



• **The Killer Instinct:** doomed by fake Dixie accents

real one, but well enough to hide the Canadian and create an ambience that no country on earth would recognize as its own. Near the beginning, there's a scene in which the head bozo tells his law professor that he can envision no circumstance which would justify the taking of a human life. There's just no way a real American would ever say that and no way a Canadian would ever have to. A real Canadian movie would probably have skipped the scene altogether to strengthen the alleged theme (bozos can be as brutal as bumpkins) by letting us ferret it out ourselves and to win for the actor (Nicholas Campbell, I think — as usual, I'm doing this without benefit of press kit) our loyalty and gratitude by sparing us all the pain of the speech.

On the whole, though, it may be the plot that suffers most by Americanization, for it is quintessentially Canadian in its foundations and makes little sense in a foreign land. What happens is that, when bozos and bimboes stumble into the isolated village, its religious and secular leader, Henry Chatwell, tips over into a fundamentalist frenzy of I-am-the-law and launches a campaign of torture, murder and driving his pick-up truck through walls. *And the whole village goes along with it.* No way, Jack. Not in the States. In the States, the local Woodward and Bernstein would have been on his ass in minutes. The widow-woman would have staged a sit-in. Half the town would have picked up signs and started marching. Americans are the people with the "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" constitution. Ours says, "peace, order and good government" and, up here, it all would have made perfect sense. We're the people who, when polled, endorsed the War Measures Act by 80%. We love authoritarian leaders, just love 'em.

A home setting would have helped the subplot, too — they could have dropped it entirely. Chatwell's younger brother is the local law and he's completely under Chatwell's thumb, which explains why Chatwell gets away with all that stuff, and that's all it does — no development, no climax, no relation to the rest of the action. But up here, we all know we've got thousand-mile stretches, and lots of them, policed by nothing but the Mountie and his dog. One line about him being at the other end of his circuit and they'd have freed up 15 more minutes for Fruet to demonstrate

the same fine hand with action he's already shown in *Bedroom Eyes* and *Cries In The Night*.

Canadianization would also have spared us the sight of Henry Silva playing Henry Chatwell. Now, there's nothing wrong with Silva as an actor, but he's an American with an American's view of fundamentalist cranks and, so he plays Chatwell at a bellow from word one, with nothing left in reserve for the high points. A Canadian actor, say, for instance, John Vernon, would never have done that. Can you imagine Vernon playing anything at a roar all the way through? Never. No more so can you imagine him suddenly lapsing into the rhythms of soul music halfway through a speech and then visibly struggling to keep a straight face through the rest of it. John Vernon never has trouble keeping a straight face. Never! And he can sound Canadian. Those Chatwell diatribes could have benefited from the odd "ch?" or "tabernac." They'd have benefited even more if they'd been composed of the superstitious Catholicism you can still find in corners of Quebec or the corpse-rigid Calvinist offshoots that thrive in the Niagara fruit-belt. Anything would have been better than the bland thee-and-thou bullshit that suggest Beaird never even made it all the way through an episode of *100 Huntley Street*.

It wouldn't have hurt the rest of the cast, either, if they'd been freed from the doomed battle with Dixie accents that takes all their energy.

For the most part, though, Americanization just means that we lose those rich and meaningful details that give a movie life and colour and come easiest from local knowledge. You can see them being set up and struggling to come out in some places, but they're always killed off. It's very Canadian to have a travelling welfare worker caught screwing the underage-slut-wife (real Americans would have stuck with the traditional travelling salesman), but they refused to do the joke about the welfare state screwing the citizens — the one you can find in every daily paper in the country every day of the week — that's utterly foreign to Americans. They missed out, too, on the Canadian humour of having him run away through the snow clad only in his Stanfields and his snowshoes and, if they'd set it here, they would have done it, I know they would. In contrast, how much more

horrifying his capture and torture would have been if, instead of tarring-and-feathering him, they'd maple-syruped-and-feathered him, with that relentless, tooth-stabbing sweetness and well-known delicate bouquet providing a chilling counterpoint to his anguished screams. I know it sounds grotesque on paper but it would've fit perfectly.

By the same token, the death of Jeb, the number-two heavy, is a piece of standard-brand Americana: he's impaled by a falling TV antenna. But how much more meaningful it would have been if we'd known it was the CBC signal sticking into his wobbly little gut. It would only have taken a line: A villager sticks his head out a window and yells, "Hey! What happened to Knowlton?" and, bingo! an instant comment on the destruction of rural life and values by 20th-century technology, all neatly embedded in the action. It would have helped of Jeb, too. He's out there dying all alone and he's a mighty long time about it. He groans. He staggers. He rolls his eyes. He clutches his belly. He falls. He rises. He does it all again... and again... and again... and, after a while, it gets sorta hard to stay focussed on the drama of the moment.

Now, all this might sound fanciful, but it isn't. Remember, those of us who like to watch things blow up don't care where it happens, just so long as it happens *good!* and, if our filmmakers can get those vinegar-soaked bandages off their heads, they might find the strength to make things blow up good. And that has certain implications, both at home and abroad. For the foreign viewer, the United States is an overfamiliar locale and Canada an exotic one. If we do something interesting with our exotic settings, we can't help but do better with foreign sales. And, if we do, then we'll need somebody to make more

THE KILLER INSTINCT d.

William Fruet p. Herb Abramson sc. John Beaird p. con. Gene Slott assoc. p. Patrick Doyle mus. Eric Robertson d.o.p. Mark Irwin, csc ed. Ralph Brunjes, cfe art d. Fred Allen p.man. Patrick Doyle stunt coord. Everett Creach p.r. Blowitz & Canton Co. post. p. sup. Ralph Brunjes, cfe sd. cfx ed. Brian French dist. (Cdn) Pan-Canadian Ip. Henry Silva, Nicholas Campbell, Barbara Gordon, Gina Dick, Joy Thompson, Ralph Benmergui, Alan Royal, Sam Malkin, Stuart Culpepper, John Rutter, Danone Camden, Jeff Toole, Jere Beery, Ervin Melton, Wallace Wilkinson, Lloyd Semlar, Randall Deal, Leonard Flory.

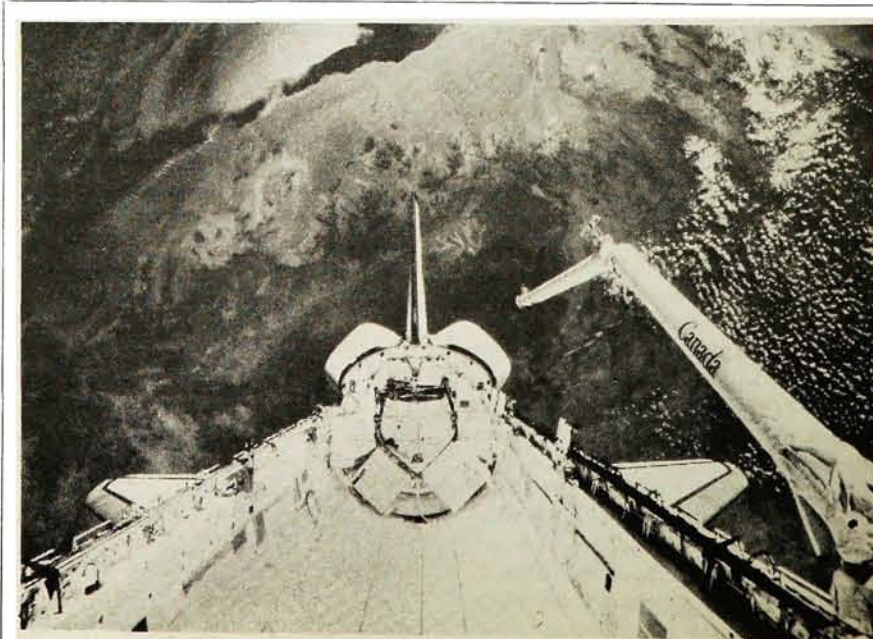
and that could point to a new commercial life for the moribund Ontario realism. More importantly, though, we could instill a certain pride and consciousness in those of our moviegoers who display little interest in the national cinema as it stands. Remember, the United States didn't become the nation it is by neglecting the patrons of even its seediest drive-ins.

Andrew Dowler •

Graeme Ferguson's
The Dream Is Alive

The latest and truly spectacular IMAX film received its Canadian premiere on Aug. 7 in the Cinesphere at Ontario Place, Toronto, with a whole lot of hoopla and an eclectic audience mix of politicians, astronauts and film people. Of course, there were speeches, mercifully short, and some containing little nuggets of interest. Graeme Ferguson, producer/director, and one of the developers of the IMAX system, commented on the "terrible experience of not being able to go where the film was made." Astronaut John McBride ("I'm the first West Virginian in space") was proud of the fact that there is more of the footage he shot in the film than that of any other person. His mission was eight and a half days in space, and went around the world 133 times. Our own Canadian astronaut, Marc Garneau, said that, apart from the weightlessness, the film really conveyed the feeling of actually being there on a space-flight.

The giant screen — six storeys high and 80 feet wide — is flooded with the light of dawn, the outline of the launching pad is visible, and the birds twitter and sing. Ironically, the Kennedy Space Centre is in the middle of a Florida wildlife reserve. The space shuttle is coming home at any moment. From this almost serene beginning, the audience is propelled into 37 minutes of overpowering images, experiences and emotions, which are literally out of this world in



• **The dream is alive:** Challenger passes over the African coast

scope and understanding.

The majestic curve of the earth sweeps across the screen; Italy is laid out below and Christopher Columbus's name is invoked. Later, another procession passes by – the Hawaiian island, the Andes mountains, Cape Canaveral and the Galapagos islands.

Earthbound, ordinary mortals are treated to fascinating details of training, and then the actual work and experiments being performed in space by the crews of three different shuttles. Two astronauts, James (Ox) van Hoften and George (Pinky) Nelson, train in an underwater tank that simulates weightlessness. For a whole year they rehearse the capture and repair of the ailing "Solar Max" satellite. Then there's the real rescue of Max in orbit using the Canadian arm and, when all does not go according to plan, Ox and Pinky improvise and dramatically bring off the operation successfully.

Visuals and tactile memories abound: the Cinesphere vibrating as an overwhelming night launch and liftoff take place; the stomach-churning "rescue basket" drill pushing all the air out of collective audience lungs; the astronauts, tackling meals and floating shrimp, and an eerie glimpse of them fast asleep, zipped into bags, but with hands and hair gently floating. Then there's Kathy Sullivan, the first woman walking in space and, with David Leestma, looking in through the spacecraft windows.

These missions also carry commercial ventures and experiments – among them the launch of a communications satellite and "bees in space" provided by students in the hope of producing zero-gravity honey!

The jumbo screen, filled with wonderful images, has to be a real filmic 'high', with wide popular appeal. However, the narration is heavyhanded and Walter Cronkite recites it in a ponderous, stuffy manner, so it's best to blank him out. But the music is a real problem. In attempting to suck up to the 'masses' who see the film, Mickey Erbe and Maribeth Solomon have composed trite middle-of-the-road treacle, including a choir of "heavenly voices" trilling around out there in space. An opportunity missed for some spare, evocative chords and themes, backed up by intellect – Harry Freedman, where are you? Luckily the fabulous images triumph every time over this wallpaper stuff.

The Dream Is Alive is at Cinesphere/Toronto until September 2, returning there later in 1985, and in 1986, and will be at the Edmonton Space Sciences Centre in September. By the end of the year the film will have played extensively in the USA, and The Netherlands, England, Australia, Hong Kong and France.

THE DREAM IS ALIVE

p./d. Graeme Ferguson, assoc.p. Phyllis Wilson, sc./ed. Toni Myers, training man. David Douglas, tech.sup. William Shaw, sd.designer Ben Burt, mus. Micky Erbe/Maribeth Solomon. running time: 37 mins., Col. Co-operating Institutions: National Aeronautics and Space Administration/Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum/Lockheed Corporation/IMAX Systems Corporation.

Pat Thompson •

MINI - REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson

OFRA HARNOY: THE MUSIC INSIDE

Ofra Harnoy, the Canadian cellist, started playing at six years old and now, at nineteen, has most successfully shaken off the "child prodigy" label. This film quickly establishes the talent inherited from her mother who plays the piano, and from her violinist father. He was her first teacher, and soon realized that "she was going over my head."

Harnoy gave a public performance two weeks after her first music lesson, and we see snatches of home movies of a recital with her parents when she was eight. She then went on to win many competitions, grants and awards.

"Playing the cello is my love... it releases emotions and feelings," says Harnoy, "... it can do anything...it's just an extension of me." She rehearses three hours a day when at home – just enough to keep her performance spontaneous. "It has been something that has come naturally to me...I almost feel guilty that it has come so easily to me."

However, Harnoy's touring is arduous. Ninety-hour concerts in a season; a schedule booked two years in advance; extensive travel; plus a recording career which began when she was fifteen. In the last five years 10 albums have been released internationally and, since the repertoire for cello is limited, her adaptations of popular music (including a very successful Beatles album) have shown her capable of living in both the classical and pop music worlds.

The stresses of success are always present. Ofra Harnoy talks particularly about the unpleasant "meat market" aspects of selling her talents

in the record business – the ugly competition, and the hatred of other musicians which is "sometimes not very nice." She tries to counteract all this by striving for a normal family life – when she has the chance. She rehearses at home in her small bedroom, and enjoys cooking a meal for her parents. Narrator Hana Gartner lets us know that the cellist likes old movies, romantic novels, reading poetry – and going out for junk food.

Ofra Harnoy is a charming, outgoing, and extremely talented performer, and Bruce Griffin gives us a nice clean impeccable documentary, which serves its subject admirably. Hana Gartner, as writer/narrator, adds just enough information to the visuals without going overboard.

d./ed. Bruce Griffin, writer/narr. Hana Gartner, cam. Henri Fiks, Jim Aquila, Colin Allison, sd. Ross Redfern, Ingrid Cusiel. Running time: 26 mins., Col. 16mm/vid-eotape. Assistance from Ontario Arts Council/The National Film Board. Special thanks to Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra/St.Lawrence Centre staff (Toronto). Availability: Kinetic Film Enterprises, 781 Gerrard St.East, Toronto M4M 1Y5 (416) 469-4155

NOTE: Ofra Harnoy: The Music Inside had the dubious honour of being shown on the first program of CBC's *Canadian Reflection* on Monday, July 8 at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The telecine transfer was atrocious, with focus and light change problems, and it was buried (as will be all other films) in this series. How can CBC allege to "showcase" short films at 4 p.m. on Monday afternoons in summer? Who's glued to the TV set when the sun is burning brightly, the lake sparkles, and outside diversions definitely have priority? It appears these shorts are only

OK enough to fill the "Canadian content" in an abysmal off-peak slot. These little films, often a spawning ground for the feature film talents of tomorrow, would be infinitely better served if an appreciative audience could snuggle up to them, say, on a wintry *Sunday* afternoon at 4 p.m.

D.P. BROWN: BEYOND REALISM

Dan Brown lives and paints in Colingwood, Ontario, and combines a studio and home in the country in order to portray the daily life around him. The film starts by focussing on Brown out in the fields and, on returning home, he throws his jacket and other items on a chair. We then see that this artful arrangement is the inspiration for a painting now on screen. (This reviewer's heart sinks.)

The artist talks a great deal too much during this film – about his "Old Master" technique; of the social, 'bitter' and 'sarcastic' comments embodied in his canvases; and his partiality for egg tempera, "the finish of the work has a quality all its own – the whole textural concept..." His blandly banal and excessively conservative canvases belie what he is telling us. There is a smidgen of unconscious humour, though.

Brown's full-length self-portrait is painted nude, from the rear, and his children call it "Daddy's Bum." Shortly after this piece of information, the artist declares, "I like the idea that what I have to say can be understood by the viewer."

The 'hook' for this film was a retrospective at the Hamilton (Ontario) Gallery of Art, covering 20 years of Brown's work, which subsequently travelled across Canada. The camera zooms in and out on many of the paintings, including "The Auction", "The Wedding tray", and "The Twirler", and Brown is also seen preparing serigraphs – accompanied by narration, or the artist (again) giving explanations of his intent.

Even if one admired Brown's commonplace work, the artist himself is enough to put off self-respecting art lovers at any level. He natters on and on about his paintings in a simplistic and unctuous manner – a sort of mundane schoolmaster trying to stir up feelings for his work that are just not there.

The filmmaker *had* to love Brown and his paintings, for what other reason is there to inflict upon an unsuspecting audience such an overdone, technically ordinary, tribute to this artist?

d./sc. Athos Katsos, exec.p. Don Haig/Film Arts, cam. Dennis Rindsem, sd. Ross Redfern, Dan Latour, ed. Barry Backus, M.C. Manne, video seq. Bill Goddard/Alndon Group, opticals: Film Effects, narr. Chris Skene, running time: 27 mins. Col., 16mm. Availability: Kinetic Films, 781 Gerrard St.E., Toronto M4M 1Y5 (416) 469-4155.

• Ofra Harnoy: "Playing cello is my love"

