceived, but not confirmed, family secret. A whiff of native ancestors, hushed up long ago; pieces of a puzzle worked upon during the walk; scraps of information sifted through her mind – what really happened?

A 16mm film by Katherine Assals. (1988) Québec. 3 mins.

MOLD GROWS ON BABY

The viewer is in the driver's seat looking through the windshield as the car moves along in a frosty suburban winter landscape. The car radio spews out the story of a widow, and her daughter who, as a teenager 20 years earlier, gave birth to an illegitimate child. The baby died – perhaps murdered? The unresolved family mystery is rehashed, with recrimination and speculation tossed between the mother and daughter. The landscape slips and slides past the window, but all the unhappy talk fails to provide an answer to the unsolved secret: who killed the unwanted child?

A "radio" video! The viewer is trapped inside a moving automobile and, with no visually dramatic highpoints, is forced to concentrate on the dialogue. After a while, the movement of the car and the blandness of the passing scenery combine to induce a hypnotic effect, to the detriment of the subject matter. But this is an intense, uneasy video which does not reach a safe, orderly conclusion.

A video by Shalhevet Goldhar. (1988) Ontario. 50 mins. Distributor: V/Tape (416) 863-9897