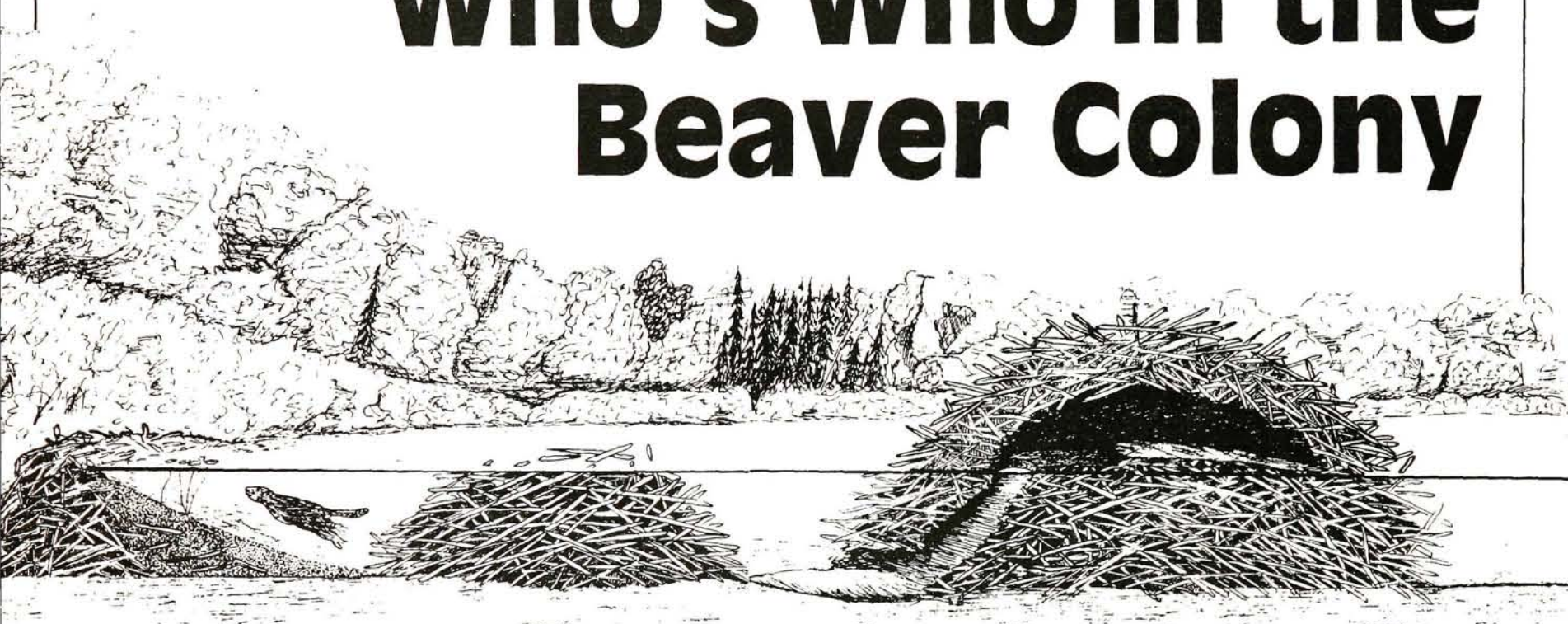


# Who's Who in the Beaver Colony



*'Before you leave Amikus Lake, have a look at the lodge on the far shore. People often wonder how many beavers live in a given pond and how the residents are related. There is no hard fast answer to these questions but in summer a typical colony consists of a mated pair of adult beavers, perhaps three or four young beavers or "kits" born in May, and a smaller number of yearling (non-breeding) beavers which were born the year before. Mating takes place in January or February in the water, under the ice.*

*Shortly before new kits are born, the oldest youngsters – then almost two years old and mature, are driven away from the pond while the one year olds are allowed to stay. The kits weigh half a kilo when born, are fully furred and have their eyes open. They can swim within 24 hours and are weaned at about one month of age. All capable members of the group co-operate in lodge building, dam repair, and other important aspects of the colony's life.'*

*– From an Algonquin Park Guidebook about Beaver Ecology*

## by Peter Wintonick

The Canadian film industry has a lot to learn from watching the Beaver colony. The Beaver and the Human are the only two animals on earth that significantly and radically alter their en-

*Peter Wintonick has just finished working on Peter Watkin's **The Journey**.*

vironments. The Beaver does so in a way which allows interspecies interdependence. The Human...well we all know about The Human. The Canadian Human Film Industry Type Beaver (*Castor Filmus Americanus*) is similar to the real thing in that it works in the summer and fall and mates under the ice in the winter. And like its furry counterpart it drives away its most talented young to other ponds or underground or to starvation. What we can learn from the real beaver, we who are responsible for Canada's images of

itself, is that we all cooperate, as a group, young and old, experienced and not-so-experienced to build a unique and universal film culture and contribute to other important aspects of our colony's life. I could suggest that we start with the de-colonization of our culture but what I think I'll do is start from the beginning again because this article is about The Montreal World Film Festival and the 1986 Canadian Student Film Festival which was a part of it this year. This article is about the "kits" out there who are going to be

breaking down your doors to make some pretty damn good films and videos.

I spent my time at this year's World Film Festival watching terrific German, Canadian and South American films. Because I am now starting to re-emerge into the reel world after working almost three years on Peter Watkins' now completed **The Journey** I wanted to see films about cinema. I wanted to see if I could find a new definition. But I was starting to get my signals crossed. Too much cinema overload.\* Reinhard

Hauff's perfectly wrought, designed and constructed film about the Baader-Meinhof trial **Stammheim: The Trial** made me an angry young man. Alexander Kluge's **The Blind Director** asked me "if should do away with the pictures over the phone." Jack Darcus' good little bad little funny movie **Overnight** about Canadian cinema as a pornography factory told me that we may be little and we may be dirty but at least we're Canadian. Jorge Bodanzky's Brazilian-French documentary **Church of the Oppressed** about the people's struggle for a new social and economic order in the state of Para and about the role of liberation theology reminded me that outside of the screening rooms of the world were people, real people.

And finally that second greatest story ever told, **The Adventure of Faustus Bidgood** from the hearts and minds of Michael Jones, Andy Jones and everyone else in Newfoundland asked me a lot of questions about Canadian cinema and our struggle to create it. After I'd seen **Faustus** I decided to go away to Algonquin Park, sit down in front of a beaver pond and write this article. **Faustus** is a multi-layered angry comedy about revolutionary fantasy, imagination and Fate that I urge all of you to see if only for its psychotherapeutic value. It is on a par with Woody Allen's early work. It is **Zelig** in a Mackinaw coat. The trouble is that Jones and Co. (a comic corporation if ever there was one) didn't have an extra 40 per cent of the budget for re-shoots and re-re-re-shoots. Watch **Faustus** and you all may learn how to make films on a dream. It got me to thinking... If Jones, Jones et al could fight for a half dozen years to make this film with no real cash from anybody but with generous service support from the Film Board to produce Canada's most original and promising film of the year then what about the others, those just out of film schools, who have given up the fight because it just takes too much out of them... beginning for money, establishing track records (we should leave track records to our Olympic running team), becoming pimps and hookers to the commercial film industry? I find it strange that our stultifying cultural institutions only give lip service to the development of our young and brilliant filmmakers... I find a lot of strange things going on out there. It was at that point that I decided to really investigate what kind of hope there could be for the future. For that I turned to and found the Canadian Student Film Festival.

From scores of possible entries, Danièle Chauchard, who also does most of the work at the World Film Festival and is the hardest working woman in the Festival business, and others put together a series of seven programs of 55 films and 6 videos from 13 Canadian universities and colleges with media production courses. An international jury was put together to judge these productions and award them a series of prizes which were donated by the National Film Board of Canada, the only institution that seems to care about these things. I decided to watch them all so that I could begin again to believe that something good was going to happen. I was not disappointed. I remembered my student films. Some of them had won some prizes. But what I remem-

bered more was the technical training and the feeling that film was a collective art which could celebrate life and move people. Frankly, before the first screening of the 1986 version of student films I had expected that I would be witness to a lost exercise, many failures and a lot of pretentious garbage. My, my how times change.

For the most part the young women and men making films in schools today are so talented and adept and intelligent that it makes me want to go back to school, vomit or give up. They are also funny, in control, political, cinematic and daring. Some are making films in the classical mode but because of very, very severe budget limitations there is something dangerous, something quirky about them. Others are freer because of these limitations or because of a developed sense of experimentation or because they have highly defined personal visions about what cinema is or can be. There are also many regional similarities and trends and a certain ability to discern that a particular set of films must be from the west coast or another set from Quebec or yet another from a particular university. This is the

ponds. They are poor. They are rich with energy and ideas. If you see one on the street or asking you for an interview, or in your office with a script idea you'd better listen and then give them the money or the job. Or run.

Perhaps their abilities and attitudes can best be summed up by François Miron, a young man in his twenties from Concordia University in Montreal whose **4X Horizontal 4X Vertical** won the top prize as the best experimental film of the festival. The film is self-described as a film about permutations, combinations and the mathematical formulation of repetition using boxes. François is a serious young man. How serious is he? Well, when his film was being screened at the festival, it came up on the screen without the sound playing. It seems that the projectionist didn't want to stop the proceedings so François, ever one to make a point "accidentally," broke the projection booth's glass with his fist trying to get those in charge to turn up the sound. It seemed that someone got the message. After he had won the first prize we went to a St. Catherine Street tavern to discuss cinema.



"schooling" process that all fish and now filmmakers know about. From all regions of the country they are coming like riders on a rainbow of apocalyptic horses. Coming to demand that they be given a voice, a camera, a blank cheque. That they be given the money and support from the CBC, Telefilm and from all those wealthy private and public places where films get funded.

While I was taking a break from the eyestrain of one too many films I found a little note scrawled in indelible ink on the washroom wall at the Parisien Cinema where this year's films were being shown. It was a manifesto of sorts. It read:

**Give us back our minds.  
Give us back our eyes.  
Give us back our screens.  
Or else.**

Be forewarned. The little kit beavers and the yearlings emerging from our film schools will no longer be content to wait for an opening. They will no longer be content to go away to other

**François Miron:** Experimental film deals with inner space. Perception. Imagination. Rather than outer space.

**Cinema Canada:** *Who do you make films for?*

**François Miron:** I think the general public can understand my films. Anybody can. But I make films for myself. If I like my film then it's O.K. If not, I don't care. Others are trying to do what they see on TV.

**Cinema Canada:** *What about video?*

**François Miron:** No to video. Film is not dead for me.

**Cinema Canada:** *How much did your film cost to make?*

**François Miron:** \$1,200.00. Concordia contributed \$300.

**Cinema Canada:** *Any other help?*

**François Miron:** Concordia was getting a special deal at the NFB for processing but that was axed because of outside pressure... (PAUSE then angrily...) Listen, I could make a great film for \$5,000.

**Cinema Canada:** *What are you going to do with the \$500.00 prize money that the NFB has donated?*

**François Miron:** Well, right now I'm concerned about the broken window. I think they expect me to pay for it. But I guess I'll pay the rent and make another film.

**Cinema Canada:** *What about the future?*

**François Miron:** Maybe I'll get into special effects and keep on making experimental films...

At that point I ordered another round.

So where does this leave the future of our beaver colony? As François Macerola suggested at the student festival awards presentation, these film students from so many schools across our nation do indeed manifest a wonderful reflection of our country and our cinema. The schools seem to act as a replacement for a national film school and have a history of turning out competent and original filmmakers. They, along with the NFB's longstanding and continuing support for new, young cinema and the cinema of experimentation and formation, do combine to create the possibility of the continuance of a unique Canadian voice and vision. But is it enough? I fear not. The pressures that permit our cultural institutions to yield to commercial and market orientations instead of visionary ones work against the viability of our National Cinema. Unless...Unless a definite programme is immediately put in place to create massive funds at the CBC, Radio-Canada, Telefilm, SGC, TVO, OFDC etc. and at the Astrals and Alliances of this land to develop our ocean of young talent, then what do we have to look forward to? The death of hope? The death of Canadian cinema?

Unless the private, public and governmental sectors can guarantee that they will support the next wave then there will be no audience. There will be no creators. There will be no need for culture. Or private sectors. Or public sectors. Let's form a film school in Winnipeg. Let's create a training centre in

**Cinema Canada:** *Did you know you were going to win?*

**François Miron:** I was certain.

**Cinema Canada:** *How so?*

**François Miron:** Well I had seen all the other films.

**Cinema Canada:** *You didn't like anything?*

**François Miron:** No, they were all bad. Without form or intention. Boring. Truthless.

**Cinema Canada:** *Do you like anything? Anyone? Any influences?*

**François Miron:** I like Bruce Elder. Michael Snow. Structuralists...Others.

**Cinema Canada:** *What about Varda. Akerman. Glass?*

**François Miron:** These people make films for intellectuals.

**Cinema Canada:** *What is an "experimental" film?*

Montreal. Let's give \$61,000,000.00 to the 61 filmmakers represented at this year's Student Festival. There will be at least a dozen great films to come out of it. Let's do something...

**PETER WINTONICK'S TOP TEN 1986 STUDENT FILMS**

(There really should be a top 40 or a top 60 because I think all the entries had something interesting to say about time and space but time and space prohibit...)

**1. 4X Horizontal 4X Vertical** by François Miron of Concordia

If for no other reason than the fact that François took the time to smash out the projection booth's window when his film started without the sound makes this filmmaker the one to watch.

2. Any film by any young woman filmmaker. Without meaning to be patriarchalistic, paternalistic, generalistic or realistic I was struck by the originality and playfulness and political savvy of many of the films that I saw. When the credits rolled up (if creeping credits could be afforded) then invariably the directors and the technical crew were women. I especially loved Lynne Stopkewitch's **The \$3.00 Wash and Set** a funny romp through the mind set of a 1963 beauty salon and France Longtin's **À votre service** a film about the frustrated fantasy life of a waitress. Jacqueline McClintock's **Porter & Sabu** was also evocative. This is promising.

3. All those funny short films from Concordia University. I don't know what has got into people these days but there

were some pretty funny cinematic jokes pulled on the audience that seemed to work in the short format. Canadian comedy is alive and kicking. **Faustus Bidgood** has led the way. These filmmakers will follow.

4. All the films from Simon Fraser University. **Doin' the Shuffle With My Baby** by Richard Gutter; **Golden Age** by Jeff Carter; **In Circles** by Craig Lane; **Metastasis** by Wilhelm Dahm and Don Alexander; **The Old Ball Game** by Lane Kuchuiran; **Skyline 505** by Rob Groeneboer; **Triptych** by Bev Brigham. They all have a particularly intelligent and grubenesque feel to them. (Patricia Grubens is a west coast film person). These films along with those from UBC and Vancouver's Emily Carr School of Art all point to a new Canadian cinema based on the nurturing rhythms of Pacific nature. These people are close to the beaver colony.

5. The political films from Queen's University in Kingston. Who would have guessed that this quiet University known more for football players and big drunks when I was in college would be producing the most significant political statements at the festival. **Mediashun** by Martha Rudden ripped apart the illusion of the media and its treatment of important issues through an examination of America's coming war in Nicaragua. **Fruits of Fascism** by Catherine Needham, C. Defates, 'E.D.' Souza and P. Segal is a documentary film examining how we Canadians are implicated with repressive regimes around the world through the simple act of buying food.

6. The dramatically literate films from York, Ryerson and Windsor. There must be something about the air in Southern Ontario...all that Detroit smog and Buffalo media drifts overhead, combining with CBCistic aesthetics and filtered through the vision of today results in some pretty good stuff. Most impressive was Mark Forler's stylistic **Passion and Gasoline** about a pyromaniacal butcher shop clerk who falls for the boss's girlfriend and **In Case We Survive** a Can-U.S. comedy from Glenn Warner at Windsor U.

7. **Buston Keater** a very accomplished piece of animation done on a shoestring by Pierre M. Trudeau of Concordia. (No, not His brother).

8. All of those filmmakers who could not afford the ten dollar entry fee.

9. All of those films not nominated. Do not despair. A lot of great films from **Citizen Kane** on up (or down) have not won certain awards. Try again. It's like a lottery.

10. All of the nominated films which did not win awards. Awards are silly. But if anyone is really upset write me a self addressed stamped note and I'll send you my own award. Here, just fill in the blank.

**THE "REAL" AWARDS OF THE 1986 CANADIAN STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL**

The jury, consisted of D.John Turner of the National Film Archives in Ottawa, Jean-Michel Ausseil from the Directors Fortnight in Cannes, and Wendy J. Tilby a filmmaker from Vancouver whose

short film **Tables of Content** won the official competition at the Montreal World Film Festival. Privately they thought generally that there was a certain lack of originality and classicism to this year's crop but when I asked them at the press conference if there was any hope for the future of Canadian cinema judging from the films they had just spent five days watching they thought that there was very good work being done in the nation's film schools and indeed the future was bright. Let's hope so. With François Macerola of the NFB present to offer \$500 to each of the winners the following awards were given:

- Norman McLaren Award* (Best Film) (\$1,000 offered by the NFB) **Fashion 99** by Karen Firus, (UBC)
- Best Fiction* **Passion and Gasoline** by Mark Forler (York)
- Best Animation* **Buston Keater** by Pierre M. Trudeau (Concordia)
- Best Documentary* **Mediashun** by Martha Rudden, Richard Lines, Patrick Moore (Queen's)
- Best Experimental* **4X Horizontal 4X Vertical** by François Miron (Concordia)

The jury also decided to give four special mentions to:

- À votre service** by France Longtin (Concordia)
- Porter & Sabu** by Jacqueline McClintock (Concordia)
- Skyline 505** by Rob Groeneboer (SFU)
- Untitled** by Cathy Parke (Emily Carr College of Art)

Congratulations  
and  
Thanks to

JILL CLAYBURGH  
in  
MILES TO GO...

Starring

ROSEMARY DUNSMORE

as  
CYNTHIA

MIMI KUZYK

as  
SUZANNE

TOM SKERRITT

as  
STUART BROWNING

Featuring

Music by

Edited by

Production Designer

Director of Photography

CYNDY PRESTON  
ANDREW BEDNARSKI  
PETER DVORSKY

KEN WANNBERG

PARKIE SINGH

ANNE PRITCHARD

RENÉ VERZIER

Co-Producer

ROBERT BAYLIS

Executive Producer

DORIS KEATING

Produced by

MURRAY SHOSTAK

Teleplay by

BEVERLY LEVITT  
&  
STUART FISCHOFF

Story by

BEVERLY LEVITT

Directed by

DAVID GREENE



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5800 AVENUE MONKLAND, MONTREAL, QUE., CANADA H4A 1G1 TEL. (514) 483-6074