

Film Reviews



Gregory Osborne and Nadine Van Der Velde co-star as choreographer Philip Crest and aspiring dancer Jessica.

Lewis Furey's **Shadow Dancing**

Shadow Dancing is a hybrid film that mixes contemporary dance with supernatural romance. It is an old-fashioned Gothic murder mystery spruced up with a heavy dance beat and an odd mixture of classical and jazz/MTV-style dancing. Director Lewis Furey, mostly known as a composer of film scores, holds the mix together for about two-thirds of the film, then he bogs down trying to make sense of it all.

Nadine van der Velde plays a pretty young dancer named Jessica who nervously auditions for an innovative new dance company at the rundown Beaumont Theatre. There she meets the demanding and skeptical choreographer Philip Crest (the National Ballet's Gregory Osborne), who is determined to reopen the theatre with his own work. Jessica is accepted into the company, but at first with only the grudging approval of Crest. Living above the stage is the theatre's original owner Edmund Beaumont (Christopher Plummer) who stalks about, reliving his past. His unfaithful wife Liliane, a temperamental prima donna, died on

the stage 50 years ago under mysterious circumstances. It turns out that her spirit still haunts the building and, with predictable inevitability, comes to possess Jessica.

Interwoven into this overwrought plot is some of Canada's best on screen talent playing an array of characters, including Charmion King as a wealthy patron and former lover of Edmund, Shirley Douglas as the dance company manager, Brent Carver as Liliane's lover Karnov, and John Colicos, as an arts reporter and lifelong fan of the dead dancer. Their performances hold the silly story together. Unfortunately, the two leads create few sparks. As an actor, Osborne is a great dancer with a commanding presence but little emotion; as a dancer van der Velde is a pleasing actor with limited range. Together they are good, but simply aren't strong enough, nor is their dancing dynamic enough, to forgive the creaky plot line.

While putting all the elements in place, director Furey builds the film with a series of sweeping camera movements through what is essentially one set. It was shot in one of the great buildings remaining in downtown Toronto, the old Polish Community Centre. The atmosphere is so claustrophobic that the Gothic suspense generated by tight angles and red gauze becomes real. The camera prowls through the building with haunting effectiveness. However,

Furey loses faith in the visual aspects of film and tries to explain the mysterious death.

A convoluted chase follows with Jessica's boyfriend Paul (James Kee) who suspects she is sleeping with Crest. Meanwhile, Jessica relives Liliane's past via flashbacks with Karnov, Liliane's ex-lover, who tries to save Jessica/Liliane from being murdered a second time. There is no real payoff as the dance goes off without a hitch and Edmund's sister is implicated in the original death, but the reason is never made very clear. The spirit is set free and Jessica is reunited with Paul.

Furey has allowed the Phantom of the Opera aspects of the story to get in the way of the dance, and consequently the film suffers from being neither a good murder mystery nor a great dance film. *Shadow Dancing* works best when Furey purposely creates an air of confusion and uncertainty, with Plummer, in a hammy but likeable performance, shuffling menacingly back and forth amongst the von Sternberg-style decor. Director of Photography Rene Ohashi has seldom done better work and he has already been given an award from the Canadian Society of Cinematographers for best cinematography in a feature. There's a lot of good filmmaking in *Shadow Dancing*. It's too bad Furey felt the need to explain things. He should have left it to the dancing and Ohashi's graceful camera work. Paul Townend •

SHADOW DANCING exec p. Don Haig p. Kay Bachman d. Lewis Furey d.o.p. Rene Ohashi orig. mus. Jay Gruska p. mgr. Adam J. Shully 1st a.d. John Board, David Warry-Smith 2nd a.d. Frank Siracusa 3rd a.d. Jill Compton trainee a.d. Andrea Raffaghello p. coord. Justine Estee p. sec. Gaëlle Ledrew asst. to p. Harriet Levinson p. acct. Peter Muldoon asst. p. des. Douglas McLean draftperson Nancey Pankiw art dep. trainee Rob Ballantyne set dec. Kevin Breen, Bob Bartman lead dresser Lloyd Brown set dressers Kim Hoffman, Suzanne Hodson, Carolyn Loucks props master Juanita Holden lead props Kim Stitt props buyer David Edgar construction supervisor Edge § Bratton key scenic artist Jak Oliver dance inst. Beverly Aitchison 1st. asst. cam. Donna Mobbs 2nd. asst. cam. Andrew Potter cam trainee Mido Onodera loc mgr. Manny Danelon asst loc. mgr. Terry Hayes loc. p. asst. Lisa Jensen makeup Jane Meade asst. makeup Donald Mowatt hair Divyo Putney sc. sup. Susan Haller sd. mix. Clark McCarron dialogue cd. James Lahti sd. cd. Michael Dandy asst. sd. cd. Tim Griffin, David Drainie Taylor sd. fr. Mac Holyoke, Michael Dandy, Tim Griffin, Scott Purdy a.d.r. recording Al Ormerod a.d.r. ed. Anita St. Denis asst. a.d.r. ed. David Bennett Foley artist Andy Malcolm Foley rec. Marvin Berns re-rec. mix. Paul Coombe, Tony Van den Akker, Marvin Berns boom op. Peter Melnychuk gaffer Chris Porter best boy Andris Matiss elec. John Bakker, Gary Ledbetter gen. op. Kevin Murphy key grip Mark Silver dolly grip Greg Palermo grip M. Blake Ballentine, Neil Fraser cost. des. Maya Mani asst. cost. des. Martha Snetsinger ward. Lorraine Carson, Derek Baskerville seamstress Kristina Boon bird wrangler Jan Paleczny sfx mech. Frank Carere 2nd unit sp. fx Chris Worts, Dave Lee, Rob Hay trans. Mike Curran, Don Dykens, John Vannoord, Mark Van Alstyne, Nick Shelter honeymoon Star Status Inc. unit pub. Karen Pidgurski stunts Marni Grossman stunts Dwayne McLean, Alison Reid, Steve Lucescu asst. cd. Mary Bell, Victoria Rose story Christine Foster, Jeremy Hole, Heather MacDonald cons. Dina Lieberman l. p. Nadine Van Der Velde, Christopher Plummer, James Kee, Gregory Osborne, John Colicos, Charmion King, Shirley Douglas, Kay Tremblay, Brent Carver, Jennier Inch, Sandi McCarthy, Patric. A. Creelman, Craig Hempsted, Marcia Plummer.

Jean-Claude Lord's **Eddie and the Cruisers II: Eddie Lives!**

Eddie and the Cruisers had only limited theatrical success in 1984, but did very well on pay TV, and the record album sold over three million copies. The music was more popular than the film and the remake, *Eddie and the Cruisers II: Eddie Lives!*, is more like an extended rock video for John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band, who once again provide the sound track album.

Eddie Wilson, now known as Joe West and working in Montreal, was thought to have died in a car accident in 1964. He was on the verge of rock superstardom, but decided he had had enough with the business, and the accident was a way of



Eddie and the Cruisers' Michael Pare and Marina Orsini.

disappearing from the public eye. Twenty years later his record company discovers some "lost tapes" from a mysterious recording session and promotes them under the slogan Eddie Lives!, to capitalize on the Elvis Lives! phenomena. Eddie hears about the scheme and sets out to form a new band under his new name. The band has success, despite Eddie's reluctance to appear in public, and eventually he is (re)discovered by the record company. Eddie returns to the stage triumphantly with his own music in a concert taped at a real Bon Jovi show in Los Vegas.

Michael Paré (*Streets of Fire*) returns to his role as Eddie, and Canadian actress Marina Orsini (*He Shoots, He Scores*) plays his artist girlfriend. Paré is more or less glum throughout, reflecting on the past. He only wants to play "real music". Orsini is little more than a pretty aside. However, the band is good, with Platinum Blonde's lead singer and songwriter Mark Holmes on bass and Bernie Coulson (*The Accused*) as an ambitious and talented lead guitarist. He gives the film its only upbeat performance and the concerts are the best part of the film. John Cafferty, a Bruce Springsteen sound-alike, sings for Paré, who gives the songs a creditable emotional reading. The music reflects the hard-driving Jersey beat, but when are film producers going to understand that music from the sixties sounds a whole lot different than today's high-tech studio product? The film loses all credibility when it tries to sell Wilson's earlier material as sounding no different than the "real music" he is supposed to be playing today.

The script is flat and cliché-ridden, and Quebec veteran Jean-Claude Lord's (*The Tadpole and The Whale, He Shoots, He Scores*) direction never rises above the workmanlike. It is evident he is only in it for the money and the chance to direct again for the American market. However, he does manage to work in many Montreal locations, including a Canadiens hockey game at the Forum, and even a side trip to the snow-covered Laurentians. The film is a Les Productions Alliance production in association with Scotti Bros. of New Jersey. Scotti holds the rights to the film and the music, which might explain why, as a sequel, *Eddie Lives!* is more of a cynical exercise in cross-over marketing techniques than an entertaining rock 'n' roll movie.

Paul Townend •

EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS II: EDDIE LIVES!

exec p. Victor Loewy, Denis Heroux, William Stuart, James L. Stuart p. Stephane Reichel d. Jean-Claude Lord sc. Charles Zev Cohen, Rick Doehring based on characters created by P.F. Kluge art. cons. Peter Nelson orig. mus. Marty Simon, Leon Aronson ed. Jean-Guy Montpetit art d. Dominic Ricard d.o.p. Rene Verzier line p. Wendy Grean 1st. a.d. Pedro Gandol set dec. Gilles Aird props Louise Pilon cost. des. Ginette Magny makeup Jocelyne Bellmare hair Ben Robin musicians John Cafferty, Bob Cotoia, Gary Gramolini, Kenny Jo Silva, Pat Lupo, Michael Antunes l.p. Michael Paré, Marina Orsini, Bernie Coulson, Matthew Laurence, Michael Rhoades, Anthony Sherwood, Mark Holmes, David Matheson, Paul Markle, Kate Lynch, Harvey Atkin, Vlasta Vrana, Larry King, Bo Diddley. A Scotti Bros. Pictures Presentation in association with Aurora Film Partners. A Les Productions Alliance production.



David (David Ian Matheson)

EVIL UNDERGROUND

David, a young businessman, eyes the beautifully mysterious woman sitting opposite him on the subway. She leaves the train abruptly, forgetting to take a small package. David discovers it contains a strange photograph on a rivetted metal plate and, as he gazes at it, the image pleads with him, "Help me. Please... save me."

A great opening - which leads David to The Underground of the city where the menacing half-darkness is filled with pipes, and steam, and the roar of trains. And then there's the evil Simeon with his own private torture chamber, and hints of sundry other strange and wicked doings.

A sometimes hysterical piece, inspired by comic books in the "Batman" style, which is fraught with a wild and nervous tension that tends to go over the top and leave one dissolving into giggles at inappropriate moments. But, hey, it's a real production number with special effects, original music that contributes a lot to the atmosphere, plus an original story and script - and it won the first prize in the Film (long) Non-Documentary category of the 1989 CBC Telefest for the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Film Dept., and its two student filmmakers.

in *The Underground*.



p./sd. Byron Martin. d. Dwight Friesen. sc./ed. Byron Martin, Dwight Friesen. cam. Ben Sharp. orig. mus. Cary Kottinoff. l.p. David Ian Matheson (David), Richard Lee (Simeon), Lee Anne Simms (Susan), Douglas Bisset (Welder). 24 mins. 16mm/tape. Martin Friesen Productions, 21 Gordon St. Toronto M6K 1P7 (416) 588-3690 dist. Int'l Tele-film Enterprises. 47 Densley Ave, TO, ON. M6M 5A8, (416) 241-4483.

SEARCH FOR A TROPICAL ARCTIC

The Arctic is perceived as a cold and hostile place where wildlife battles the elements to survive. But this neat little film asks its audience to "imagine a world that contradicts everything we know about the Frozen North."

When the short summer comes to the High Arctic, there's sunlight 24 hours a day. An expedition assembles from around the world on Axel Heiberg Island to search for the remains of a prehistoric forest. Only a few weeks remain before winter, when everything will once again be hidden under snow and ice.

The leader of the expedition, Jim Basinger, is a botanist from the University of Saskatchewan, and in the group are two women - an American paleontologist and an Australian authority on ancient forests. In the tiny tents plans are made and discussed; there's speculation about this forest frozen in time, and the possibility of finding trees that disappeared from North America millions of years ago which could only have grown in a warm wet climate. Could the Arctic have been a lush swamp?

The expedition members dig and sift meticulously and, towards the end of their allotted stay, find leaves and twigs, and hickory seeds and spruce cones perfectly preserved. Basinger estimates the forest is 45 million years old.

A quiet, pleasant visit with a small but interesting expedition, where the people are truly devoted to, and entranced by, their chosen fields of endeavour. The discovery of the lost forest is a slight cliffhanger, a small peak in the film, but the viewer feels the underlying excitement running through the group. Too soon the plane arrives to return the members of the expedition to their respective countries... What a great way to spend a summer - unearthing an ancient forest!

p. Peter Williamson. d. Ira Levy. cam. John Dyer. 30 mins. Tape. Breakthrough Films and Television Inc. 67 Mowat Ave., Ste. 331, Toronto M6K 3E3 (416) 534-2307.

THE ISLAND

Under the umbrella title of *The Island*, filmmaker Tad Jaworski combines *Selling Out* and *A Generation After*, which aired on CBC earlier this year.

Selling Out, made more than a decade ago, chronicled the sale of Vernon MacGougan's farm and land to an American buyer. The land had been owned and worked by the MacGougans for over 200 years, and it was noted then that, by 1983, 46.5 per cent of P.E.I. would have been sold to outsiders.

And now, Jaworski returns to P.E.I. to make *A Generation After*. The MacGougan house remains, the farm buildings are gone, and both Vernon MacGougan and the buyer are dead. "I feel like a ghost" comments the filmmaker. He talks to islanders who express regret that family farms are a thing of the past and that "People today don't seem to take care of the old buildings." While fishing and farming are still the backbone of the Island economy, there is talk of how these traditional operations have changed, the new ideas, the working in co-ops. The pros and cons of the fixed link with the mainland are argued, while the visuals present views of P.E.I. today.

It's an interesting hour, but *Selling Out* emerges as the better film because of its tight focus on the one old farmer and his daily routine, the auction of his property, and his departure from the land of his forefathers. *A Generation After* attempts to cover the many aspects of P.E.I. today, from trade to tourism, to modernization versus trying to remain virtually unchanged. So there are snatches of opinions and information; the filmmaker's comments; and an attempt to introduce the next generation in the shape of a young girl in a red dress who appears at intervals around Charlottetown. The visuals are beautiful and the overall effect impeccable, and the two films seen together give a good overview of what has happened, and is happening, in P.E.I. - and should promote a definite feeling of unease.

Two films by Tad Jaworski. 53 mins. 16mm/tape. Co-Producers Fund of Canada Limited (416) 222-8491.