



ATLANTIC  
FESTIVAL  
ATLANTIQUE

# MOONSNAILS, TAKE TWO

*Due to a lay-out error, two paragraphs in Chris*

*Majka's "The Moonsnails Invade" (Cinema Canada, January, No. 148) were switched. Our apologies to Mr. Majka. The following is how the skewed portion of the article should have read.*

by Chris Majka

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The same evening the Wormwoods featured Michael Brun's **Deep Sea Conspiracy**. It was shot on the south shore of Nova Scotia around Chester under the working title of **The Puracone Factor**. It is a thriller/adventure film with a relatively high-budget for this region (in the vicinity of \$2 million). The plot concerns Kate Simpson, an oceanographic researcher studying communication in Orca (Killer) whales. A naïve scientist, she doesn't realize that sinister wheels are turning behind her back. Returning from a three-month stint on a Navy frigate, where she has been sent to test some of the results of her research, she finds her institute closed, her boyfriend gone and her whale vanished. The credible (at least to the 'escapist' clientele that the film is aimed at) plot leads us from luxury yachts to Politbureau backrooms to the Soviet fishing fleet to, at last, the wreck of the *Fury* in which evil plots having to do with the miracle substance 'Puracone' are being hatched. The film has clever sections, some complex underwater special effects, a passable mechanical whale, and is well shot. The villains are just a bit too one-dimensionally villainous and the plot strains credulity at times but it's entertaining, suspenseful and, despite a murder or two thrown in to quicken the pulse, never particularly violent. In the company of a box of popcorn and a good friend it's not a bad way to spend a late night. Patricia Talbot in the lead role of Kate is intelligent, charming and succeeds in making her character believable and at times even captivating. There are also good cameo performances by John Dunsworth as Mark and Susan Stackhouse as Peggy.

young musician of questionable talent on the trail of Elmore Silk, a legendary gu-tarmaker hiding in the wilds of Cape Breton. Lots of nice ideas here and plenty of walcky offbeat opportunities with a cast that includes Tom Waites, Dr. John, Leon Redbone and Rita McNeil.

I'm sad to report that with all this potential talent the film goes nowhere. Frank seem tangled up with romanticized Jack Kerouac *On The Road* imagery. Neither the characters nor the plot ever assume any life — they seem like faded romantic caricatures of a bygone time. Waites is hopelessly miscast as a cigar-chewing urban fat-cat and Leon Redbone as a gun-toting hillbilly. We get precious little music from either of them and none of Waites' wacky **Down By Law** humour. Publicity material for the film tries to maintain that "the glue that holds the narrative line together is the music". Sadly, **Candy Mountain**'s unstuck.

In addition to these productions which could be termed 'Atlantic' in some sense or other, the festival also presented Atom Egoyan's **Family Viewing**, Patricia Rozema's **I've Heard the Mermaids**

Singing, John Smith's **Train of Dreams**, and Giles Walker's **The Last Straw** as an opportunity for local audiences and filmmakers to see some of this year's more-discussed films from other parts of Canada. I didn't make it to screening of **The Last Straw** but certainly all the others were received with keen interest.

A further 24 short films and 38 videos were screened at the festival.

Nigel Markham's and Charlie Tomlinson's **Albert** (neither cinematographer Markham nor actor Tomlinson want to claim credit as director) is a quirky, eccentric look at an odd character who crosses the border of sanity during a weekend-long soliloquy with his budgie. Adapted from the stage, it is coherent and disturbing but perhaps just a trifle too odd in its byzantinely convoluted dialogue.

In **Ballad of South Mountain** director Hubert Schuurman brings sympathy and sensitivity to his analysis of rural poverty in the Annapolis Valley. Never patronizing, he examines two families, involved in a program to help them acquire better housing, with substantial insight into their circumstances and culture.

Mary Jane Gomes and Emil Kolompark bring their interests in community issues and organizing to **Finest Kind**, a documentary which examines a fishing co-op in Petty Harbour, an outpost in Newfoundland. Clear in its analysis and varied in its portrayal, it is an important addition to films which examine the socio-economic circumstances of this region.

Ex-Cape Bretoner Stefan Wodoslawsky's NFB documentary **Give Me Your Answer True** about ex-Nova Scotian Donald Sutherland received its world premiere at the Festival. Shot over a period of five years, and complete with clips from scores of films Sutherland has been involved in, it is a warm, intimate, humorous, sometimes rambling, sometimes insightful look at one of Canada's best-known sons. Wodoslawsky treats his subject with affection and irony, with admiration and candor. It is an entirely successful and entertaining documentary.

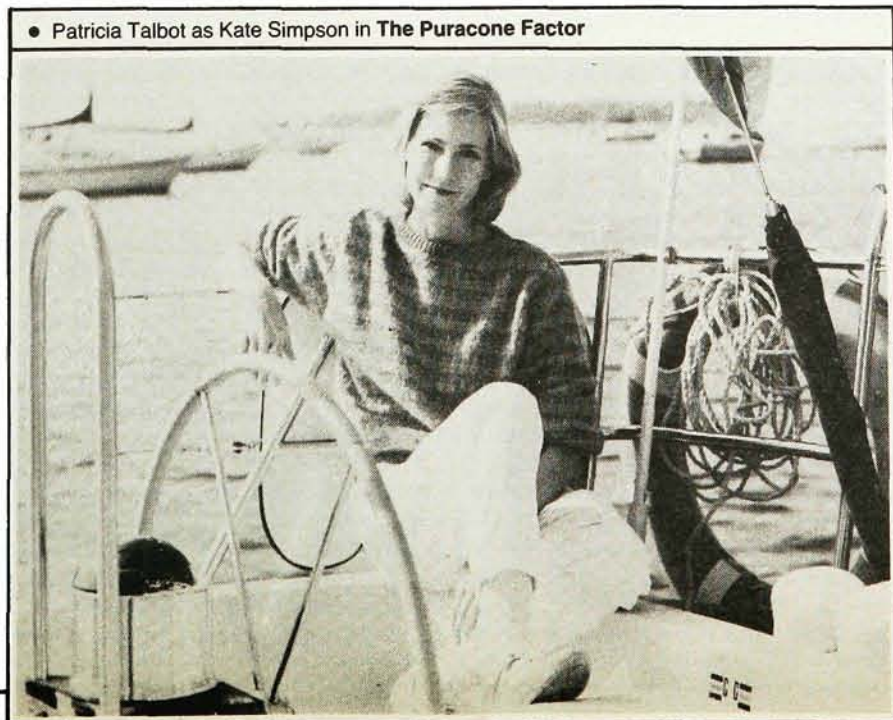
**John Nesbitt-Sculptor** is Neal Livingston's portrait of a talented, yet strangely remote artist, who lives with his wife, painter Ann Richardson, in rural Cape Breton. There is a curious quirkiness to these figures as if, after all the years they have spent in the remote wilds of the province, their personalities had melted into one indistinguishable unity. Yet Livingston never quite grasps this. As a result, despite certain occasional insights, we never really are able to discern the impetus which drives their life and their art.

Fred Hollingshurst has directed a fine historical documentary called **The Last Chinese Laundry: The Chinese in Newfoundland**, a genuinely captivating ethnographic film telling a little-known story of some of the immigrants to Newfoundland as well as charting the ascendancy and passing of a traditional institution of early Canadian communities.

Glen Walton's **The Nova Scotia Song** is a documentary of the career of folklorist Helen Creighton, collector of, amongst many others, the "Farewell to Nova Scotia" song. Helen Creighton's voice is strong and clear in her recollections and there is some evocative camera work using historical photos. However, the presence of folksinger Clarey Croft as a sometime dry interviewer and sometime buccaneer singer is cumbersome and distracting. Croft's questions are turgid and seem to get in the way of Ms. Creighton rather than assisting her in her tales.

**The Pass The Hat Disappearing Hat Trick** is a short film by Kimberlee MacTaggart looking at Toronto street entertainers. It is pleasant and entertaining but lacking an insightful edge.

**Au Rythme du courant** by Pamela Gallant is an Acadian whimsy that is delightful and leaves one feeling as if awakening from a dream which has finished too soon!



• Patricia Talbot as Kate Simpson in **The Puracone Factor**

The last night of the festival brought out a capacity crowd to the Hyland to see Robert Frank's first fully-scripted drama **Candy Mountain**. Frank, well known as a documentary filmmaker and photographer, teamed up with Rudi Wurlitzer of the nickelodeon family, to write a semi-autobiographical tale about Julius, a