

IN PROGRESS...

Tulips

d. Rex Bromfield asst. d. Julian Marks sc. Henry Olek ph. François Protat stunt co-ord. Bob Minor ed. Don Ginsberg sd. Joseph Champagne a.d. Ted Watkins cost. Lynn McKay l.p. Gade Kaplan, Bernadette Peters, Henry Gibson, Al Waxman exec. p. Harold Greenberg, John B. Bennet p. Don Carmody assoc. p. Lawrence Nesis unit man. Josette Perrotta p. man. Phil McPhedran p.c. Astral Films Productions Ltd./Bennettfilms Inc. pub. David Novek/Holly Levine, Berger & Assoc. Assoc.

It's Grey Cup weekend and the prison cells in Montreal's Palais de Justice aren't yet emptied. They're nearly always cleared by two o'clock, but the Grey Cup festivities place an extra strain on this, one of the city's favorite overnight holding tanks, so the shooting in the prison starts an hour late. Despite this minor setback, the crew plows through and finishes all the day's takes a mere five hours late.

Considering the many features being filmed in Montreal these days, **Tulips** is unique, because it uses Montreal, itself, as the actual location for the plot. Gabe Kaplan, of **Welcome Back Kotter** fame, plays the chronically depressed Leland Irving. Irving is such a klutz that he can't even succeed in committing suicide, so he hires killer, Avocado (Henry Gibson), to do the job 'right'. Irving then meets the beautiful Rutanya Wallace (Bernadette Peters) while *she* — what a coincidence — is attempting suicide. And . . . they fall in love.

But, is it too late to prevent Avocado from completing the job . . . ?

The production of this "off-beat comedy" has been loaded with one-liners and practical jokes, and today the prison setting arouses a sense of claustrophobia and unreality just perfect for tension-releasing humour. Gabe Kaplan ruins a take and cracks up the crew by announcing that the hired killer (Henry Gibson) is the best in his business, because "he's throwing a party tonight." The crew is also in top form for pranks. And everyone on set recognizes the absurdity of the 'straight' extra, uncomfortably portraying a trans-

vestite prisoner hitching herself up after peeing.

Admittedly, this slapstick humour is really no indication of the quality of the comedy in **Tulips**. Director Rex Bromfield says he didn't even find the script funny until he recognized the potential for developing the characters' farcical relationships. By exploiting the audience's expectations of the well-known actors' characters, and by varying the usual elements in a comic scene, Bromfield will probably succeed in achieving an unusual, "serious, dark-grey comedy." He has worked extensively in television, but has one other feature — **Love at First Sight**, which he wrote and directed. Recently, he completed an "apprenticeship," partially paid for by the CFDC, to Jules Dassin on **Circle of Two**.

Creating the comedy's unusual lighting effects is the meticulous DOP, François

Protat, who spent two years as assistant to Michel Brault, and has since worked as DOP on a number of highly-acclaimed features. In this film he uses low-key lighting and dark pictures to create what is almost a black-and-white look in some shots. "Then boomph!" says Bromfield, "in comes a character with colour — with a pink face," adding another element of surprise to the film.

The production team, which really *does* work and play together, is so devoted to its work that everyone shows up (unpaid) for the rushes each night after the day's shooting. Most of the crew recently worked together on another film, **Crunches**, in August — which partially explains their team spirit.

The production of **Tulips** has not been all roses, however. Mark Warren, the original director, was reportedly fired at the last minute, postponing the start of



If looks could kill! Bernadette Peters with Gabe Kaplan in **Tulips**

production for two days. Following the decision to go ahead anyway, producer Don Carmody pinch-hit as director, along with stunt coordinator Bob Minor, for a number of exciting, highway-jumping, stunt shots. To top it all off, Carmody broke his leg on the first day.

Bromfield's subsequent appointment as director was no less spontaneous. He was flown in from Toronto simply to have a look at the script. Seeing its potential he said he was interested. Only then did he find out that shooting had begun two days earlier... and could he start seven weeks of shooting the next morning?

Now, the crew is terribly dependent on the whims of Montreal's weather. Carmody says they're desperate for just half a day of clear skies before the snow (?) arrives. He admits it was rather late in the year to be scheduling for clear weather without snow, but exterior driving shots of Bernadette Peters were put off for eleven days when the shooting started because of her previous commitments. At the same time stunt coordinator Bob Minor, had to get the stunts over with and return to L.A. Consequently, the stunts were shot in clear, snow-free, early November. Since then, Montreal has been rainy and gloomy most of the time, and because of this, Carmody says the production is a day behind schedule, but still within budget. He is confident though, that they can improvise the driving scene if they don't get the right weather.

In spite of possible production problems, **Tulips**, a 3.8 million dollar Astral Bellevue Pathé/Bennettfilms co-production, has already been marketed and sold, worldwide, by Avco Embassy Films. According to Carmody, **Tulips** has been one of Avco's biggest sales ever, largely because of the strength of the script, and the well-known cast of Gabe Kaplan, Bernadette Peters, Henry Gibson and Al Waxman.



The prison ward is stuffy after the team has spent five hours inside, and the cameraman is annoyed because he's receiving conflicting messages from the director and first assistant director. But it's hard to stay edgy when Avocado is about to land in jail — in style! Soon he'll come through the electric gates carrying an outrageous umbrella with a rubber-duck head for a handle, accompanied by his cart of personal 'necessities' including a television, ice bucket and mineral water. Besides, yesterday, the wonderfully funny and warm Henry Gibson sent out **real** avocados and hand-written invitations to drinks tonight at Stash's in Old Montreal. . . as soon as this take is over and the director calls "wrap!"

Mark Leslie

The Lucky Star

d. Max Fischer **asst. d.** Pierre Magny **sc.** Max Fischer, **adapt./dial.** Jack Rosenthal **ph.** Frank Tidy **ed.** Yves Langlois **sd.** Patrick Rousseau **a.d.** Michel Proulx **cost.** Jany Van Huber **i.p.** Rod Steiger, Louise Fletcher, Lou Jacobi, Brett Marx **exec. p.** André Fleury **p.** Claude Léger **assoc. p.** Pieter Kroonenburg **p. manager.** Matthew Vibert **loc. man.** Didier Hoffman **unit pub.** Denise Di Novi **p.c.** Caneuram Films Inc. **pub.** David Novek, Lucienne Appel for Berger & Assoc.

school bus and four large Budget trucks parked on them.

Outside, all is quiet. I check the address, open the door, and follow the cables up a flight of stairs and in through another door — but still nobody. I look around and find all the familiar trappings: tape recorders, film cans, Coke and Seven-Up tins, wires leading everywhere. Then, to the left and down the hall there are voices. As I enter the room they stop talking, look up and smile. They, too, appear to be waiting for the publicist.

My appointment with the publicist is for two p.m. Finding the location turns out to be no trouble at all; after all, how many of Montreal's narrow, one-way streets have three trailer homes, a converted

Inside the double livingroom/dining-room sits a man with a grey beard that curls up neatly at the tip. He is sketching,

The Toronto Super Eight Film Festival

For Information
Box 7109
Station A
M8
(416) 977-1111

May 16, 17, 18, 1980
Entry Deadline May 1

At Harbourfront
235 Queen's Quay West

SCREENINGS - WORKSHOPS - CASH PRIZES - TRADE SHOW - EXPOSITION

IMAGINE



"A movie on your very own street is a dream come true." On location with **The Lucky Star** crew

intently, all alone. Further along, the set. The table is set for three. Jars of jam, a salami, and some very white bread.

I sit down beside the man, on a settee as

old as the house and long since emptied of whatever stuffing it may have once contained. He stops sketching, looks up and smiles. I introduce myself and we start talking. He is the director of photography, Frank Tidy, soft-spoken, with an English accent.

As we discuss the shooting, he seems pleased with everything but the weather. Evidently, he is enjoying turning Montreal into Amsterdam. He speaks appreciatively of the work done by the design department in recreating a Dutch market in the St. Lawrence Street area, as well as having found appropriately flat countryside west of Montreal near the Soulanges Canal. They have already been out there shooting exteriors with Louise Fletcher. She will be returning to town, along with her co-star, Rod Steiger, when the cast and crew head for Montreal's Sonolab studios, where the majority of the film will be shot. Although Tidy thinks Montreal is conducive to a Dutch adaptation, alas, it lacks the canals; so a skeleton crew will go off to the 'real' Amsterdam for a fast week of exterior shooting.

The conversation shifts to the director, Max Fischer, who is described as the bald man in the kitchen. Almost on cue, the bald man walks into the room and sits on the other side of us. It's lunch time and they are waiting for the cast and crew to return. I ask them both about working on a feature in Canada for the first time. Tidy alludes to his own language limitations with the predominantly Francophone crew, commenting that, luckily, he usually has the trilingual director at his side. Fischer smiles. Suddenly, there are noises on the stairs, and more people than

seems possible begin to fill up the living-room. Fischer is on his feet to greet them all. Smiles for everyone, kisses on both cheeks for some.

The publicist has arrived, as has one of the three actors involved in today's scene. I don't hear anyone yell "action," but obviously nobody needs to hear it. They just do it. Belts are strapped on, lights checked, make-up is brushed on, as the booming voice of the first assistant director rises above the din. Well-ordered confusion abounds — as do tooth picks hanging from mouths that look well-lunched.

All of this preparation is for an early day of shooting on **The Lucky Star**, a film that stars fourteen year-old Brett Marx (even without his last name the kid is a ringer for Harpo. When I mention this to the director, he agrees, but qualifies it with "Harpo crossed with Paul Newman"...), Louise Fletcher, Rod Steiger, and Lou Jacobi, who by now has entered the hallway. In a skip and a jump, already in costume and not looking at all out of place in this 'old neighborhood,' Jacobi approaches and tells a joke. It is the first of a steady stream... proving that Show-Biz does indeed provide a continuum: Vaudeville isn't dead, it's what goes on between takes.

Jacobi's presence here is interesting for more than his jokes. He is not only a survivor, but one of those U.S.-based Canadians, come back to take part in the Canadian film boom. The irony of the situation is not lost on Jacobi. Once he had to leave his native Toronto in order to 'make it'. Now, he has just completed a feature there. Besides Jacobi, there are a number of other Canadian actors in **The Lucky Star**, including Guy L'Écuyer and the multi-talented Jean Gascon.

The film, budgeted at three million dollars, is being produced by Claude Léger of Caneuram Films, and Peter Kroonenberg. A few days into shooting, however, an addition is made, and it's a first: Télé-Métropole, the privately-owned French television network, becomes involved and the hierarchy shifts. André Fleury of Sonolab (now wholly owned by Télé-Métropole) becomes executive producer, Claude Léger remains producer and Peter Kroonenberg is associate producer.

But none of these changes directly effects what is at hand, and the 'key' to the whole film arrives in a parka, playfully yelling for his hairdresser. Thus far, the young Mr. Marx has pleased both the director and the crew — a good sign, because the kid is in virtually every scene!

In this film, which is described as part fantasy, part Western and part war movie, Marx plays David Goldberg. His parents



BULBS

**Barbizon Light
of New England, Inc.**

.....

3 Draper St., Woburn, Mass. 01801
USA (617) 935-3920

.....

We are the largest stocking tungsten halogen, HMI, fluorescent, incandescent and socket house in New England and offer overnight service. Call or write for a free catalogue.

.....

**Electro Controls, Mole-Richardson,
Sylvania, G.E., Osram, Thorn,
Rosco and Lee.**

are captured by the Nazis in Amsterdam, causing David to run for the hills — or at least, to a country village where he finds shelter with a sympathetic widow. The mayor of the village discovers David is a Jew and pins a yellow star to his chest. Instead of accepting it as the star of death it is meant to be, David thinks of it as a sheriff's badge empowering him to run the 'bad guys' out of town. During the process, young David manages to capture his own Goliath, in the form of a Nazi colonel. And a showdown ensues. Along the ride to the showdown, however, the fear and weakness of a villager enters into the situation, rounding off this fantasy-cowboy-war story into what the synopsis calls a "heart warming drama."

To say the least, it is a tall order. But what appears on paper does not take into account the one aspect of this film that seems to set it apart from other shoots: Max Fischer not only conceived the idea for **The Lucky Star**, he wrote the script (with adaption and dialogue by Jack Rosenthal of **Bar Mitzvah Boy** fame). He has also managed to see his film through the pre-production stages and to get it before the cameras — a feat which few directors have accomplished in recent years. Fischer's personality and sense of commitment have had positive effects on cast and crew alike.

Montreal actress Helen Hughes, in the role of the boy's mother, is now ready and the camera is set up. As I stand waiting for "action!" to be yelled, somebody taps me on the shoulder. It is the very amiable Mr. Tidy (director of photography on Ridley Scott's impressive **The Duelists**) still smiling, and offering me a look through the



Right on target! Director Max Fischer with star Brett Marx on **The Lucky Star** set

lens. And there it is, the magic of the movies, as the room before me is transformed into a visual of another time, another place.

The run-through comes off smoothly and Fischer is gracious and grateful. Clearly, he is enjoying himself. The same breakfast table scene is shot from three different angles, and in each take Jacobi adds a nuance or a slight line change that keeps everyone fresh and the director smiling.

On the street outside, the production assistants busy themselves as much to keep warm as anything else. The neighborhood is full of school buses carrying children, and it's not easy keeping the street quiet for the second story filming. Everybody wants a look, a peek: a movie on your very own street is a dream come true. Time will tell if Fischer's dream comes off as well.

Kevin Tierney



Birmingham International Educational Film Festival

"Creative Films for Lifetime Learning"
 April 8-12, 1980 • Birmingham, Alabama
 Cash Awards • Workshops
 Screenings • Special Events

Entry Information: Craig Battles, Chairman Office of Institutional Relations Mortimer Jordan Hall UAB Birmingham, Alabama 35294	Film Workshop Information: Ms. Carolyn Dow UAB Arts School of Humanities UAB Birmingham, Alabama 35294
---	--

Sponsored cooperatively by: University of Alabama in Birmingham
 Alabama Education Association, Alabama Power Company,
 and Interlock Film Studio, Inc.