

photos: National Film Board of Canada

● Michael Rubbo's latest is indeed a slice of life

probing questions, and more often by her own propensity for self-analysis – to face the truth within herself. She admits that she is terrified of growing old, afraid that “the past may become more interesting than the future.” In a rather cruel, unobtrusive juxtaposition, Rubbo gives us Daisy's greatest fear – that of becoming “a little old lady who simply behaves herself” – as the camera focuses on a grey-haired old woman attempting against all odds to look dainty whilst eating a sandwich under a hairdryer. Rubbo proceeds to audaciously rub the point in further as he has the old lady pose demurely, newly coiffed and tottering, before the mocking camera eye. Unfortunately, this little old lady who incarnates Daisy's greatest fear, *has* behaved for Rubbo's camera, and has unwittingly derided herself in the context of the act.

The point is driven in, again and again, that there are cogent arguments in support of cosmetic surgery. First and foremost: human beings are inclined to discriminate on the basis of appearance. As an attractive woman whose signs of age are beginning to show, Daisy knows this only too well. A self-proclaimed romantic, she once saw work as “something a woman did in between being in love.” But now she, who lived her life for a man, ends up with a terrific career and no man. The men who used to come and go, now mostly go. So it is time to upgrade the product, because Daisy is ready to fall in love again.

She tests her hypothesis that looks and youth are critical factors which

attract men to women on her doctor-friend's husband. He readily admits that before you open the package, you look at the wrapping. And in an age when quick first impressions are usually the only bases we have for either pursuing or avoiding further contact, older women stand less chance of nabbing the man than their youthful, more attractive counterparts. (Daisy claims that a man's attractiveness is less important.)

Rubbo does some investigating of his own. At the New York Public Library, he researches the work of early physiognomists who claimed that there was some relationship between facial features and character or disposition. To test whether we still look at faces this way, he asks a psychologist from the University of Massachusetts (who unequivocally claims that people's faces influence the way we think about them), an employment counsellor (who says that 85 percent of the information we receive about another person is visual) and a waitress (who admits that the prettier waitresses get the best tips). Obviously Daisy has a point.

Once the value system out of which Daisy made her decision has been fully scrutinized, Rubbo moves in on the medical practitioners who capitalize on it: the cosmetic surgeons. They see themselves as fulfilling a societal need. In restructuring noses, breasts, buttocks, thighs and faces, these sculptors of human flesh bestow their clients with the bodily features they feel themselves entitled to, the features they feel really belong to them. Post-operative clients

willingly testify to their happiness with their new appearance. They candidly admit to a previous dissatisfaction with their looks and all confess that they underwent surgery so that they could have an appearance that they could live with. Vanity is taken for granted; no moral or social guilt trips here.

Daisy perceives herself as fortunate for never having learned the meaning of “Anglo-Saxon guilt.” She philosophizes that everything comes and goes: marriages, children, money... In the end, says this veteran of three failed marriages and mother of two children: “All you're stuck with is yourself.” And as it helps to be stuck with a self you can accept, if that means tampering with the wrapping, so be it.

During the facelift sequence, Rubbo's mellow narration and soothing instrumentals coax the squeamish viewer gently through the gruesome procedure. “Now comes the nasty part, close your eyes,” he warns as a rubbery flap of cheek skin is pincer-stretched to one side, and the surgeon extracts spirals of fat from underneath the patient's chin. At this moment of truth – when an anaesthetized face is being cut, trimmed and re-fitted – we see the face for what it is: a mask.

Six weeks after Daisy's facelift, she is packing for a European tour. She still looks like Daisy. The difference is perceptible, but barely. Like the difference between a tired face and a rested one, she now seems a shade smoother, more relaxed. But she knows her face best after living with it for 55 years, and to her the difference is obvious and striking. She feels more secure about her appearance and projects a more attractive persona. And... yes, Daisy gets her man.

Lyn Martin ●

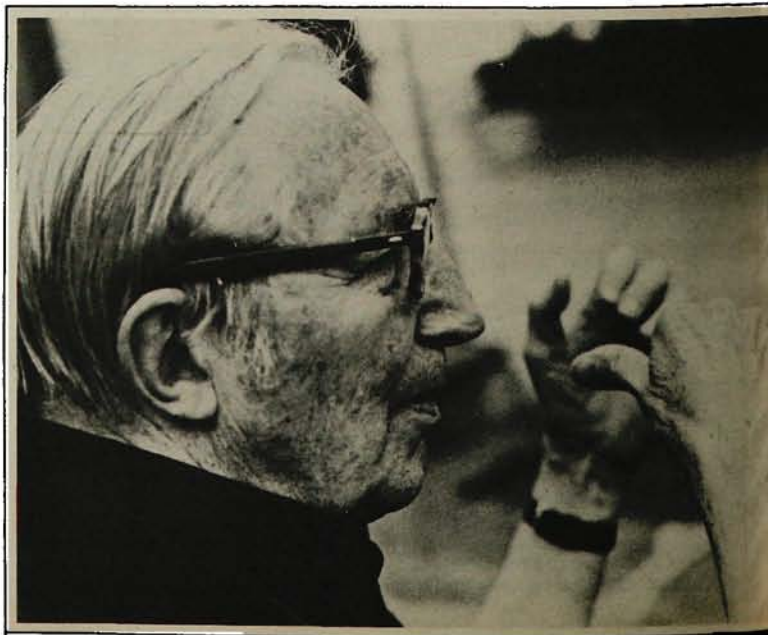
**DAISY: THE STORY OF A FACELIFT** d./ed. Michael Rubbo d.o.p. Susan Trow add. photog. Ned Johnston mus. ed. Julian Olson loc. sd. Claude Hazanavicius add. loc. sd. Alex Griswold, Yves Gendron sd. ed. André Galbrand sd. eff. & mus. ed. Julian Olson re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl orig. treatment Michael Rubbo, Kate Jansen from an idea by Harry Gulkin research Kate Jansen p. Michael Rubbo assoc. p. Giles Walker exec. p. Adam Symansky, produced and distributed by The National Film Board of Canada running time 57:40 colour 16mm.

## Donald Winkler's F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason

Director Donald Winkler has a number of fine films to his credit, including *In Praise of Hands* (1974), *Travel Log* (1978) and *Earle Birney: Portrait of a Poet* (1981). Director-editor Albert Kish has also gained distinction by his work on films like *Best Damn Fiddler From Calabodie to Kaladar* (1968, editor), *Time Piece* (1971), *Los Canadienses* (1975), and *Paper Wheat* (1978). *F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason* is the fourth film on which Winkler and Kish have collaborated. Perhaps that is why I was so surprised to find the film tediously boring and without a heart.

There is no doubt that F.R. Scott is himself an amazing human being: poet, politician, lawyer, constitutional expert, defender of civil liberties. Organizer of the League for Social Reconstruction in 1932 and its president from 1935-36, national chairman of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) from 1942-1950, member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, dean of law at McGill University from 1961 to 1964, F.R. Scott has throughout his life been engaged with the major social questions of our times. He seems, in essence, a man of concepts and words. Clearly, a man of reason. But the title of the film promises rhyme as well. And this, in its deepest sense, we do not find here.

The film does quote from Scott's poetry. But something more is needed, something to humanize for us this man of concepts and abstractions and legalistic brilliance. Instead, the film is strictly academic in the worst sense of that word. It is like a lengthy lecture and its overwhelming verbosity makes us yearn for moments of silence, lightness, laughter. There is almost an endless stream of “talking heads.” The interviews with David Lewis, Leon Edel, A.M. Smith, Louis Dudek, Graham Fraser, and Marcel Rioux all seem coldly analytical in



● Brilliance without heart: poet F.R. Scott as a talking head

content and visually repetitious: a medium-shot of a man discussing an abstract idea. Talking heads are not in themselves anathema, nor is the discussion of abstract ideas, but the combination on such a scale seems to move us further and further into impersonal, academic abstraction. Certainly we move further away from the man, F.R. Scott, and any sense of him as a whole person. There is so little emotion expressed in the film that even the interview with his son, Peter Scott, concentrates on the father's ideas. As words pile upon more words, they begin to seem like a protective device to keep us from seeing who F.R. Scott really is.

Unfortunately, the chronological structure of the film does not serve to its advantage either. The archival stills and footage are simply not visually interesting enough to contribute anything on their own. They are used like visual aids to a lecture, literally translating facts in the commentary. At times this visual paucity becomes embarrassing, as when the filmmakers utilize courtroom sketches to illustrate a legal case undertaken by Scott, or when a montage of newspaper clippings is supposed to illuminate a point. I saw this film with a friend. At its end, she turned to me and said, "This should have been a book." In this monology, the filmmakers have included some of F.R. Scott's poetry; they should have put in little of their own.

Joyce Nelson ●

**F.R. SCOTT: RHYME AND REASON**  
 exec. p. Barrie Howells p. Tom Daly d./sc. Donald Winkler ed. Albert Kish d.o.p. Barry Perles, Andy Kitzanuk research Sheila Fischman loc. sd. Bev Davidson, Jean-Guy Normandin, Hans Oomes mus. Alain Clavier mus. rec. Louis Hone re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl colour 16mm running time 57 min. p.c. National Film Board, 1983.

## Mini-reviews

*With this issue Cinema Canada increases its coverage of Canadian short films by publishing a "Mini-review" section each month. Over 1000 Canadian shorts are produced every year. By concentrating on one distributor each month and reviewing a series of shorts, we hope to be able to cover more films than in the past and to give that distributor more exposure. This month features shorts from Kinetic Film Enterprises Ltd., Toronto.*

### ACID REIGN

A short sharp overview of an "invisible, silent, form of violence." Lyrical views of the beauties of nature, including lovely lakes, lead to melting snow which harbours the acid rain released in the spring melt.

Foliage and berries die; lead pipes carrying drinking water are eaten away; building stonework decays inexorably; and a public statutory displays mute evidence of erosion with the loss of extremities and faces smoothed to blankness.

Smoke stacks, factories and car exhausts all lead to the low-key message - a need for laws to contain acid rain and for a combined US/Canada effort.

Good photography and underwhelming music reinforce this introduction to one of today's relentless problems.

**ACID REIGN** A film by Helen Henshaw. 10 min. 16mm.

### HIGHWINDING

Mike Gadd, Harry Hall and Derek Wulff, wizards of board sailing, or wind surfing as it is popularly known, display their fabulous footwork and expertise.

A lesson for beginners shows that everyone keeps falling into the water at first, but it takes only a few hours to learn the basics.

The experts give a nifty display of the tricky stuff - sailing the board on its edge, turning completely around while bowling along (and still staying upright), and a series of backwards and forwards bends with head touching the rushing water.

A lively, interesting look at the popular sport, with not too much talk, pleasant music, and lovely photography from Barry Stone.

**HIGHWINDING** d. Eric Goddard cam. Barry Stone p. Paul Caulfield p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 15 min. 16mm.

### SEASONS OF THE MIND

A look at two senior citizens, Doug Robinson and Bill MacQuillan, who filled the gaps in their lives by going to university.

Both in their early '70s, they had tried volunteer work, but the need to more fully exercise the mind led them to seek the higher learning that had been denied them in the '20s depression.

But it's not all a bed of roses. There's the problem of coping with new equipment, organizing study-time, and the mind too - the old memory bank isn't what it was, says one ruefully.

A stimulating look at the retirement life of two determined people fitting in well with the younger academic element, and all reaping benefits. Competently shot, but with uninspiring 'wallpaper' music which, luckily, doesn't detract from the gutsy subject matter.

**SEASONS OF THE MIND** d./cam. Anthony Hall add. cam. Terence Macartney-Filgate p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 21 min. 16mm.

### JOHN DOE

A rueful look at losing one's job and why - though the 'why' remains elusive.

A scripted piece of gentle humour introducing John Doe discovering the name plate being removed from his office door.

Back in his apartment he telephones without success: "I'd like to talk to someone about my job." But the word is out, and the repossession of his possessions starts. In the end, John Doe is left with the one thing they cannot take away...

A slight, rather soft little exercise, with good production values - well shot by Mark Irwin and with David Grimes' pleasant original music. But what does it say? Not much, really.

**JOHN DOE** d./sc. Larry Moore cam. Mark Irwin musc. (composed/performed) David Grimes p. Paul Caulfield l.p. Larry Moore, Ray Landry p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 8 min. 16mm.

### THE VEGETARIAN WORLD

"Animals are my friends, and I don't eat my friends."

George Bernard Shaw

A whirlwind tour of vegetarianism, hosted by William Shatner, himself a devotee of meatless meals.

An entire approach to life is reinforced by people recounting their reasons for the choice and illustrations from around the world - Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and various eastern countries. Many names are dropped of famous vegetarians - Socrates, Shelley, Schweitzer, DaVinci, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and, of course, Shaw. Discussions of recipes and the array of dishes are enough to make the mouth water.

There's a section of nasty bits relating to chickens being killed and cattle slaughter in abattoirs, plus the horrors of raising milk-fed veal.

Children's perception of animals as friends, and then their eventual realization they are eating them, seems a mite forced.

A summary of facts and statistics indicates that if more pasture land was utilized to produce vegetables and fruit, more of the world population could be fed.

According to publicity, this film was three years in the making and filmed in nine countries. It seems such a big effort for such a tiny nibble at what appears to be a fascinating mode of life. Too many snippets of information are crammed into too little time and the film exudes a faintly self-righteous air. However, as an introduction, a starting point for further exploration, it certainly has its uses.

**THE VEGETARIAN WORLD** p./d./cam. Jonathon Kay sc. William Whitehead & John Benrose orig. mus. Bernie Senensky, performed by Moe Koffman Quintet host/narrator William Shatner. 28 min. 50 sec. 16mm.

Pat Thompson ●

● The lyricism of pollution: Helen Henshaw's *Acid Reign* introduces one of today's relentless problems

