

quickly disavows the title. "Gilda is king," he tells me. Monroe is presently trying to convince Gilda, a person with pull in the milieu and a star performer in his own right, to collaborate on **Lip Gloss**.

Lip Gloss is an attempt to personalize transvestitism. Person-on-the-street interviews will be juxtaposed with intimate interviews with transvestites. "We want to tell these people's histories," says Monroe. "What goes on in their heads before and after they decide to become transvestites. Things that ordinary people don't know about. Like what transvestites feel the first time they go into the ladies' lingerie department and buy brassieres and panties. Do they feel any animosity from the salespeople? The film is going to be an in-depth look."

Siegel and crew have already filmed about 35 transvestites. They've still to film over 100 more. Eventually, eight will be chosen as interview subjects. So far, everyone in the milieu has been very co-operative. "The only problem has been the audience at the shows," says Monroe, "Every one we've been filming has been gay. Some people don't want to be publicly associated with the word. It's unfortunate."

But this doesn't seem to be a problem at the Bellevue. The show, *La Bellevue Follies '86*, starts at 7pm. By 5:30 Aretha Franklin is blasting from the high-tech sound system urging people to ride on the highway of love. It's Monday but the place is packed.

As Siegel and her crew busy themselves putting up the lights and adjusting the camera, the usually relaxed, friendly loudly whisper, "They're shooting a film here." But they seem to reveal more delight than apprehension. Siegel nevertheless asks Monroe to get releases from everyone within camera range.

The only visible resistance he encounters comes from a man who asks him what kind of film it's going to be. "Blue," replies Monroe jokingly. The owners pass around free finger food. Nobody leaves.

By 6pm, the set-up is in place. Siegel wants to take some shots of the tavern before the show begins. She also wants to film Babette, organizer of the show and a celebrity in the gay community, at the bar. Aretha is now singing "One Thing Leads to Another" but Babette wants to change before anyone films him. Show time is approaching and Siegel's getting nervous.

The bar is resplendent. The mirrored wall behind supports shelves, one of which holds a red reproduction of Michaelangelo's David. To highlight the work's splendor, two bouquets of artificial flowers have been placed on either side. A statue of a chubby yellow pig with long lashes and rosy cheeks sits on a higher shelf. Siegel shoots a close-up of it.

At The Bellevue, middle-aged men mingle with punks who mingle with people wearing polo shirts. Beer is \$1.75. A young man with blond hair and faded jeans tells the waiter, "Maudit, it's expensive. I can get it cheaper in Quebec." The busy waiter, hair tied into a ponytail, eyes framed by red glasses, and with a miniature sword dangling from one ear, remains unfazed. "Well, why don't you go there and get one," he



Photo: Lois Siegel

• "I've got what you desire", sings one of **Lip Gloss**'s transvestites

responds sarcastically. The Bellevue seems normal.

Monroe is chatting with everyone, making them feel at ease. An assistant informs the cameraman that the lamp above the bar is shaking. "It can shake. It can even boogie if it wants to," says Dion. "So long as it doesn't fall." Meanwhile Eartha Kitt's seductive purr beckons, "champagne me, serenade me...I've got what you desire," and Babette makes a grand entrance. His outfit, mauve from hair to shoes, includes a Tina Turner wig and bell-bottom pants. He gets behind the bar and poses. Behind me a blond athletic man is murmuring, "I wanna be in the movie. I wanna be in the movie. I wanna be in the movie."

A big brassy instrumental version of "We're in the Money" foreshadows the beginning of the show. "I hope my film lasts," frets Siegel, "I brought a couple of rolls of short-ends in case I run short but I'd prefer not to use them. Who knows what they'll turn out like."

The show consists of several production numbers - impersonations of Sade, Cher, Diane Dufresne, Mireille Mathieu, Diana Ross and the Supremes, and several non-imitative mimed songs. Though Siegel shoots selectively, she looks pleased. A combination of brass and sequins with a large dose of camped-up innuendo for spice, the show has been fun.

At the end of it, the MC asks, "Avez-vous aimé ça, les boys?" Though it wouldn't be The Bellevue without a few loud voices answering with, "Shut Up!", they are drowned out by applause. Colourful stuff, **Lip Gloss**.

José Arroyo •

Heaven on Earth

It's a Friday afternoon in July in Scarborough, Ontario (northeast of Toronto), and it's one of those clammy, god-awful days when the mere act of breathing is enough to start the sweat.

The location is an old country farmhouse. On the sprawling front lawn the picnic tables set up for the lunch break are steadily deserted as crew members move off to prepare for the afternoon's shooting. The threatening sky in the near-distance has scuttled plans for an exterior scene, and so most of the crew head indoors for the next set-up.

Not a part of this activity, twenty-three-year-old Welsh actress Donna Edwards wanders over to a picnic table and sits down. She looks hot and un-

comfortable. "They've got a bust-binder on me," she says miserably, "because I'm too big." Still in the make-up and period costume she wore for her morning scenes, she reaches into a cooler and pulls out a cold drink.

Edwards is one of three Welsh actors playing 'home children' in Primedia Productions' \$2.35 million television feature **Heaven on Earth**. 'Home children' is the term used to describe the 125,000 British children shipped to Canada between 1867 and 1914. Orphans, foundlings, children neglected and abandoned - these youngsters were supposed to be placed in 'good Christian homes' in Canada so that they might have the chance to build better lives for themselves. It didn't always work out that way. Scripted by Margaret Atwood and Peter Pearson, and directed by Allan Kroeker, **Heaven on Earth** is set in 1911 in New Canaan, Ontario, and tells the stories of five of these 'home children'.

Donna Edwards' character is sixteen-year-old Sophie Payne, a troubled Welsh girl who has a baby and is abused in her first placement. Unlike the other Welsh actors, Edwards has extensive acting experience - she's performed professionally since she was fourteen - and back home in Wales she works in a highly-rated soap opera done entirely in the Welsh language. Her soap character, she says, "is a nasty, horrible bitch" who is presently in a 'remand center' (juvenile detention) accused of murder; she'll remain there, her fate undecided, until Edwards returns to the show in September.

This is Edwards' first visit to Canada, and asked for her initial impression she answers simply, "Nothing has really amazed me, except Niagara Falls." She's enjoying working on **Heaven on Earth** because "There's a wonderful strength (around the set), everybody's on the same wavelength, everybody talks to everybody." (Though she's finished for the day, Edwards will hang around for the rest of the afternoon. "I like being with people," she says.)

Even before the afternoon's shooting begins, the sky makes good on its threat and the rain starts. It is, at first, just a steady drizzle. A few technicians working outside setting up some lights (they're aimed towards a window of the room where the scene will take place) pause long enough to pull on orange rubber safety gloves before hurrying to cover up the electrical connections.

Inside the house, in a small, very warm front room, lighting and camera equipment, a dozen crew members and director Kroeker are crammed together ready to shoot the next scene. Breathable air is almost a rumour.

The scene calls for fourteen-year-old Megan Dove (Welsh actress Sian Leisa Davies) and Mrs. Laird (Alison McLeod) to arrive at the home of Wilf Hawthorne (R.H. Thomson) just as Mrs. Hawthorne is dying upstairs. (This difficult death scene was shot during the morning on a closed set.) As they come through the door, Wilf's sister, Abigail (Fiona Reid), rushes up to them with a bowl of bloody water. She thrusts the bowl at Megan, orders her to boil more water, then hurries back upstairs with Mrs. Laird at her heels.

The brief bit of action is rehearsed several times before Kroeker calls for a take. Take one goes well, but the sound-

man asks for another as a precaution. In take two the sound is fine, but the camera is late in dollying away from the door. Take three: the camera movement is corrected, but the bowl of water Reid is holding hits her belt buckle and the sound is picked up.

Because the humidity is now starting to take its toll on the actresses' appearances, hair and make-up people move in to make some fine adjustments. Once again, the actresses move into their positions and the camera rolls. Take four goes smoothly and the scene is wrapped.

Outside, the situation has gone from 'not so good' to 'downright dreary': the rain is coming down harder and the sky has taken on a funeral grey pallor (Mother Nature, it seems, is following the script). Despite the unpleasant conditions, the decision is made to move the shooting outdoors. There are several key exterior scenes which cannot — due to one factor or another — be rescheduled.

As the crew and equipment move out, the actors needed for the next scene are rounded up and costumed. Eight-year-old Nathan Adamson and seven-year-old Sarah Polley, playing R.H. Thomson's children in the film, sit quietly on a couch as they're dressed, but are gone in a flash as soon as they're done. Their on-set guardian, Jan Green — she is also the guardian for the Welsh actors — remarks that there's a tension on the set this day which the children have picked up on. With barely a week of shooting left, Green says "there's re-



• *Heaven On Earth*: left to right, Donna Edwards, Sarah Polley, Sian Leisa Davies and Nathan Adamson

ally a feeling on the beginning of the end."

The children's scene is set in a field beside the barn, and takes place in the story shortly after the death of the mother. As the scene starts, the children are sitting on a tree stump dealing with their grief; after a tense moment, Adamson (in character) jumps up and runs away and Polley chases after him, calling his name.

The children perform the scene smoothly several times, and huddle under an umbrella between takes. After a brief dialogue with cinematographer Rodney Charters, Kroeker calls for 'just one more'. Once again, the children run through the scene without a hitch. But this time something special happens. As the children are running away, a low, rolling thunder is suddenly heard emanating from the grey heavens above, and the sound travels across the sky for (what seems like) a long moment. The set is 'pin-drop' quiet. Though the scene is over, Kroeker holds his "cut": the soundmen are recording Mother Nature's dramatic and timely soliloquy.

Standing off to the side, line producer Duane Howard is looking very pleased. As the scene is wrapped, he remarks that he's not at all upset about the unscheduled rain; on the contrary. "I like to see weather in a movie," he says smiling. "It's like another character."

Howard has reason to be happy. On the set of *Heaven on Earth* this day, weather is a featured performer.

Linda Gorman •

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