

## Claire... Cette nuit et demain: Virtues of video

Rather than shying away from video, Nardo Castillo is one veteran filmmaker (*Black Mirror*, *St. Louis Square*) who has come to grips with the "new technology" — by advantageously integrating video into the filmmaking process.

Two weeks prior to the production of *Claire... Cette nuit et demain*, a romantic comedy feature set in Montreal (whose style, says the producer, is somewhere between Woody Allen and Eric Rohmer), Castillo set up an extensive rehearsal procedure. Along with the actors, D.O.P./cameraman Alan Smith, first a.d. Mircille Goulet, and script-girl Brigitte Germain, Castillo first taped every scene on location using a Betacam video camera.

"We would set up the scenes for rehearsal as if we were doing the actual filming," Castillo told Cinema Canada. "The DOP, Alan Smith, would operate the camera as he would on the actual shoot. We would frame things the way we wanted them to eventually appear on the screen. The actors would go through their lines and paces as we had written them.

"This way we could see immediately what worked well and what didn't. The actors could express their likes and dislikes with their lines and their movements. Allen could try out all the possible camera movements and angles."

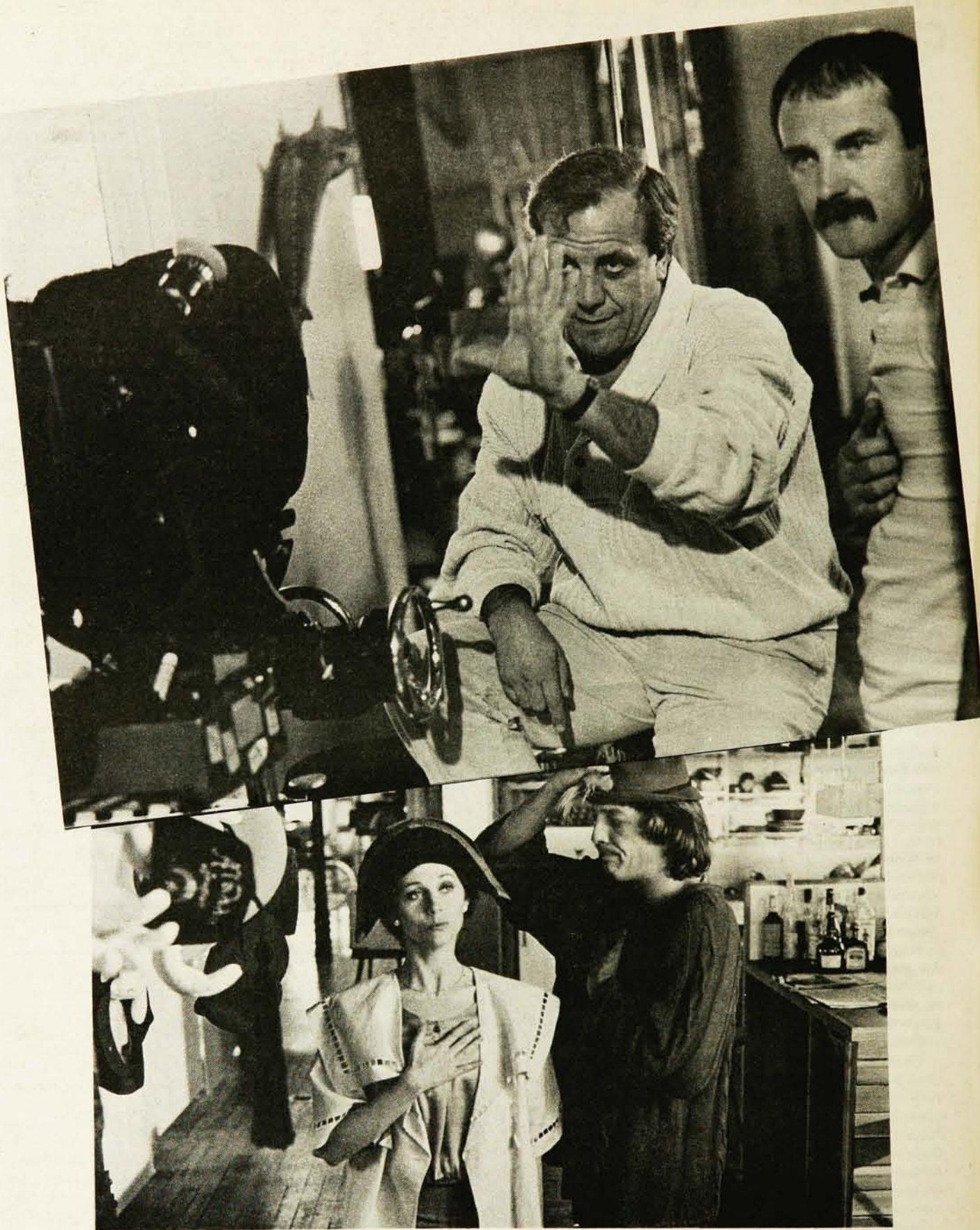
Castillo observes that being able to rehearse in the actual locations *before* the shoot made all the difference. "On location you can measure things out exactly. The access points are the real ones. When a scene requires the actor to leave through a door, we are using the real door. It really makes a world of difference when you come to the actual shooting of a scene."

Both Castillo, who shares the writing credit on *Claire... Cette nuit et demain* with Victor Désy who conceived the original scripts, along with the film's co-producer Arnie Gelbart of Cléo 24 Inc., found the use of video during pre-production rehearsals opened the door to improving the script, and adapting scenes to better accommodate the film's performers.

"I would watch the video-tapes of the day's rehearsals," Castillo explains, "and this would give me an early appreciation of what worked well and what did not work in a particular scene or sequence. Very little was improvised. After all, the best improvisations are the ones which are prepared."

Castillo doesn't feel such meticulous rehearsing risks eliminating all spontaneity. "None of the great filmmakers improvised during production. Everything was planned, calculated and prepared. Video permitted me to be very well-prepared when we got on location."

So well prepared, in fact, that Castillo's controlled directing left very little room for the actors or technicians to "ad-lib"



• *Claire... Cette nuit et demain* director Nardo Castillo and d.o.p. Alan Smith line up a shot

• *Claire* stars Lilian Clune and Luc Matte mug for the camera

during actual production. For Castillo, the right chemistry between the actors, the camera and the script crystallized during the two weeks of rehearsal prior to the actual shoot.

Leading actress Liliane Clune agrees.

"We all had the opportunity we needed to try things and to feel comfortable in our particular roles and with one another," she told Cinema Canada. "By the time we got to the real production we were all happy with our parts and our scenes and we knew that Nardo (Castillo) was happy with them since he had seen them on video. In that sense the use of video was a real advantage for the actors."

On the set of *Claire... Cette nuit et*

*demain*, Castillo, the cast and the crew certainly appeared well-prepared to this writer. Once the necessary equipment was in place the actual shooting took only ten minutes and only one take. Castillo, getting thumbs-up from the cameraman, knew that the take was good.

"The preparation that we were able to do thanks to video saved us a lot of time and, in this business, that means money," says Castillo. "When we got on location we all knew what we had to do, and, even if there had to be certain adjustments, I had an overall understanding of how the film would look, so I could make the proper changes quickly. It was the perfect marriage of film and video."

That Castillo succeeded in completing the shooting of *Claire... Cette nuit et demain* while meeting the requirements of a rigorous 12 locations in a 20 day-schedule on a modest \$635,000 budget, says a lot for his technique.

Perhaps Castillo is at the forefront of a new "cost-efficient" approach that combines two particular media with the aim of perfecting the end-product. Given the modest budgets usually allocated for feature films in Quebec (or in Canada in general) the use of video during pre-production might well be an idea whose time has come.