

## FILM REVIEWS

There are a few, good, isolated bits which deserve mention. Aubert Pallascio's impersonation of Trudeau is amusing, complete with the arrogant shrug, as he arbitrarily hands the crisis over to Shatner and tells him to keep it quiet. The nicest, unintentional irony in the film is that the police refer to Jackie Burroughs as "our actress"; she could have done much to help the drama if she had been more than a "woman agent". Gary Reineke is effective as Shatner's rival Deitrich, the small-minded ass from the CIA. There is one, strong, tragi-comic vignette when Shatner shoots an English Jesus freak, Patrick Brymar, as he tries to reach the truck in order to "save" the President.

The big question in the movie — whether to give in to terrorists for the sake of the President's life — is not explored so much as exploited. The yes/no vacillations are meant to height-

en suspense, but instead, they augment the sense that most of the authorities in the film, from the cops to the President, are shallow, incompetent, trigger-happy, or just stupid. Watery-eyed and desperate (to save the movie?), Shatner combines his efforts with the Toronto police chief, Michael J. Reynolds, to stumble through them all toward the semi accidental events which resolve the crisis.

The final, disconcerting piece of direction and editing occurs at the end when, up until two seconds before the explosion, it appears that Shatner and Holbrook are just getting out of the truck. The next thing we know, they're behind sandbags at a safe distance, breathing calmly as the flames light up Nathan Phillips Square.

Really, George. You watch too much T.V.

Chris Lowry

## George Mihalka's Pinball Summer

d. George Mihalka p. Jack F. Murphy exec. p. Dan Weinzweig assoc. p. Fred Fox sc. Richard Zelnikes story Fred Fox d.o.p. Rodney Gibbons art. d. Csaba Kertesz ed. Ion Webster line p. Bob Presner mus. & arrang. Jay Boivin, Germain Gauthier story ed. Fred Fox, George Mihalka cast. & dialog. coach Arden Ryshpan script & cont. Joanne Harwood a.d. François Ouimet (1st), Otta Hanus (2nd), Normand Plessis-Belair (3rd) unit/loc. man John Desormeaux 1st asst. cam./2nd unit op. Bert Tougas asst. cam. Glen MacPherson (2nd), Marc Hebert (3rd) key grips James Gray, Marc De Ernsted 2nd grip Charles Toupin gaf. Walter Klymkiw best boy François Vincellette 2nd elec. Arshad Shah sd. rec. Donald Cohen boom Lewis Wolfe sd. ed. Marcel Pothier, Anne Whiteside (asst.) mus. ed. Greg Glynn, Rick Elger, Ian Ferguson sd. mix David Appleby, Dino Pigat (asst.) add. re-rec. David Higgs post sync. rec. Gary Bourgeois post sync. efx Terry Burke asst. ed. Michel Juliani, Tony Reed, Judy Palnick, Frederico Saltzman prop. mas. Peter McMillan, Andrew Deskin asst. prop. Dominique Sanche asst. art d. Myles Clarke set dec. Peter Dowker construc. man. Mike Waterman set carp. Ryal Crogrove, Dean Eilertson costumes Laurie Drew dresser Corinne Verzier, Sylvie Montet (asst.) ward. asst. Sylvie Boucher make-up Chantal Ethier, Tara Workman (asst.) hair Benjamin Robin special efx Josef Elisner stunt co-ord. Jerome Tiberghien motorcycle stunt adviser David Israel stunt doubles David Israel, Andrew Deskin, Claude Chausse pinball adviser Jill Golick stills Piroska Mihalka post p. superv. George Mihalka, Ion Webster p. account. Pierre Guévremont p. sec. Elvira Rychlak p.a. Fred Berlin, Cheryl Buckman,

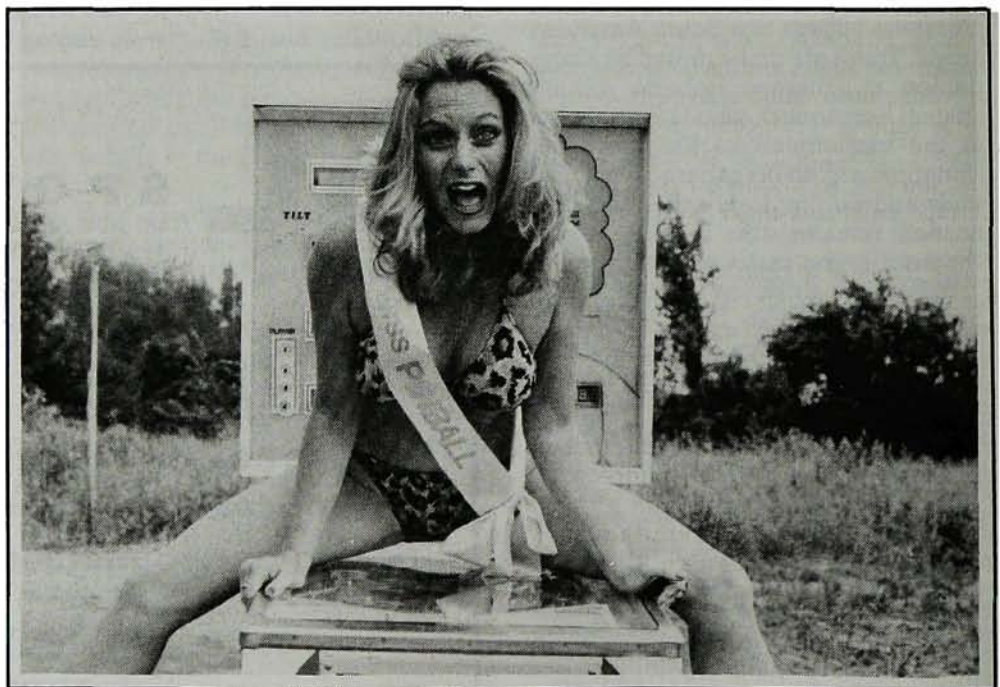
Garnett, Dawn Dowling, Brenda Claire Hall, Kathy Pedersen, Lucy Topetta, Darlene Purkess, Wendy Dye, Susie Glynn, Johanne Sheehy, Ann Pilon, Renzo Tettamanti, Peter Kreisman pub. David Novek, Mary Trees p.c. Pinball Summer Inc. (1979) col. 35mm running time 97 min. dist. Astral Films Ltd.

Question: Name a Canadian B feature which cost less than one million dollars, is chock full of tits and ass, celebrates the sexual surcharge of adolescence, and gives the viewer "contact indigestion" from all the burgers, fries and cola.

The answer: **Pinball Summer**, one of the few 1979 Canadian features which made it out of the can and onto the screen.

Here are all the clichés of this genre: suburbanite kids cruising in cars, bad boy greasers on motorcycles, bumbling police chases, mooning, flashing, burping, petting, but no fornication. If there's any moral, it's that jigging and comely breasts in T-shirts are for fondling, but good girls don't.

In scene after scene of this mindless puerile pap, producer Jack Murphy and director George Mihalka hope to titillate with gags and giggles. In fact, **Pinball Summer** is more like a Mr. Clean version of a 42nd Street peep show. The tempo is set by the frequency of appearance of nubile breasts and limbs, all orchestrated to stimulate an already overstimulated male adolescent libido. The image of women is early Neanderthal, ornamental and passive, with a hint of sibling



Pinball pinup Joy Bouschell "charmed" the spots off a leopard for this one.

lesbianism. The story is a combination of **The Wild Ones**, minus dramatic tension, **American Graffiti**, minus the cool cars and **Gumball Rally**, minus the race.

But who cares? The plot, about a pinball championship where the winner is to get a trophy and the pinball queen, is all quite incidental to the froth which these young cinéastes are trying to celebrate. I wonder what kind of impact a film like this would have on an alien being — armed with a Classics Illustrated Freud — who was looking for symbolic meanings?

First, the oral gratification aspect. Repeated scenes in the suburban hamburger joint show the cast stuffing their faces with junk food while washing the glop down with cola and a background of imitation Beach Boys. (Was Coke a sponsor of this long commercial?) How about anal fixation? Two suburban heroes stuff more abominable food into the tail pipe of the smart rich kid's car at a drive-in. The car regurgitates (evacuates?) it onto the window of the town alderman's Cadillac as he and a female object fondle each other before a backdrop of Hollywood's forgettable **Krakatoa, East of Java**.

The greaser Burt tries to steal away the suburbanite Greg's girl. So Greg steals Burt's motorcycle, which he drives off a pier and into a lake, to the tune of Burt's idiotic, plaintive cries — "You drowned my bike! It doesn't even know how to swim!" Later they duel it out at the pinball contest, where Burt's fraudulent victory is exposed by Wimp, a wimp. A chase ensues, Burt see his shack demolished, and Sally the waitress (of whose mountainous breasts everyone is waiting for another peek) is left sexually straddling a talking pinball machine in the middle of a highway. Curious creatures these North Americans.

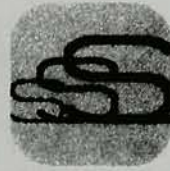
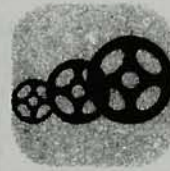
The scene of the pinball contest typifies the film's ambience. In the contest audience, a mindless mute (line producer Bob Presner) throws handfuls of popcorn into the air, catching only a few kernels in his open mouth — the rest scattering helter-skelter on all those about him, including a peripatetic flasher. The scenes of this film are so many popcorn kernels falling around us too. Only a few are ingested.

If **Pinball Summer** is supposed to be fun and mindless, despite all the grass smoke wafting across the screen (both in the film itself, and in the theatre) there just weren't enough laughs. Amuse-

ment? About as satisfying as a pinball game at eight times the cost. In places Rodney Gibbon's camera work was sloppy. (Who kept bumping the camera during the chases?) And attempts to be artistic by shooting directly into the sun on water produced terrible colour fading.

As for Canadian content, the film's constant emphasis on American flags

(even joints are rolled in Stars and Stripes!) reflects the Canadian compulsion to make it in the States by out-Yanking the Yanks. Good Canadian content is invisible anyway, eh? Then again, the CFDC put no money in. Remarkably, this film has acquired U.S. and foreign distribution — no small feat for the director/cinematographer duo's first feature after graduating from Concordia University's Cinema Program.



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Whether or not **Pinball Summer** reaches the adolescent, and post-adolescent market it aims down for, is a moot point. I heard one fiftyish matron sigh upon leaving the theatre, "It's frightening if you have young kids." I think she was bemoaning the film's reflection of the adolescent's never-ending wrestling match with runaway hormones and unrequited sexuality.

An alien being exposed to this supermarket of sexual innuendo with no sex might conclude that play, fantasy and consumption with no consummation are what earth creatures do. Or perhaps suburban survival from junk food overdose is the latest adaptation of the Margaret Atwood "survival is Canadian" litany.

Gary Evans

tion of his lack of courage, gives one of those oddly angled, jittery bits that have been an **Houstonian** hallmark since Peter Lorre's entrance in **The Maltese Falcon** almost forty years ago.

The story concerns a group of five phobic patients under the treatment of Dr. Ross (Glaser): an agoraphobe (Stewart), a claustrophobe (Eisner), an acrophobe (Bolt) an ophiophobe (Robert O'Ree), and a girl terrified of men (Lisa Langlois).

One by one they are killed off in ways appropriate to their fears. Enter a scenery-chewing detective (Colicos, of course), determined to get to the bottom of things. Scattered about are Ross's old and current girlfriends (Hogan, and, in a nicely underplayed turn, Patricia Collins). Of course, at the bottom of it all is Doctor Ross (This becomes apparent about half-way through the film).

The narrative inconsistencies could fill several volumes. Ross, for example, is from California, but his accent is pure Brooklyn. The detectives take their suspect for the first murder and brutalize him for no apparent reason. Ross's "radical" technique, of helping his patients overcome their fears by exposing them to what they fear, is almost as old as psychotherapy.

**Phobia's** real significance, however, comes from the very precise ways in which it demonstrates exactly what is

## John Huston's Phobia

**d.** John Huston **exec.p.** Larry Spiegel, Mel Bergman **p.** Zale Magder **sc.** Lew Lehman, Jimmy Sangster, Peter Bellwood **story** Gary Sherman, Ronald Shusett **asst. to Mr. Spiegel/Mr. Bergman** Judy Goldstein **mus.** André Gagnon **d.o.p.** Reginald H. Morris, C.S.C. **co-ord.** Alice Ferrier **p.man** David Sheperd, Emily Eng (asst.) **loc.man** Barry Bergthorson **sec.** Monique Savarin, Sue Murdoch **loc.audit.** Edythe Hall, Penny Royce (asst.) **assoc. to Mr. Huston** Gladys Hill **a.d.** David Robertson (1st), Richard Flower (2nd), Karen Pike (3rd), Louise Caselman (3rd) **p.design.** Ben Edwards **art.d.** David Jaquest, Joe Cselenyi (asst.) **set dec.** Andree Brodeur, Chris Biden (asst.) **cam.op.** Murray Magder, Neil Seale (1st asst.), Mike Hall (2nd asst.), Kerry Smart (3rd asst.) **gaf.** Chris Holmes **best boy** Tony Eldridge **elec.** Ron Chegwidien, John Spurell **generator op.** John Ferguson **key grip** John Hackett, Jim Krauter (2nd), Wayne Goodchild (3rd) **prop. master** Elena Kenny, Hilton Rosemarin **script superv.** Blanche McDermaid **make-up** Kathy Southern **hair** David Beecroft **ward.** Aleida Macdonald, Ann Russell (asst.) **sd.rec.** Noland Roberts **boom** Herb Heritage & Tim Roberts **driver capt.** Jim Kennedy **head driver** John Cocks **craft service** Brad Blackwood **casting dir.** Vicki Mitchell **casting extras** Peter Lavender **ed.** Stan Cole, Bruce Lang (asst.), Gilles Le Clair (asst.) **sd.ed.** Peter Burgess, Jeremy MacLaverty (2nd) Gary DaPrato (asst.) **mus.superv.** Tim McCauley **re.rec.** Paul Coombe, Mike Hogenboom **spec.efx** Martin Malivoire **stunt co-ord.** Paul Nuckles, Bob Hannah **stunt persons** Greg Gault, Jack Verboise, Joie Chitwood, Moo Herbst, Gloria Fioriomonte, Terry Martin, Joanne Lang-Hannah **stills** Anthony Bliss **psych. consult. to Mr. Huston** Melvyn Hill, Ph.D. **l.p.** Paul Michael Glaser, John Colicos, Susan Hogan, Alexandra Stewart, Robert O'Ree, David Bolt, David Eisner, Lisa Langlois, Kenneth Welsh, Neil Vipond, Patricia Collins, Marian Waldman, Gwen Thomas, Paddy Campanero, Gerry Salsberg, Peter Hicks, Joan Fowler, John Stoneham, Terry Martin, Ken Anderson, Janine Cole, Karen Pike, Wendy Jewel, Coleen Embry, Diane Lasko **p.c.** Borough Park Productions (1979) **col.** 35 mm **running time** 91 min. **distrib.** Paramount Pictures

Despite the rather Hobbesian reviews **Phobia** has received in the Toronto press, it isn't that bad. Despite what Jay Scott would have you believe, it is not the worst film that John Huston has directed (remember, we have here the director of such yawn-inducers as **The Misfits**, **Night of the Iguana** and **Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison**), it is not the worst Canadian film of the year (there's **Prom Night**, for starters), and although it is certainly negligible as art or commerce, it has a few things going for it.

Despite the singularly dull presences of Paul Michael Glaser, Susan Hogan and John Colicos in the leads, there are some good performances from: Alexandra Stewart, who is unfortunately killed off in the first reel; David Bolt, as a timid acrophobic; and most memorably, David Eisner, who in one brief descrip-



Trying to conquer her **Phobia** of open spaces, medical patient Alexandra Stewart in a sudden panic.