

pouring personal energy and money into it." Four years ago Shebib optioned a novel called *Bottle Factory Outing* by Beryl Bainbridge. Kroonenburg, Patterson and Raibourn formed Rising Star Films Inc. in January of 1980. Shebib needed money for his film and Rising Star needed a project with which to launch their production company in style. They in turn optioned *Bottle Factory Outing* from Shebib on May 14th.

Finding each other was probably the simplest step. Next, came the financing. Even for a team of three producers experienced in the ways of packaging and marketing feature films, the game of financing a picture is always a risky venture at best. The problem of interim financing often seems to be the killer, and did cause *Heartaches* more than its share of heartburn. At one point, problems with the public issue of the Seven Arts prospectus - Seven Arts had committed itself to furnishing \$2.5 million to *Heartaches* - closed down shop for a six-day period. Eventually, the Seven Arts investment became available and, thanks to help from the CFDC and a private offering by Newhouse Securities, the \$4.9 million budget was assured.

Next came casting. Kroonenburg and Shebib went down to Los Angeles and came back with Margot Kidder, Annie Potts and Robert Carradine. Winston Rekert is the home-grown addition that rounded out the cast. Shebib and Kroonenburg initially wanted Kidder to play 'Bonnie', but Kidder wanted the part of 'Rita' so badly that they relinquished. Consequently, Annie Potts (*King of the Gypsies*, *Corvette Summer*) plays Bonnie, the naive country mouse, to Kidder's Rita, the tough been-there-and-back city broad: in the film, both ladies are running away from confusion and bad times with their menfolk and end up finding renewed strength in each other. *Heartaches* is a departure for both Kidder and Shebib. Kidder is playing against type in a film whose story is pure Shebib - with a twist. Never before has Shebib explored the bonds of female friendship. As Piers Handling writes in his book *The Films of Don Shebib*, "...although he made his first film in 1962, it wasn't until *Goin' Down the Road*, seventeen films later, that we see a woman as a character on his screen!"

Back at the Hotel Isabella Margot Kidder enters the bar room set in a teased blond wig, black spandex pants and a two-sizes-too-small T-shirt (This is Lois Lane?) She is convincing and is appropriately complimented on her efforts. "Boy, do you look trashy!" remarks *Goin' Down the Road* alumnus, Paul Bradley. Kidder cracks her gum and lets loose with a full husky laugh. "Why thank you honey." Everyone in the room laughs and the tension dissipates over the set. The dimly lit tavern room is complete with fifty-cent glasses of draft on the tables of the sit down crowd; the mangier clientele are propped up against the bar listening to the guitar strummings and wailings of a lone singer. The whole scene seems to be coming together. As Pieter Kroonenburg says to me at our table, "Shebib is not an actor's director, but he is instinctive."

"I still remember the first time I saw *Goin' Down the Road*... Many of us remember the film and the strong impact it had on us. We took great pride in it, for all its shortcomings, we embraced it... *Goin' Down the Road* seemed to be our first step... For some, the promise the film held out has not been met, neither by Shebib nor by his

contemporaries, although it is probably too early to tell - after all, it's only been seven years..." Piers Handling, *The Films of Don Shebib*, 1978.

Hopefully Shebib's "instincts" about *Heartaches* will result in another film we can all be proud of.

**Virginia Kelly ●**

## HEARTACHES

p.c. A Rising Star Films Inc. Production (1980) exec. p. Joseph Beaubien, Nicole Boisvert p. Pieter Kroonenburg, David Patterson, Jerry Raibourn assoc. p. André Djaoui, Peter Rona d. Donald Shebib sc. Terence Heffernan p. man. Don Buchsbaum a.d. Mac Bradden asst. p. man. Holly M. Aylward asst. to p. Irene Berkowitz prod. ass't. Neil Huhta prod. acct. Irene Phelps cont. superv. Diane Parsons creative consult. Tedde Moore unit/loc. man. Marc Dassas d.o.p. Vic Sarin cam. asst. Robin Miller (1st), Marvin Midwicki (2nd) 2nd unit cam. Bob New sd./sd. mix. Don Cohen boom Gaby Vadnay art d. Gavin Mitchell set dec. Pat Gruben cost. des. Julie Ganton ward. mistress Kathleen Moyer make-up Kathleen Mifsud hair Barbara Alexander casting Walker-Bowen Inc. extra cast. Peter Lavender key grip Jim Craig grip Lee Wright, Lou Gradon ed. Gerry Hambling unit pub. G.R.O.-Glenda Roy stills Rob McEwan Lp. Margot Kidder, Annie Potts, Robert Carradine, Winston Rekert, Michael Zeiniker, Arnie Achtman.

## A twentieth century chocolate cake

# Olly, olly, in-free!

If this were 1971 and not '81, any discussion of Lois Siegel's work would have to include the word 'underground.' But now that Abby Hoffman has surfaced, Steven Lack has been mauled by Rona Barrett no less, and Allan Moyle has lost his hair to Robert Stigwood, the

whole idea seems anachronistic.

Consciously or unconsciously, Lois has lent her own hand to laying the word to rest: she recently completed her first documentary, *Extreme Close-Up*, a 30-minute black and white exploration of the world of the multi-handicapped. As a result of a screening at the Grierson Seminar, the film was picked up by both Toronto and Montreal's CBC outlets. The former bought it for two showings, while the latter scheduled its only screening at 11:30 Sunday morning - the wasted people's prime time slot. And now there's the ambitiously titled, feature length, *A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake*.

By almost anyone's standards, Lois Siegel is a remarkable human being. Since coming to Montreal in the early '70s, she has taught film courses at every conceivable level, made her own personal statements through films and still photography, helped students and other young filmmakers get their own works going, written extensively on everything from films to Montreal taxi drivers and still found time to roller skate and play the odd game of baseball - something she's very good at.

*A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake* is her first attempt at a feature ("my first no-budget feature film"), and it is the result of a collaboration with co-producer Greg Van Riel, who is also the film's leading player and scriptwriter. The two of them had worked together previously on *Recipe To Cook A Clown* and, before that, on *The Rubber Gun Show*. When *Recipe* was over, Van Riel left town to see the world while Siegel made other films. Listening to the two of them discuss how this film came together is a bit like listening to the counter-culture's version of an Andy Hardy movie - hey, kids, let's make a movie.

"The day Greg got back to Montreal, he called me from the airport and said, let's make a movie. And I said, sure." Within a week they were driving around

Montreal 'shooting a movie.' "We didn't have much of a story-line in mind at the beginning, just something about life in the city," Van Riel says casually. What they did have was a peculiarly painted automobile that provided much needed transportation, inspiration, and before it gave up the ghost, money from its sale to a Québécois stunt family who featured it in a spectacular explosion as part of a TV show called *The National Driving Test*. Says Van Riel, "I just loved that car - seeing it get blown away was an eerie experience. Unfortunately most of the stuff we shot with it in the beginning didn't really work out and we threw it away."

That early stuff was in 1979 and from the sound of things, they've been shooting ever since - and everywhere: at a time when some of the movies being shot here try to disguise their location, this one makes it very clear that we are in Montreal - bright lights, big city above and below ground...

Watching these people shoot a scene reveals a very different facet of the Andy Hardy energy. Professional, definitely; but not jaded enough to cover up the unbridled enthusiasm they have for what they are doing. One day they are shooting a business meeting scene in the tiny boardroom of a travel agency in the Town of Mt. Royal. The proprietor has given them three hours to shoot the scene. Why does he bother? "Well," Siegel explains, "we always offer a screen credit to people who are willing to help, and this guy is already involved in film financing or something so he's sympathetic." And others? "It always amazes me how people are happy about giving us stuff or letting us use their place, or something. Like at Filmplan, where we shot this scene of a secretary xeroxing parts of her body. They don't know yet that we did it in their offices but we're going to give them a credit anyway." Adding up all the credits that have been promised almost totals enough footage for another film.

The cast of *A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake* is made up of all kinds of people and they add to an already friendly atmosphere on the set. Most people either know Greg or Lois or somebody who knows Lois or Greg or somebody who knows somebody who knows Lois or Greg... And sometimes not everyone who is supposed to show up, does. When that happens anyone else who happens to be around is called into service and yet another credit is added to the list. There are even one or two 'stars' to be found in the film: Stephen Lack and Peter Brawley have a bit in a gas station; Tommy Schnurmacher tells us his inner-most fantasies, intercut with scenes of people walking around a large suitcase parked on a busy, downtown street corner; and the Great Antonio plays the Great Antonio and pulls a car. ("The only way you can get in touch with this guy is by leaving phone messages in the restaurant where he eats breakfast.") Antonio's services were far and away the most difficult to procure. Before agreeing to be in the film, he wanted to know who his 'co-stars' would be. Nobody? Antonio was not impressed. Finally, Siegel hooked him when she promised to add to his already large collection of 'star' photos by taking a picture of him standing beside Tom Jones outside of Place des Arts.

It's dark. The Metropolitan expressway is, thankfully, almost empty, as is the parking lot at the National Film Board. Inside, the long creepy corridors



appear to go on forever. At the far end of one of them, off to the left, is a door with somebody's name on it; but that person isn't there. Siegel is - looking comfortable and in control of the editing table. Tonight there is a screening of assembled footage for the benefit of the film's musical composer, André Vincelli. Siegel tells him what she's looking for, using a vocabulary that many wouldn't understand, but which Vincelli appears to. When articulation fails them, they hum and Siegel turns on Nino Rota to reiterate. Together they watch and interrupt with ideas.

"I consider this film to be research, just like *Extreme Close-Up* was research, and all my other films too. I'm looking for a new way to approach storytelling, so I've mixed up the elements of various kinds of films - from straight documentary to off-the-wall stuff," Siegel explains. The result will be, if nothing else, exactly what she wants to see up there. That liberty is one she considers to be worth the enormous effort that is going into the film. In addition to co-producing, directing and editing her feature, she wants to "find out about stock issues, distribution and all that - and this is the way to find out."

Compared to the average cost of feature films today, *A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake* is being made for nothing. However, Siegel has raised most of that 'nothing' herself, and that alone is a full-time job. Shooting is nearly completed and she's optimistic about finding enough money to cover post-production costs: "I'll find it somewhere!" - a remark not so much full of confidence as determination.

"I'm really working on structuring this film because I want people to be able to follow it, to know what's going on and to like what they are seeing." As a result, changes are being made all the time: the beginning has been altered to establish more about the central characters and the conflicts.

Now that the end is in sight there's a touch of anxiety to conversations about when it will all be finished. Soon it will be screened for friends, most of whom

will offer advice - but only because their opinions are sought in an open and sincere way. More changes will follow.

*A Twentieth Century Chocolate Cake* should be ready sometime in the spring. Chances are slim that you'll be able to catch it at your local movie house but you can rest assured that Siegel, Van Riel and company will be out there trying real hard to get as many of us to see it as possible.

Kevin Tierney ●

**A TWENTIETH-CENTURY**

**CHOCOLATE CAKE** p.c. Chocolate Cake Productions, 1978 p./d. Lois Siegel co-p. Gregory Van Riel cam. Peter Benison, Mike Rixon, Lois Siegel, Glen Macpherson, François Wardot, Raymond Gravel, Serge Ladoucer, Donald Delorme, George Archambault, Ken Decker mus. André Vincelli animation Veronika Soul sc. Gregory Van Riel ed. Lois Siegel sd. Paul Turcotte, Mary Armstrong, Gilbert Lachapelle, Michel Charron, Donald Cohen, Ron Hallis, Richard Elson, Glen Hodgins, Gaby Vadnay, Ray Roth asst. cam. Daniel Villeneuve, Peter Rosenfeld, Normand Belair, Keith Young, Mark Sherman, Rick Mackiewicz, Jonathan Goodwill electr. Donnie Caufield, Claude Langlois, Gordon Caplan, Marcel Durand set dec. Lise Legaré stunt des./perform. Denis Koufoudakis stunt advisor/spec. efx Marcel Fournier, Mike Tonic voices Carolyn Maxwell, Dawn Levine, Jim Hill, Marc Carrier tech. advis. Denis Gillson, Rit Wallis, Mike Rixon, Denis Villeneuve-Giraud, Oliver Perrity, Louis-Phillippe Hémond, Jean-Pol Passet, Michael McKennirey p.a. Brian Campbell, Peter Budden, Carol Leroux, Sylvia Poirier, Bob Eshelby, Claude Labrecque, Mark Berry, Andrew Nevard, Howard Goldberg, Jacques Bernier, Gilles Corbeil, Nagui Fam, Philippe Ayoub, Mike Slobodzian, Cynthia Leslie, Robert Gibson, Robert Brown, Ronnie Lutzer, Graham Goymour, Yves Gagnon, Robert Lee, Mac Bradden, Tony Altamura, Elias Fessus, Ian MacGillivray, Jean Belcourt, Susan de Rosa, Shozo Ushiroguchi, Stephen Reizes, Marten Berkman, Susan Clarkson titles Val Teodori in memoriam Kenny Berthiaume (gaffer/grip) lp. Gregory Van Riel, Charles Fisch Jr., Jeannine Laskar, Stephen Lack, Peter Brawley, the Great Antonio, Fonda Peters, Thomas Schnurmacher, Liliane Clune, Edouard Fellmann, Clement Sasseville, Nadia Verdi, Paul Delaney, Lucie Tétrault, Lita-Anne Dawn Lee, Lianne Faith Lewis, Ronald Blumer with Erasmus J. Rabbit, Yoshi Inoui, Bob Kuluza, Anna Vitre, Omer Slergher, Stella Dubois, Jason Paulich, Alain Charky, David Callender, Judah Zelman, Sandra Clancey, Kevin Fenlon, S. Chairney, Saba Cottle, Ben Queenan, George Pandi, Peter Bierman, Bob Presner, Louise Cardinal, Dan McCrimmon, Geoff Bowie, Eric Olson, Carolyn Maxwell, Fabiola Lamoureux, Allan Avrith, Linda Clarkson, Denis Koufoudakis, André Vincelli, Arthur Bergeron, Kevin Tierney, Mark Nader Behlak col. 16 mm.

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