

Last month when I sat down in front of my computer the Atlantic film industry was poised on the brink of a blizzard of production (pardon the metaphor - I'm starting to brace myself for the upcoming winter) and since then the storm has broken. Films such as Salter Street's *George's Island*, Picture Plant's *Vacant Lot* and the NFB's *Justice Denied* are squarely in the middle of production.

The Jim Jenson production of *Lighthouse Island - She's Special* has wrapped out at Peggy's Cove and translocated back to post-production facilities in Toronto. Although a few scenes remain to be shot these are night scenes and will be filmed somewhere on the Great Lakes - not quite the raging North Atlantic but then again, at night, who can tell the difference? Peggy's Cove will never be the same now that the swimming mermaids have left the shore and the fisherman with deer antlers no longer hangs out by the dock. I spoke with Art Director Ed Kotanen in Toronto who showed me photos of some of his lovely designs for the film and told me that shooting had gone smoothly. Can't wait to see this one.

Salter Street has done some preliminary shooting for its *Codco Show* in Newfoundland and principal production is slated to begin shortly here in Halifax. Not all the films hanging by a thread over the precipice of production have fallen in, however. The 21st century science fiction film *Atarelle Pacmaniens* scheduled to be shot this fall in New Brunswick has been postponed until next spring. The *Atlantic Festival Atlantique* has also come and gone with considerable fanfare and an outstanding line-up of films. More on this in a separate article.

The Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op suffered a setback when its magnificent eight-plate Steenbeck mysteriously caught fire one night, almost burning the entire work print of Luciano Lisi's *The Bell Ringers* with it. Resident Steenbeck expert and all-round whiz Paul Mitcheltree says he's never seen anything like that happen before, but then in the world of film anything can happen, eh? In any event the machine was insured and if co-ordinator Healthier Leveque can ever extract the money from the adjustors the Co-op will be back in business. In the meantime its catch editing space as catch can.

In the exhibition realm the much heralded Park Lane 8 cinemas, a new development by Famous Players, have finally opened. "Eight more screens!" I thought to myself, rubbing palms together in anxious anticipation of the cinematic gems which now might make their way to Halifax, especially since it was rumoured that one of these might be designated an "arts house" screen. Well in fact the programming, at least thus far, has been an almost verbatim duplication of the Famous Players screens at the Penhorn Cinemas over in Dartmouth and if one is carrying "arts house" fare I haven't been able to discern it. Hmmm. In addition Famous Players has closed both the Scotia Square Cinema, the largest in metro, and the Paramount 1 & 2 screens. Cineplex-Odeon has announced that it will open four new cinemas at the Maritime Mall in June of 1989. Guess I better get used to small rooms and tiny screens.

Elsewhere, though, there is a lively and diverse exhibition schedule. After playing co-hosts to the *Atlantic Festival Atlantique* both Wormwoods and the NFB are back in full swing. The NFB has completed its 15-year retrospective of the Atlantic Unit, *Take 15*, with screenings of *The Author of These Words*, *Alden Nowlan*, *In Love and Anger*, *Death in The Spring*, *A New World Below* and *Singlehanders*. They have also organized an eclectic series of international documentaries (including, for example, Bob Connolly's *First Contact* and Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams* - a couple of my favourites) which are screened on Thursdays at 5:30. Curious time but excellent films. The Dalhousie Art Gallery has also put together a fine series of films focusing on different directors. The Centre for Art Tapes made its contribution with a month-long exhibition of Tom Sherman's *Exclusive Memory*, a production of Vancouver's Western Front. It is described as a video installation featuring the artist in an intimate relationship with a computer-based, video sensing robotic entity of his own creation.

In the documentary sector Bill Skerrett, president of Skerrett Communications, has just released *The Appalachian Story*, the second in a series of four 50 minute videos that he is producing for the Atlantic Geoscience Society. The series, called the *Geology of Atlantic Canada* was initiated a couple of years ago with a production called *Mineral Wealth of Atlantic Canada*. Skerrett is currently in negotiation with several educational television networks he hopes will be interested in the series.

In the "You-have-to-go-away-to-make-it-big" department I note that one of Hollywood's current starlets, Leslie Hope, is a former Haligonian. Seen in Paul Almond's *Ups and Downs* and John Cassavetes' *Love Streams* she has recently hit the big times with lead roles in the David Stevens/Spencer Eastman film *Kansas*, Oliver Stone's *Talk Radio* and the United Artists release *It Takes Two*. Now who says we can't produce bankable talent down here in the Maritimes - and Ms. Hope is only 23-years old! Do you suppose an attractive film offer might lure her back to her old home town? Film producers, are you listening?

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