

Lov, played by Julia Gilmore. This spoken-art-song does create a mood and lifts the film off onto another level. Also, Rotwang, who plays himself as a club-owner, is very funny and refreshing with his little diatribes, but he appears only for a few fleeting moments in the film.

Chbib's earlier work indicated much promise. *Or D'ur* was a convincing pseudo-documentary about male prostitutes which showed a unique sense of humor and freshness, and it teased the audience with wonderful characters. *Bread*, a film produced by Chbib, was a delicious documentary directed by Albert Kish.

Perhaps Chbib just needs time to develop his sense of making a longer film. Feature films are peculiar animals, and one doesn't hold an audience's attention for 90 minutes easily.

Chbib brags that *Memoirs* was written in two weeks, pre-produced the next week, and shot the following four weeks. It looks it. He should have spent more time thinking about the content of his film. For some reason young filmmakers today think that speed means quality or indicates something wonderful. They should learn from Flaubert who worked on *Madame Bovary* for five years, often only completing a page a week, re-writing sentence after sentence.



● Human art objects: Julia Gilmore and Norma Jean Sanders in *Memoirs*

Yet the notion of collecting art objects and then going further to collect people is a very good idea. *Memoirs* would have been better if this idea had been taken one step further, perhaps if it had been turned into a collection of many

different people, rather than just one. The variety would have been stimulating.

Personally, if I'm going to watch social satire, I'd prefer John Water's *Polyester* or *Pink Flamingoes*. I like humor that comes right out and bites me. Humor that hides in corners, pretending to be something other than what it is, just doesn't turn me on.

And I want some charm, like Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*. But I'm sure *Memoirs* would do well at festivals – it is definitely different and has already played in New York at The Bleeker Street Theatre, where it has become a mini-cult film for midnight viewers.

Perhaps I've just seen too many He, She, It movies, and I'm ready to have, as Rotwang says in *Memoirs*, "Two toast, one jam, and move on."

Lois Siegel ●

MEMOIRS d./p. Bachar Chbib sc. John Beckett Wimbs. Bachar Chbib, based on the original play "Memoirs of Johnny Daze" by John Beckett Wimbs cam. Christian Duguay, Bill Kerrigan mus. Julia Gilmore, Edward Straviak, Philip Vezina ed. Bachar Chbib, Amy Webb sd. Gabor Vadney p.c. Cdn. dist., foreign sales: Les Productions Chbib Inc. (514) 397-1402 Produced with technical assistance from the National Film Board of Canada. **Colour, 16mm running time: 91 mins. Lp. Philip Baylaucq, Norma Jean Sanders, Julia Gilmore, Rotwang.**

One cannot have examined the decisions made by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) over the past 20 years without coming to the conclusion that, in this country, the solution to any broadcasting problem is inevitably to throw hardware at it. Software – the actual programming to be carried by that hardware – is far down the list of priorities. It is as though the regulators simply took McLuhan's dictum – "the medium is the message" – quite literally and never looked back. They have been expanding the medium at the expense of the message ever since.

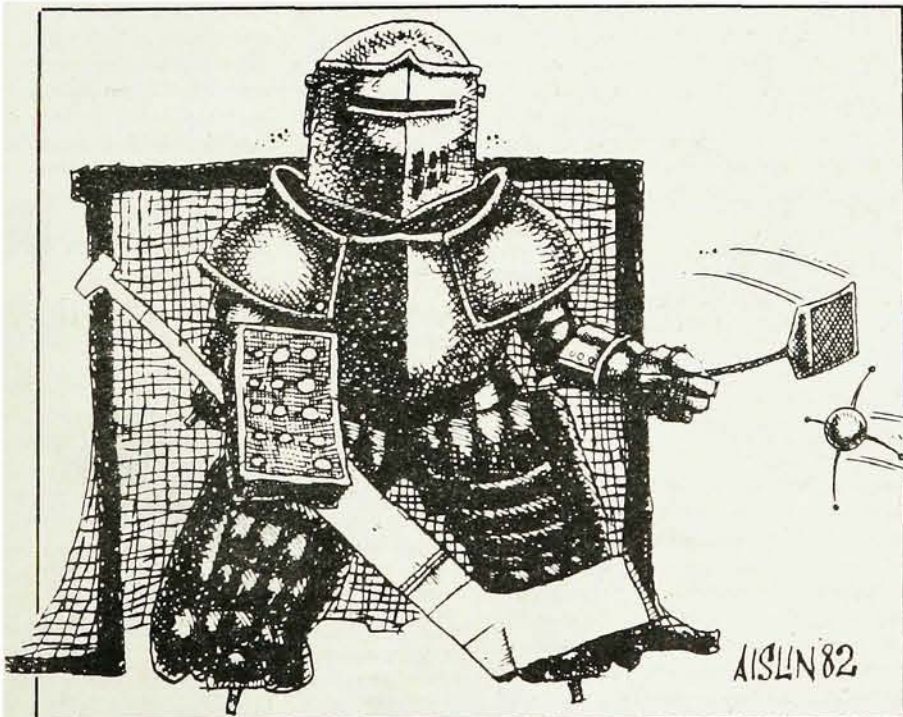
This mind-set is revealed once again in the recent CRTC decision, referred to as "distant signals", to create Canadian superstations – regular stations delivered nationally by satellite to communities now served by a maximum of two TV signals, or where cable companies have fewer than 3,000 subscribers and offer fewer than 12 channels. The stations which have in principle been given the go-ahead to become superstations are Hamilton's CHCH, Edmonton's CITV, Vancouver's CTV affiliate CHAN, and Montreal's private French network affiliate TCTV.

CRTC chairman André Bureau told the *Toronto Star* (Mar. 23) that the superstations were being created chiefly "to give markets a third TV (Canadian) service and to help prevent Canadians from bypassing the Canadian broadcasting system by buying satellite dishes." *The Globe & Mail* (Mar. 23) quotes Bureau as explaining that "the kind of balance (between Canadian and foreign stations) we used to have in our system is eroding" and so the CRTC will authorize as many new Canadian services as it can "before it is too late." In its decision, the CRTC says that superstations "will improve the choice offered to Canadian viewers" and thereby contribute of "the critical struggle for a distinctive and strong Canadian broadcasting system." *Globe & Mail* reporter Dan Westell

SCAN LINES

by Joyce Nelson

Very distant signals: Canadian content minimalism



CRTC Annual Report 1981-1982

notes that at the same time, the CRTC "approved a task force report that recommends allowing the same communities to have access to up to three U.S. stations for every Canadian one."

To consider the extent to which soon-to-be superstation CHCH Hamilton (channel 11 in my area) contributes to the "critical struggle for a distinctive and strong Canadian broadcasting system", I examined its prime-time programming for the weeks of Mar. 2-8, Mar. 9-15, and Mar. 23-29. During the hours of 7-11 p.m., the 7:30-8:00 time slot appears to be Canadian Content Time. On Monday

it's filled by *The Pierre Berton Show Revisited*. On Tuesday, by an in-house production called *Smith & Smith*. On Wednesday, it's *Don Cherry's Grapevine* – a sports celebrity show. On Thursday, something called *Backstage* – a talk-show about theatre. That same evening, the station boldly creeps into peak viewing hours (8-11 p.m.) with a regular offering called *Niagara Repertory Company*. This venture into an 8:00 p.m. time-slot for Canadian Content would seem to make up for the fact that Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are traditionally free

of Canadian programming on CHCH, though the weeks under study here, there was a Sunday prime-time NHL Hockey broadcast on Mar. 24.

Indeed, were it not for CHCH coverage of NHL hockey on Wednesday nights, the station would boast a grand total of 2 1/2 hours of Canadian programming per prime-time week, out of a possible 28 hours. Otherwise, its schedule is filled with American network offerings, making it a "Canadian" superstation in the most minimal sense of that adjective.

Considering that CHCH, as a highly profitable independent station, has had at least a decade in which to build up its contribution to Canadian broadcasting through re-investing in in-house productions and purchase of independent Canadian programs for prime-time, it has actually done little but help drive up the bidding on American shows. For this, it is being rewarded with superstation status – an irony not lost on the Canadian networks (CBC, CTV, Global) which opposed the CRTC decision. As reported by the *Toronto Star's* Sid Adelman, "the networks argued that letting these stations spread nationally would create bidding wars for U.S. programs they now buy exclusively and would cut into their revenues, in part, now used to produce Canadian programs."

Nevertheless, the decision is clearly in keeping with Canadian broadcasting regulatory tradition. Yet another stage in the hardware delivery-system is achieved, extending again the reach of American programs. The U.S. pay-TV companies plan to scramble their signals by the end of this year, so Canadian satellite dishes are not necessarily the threat perceived by the CRTC. The real beneficiary would seem to be financially troubled Canadian Satellite Communications Inc. (CANCOM), formerly headed by Bureau himself. As usual, another hardware solution further complicates this country's broadcasting morass.