

E A S T E R N W A V E

by Chris Majka

Well the first snow has come and gone, the leaves are all off the trees and the Snow Buntings are returning to the fields from their summer homes in the Canadian Arctic. There's no doubt about it anymore - we're definitely embarking upon another winter.

Fleeing the grey skies and the dropping temperatures are a good portion of the Salter Street Films crew. Leaving the rest of us looking anxiously south, they are now on location in Argentina preparing to begin shooting **Normanicus**. On the heels of **South Pacific 1942**, **Seige**, and **Def Con 4**, **Normanicus** is next in their series of slash, gouge and come-out fighting survival flicks. It is set in Switzerland and involves some scientists from the CERN nuclear facility who are inadvertently sent back to the year 60 AD. They meet the indigenous Celtic population as well as the Roman occupiers and the melee begins. **Normanicus** is perhaps the first film to have dialogue in both Celtic and Latin.

Partly funded through Telefilm, **Normanicus** employs cast and crew from both Cana-

da and Argentina and equipment from Miami. It is being shot on location in San Martin de los Andes in the west of Argentina, an area which looks appropriately rustic for first-century Geneva - something which contemporary Switzerland does not. While Paul Donovan directs this one, his brother Michael is staying firmly Halifax-bound beginning post-production on **The Codco Show**, the six-part television series which recently wrapped in Halifax.

Also flying off to warmer climes (is there a trend here?) is Domsday Studio's Ramona MacDonald. She's just recently returned from an initial trip to Ras El Khaimah, one of the seven member states of the United Arab Emirates, casting and scouting locations for her film **Golden Sand**, **Silver Water**, a romance set in the Persian Gulf in the 1870s. Funding for this project is being developed partly through the United Arab Emirates who have built the lavish Ajman Independent Studios with their petrodollars and are looking for projects for it. Canadian filmmakers take note! The animation unit of Doms-

day, in the guise of Pat Colp, has started work on the CBC's **Sesame Street**. She told me that they wanted something with an East Coast flavour so she has a cast of sculpins and squid telling the story.

Maritime winters don't scare everyone off, however. A small core of us believe that experiencing snow, sleet, sea-smoke, and "slob" is the only way to grasp the "essential" nature of the East Coast character. Among the converts is a Dutch company called Film Productions Orthel which is preparing itself for a two-month on-location shoot in Cape Breton in the dead of winter. They are making a feature film called **Mind Shadows** based on a book of the same name which involves the story of a Dutch couple who retire to a small village in Canada. The quietly paced drama of the film develops with the realization that the husband has Alzheimer's disease and the effect that this produces upon him and his wife. Director Heddy Honigmann read the novel and was inspired to write a screenplay of it and to involve Dutch producer Rolf Orthel. It is being shot in 35mm in both Dutch and English with funding from Dutch television and a possibility of Canadian involvement. They are also seeking Canadian theatrical distribution for the film. On this coast Halifax's Red Snapper Films is serving as the Canadian terminus of the production with Chris Zimmer serving as Canadian co-producer, Lulu Keating helping with casting, and Gary Swim from the Atlantic Filmmakers' Co-op scouting locations.

Another feature being currently shot in Cape Breton (did Dan Petrie start a fad here with **The Bay Boy**?) is Robert Frank's **There Ain't No Candy Mountain**. Frank, equally known for his documentary photographs and for his films, is a part-time resident of Mabou in Cape Breton. In these days of international film production he has put together a package which includes money from Switzerland, France, and Quebec companies. The film is being shot in both Cape Breton and New York City. The story involves a bummed out guitar player searching for an elusive guru of guitar makers. It is being produced by Claude Bonin, Suzanne Henon, Philippe Diaz and Ruth Woldburger, directed by Frank with a screenplay by Rudy Wurlitzer. All manner of intriguing rumours are circulating about various musical luminaries who will appear in this film, the star of which is Kevin T.O'Connor of recent **Peggy Sue Got Married** fame.

Another feature, long in planning, is Bill MacGillivray's

Picture Plant production, **Life Classes**, which recently wrapped in Halifax after six weeks of shooting. Filmmaker Ken Pittman, in town from Saint John's to work on **Life Classes** told me he was hurrying back to "the rock" to continue pre-production work on **Finding Mary March**, the "almost shot it last year, I'll shoot it this year" feature he has been working on. Rumour is that after a dazzling cinematic debut, **Life Classes** lead, Jacinta Cormier, is also going to appear in **Finding Mary March**.

Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Cinema, Halifax's home of the eclectic, eccentric, electric and occasionally ecstatic in terms of cinema, has been looking for new and more spacious quarters for some time and a new situation in the old Keith's brewery seemed to be hovering on the threshold of possibility. This deal has collapsed, however, and Wormwoods is once again beating the streets, measuring tape in hand. Proprietor/impresario Gordon Parsons, speaking regretfully of the dearth of situations available for a cinema, told me, "It's not as if I can move into a single-family residence, tear out a few partitions, and show films on the back wall." Suggestions are al-

ways welcome. Word has come to me of a new event being organized this year in the Atlantic area. A group called "Femmes en Focus" in Moncton is proposing to put together a festival of film and video showing works which are directed by women. The simple aim of the festival is "to allow us the pleasure of viewing videos and films which are rarely available here". Participation is similarly open with entries being invited in "fiction, documentary, experimental, animation, to short, medium and long features and to works in 16mm or video." The festival is slated to take place in Moncton from February 19-22, 1987 so keep your eyes open. More on this in the future.

In the Annapolis Valley, Hubert Schurman's Hollow Reed Productions is continuing work on an NFB on-production called **South Mountain**, which examines rural poverty in this agricultural region of the province.

So, as we wait for the Rough-legged Hawks and the Snowy Owls to sweep south out of the Arctic this winter we can take comfort in a reassuring whirr of film cameras which tells us that production is alive and well and carrying on into those long, cold winter nights.

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