

Final examinations: 1988 student films

Student filmmakers (like student broadcasters) are in a unique position with respect to the rest of the industry. Free from commercial (and one would hope ideological) constraints, they can explore subjects and techniques that are given short shrift by the 'mature' industry. Therefore it's not surprising that the best student filmmakers offer some of the most innovative and incisive images to be found, even as they learn the basics of their craft. *Cinema Canada* sent Jamie Gaetz, Calvin Wharton, Helen Lee and Bruce McDonald to year-end student film screenings at, respectively, Concordia University (Montreal), Emily Carr College of Art and Design (Vancouver), York University (Toronto) and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (Toronto).



Waking-Up is hard to do. Jacques Millet explores changing sexual mores

Concordians cultivate craft

Some people find the idea of watching student films three nights in a row as appealing as the idea of being placed on a medieval torture rack. But I'm not one of them. Maybe it's perverse, but I do find pleasure in the exuberance and creative energy of these films. And as Don McWilliams (who presented the Norman McLaren award for outstanding achievement in animation to Jean Pierre Morin and Pierre Paul Clément) said, this is the one and only time a filmmaker will know such freedom to use the medium in any whimsical manner desired. Certainly, at their

worst, student films can be blankly derivative, self-indulgent, silly, trite, and ultimately just plain tedious to sit through. But at their best, these films can display a stimulating level of innovation and ingenuity, and they can deal with topics that no commercial filmmakers and few independents ever would.

Concordia University's Fifteenth Annual Year End Screening of Student Films provided both tedium and stimulation. Once again, whether consciously or not, the best films were saved for the last of the three-night event. In total, 64 films were shown, which represents approximately one-half of the submissions.

The problem I had with last year's program was a tendency towards slickness. There was a lot of gloss with little substance. While a certain degree of derivativeness is permitted, and maybe even expected from a student filmmaker, there was little originality and experimentation in evidence and it was also difficult to discern whether the filmmakers had any cognizance at all of a larger social reality, one beyond the hermetic world of film school.

This year's program provided more variety, although there seemed to be a prevalence of blood and gore. Even the animated films were filled with images of blood, spurting and gushing.

Several films incorporated difficult technical stunts (always impressive to see at this level). Most of these films were done with assistance from the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) which seems to be providing an increasing amount of assistance of one kind or another to these student productions.

For example, Robert Paquette made his fascinating and delightful experimental short *Vincent Van Gogh* with a completely new technique he devised at the NFB. *Derniers instants* by Brigitte Huppen was also produced

with help from the NFB, as was Guylaine Dionne's *Last Call*, both of which have a professional level of technical achievement.

For some reason, the animated films always seem to be more fully realized than the live action. Perhaps that is because they are shorter in length, and often depend upon a final punchline, which assures the message gets across. Often, with the live action films, I am left wondering at the end what it is I am supposed to be thinking or feeling.

Many of the animated films used the claymation technique. Most memorable of these were Christian L'Ecuuyer's *Docteur Inc.* and Joe Spagnuolo's *Fairytale*.

Other traditionally done animated films that enjoyed include Denise Tremblay's *Low Blow*, Cilia Sawadogo's richly coloured *Début d'une faim*, and Sandra Eber's 75-second *Silent Screams*. Pierre Sylvestre combines good animation with effective use of thriller genre techniques to make his great little film, *Crépuscule*. Catherine Morin Marchand's *Les Aventures de M. Spin* is inventive in its use of sound.

Aside from Paquette's *Vincent Van Gogh*, there weren't many experimental films shown this year, which seemed strange. Some of the best productions on last year's program were the experimentals. *Nivis* by Simon Goulet is about snow, and snow removal, a major part of Montreal reality. It is interesting, technically accomplished, but perhaps a bit too long, which often tends to be the problem I have with experimental work.

The highlights of the event seemed all to come within the last hour of the program on Saturday night. Peter Wellington's film *Pool* really is about the game of pool. It is slick, but only in the most positive sense of the word. Scripting, casting, editing, and camera work all come together to make one of the tightest, most professional, and funniest, films presented this year.

Arto Paragamian, who made the weirdly wonderful *The Fish Story* last year produced one of the best films again this year. *Across the Street* again deals with immigrants newly arrived to Canada. In its lyricism, humour and mood, the film is evocative of Jacques Tati, but that is not to say it is imitative.

Le Bonheur et Rita Rose-en-talle is Jean-François Pothier's ambitious "work in progress." He did *Clochard dans l'âme* last year, another ambitious and interesting work. *Le Bonheur* employs some fantastic technical feats and was also produced with NFB assistance. It is a fantasy about an

PHOTO: ANTHONY BECK

isolated community that discovers a new word, "le bonheur" (happiness) and the adventures and characters two young people encounter on their search for its meaning.

The visually spectacular 12-minute documentary of the outdoors by Benoit Jacob, *Les Gambadeurs* has footage I'm sure the most experienced wildlife photographers would envy.

Walking Up is a 12-minute narrative based on the urban folktale about a guy who wakes up one morning after a brief sexual encounter to find a message scrawled in lipstick on his mirror "...I tested positive and so will you." With good scripting, acting, and editing, Jacques Millet has created an entertaining film about changing sexual mores.

Julia Petrov cleverly juxtaposes sound track and visuals in her "documentary vignette" *Keep Off the Grass*. It has an important message in its satirization of that modern suburban preoccupation, "the lawn," and the lengths people go to maintain it, including using potentially harmful chemicals.

Six Super-8 films were included this year (two more than last year) which numbered among some of the more interesting productions. Don Schiedel's *Gilbert Doesn't Really Need New Glasses* compensated for the inconsistencies of Super-8 with terrific humour, some nice camera work and editing. One of the most absorbing and alarming works of the entire program was Daniel Cross's 10 minutes of documentary footage *Danny Boy*. Cross follows Daniel Clavin, a 25-year-old "pyro-addict" who lives on the streets of Montreal with his dog. The world Cross captures is truly the underworld, one made up of partly demolished buildings, garbage dumps, and despair. Jim Lévesque accomplishes exactly what he set out to do in *Over the Summer*. Even though there is no narrative, this is one film where I had no problem getting the message about modern society and its nasty habits.

Almost all of the films shown at the Concordia event displayed intelligence and ingenuity. Certain films have some strong elements but, in my opinion, don't quite come together as a whole. The films I've mentioned here were those I felt worked, that is, there was a clear idea realized in an artistic and technically capable manner.

After three years of attending this event, and every year recognizing distinctly talented young filmmakers, I am left with one large and looming question, what happens to all this talent after graduation? I expect that very few of them plan to make it big here in Canada - to really make it in this business means going south. But if this is one school of several across Canada producing at least four or five talented writers, directors, producers, and technical people each year, one would wish there was a way to keep them working here.

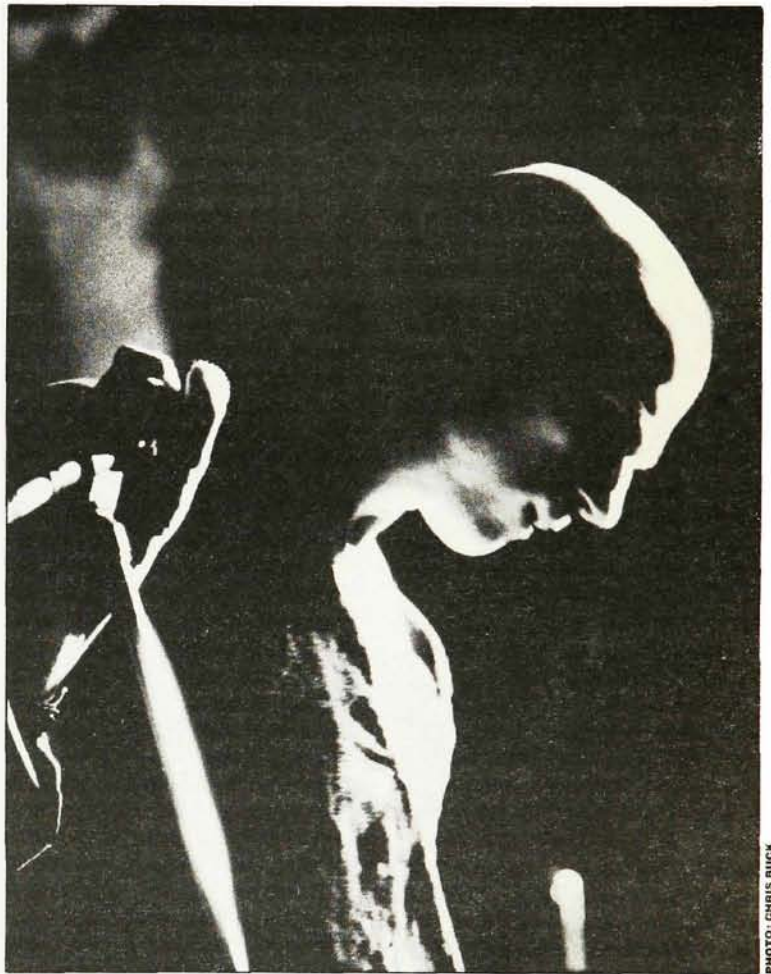
Jamie Gaetz •

Kelly's heroes rock the Ryerson screen

Year end at Rye High. The crunch is over for most of the students, but a few desperados still roam the hallways, slipping overdue essays into the cells of weary professors, gathering their wits for the final assault on the fine-cut of their fine-cut and, in what precious time remains before being released into the grim reality of forced labour in the booming Toronto film industry or local donut shop, these film school veterans are perhaps just taking a final stroll through their home for the last four years. A hairy-looking gentleman pounds his head on the doors of the school's film laboratory screaming, "Why me? Why me?" A girl with faraway eyes sits alone in her editing room, packing up her films and trophies, humming *Pomp and Circumstance* while I'm prowling the hallways of this renovated beer factory, trying to seek out the notorious Bruce Elder for some advice as to the whereabouts of the mythical Highway 61. Elder is off working on his new film somewhere, so Bruce the Younger is left to wander some more, finally ending up getting seduced by Linda Lewis, chairman of the Photographic Arts Department, into looking at the recent harvest of student cinema. I don't object. I'm always looking for new things to steal.

Perhaps it is the nature of the viewing experience that affects how one reads and responds to a film, because after looking at the fourth-year films transferred to video in a small private room and then getting caught up in the buzz of an audience as we screened Professor Jim Kelly's first-year class of final films, I thought my feelings may be swayed by silence or chaotic exuberance. That is part of it, but in terms of sheer excitement, thematic treatments, cinematic innovation, and cheap laughs, the first-year students blew the fourth-years out of the water. You may call them punks, purists, bloody students, idealists or - at worst - artists, but I'll call this motley crew, Kelly's Heroes, after their instructor and mentor, smiling Jim Kelly.

Most of the fourth-year films, running on the average about 25 minutes in length, picked up on country rocker Steve Earl's lament, "No matter which way the wind blows, its always cold when you're alone." Francis 'The-Killer-Inside-Me' Litzinger may have created his main character with Earl's yearning for human contact, but propelled him to do something about it. His film *Erebus* is a stunning black and white film noir study of a happy-go-lucky degenerate sex killer who accepts the urban shadowland for what it is: savage, alien and



Neal Arbick of *Neon Rome* in Samantha Sargent's *We Never Found Civilization*

perverse, and so equating himself with his environment, our hero feels happily normal in how he spends his time. The night stalker tells us that he is too smart to get caught as he abducts his victims, men or women, off Nigger Alley, takes them home, ties them up, fucks them, and kills them. Litzinger, like Warren Zevon, may claim that his character is just an excitable boy, but feminists and the meek-that-shall inherit-the-earth would demand castration of the director after seeing this film. *Erebus* is a tight, well-narrated sicko film, and Litzinger would be a prime candidate to film Thomas Berger's novel *Killing Time*, a story about a psycho killer who gets caught but explains himself rather well.

In Tom Scott's film, *Runaway*, we are introduced to a teenaged boy who would be easy prey for Litzinger. Leaving behind a morose, alcoholic father, the kid wanders around Toronto's downtown night zoo, with a few scraps of loose change and no direction home. Augmented by flashy Slo-Mo step-printed sequences of our hero moving through the neon streets and a confessional overly poetic narration track directed at his poor excuse for a father, we watch this suburban innocent as he tries to

survive out on the streets. Scott does a nice job, in the William Friedkin tradition, of evoking a hellish atmosphere, but his character remains distant from us and in the end we are craving some medicine for melancholy but it does not come. That's life in the Big City.

At *The Sound Of The Tone*, by Bill Sweetman, is about a young film hipster's relationship with his answering machine. A dull narrative, involving a girlfriend, some unpaid phone bills and a nagging mother, evolves from the messages left on the machine over the weeks or months of the hipster's sporadic absences. Each time he comes home, usually from exotic film festivals, the hipster turns on the machine and listens to the latest installment of the telephone drama. A good five-minute concept stretched into the pacing of *Wavelength* but without the suspense, and without the laughs.

Talk about lonely; Mark Hajek, in his film, *Will*, follows the adventures of a young man in a coma. He is a complete vegetable, hooked up to life-support systems, his body stricken down in the prime of his life, but his mind remaining clear and active, and able to hear what is going on around him. His heartbeat is his only means of communication to his suffering girlfriend and

PHOTO: CHRIS BUCK

his jaded father, who has given up hope for his son. Just as our hero is beginning to feel the first stirrings of his body on the rebound, the decision is made to pull the plug on him. A little too precious at the outset, Hajek manages, through voice-over and beautifully captured flashbacks, to guide us into a surprisingly gut-wrenching finale.

Bursting out of the I'm-so-lonely-I-could-die theme, Neal St. Clair serves up a family of zany characters who could live easily in the neighbourhood of *Pee Wee's Playhouse* and tells the story of a little boy who helps his uncle test out one of his magical inventions. *Kipper Breakfast*, with its flashy opening title sequence and its superb art direction, has Uncle dress up his nephew to resemble an astronaut on acid and with his remote control video device sends our little hero out into the world like a guided missile, seeking fun. He experiences the high drama of a frog jumping contest, the beauty and grace of Scottish caber tossing, the manic energy of a Japanese game show and finally, after a little difficulty with the controls, brings it all back home again. St. Clair weaves together the cartoonish portrayal of the family characters with documentary footage of what the little boy sees on his big adventure with delightful results, but has a tendency to let some of the sequences go on a little long, and loses sight of the kids' reaction to what he sees. Any *Pee Wee* fan would love a *Kipper Breakfast*.

With a script by Michal Golinski, and with his own stunning photography, Mirosław Baszak explores the uneasy silences in a deteriorating relationship entitled *Blind Love*. A brooding painter, who will only be happy when he is rich and famous, quietly begins to unload his responsibilities and his commitment to his live-in girlfriend, who is slowly going blind. The painter, like most art weasels, figures that he will have a better chance at success without the handicap of a helpless dependent and decides to dump her in a cowardly way. But the tables are turned and the focus on the girl's blindness is shifted to the painter's more tragic, emotional blindness. Rich in metaphor, and assured in his direction, Baszak explores a painful landscape with a subtle, elegant touch, revealing the ties that blind us in love and the kind of will necessary to escape when it becomes a ball and chain. A little too earnest at times, the drama could have used a few more humorous moments to make it really fly.

While most of the fourth-year films were executed with precision, style and grace, they seemed to lack savy and verve. The first-year rookies, or Kelly's Heroes, as they have been dubbed, opened up with all guns blazing and showed great promise in the humour department. Kevin Lafferty's short piece, *Candy Darling* delivers a Buster Keatonish deadpan examination into the powers of suggestion offered up by television's Pepsi Pimp, Michael Jackson, to a lonely Monkees-loving couch

potato. Even Travis Bickle would laugh at this film. Leif Stout proves that chivalry is not dead in *Freddy And The Fair Game*, revealing the true nature of the game between a subway gentleman, and a beautiful maiden who drops her handkerchief. Executed with great charm and a sparkling wit, Stout takes us on an exciting chase that concludes with a wise observation on love and honour. The very best of the comedies is James Flaherty's magnificent treatment of two yuppies on a first date who become victims of their own superficiality. *Big Elvis Mouth* takes Murphy's Law to its comic edge and the result is what you might expect if you crossed David Byrne of the Talking Heads with Dr. Frankenstein.

Trying for a little tenderness, Bridgette Brunner looks at the best and the worst moments of a man's life within a fugue-like structure, in her snappy short film, *Stretto*. Brunner's command over her visual compositions and her cutting style is impressive. Her pursuit of the many combinations of sex and politics make her an exciting talent to watch for. Leaving out the sex and going straight for the political jugular, Karen Yarosky delivers the bad news about our crumbling society and our polluted world in the short, *Permissible Risk Condition*. A stirring sound track rallies our desire to know thy enemy.

Love and loneliness plagues the best of us and while Brian Altvasser in his film *Prisoner In Disguise* and Maureen Murney in her short, *States and Chances* deal with heartache admirably, the bravest expression of the strange world of loneliness comes from Jill Battson in her piece entitled *A Film by Jill Battson*. A woman, just turned 30, goes to a bar for a drink and meets the male version of herself. He follows her home, and while she can lock him out of her home, she catches him looking through the window at her and then finally, looking out of the mirror at her. Mixing sexual ambiguity, Dr. Caligari sets and surrealistic spacings, Battson offers us some very strange fruit, that seem to expose some raw nerve endings in her characters and in her audience.

The love triangle rears its tragic head in Liz Copeman's adaptation of Alice Munro's short story *The Painted Door*. Copeman focusses on a married woman's adulterous relationship with her husband's friend, and handles the dynamics with haunting sensitivity and builds inevitably to that simple twist of fate where the woman who loves two men runs out of choices all at once. The original score by Kitaro carries the drama like petals on the water and establishes a mood that is in sharp contrast to the electric heroin circus captured by Samantha Sargent in her short rockumentary, *We Never Found Civilization*, where we meet the notorious underground Queen St. band, A Neon Rome. Sargent focusses in on the leader of the band, known only as The Leprechaun Dog, depicting him as a cross between Charles Manson and a

14-year-old girl. With raw, almost pornographic-looking performance footage of the band on stage, a hilarious interview and vignettes of the band working in the recording studio, Sargent manages to steal the soul of the 'sons of rock'n'roll.'

The self-reflexive, cinema-as-a-mirror and road-map-to-the-soul is delivered with the grace of the perfect golf swing in Jeff Stewart's *A Student Film*. Revolving shadows in a white room, choreographed camera moves and a refreshing bid for honesty add up to an Escher-like gem of a film. With a quieter, more subdued elegance, David Healey reflects on his thoughts on cinema and how it affects the viewer, in his own short piece simply titled, *Untitled*. It will be interesting to see whether these two explorers will continue to pursue this line of questioning and examination in future films or whether they will cop out and jump into straight-up narrative.

Taking his inspiration from the classic European cinema of Bergman and Bresson, Roman-Newbacher undertakes an ambitious chess match with Lady Death in his film, *The Parallax Check*. In this lonely northern land, littered with doubt and fear, our hero-killer knows the game well but doesn't count on Lady Death cheating. Newbacher presents a solid psychodrama that is well executed and carries glimmers of *Allman's Images*, and the forbidden territory of Polanski. As the lights come up in the screening room, the students stretch in their chairs and Jim Kelly looks about for the final presenter, in order to give him his grade. He calls for Dave Watts, the last name in the class alphabet, and receives no reply. About to mark him absent, with a failing grade for a no-show, the door bursts open and the hairy-looking gentleman I saw earlier in the day, pounding on the door of the lab, rushes in with his final film still dripping and flapping out behind him. He roars into the projection booth like the Tazmanian Devil. Dave Watts, no doubt. The screen lights up with his final first-year film, *An Exorcise In Self Reflection* and the class is treated to the hilarious struggle of Dave Watts, in a series of slapstick pratfalls and daring stunts, trying to finish his film against all the odds. The class roars their approval, each of them seeing a little bit of themselves in this raggedy student's desperate efforts to manoeuvre through the dangerous world of Ryerson production facilities, to bring his film in on time, with no budget. Like the rest of Kelly's Heroes, Watts makes the grade and steels himself for another three years of inspired insanity. Smiling Jim Kelly has seen it all before, but he has done a remarkable job with his first-year students. Congratulations. With everyone getting up to leave, I begin asking around for Elder again, and it is Dave Watts who tells me that Professor Elder lives out on Highway 61. Oh, well, I guess I'll find my own way.

Bruce McDonald ●

ECCAD graduates show promise

The recent graduate show at Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver featured 21 short films (including animation) as well as videos from students in the film program, and introduced several interesting young filmmakers.

One of the major surprises of the show was the amount of narrative throughout the three hours of film. Which is not a judgement, nor is it to say non-narrative film was absent. In fact, Amanda Forbis's *The Man and the Moon* used a mixture of animation and a grainy, silent-film look, to create an effective accompaniment to Debussy's "Claire de Lune." Another Forbis film, based on a journal kept over several years, examined the friendship of two women.

A number of the productions had anti-war messages or post-holocaust themes, such as *World Without End* by Jack Ferguson. This ambitious work had a relatively huge cast and developed an appropriate atmosphere, but dragged on a bit at times. The main points were made over and over again, as if the audience might possibly miss them. This, however, is the sort of difficulty that will likely be resolved as the filmmaker gains more experience.

In general, pacing was the main problem area in the program. Most of the rough spots could otherwise be forgiven due to budget restrictions and the sense that this was a show of work that is also a process of learning.

The slickest, most sensual (in terms of use of light and texture) of the films was Bill Hornecker's *Valley of the Moon*. It is a sort of science fiction film - without special effects - that tells the story of a young woman following the path of her explorer grandfather in a futuristic world governed by the Church.

Two films made under Cine Stir Productions had overtones of B-grade horror at its best. The first was a tongue-in-cheek tale of a man who keeps his dead wife in his apartment, refusing to acknowledge her demise, despite the complaints from neighbours about the stench. This funny and macabre piece was made by Kevin McBride. The second Cine Stir was a psychological terror tale called *Morton Institution for the Criminally Insane* by Michael Anthony Hills.

One of the most interesting films was David Vaisbord's *The Voyage of Herkules*. Not only was this piece humorous, but it also developed some tricky self-referential details - such as the young Herkules forever pushing the camera dolly uphill. Vaisbord's examination of the hero figure as goof comes across well.

The strongest animated films were by Tracy Lewis. Her *A Muse*, about a very bored character trying to amuse himself, was a clever and confident work that did not suffer from a pacing problem.

In most cases, cast and crews on the films came from friends, relatives and other students in the film program. Overall, the work showed ambition, great heart and great promise. Certainly we will be seeing more from many of these people in the future.

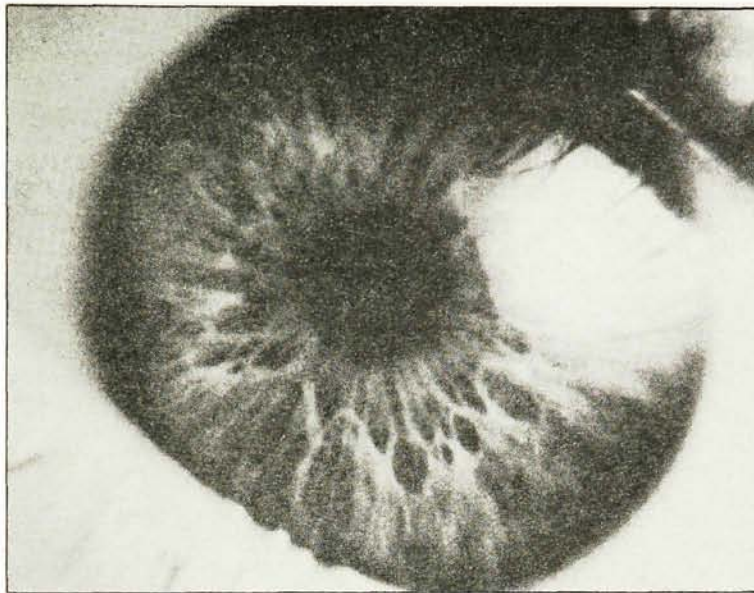
Calvin Wharton •

Shooting for fame at York

If opening speeches are to be believed, York film department head Evan Cameron's address to the throng of parents, students and other interested bystanders at the Royal Ontario Museum screenings of films by this year's graduating class, suggested the most valued guests that night were potential employers. The Industry: a mammoth but not impenetrable superstructure whose future inductees - the cream of the cream of the crop - await in this very room for the divine edict; does he have talent? Does he have it?

Only one gender was in question since, notably, all 11 shorts by the 12-person class of '88 were directed by men. The four-year York program, Cameron proudly noted, whittles away the film student body with each successive year, like so much excess flesh. This year's streamlined model - chock-full of youthful endeavour - offered style mavens all with an eye on the Industry. The "vacuum" of film school where innovation and personal expression are not only allowable but *expected* (if not in school, where *can* you take chances?) proved false. These kids want work.

In a humorous takeoff of Michael Apter's documentary, Peter Marshall's film *4Up* introduced the evening. The mini-narrative chronicles the York film school experience in four crisp vignettes: eager freshman, frustrated sophomore, diligent junior, cool senior. Perfect timing, (intentionally) sloppy camera work and a simple, 4-shot structure worked effectively, drawing shrieks of recognition from peers in the audience. Along with Tom Tennisco's *Merry Christmas, Daniel*, an animated send-up of indestructible toy robots and the Duracell commercial mini-genre, *4Up* handles humour unself-consciously and laughs at itself - a kind of achievement in the awkward, self-important student film.



The eyes have it for Drew Solodzuk's film *Wishes*

A couple of works were named "experimental" in the name of diversity, lack of narrative or both. Randy Lobb's *Waiting For Another Day* sought to improve the perceived deteriorating quality of music video. All sweeping camera movement and bleary blue tint, the piece is less about the materiality of the image than a callow portrayal of British pop posturing and atmospherics. *Odes* by Peter Jacobs offered the same play of "light, shadow and movement." Bracketing black and white montages of modern dance bits with solarized images of landscape, *Odes'* occasionally compelling moments also

slipped back into self-indulgence and techie jerking-off.

A Man, His Dog and the Woman is every bit as bad as it sounds. One of four longer works on the program, the poorly-directed lifestyle film about a career boy in the fast lane was literally painful to watch. "Never let a skirt tell you what to do" and other conceits pinpointed the one major flaw of undergraduate filmmaking: technical knowhow propelling empty-headed, even regressive projects of little redeemable value.

The documentary *Norman*, like the runaway



From Dale Hildebrand's *The Autumn Smiles*

docu-drama *Modern Age*, works in the same unthinking mode of underdeveloped ideas and no clear penetration of the subject. With an appropriately humanist bent, *Norman's* about a young achiever in Manitoba with Down's Syndrome. A "He's as good as us" sentiment pervades the film, preventing the very dissolution of the cripple/normal social dichotomy it seeks. Panels of experts, friends, co-workers are ushered in and cut 'n' spliced haphazardly between Norman at work, play and as interview subject. The mess ends at an emotional apex, a disjunctive string of *Norman's* quotables forging its manipulative, cut 'n' paste style.

With its superior production values, *The Autumn Smiles* is anything but amateurish. The longish narrative goes like this: a white rock/blues boy saves white girl from black pimp. They have a good time. Zack gets big break into music biz (her wish). "Keep Your Hands Off 'Cos She Be Mine" is rallying chorus (concert scene) but he gets killed by avenging black pimp anyway. She surmounts loss and is reborn into new life. For the director, Dale Hildebrand, the price of white, patriarchal politics with service and a smile means work, big and fast.

Drew Solodzuk was an anomaly in the bunch. His film, *Wishes*, probes the imagery like few films do, much less those by students. Oscillating between a young woman's questing memories and a neverland of snickering boy elves with a mysterious pied-piper (played by Solodzuk), the film locates a world of cuckoo clocks, mirrors (à la Cocteau's *Orphée*), and cheesy butterflies. A loaded, meticulous soundtrack both intimates and defamiliarizes the childhood fantasy/memory as something knowable but unattainable, articulate and ineffable. Although not without its flaws, the film stood apart as something not only different but sophisticated in intent. Intentionality being the most blatant feature of student filmmaking, Solodzuk's project marked a promising, even original talent. I hope he keeps working.

If *Wishes* was the most ambitious of the lot, *Channel 7* was the most successful. Directed by Mark Cook and Kevin Schjerning, the narrative combined daily domestic drama with an excursus on TV soaps and ads. Like *The Autumn Smiles*, *Channel 7* used professional actors and it shows - a prudent decision. The modular family - father, mother, teenage daughter and son - avidly watch TV commercials while ignoring the program altogether - which stars them in exaggerated soap opera roles. The initial premise thickens when these commercials, in a cunning caricature of the editing shorthand of TV ads, pervade and counterpoint the action. Experiences and interactions between family members are simulated twofold: by TV (the ads) and in it (the soap opera). This is clever, laughing and thinking at the same time. More students should do it.

Helen Lee •