

Lee Thompson's
Happy Birthday to Me

It's a continent-wide 'phenomenon,' if the term can be so employed: the target audience as target. Movie producers are convinced that North American teenagers derive some kind of vicarious thrill from watching their film counterparts kill and dismember one another, and box office returns back them up. Whereas the horror genre was once synonymous with low budgets and small-time, independent producers, it now ranks as one of the industry's most lucrative sectors - an apparent sure bet in a business that runs on risk. Gore has gone legit; it's big time now, replete with expensive ad campaigns, massive budgets and major studio backing.

That all these factors would make an indelible impression on the spanking new Canadian film industry was inevitable. This year, DAL Productions has been kind enough to supply a companion piece to *Prom Night* and *Terror Train*. *Happy Birthday to Me*, which gleefully offers up "six of the most bizarre murders you will ever see," is stock schlock with a footnote: as the latest and potentially most offensive entry in the 'multiple murder for kicks' sweepstakes, the picture is a grotesque little barometer for the state of the 'art' in this country.

Like both its predecessors and at least two yet-to-be-released Canadian films to follow, *Happy Birthday* is another reworking of the 'ten little indians' theme. Virginia (Melissa Sue Anderson) suffers traumatic brain damage in a car accident, undergoes rehabilitation, returns to her home town and college pals, and the kids start dropping like flies. There are red herrings galore, an overabundance of gratuitous gore, and all the wit and grace of an afternoon at the abattoir. Except that no one ever really suffers here; death in this movie is as casual as conversation, devoid of any purpose other than the obvious. And it's working. Kids are forking over \$4.50 apiece to scream and bounce in their seats, even if the whole thing's a massive dose of déjà vu. *Happy Birthday to Me's* script has been shot at least six times over in the last few years under different titles, and the budget's gone up every time. And the more money they spend, it seems, the less imagination they bring to the package. *Happy Birthday* has no tongue in its sallow cheek; as if to justify the expenditure, Canadian horror flicks have lost the crazy edge

they used to have. The scariest thing about all these films is their deadly dullness; the fact that they account for so large a percentage of this country's total product is enough to give you the creeps.

Anne Reiter •

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME. d. J. Lee Thompson line p. Stewart Harding p. John Dunning André Link assoc. p. Lawrence Nesius mus. Bo Harwood & Lance Rubir p. design. Earl Preston d.o.p. Miklos Lente sc. John Saxton, Peter Jobin, Timothy Bond exec. asst. to p. Irene Litinsky p. man. Ginette Hardy unit man. Estelle Lemieux loc. man. Cary Ross p. compt. Leo Gregory p. acct. Lucie Drolet, Trudi Link asst. to line p. Marilyn Majerczyk p. sec. Carole Laflamme a.d./2nd unit d. Charles Braive 2nd a.d. François Ouimet 3rd a.d. Robert Ditchburn casting by Casablanca Productions Inc. extras casting Francine Brasseur cont. Monique Champagne p. sd. mix Richard Lightstone boom op. Jim Thompson, Jean-Claude Matte 2nd unit sd. Susan Schneir cam. op. David Douglas focus Mathieu Décaré 2nd asst. cam. Michel Bernier 2nd unit cam. Ernst Michel, Michael Jones, Don Burgess, Mosh Levine asst. art d. Michel Denuet, Claude Benoit (2nd asst.) set buyer Katherine Wadas asst. set dresser Armand Thomas set props Charles Bernier, Ryal Cosgrove (asst.) property-vehicle co-ord. David Phillips construc. man. André Brochu art d. asst. Jim Hodgson, Mark Montebello, Réal Paré, Brian Campbell cost. design. Huguette Gagné ward. Marie-Hélène Gascon, Elisabeth Lamy, Denys Proulx (asst.) make-up Jocelyne Bellemare, Monique Coge (asst.), Normande Campeau (asst.) hair Bob Pritchett, Benjamin Robin (asst.) key grip Jean-Louis Daoust grips Emmanuel Lépine, Pierre Charpentier, Jacques LeFlaguais, Claude Gingras gaf. Donald Saari beat boy Charles Hughes elec. Gérard Proulx, John Lewin, Jacques Paquet 2nd unit elec. Walter Nichols gen. op. Guy Rémillard, Eddy Trempe sp. efx co-ord. King Hernandez, Bill Doane, Warren Keillor, Ron Ottesen efx tech. Jacques Godbout, Gilles Aird, Louis Craig, France Belisle sp. make-up efx The Burman Studio neurosurgery consultant Dr. Burke Dial stunt co-ord. Max Kleven bridge loc. man. Tim Rabbitt stunt perform. Bennie Dobbins, Brad Bovee, Tony Jefferson, Ben Scott, John Clay Scott, Karen Pike, Dwayne McLean, Jerome Tiberghien, Jean Lysight, Susan Charest, Lyne Fournier, Eve Robin asst. ed. Michael Karen, Jaki Carmody L.A. superv. Peter Thompson sd. ed. Jeff Bushelman, Pat Somerset re-rec. mix. Les Fresholtz C.A.S., Stan Polinsky, Robert Fernandez C.A.S. mus. ed. Kirk Hawkes unit pub. Elizabeth Morris stills Pirooska Mihalka sec. to Mr. Thompson Kathy Flynn craft serv. Gisèle Bolduc asst. loc. man. David Bailey transp. capt. Neil Bibby drivers Christopher Gilmore, Sidney Goldberg, Michael Borlace, Edward Sanden, John Ellis, Jim Disensi, Michel Côté, Victoria Frodsham, Marc Hébert p.a. Stuart Woolley, Gregory Dunning, Beverly Lev, Alain Desrosiers p. typists Kathy Wolf, Danae Vilandre L.P. Melissa Sue Anderson, Glenn Ford, Lawrence Dane, Sharon Acker, Frances Hyland, Tracy Bregman, Jack Blum, Matt Craven, Lenore Zann, David Eisner, Lisa Langlois, Michel René Labelle, Richard Rebiere, Lesleh Donaldson, Jerome Tiberghien, Vlasta Vrana, Gina Dick, Walter Massey, Len Watt, Victor Knight, Rollie Nincheri, Keith Sutherland, Joe Wertheimer, Paul Board, Bruce Gooding, Alan Barnett, Marc Desgagné, Aram Barkev, Herbert Vool, Maurice Podbrey, Terry Haig, Louis Del Grande, Nick Kilbertus, Damiir Andrei, Murray Westgate, Earl Pennington, Griffith Brewer, Ron Lea, Alan Katz, Stephanie Miller, Karen Stephen, Steven Mayoff, Nancy Allan, Karen Hynes, Tracey-Marie Langdon, Debbie McGellin, Kathy Reid, Lori Timmons, Debbie Tull, Lynn Wilson animals trained by Mike Klingbell, Catman Productions p.c. The Birthday Film Co. Ltd. (1980) dist. Columbia Pictures running time 110 min.



● Accidentally caught in a mysterious conspiracy, Kate Jackson and Elliott Gould try to escape their pursuers

Alvin Rakoff's
Dirty Tricks

Their blood carbonated with excitement from a modest winning streak (*Atlantic City*, *U.S.A.*, *Improper Channels*), and the discovery of such exciting new Canadian talent as Burt Lancaster and Louis Malle, some members of the Canadian film industry will probably laugh off *Dirty Tricks* as an unlucky roll of the dice. ("Heh, this is a crazy business! Who knows what the public will go for. One year it's kooky camps and high school blood-all-over-the-place, the next year it's arts-shmarts.")

That will be the only laughter surrounding Alvin Rakoff's (*City on Fire*, *Death Ship*, *King Solomon's Treasure*) *Dirty Tricks*, a film comedy that only its publicist could love.

Ostensibly a breezy *Silver Streak*/*Foul Play* suspense comedy (a hybrid genre that François Truffaut has noted begins with the Bond pictures), *D.T.* provides inadvertent comedy when it tries for suspense, and suspense only when the cheeseburger-bloater Elliot Gould courts a heart attack doing wind sprints away from bad guys.

Director Rakoff and writers William Norton, Sr., Eleanor Norton, Thomas Gifford and Camille Gifford clumsily steal ideas and graft scenes from so many other Hollywood films that *D.T.* lurches unsettlingly from style to style like a kidnap ransom note. The film opens with Harvard American history prof Gould and a blonde student doing a harried battle of the sexes routine. We could be in George Segal's next film. Then the film shifts gears as Gould goes to class and makes, in what is arguably the worst scene in this terrible film, a trembling lipped defense of the virtues of long ago America. Frank Capra would blush. Then the suspense angle in-

trudes. A student of Gould's discovers a letter that suggests George Washington was on the take from the British. Then bald twins in muscle shirts karate the student to death. Then a handsome man and a beautiful woman (spys, of course), chase the baldies. Then, Kate Jackson, imitating Jane Fonda as a pesky, new-woman reporter, chases Gould. Then the baldies chase Rich Little, who as hero Gould's sidekick, appears to be impersonating Gig Young. At one point or another in the film, everyone is in hot pursuit of everyone else.

Also thrown in at odd moments in the film, are: one cute dog; one post-Watergate morality play involving a corrupt official; one cruel ageism joke; one fag joke, three pee-pee jokes; and... a Canadian director's best friend - lots and lots of close-ups of American taxi cabs in an attempt to persuade the film's viewers into thinking this is an American film. Here's the hoping.

Stephen Cole •

DIRTY TRICKS. d. Alvin Rakoff exec. p. Pierre David, Victor Solnicki, Arnold Kopelson p. Claude Héroux sc. Thomas Gifford, Camille Gifford, Eleanor Norton, William Norton, sr. based on the novel "The Glendower Legacy" by Thomas Gifford d.o.p. Richard Ciupka p. man. Jean-Marie Loutrel ed. Alan Collins art d. Earl Preston mus. Hagood Hardy cost. Blanche Boileau sd. Patrick Rousseau asst. to p. Kim Obrist a.d. Jim Kaufman (1st), François Ouimet (2nd), Anne Murphy (3rd) unit man. Suzanne Hénaut, Bill Lee (asst.), Michael Bennett (Boston) cont. France Lachapelle loc. man. Harry Sutherland asst. art d. Claude Benoit set dresser Gilles Aird graphics Patricia Dumais props Charles Bernier, Jacques Godbout make-up Jocelyne Bellemare, Stephan Dupuis (sp. efx) hair Pierre David op. David Harrington cam. asst. Andy Chmura (1st), Larry Lynn (2nd) gaf. John Berrie elec. Walter Klymkiv, Michel-Paul Belisle key grip Jacob Rolling grip Paul Morin dolly grip Normand guy boom Normand Mercier stunt co-ord. Bob Minor stills Attila Dory casting Arden Rysphan p. sec. Carole Laflamme L.P. Elliott Gould, Kate Jackson, Arthur Hill, Rich Little, Nick Campbell, Angus McInnes, Michael Kirby, Michael McNamara, Martin McNamara, John Juliani, Alberta Watson, Mavor Moore, Cindy Girling, Sean Sullivan, Neil Affleck, Lee Murray, Earl Pennington, Helen Hughes, Dr. Robert D. Koby, Griff Brewer, Tony Sherwood, Kate Trotter, Irene Kesser, Howard, the dog p.c. A Filmplan International Production (1979), an Avco Embassy release dist. New World Mutual Pictures (Canada) running time 96min.

● Sweetness and light turns to murder and mayhem for *Birthday's* Melissa Sue Anderson and Tracy Bregman photo: Pirooska Mihalka

