

TORONTO FILMMAKERS' CO-OP

The Co-op was three years old on March 11. Which caused some nostalgia along the lines of "It all began in a little room in Rochdale..." It also caused me to pull out the press clippings about our formation, which are reminders that the Co-op began with the energy of about 70 people who wanted to make films and didn't have the resources to do it.

They did meet in a little room in Rochdale, paid \$5 each, and drew up a list of objectives. With a little help from the film community — companies like Premier Operating, Film Opticals and Mackenzie Equipment donated a total of \$250 — and a matching grant from the Ontario Arts Council, the new Co-op moved in on top of the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre and hired a co-ordinator (remember Stuart Rosenberg?) for the princely sum of \$25 a week.

Week one the Co-op got its first big project: the administration of the original OFY film grants for which we managed to solicit 100 applications on a week's notice. With that under our belt, there was no stopping us. That summer we began our first workshop programs, again with the help of the film community. Ciner Productions, Patrick Spence-Thomas, Clarke Mackey all agreed to teach for the princely sum of \$0. Don Owen, Don Shebib, Peter Rowe and others brought their films and themselves to evenings with Co-op members, for the same fee. Discounts on lab services were arranged; editing facilities

were set up; the first issue of RUSHES (remember RUSHES?) was cranked out on a gestetner. We made out applications for grants, began writing briefs and lobbying for Canadian film, and in our spare time sat around arguing with lawyers about why we wanted to be incorporated as a Co-op, not a corporation (remember trying to convince them we didn't mind the fact that Co-op had connotations of socialism?)

Along the way the Co-op has managed to realize almost all of the original goals it set for itself in those days. It has also managed to grow far beyond expectations in the number of members it has attracted. Three years later, the Co-op has a membership in excess of 400. 50 of those members produced independent films last year. The original operating budget of \$250 has grown closer to \$25,000 by this year. Discounted lab processing, courtesy of Quinn Laboratories, is going through the Co-op at the rate of \$20,000 annually. By April this year there will be three editing benches in operation at our new Jarvis Street headquarters. Eight workshops, with a total enrollment of 100 members, are in progress with instructors John Marshall, Aerlyn Weissman, Patrick Spence-Thomas, Jock Brandeis, Walter Delorey, Bill Fruet, Clarke Mackey, Richard Leiterman and Carol Betts. A new series of workshops will begin in June. RUSHES, to augment this page and mailings, will be out in new form before this issue of

Cinema Canada reaches you. Regular screenings (above) continue, and the once a month seminar series has Rick Hancox, on independent film production, and Pen Densham, on how to win an Academy Award (Co-op member Densham's film *Life Times Nine* has been nominated for the Academy Award — reason enough to watch the extravaganza televised on April 2) coming up.

Further afield, the Co-op has assisted the birth of three new Co-ops across Canada (Halifax, Vancouver and Winnipeg) this year. We have also participated on the executive of the newly formed Council of Canadian Filmmakers whose lobbying at Canadian Film Symposium II and the CRTC hearings in Ottawa (both reported on the CCFM page in this issue) should appreciably improve the environment for all filmmakers in Canada.

Recently the Co-op has arranged with the Directors' Guild of Canada to bring together filmmakers who wish to participate in the Canada Council's apprenticeship training program and directors who are in production. The Co-op has also received several requests lately for politically oriented filmmakers to work on projects with unions and community groups. If you would like to know more about either program, contact the office.

So, at the end of three years, here's to the future. To guarantee the Co-op's survival, we close with a paraphrase of an incantation which has proved itself to work against all odds — "three more years".

— Sandra Gathercole
Co-ordinator

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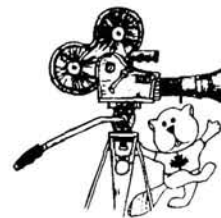
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How I Spend My Sunday Nights

How else? I go where it's happening — at the Co-op Screenings of films-by-members, films-in-progress, films-you-wouldn't-dare-show-anywhere-else, films-you'll-never-see-advertised-anywhere, *the vanguard of cinema!*

But seriously, it's one of the few places where you can discuss your work with other filmmakers. That ought to be worth trying! So here's a sampling of recent goodies brought down for roasting:



406 Jarvis Street, Toronto

One of the most interesting discussions centred around the problems Walter and Ellis Delorey encountered while shooting their two half-hour films in the Yukon – including being totally isolated for weeks (they were dropped by helicopter) and withstanding an August snowstorm. Fortunately, both Walter and Ellis are seasoned campers, as well as technically and artistically excellent filmmakers. Walter brought down the second of their joint productions, **Cold August Wind**.

It's very difficult to describe **Cold August Wind** without going into long descriptions of what it's not . . . Basically, it's not a "nature film" as we know and hate them. Walter Delorey simply filmed a documentary about life (non-human, i.e. animal, vegetable, mineral) in the Yukon and used an electronic music soundtrack to complete the illusion of witnessing the birth of the world. I would love to retitle Walter's film "How it feels to be the first groundhog in the universe" but fortunately, you can judge this film for yourself – it was bought by the CBC for airing on Beverly Roberts' "Canadian Filmmaker" series. Even though a lot of the visual beauty and majesty of the north will be lost on tiny TV sets, we're all hoping that the CBC keeps on buying the works of independent filmmakers. Hurray for Bev Roberts! Amen.

Moving on – Raphael Bendahan brought two films down for a recent screening, **Noir et Blanc** (reviewed on page 52, Issue No. 7 of this great mag) and **L'ennui – les rêves d'un somnambuliste**, a film in three segments. The very beginning consists of a 3-minute dedication to Universal Leader. Lots of fun, especially for film freaks. Only after watching the Great Countdown several times over does he start the first section which depicts a beautiful old woman (Raphael's grandmother) floating through states of insomnia and timelessness. The pace is very slow, serene and dreamlike. The second section deals with the frenzy/insanity of the city. Sure, it's been done before. But never quite this way. By using entire scenes in negative and layering street scenes one on top of the other, Raphael achieves a

surreal and frightening eeriness to this section. The last part is not only an ode to human beauty, it's also quite humorous in parts. This entire section is shot in a totally white room with only a chair in the middle, and stars two nude people – a black woman and a bearded white man. Raphael used step-printing to emphasize their dance movements and progressively shortened the duration of the cuts until finally there's only one frame of each person forming a complete merging of the two bodies – both black and white, male and female, bearded and breasted. It's a very sensuous sequence. The music for **L'ennui** was done by an ex-student of John Cage and works stupendously with the imagery. All in all, it's a film well-worth seeing.

Another marvelous film was Frank Elsasser's untitled Super-8 epic with the theme song from **Pat Garret and Billy the Kid** by Bobby Zimmerman for a soundtrack. Frank's film is a zany, very touching and spontaneous series of home movies and mindtrips. Interspersed with poetic close-ups of cannabis growing wild all over Ontario (hmmm) are lovely sequences of tripping around Toronto, visiting friends, playing with a puppy, seeing a brother off at the airport, smiles, hugs, tears. A very humanistic film.

Another Super-8 epic shown was dedicated to Teperman, the big wrecking company. David Anderson strung together continuous pans of demolition sites with the huge red Teperman letters proudly hailing destruction throughout the city. He also included quick cuts of Superman flying through smog (ingeniously filmed off a color TV set in a store window). And for ART's sake, David projected his "Teperman film" at an extreme sideways angle, causing marvelous distortions and inventing a cheap way of getting wide-screen Super-8 panavision. Try it!

Big Wave by David and Jim Anderson (yes, the co-op is very incestuous) is a lyrical study of the movements of a tarpaulin covering a mountain of salt. They filmed the rippling caused by the wind and wound up with footage suggesting a huge, dormant animal with the film's rhythm becoming its breathing. A

sensuous and visual massage of a medium . . .

—→ by David Anderson was one of the favorites of the evening. David spends a great deal of time hitchhiking between a farm near Buck Lake and Toronto. He wanted to record the repetition of that experience, so he took his Bolex on one of the trips and decided to make a 180 degree pan every 10 minutes – no matter where he was. The film starts with a left to right pan (as were all but one) of a completely wooded area and gradually becomes more and more cityfied as the rides are getting him closer and closer to Toronto. Between each pan is a short section of black leader which becomes the breathing of the eye. The rhythm and structure are very distinct, yet —→ has a loose and easy mood to it. This film caused the most discussion among the other filmmakers. Questions like: should the pan have been right to left, should it have started from front to back or side to side, should the leader be cut out for continuous movement – but all these things would have made another film. The consensus finally, was that —→ is beautiful as is. (It is.)

And now for something completely different – Michael Hirsh's night of screenings was an altogether different experience. Besides the feature **Voulez-vous Couchez Avec God?** (reviewed on pages 41 & 42 in Issue No. 5) Michael brought along **Smile-A-Day**, one of several children's films he's made through Nelvana Productions. This one, narrated by the same four-year-old who stars with her best friend, was about smiling all day. With the help of animation – everything the little girl smiled at smiled back! She and her friend spend a day gleefully traipsing around the city, pasting smiling decals on everything. My favorite part is the end which is animated. The little girl climbs up a ladder to get to her bed in a cloud and on this cloud is a transmitter which sends her smiles out all night long while she sleeps! Chronologically, there was only one 4-year-old in the audience that night – he thought it was a great film. So did the rest of us. And that's what it's all about – eh?

– Cain St. Cleofas