



• Platinum Blonde

ness consultant, Philip Jackson, producer of **Music of the Spheres**.

The film has gone through a number of title changes, and has also kept Kiki busy in the cutting room with major revisions. The music, apart from the title song, is being produced in Toronto by John Doerr and Marcelle Amar, original members of the rock group, **Cano**. They are writing the principal and electronic sound tracks.

The principal actors are all non-actors. Few of the people involved with the film are in the business full-time, except for Sarda, Jackson and Frank Cole.

"The original idea of the film was to form a group of people, that is, technicians and performers who could work on a low-budget road picture where many locations are covered as part of the development of the film story," Evanchuck says. Everyone in the film has other work. "This is an experiment to see if people could make feature films and continue their regular lifestyle." Testimony to success is the fact that the film is now in post-production and all participants are still working and living their regular lives.

Platinum opens with the haunting sound of Hank Rivers yodelling from atop an old steam train. Hank, of course, is Canada's "Singing Soldier", Gene Autry. He plays Johnnie Doe's missing father. Johnnie is played by independent filmmaker Frank Cole, currently completing his own feature, **A Life**. Helene Lacelle plays the principal female character, Libbie Dough, who has numerous relationships throughout the film, always looking for Johnnie, or at least a reasonable substitute. In the substitute's role is Jacques Couillard, whose portrayal of John Smith, a lawyer, is convincing. Numerous other bit parts are taken by whoever Evanchuck could dig up to fill in at the time of the shoot.

Israel Shaked, of Transcontinental Pictures Industries, sees the film as a series of vignettes made into a feature, which he predicts will be popular with youthful viewers because of a similarity to rock videos.

Helene Lacelle and Jacques Couillard found the experience of working on the film both rewarding and enlightening. Says Couillard, "There are always problems when you work with the same people all the time. You know, sometimes you get fed up and think what's the point, but in the end you always know that you have been part of something new and unique in the film industry."

Paul Henry found it difficult to play himself. "When the camera goes on, you feel you have to play yourself, but at the same time, it's difficult to do because you always see yourself as being someone else." Indeed, at the shoot I attended, Paul's voice dropped two octaves and he sounded more like Johnny Cash than Paul Henry. As Evanchuck summed up, "There is a problem in working with non-professionals. They can't seem to be themselves. They all want to act and I don't want them to. I want real people, not actors."

Platinum has been in production for the past two-and-a-half years. It is the first film in the **War Trilogy** ("The war between men and women", one of the character's explains), which will also include **Mothers** and **Nervous Disorders**.

Evanchuck hopes that now the team is together, the rest of the trilogy will be completed within three years. Other Canadian actors in the cast are too numerous to mention, but all play crucial roles in this parody of middle-class relationships.

Doug Allan •

Outrageous Comeback

Turning the depressing, snowy streets of Toronto into the backdrop for real life narrative mixed with the lure of legend and myth, Richard Benner's classic **Outrageous** (1977), showed us at our most Canadian: dreaming of success, a success most often defined as more valuable for occurring south of the 49th parallel. Robin Turner (Craig Russell) wanted to "make it big" in New York doing his impressions of the silver screen's most remembered ladies, and Liza (Hollis McLaren) wanted to be "as famous" as Robin by creating fantastic stories out of her experiences in the mental health ward, where she was often a resident. Not really an unusual pair if you hang around Yonge Street long enough.

Like many stories that bring you memorable characters, **Outrageous** was due for a sequel. **Too Outrageous**, which recently finished shooting in Toronto and New York, catches up with Robin and Liza and their friends ten years later. They haven't quite 'made it' yet but they are still trying.

On the final day of shooting in Toronto the atmosphere on the set was an expected mixture of exhaustion and excitement. The scene is set in a diner on New York's Christopher Street on Halloween. Robin has just finished an anniversary show at the Jack Rabbit club, that quintessential gay bar whose clientele wear both leather and lace. Our Mr. Turner and his 'entourage' have come in from the street's madness for a bite to eat.

Director Richard Benner jokes with his cast. Like a leader on the final day of summer camp, he attempts to rally some energy from his group of eager but tired campers. One's eyes fall immediately on Craig Russell. Ten years ago he flirted with the fame Robin Turner hungers for. But after much celebrated 'bad boy' behaviour, and the tirade of bad press that followed, he ran from the brass ring to the safety of Germany's cabaret scene. The lights were a bit dimmer there and the fame, presumably, less costly.

He now sits demurely in the booth waiting for the cameras to roll. "Darling", he says, "this is why I never wear a fur coat in a scene unless I have to." I catch myself staring at his face, searching for signs of that famous fire and mischief, but all is in tow for the moment. "Too hot darling, glamorous, but not worth the torture in this heat." In an instant his eyes roll, and his mouth cuts a private grin. There is no mistake - this is for the benefit of my smuggled camera.

In addition to Hollis McLaren and Russell the cast is a pleasant reunion of many of the **Outrageous** originals, including David McIlwraith as Bob, Robin's leather-clad agent. This time around the picture's focus is no longer predominately on Robin. The Liza

character has been developed and her individual struggle to lead a fully integrated life, in spite of that bag full of prescription drugs, brings a fuller sense of drama to the sequel. We know these characters. We can almost imagine how their lives have continued in that Manhattan loft.

In spite of all the sequel's new twists and turns, the film's success will be due to the metamorphic Craig Russell's ability to erase some of those bad memories of the post-**Outrageous** performance fiascos which are not always easy to forget. As an ardent fan, I remember sitting in the audience at the Royal York's Imperial Room in 1978, disappointedly watching as Russell tumbled off the stage. Any discussion of Russell becomes impossible without intersecting these unfortunate incidents. The ways in which the persona of 'Robin Turner' interweaves with the myths and stories that surround the 'real' Craig Russell approaches the uncanny in the new film.

In one scene, when Robin is about to sabotage a backer's audition for a Broadway show, his long-time friend and agent Bob (McIlwraith) tells him to "grow up". In the tradition of the 'comeback' - for which many of the Russell ladies were themselves famous - **Too Outrageous** could well prove to be the phoenix Craig Russell has the talent to navigate into effortless flight.

David MacLean •



photo: David MacLean

• Craig Russell - Too Outrageous!