

budget and time constraints rushed it. This, combined with freak cold weather, often made the primary effort just "getting the thing done."

The result was some compromise as shown by the film's last scene shot on the final day of principal production. It was to have been a spectacular finale of special effects: a tug-of-war between the family and the lineman that results in total chaos - plaster falling, appliances flying through the air, sparks everywhere and a "zombie shot" of the surprised residents. But money couldn't be found for the extras needed and lack of time meant that Bauman couldn't get the coverage he wanted. A disappointing way to end production.

Even so, Bauman believes that the final product is essentially good. The characters and their relationships are developed fully and the story is well told. Ironically, he senses that its subtle humour, although not what he intended, is much like that of Mitchell's more nostalgic story.

Bauman feels positive about the opportunity that the film gave him to work with professionals. The Saskatchewan way often requires that filmmakers do it all on their own. Bauman appreciated the full team of professional support on *The Great Electrical Revolution*. Each department brought a wealth of talent and ideas that added to

the film's production values. Working with professional actors the calibre of Lewis Gordon, an Ontario actor who has spent 22 years with the Stratford Festival and whose credits include a guest lead in *The Campbells*, was the most positive aspect for Bauman. He quickly learned to value the input of the actors and often he found himself doing more supervising than directing.

For the trainees, it was an opportunity to work with professionals in a professional environment and to make valuable contacts. This practical experience allowed the Project to place four trainees on *The Last Winter*, a feature film being shot in Winnipeg. The Project's intent is to use fewer out-of-province professionals and to be able to rely on the growing pool of Saskatchewan talent.

With a series in the planning stage, there really seems to be hope for more work within the province. This is the heart of the Project and for that reason *The Great Electrical Revolution* is a success. As Kay Nouch, an 80-year-old actress from Saskatoon who has been acting, directing, and writing plays for over 50 years, said: "Acting in *The Great Electrical Revolution* was a childhood dream come true - and none too soon!"

Karen Henders •



PHOTO: MICHAEL MCDERMOTT

Director Izidore Musallam

Toronto Foreign Nights

A dark-haired girl wearing a leather jacket, too much make-up and a sullen pout sashays up to the window of a butchershop. Mournfully, she gazes up at two freshly slaughtered lambs dangling from meathooks. The blood from their slit throats coagulates in their curly hides. Her bottom lip trembles. The self-indulgence of this reverie is interrupted by a forceful attack from behind by a tall youth. He pins her arm in the "uncle" position, speaks to her in threatening tones and bangs her head against the glass of the butcher shop window. A motley crew of similarity attired youths who just happen to be passing by pull the oppressor (who happens to be her brother) off the girl who flees hand in hand with one of her rescuers down the street.

Director Izidore Musallam yells "Cut!". The entire crew is crying. It is from the blistering cold. It is one of the coldest days so far in February (a high of -3 and a low of -17), and today all they are shooting is exteriors. A production assistant throws a heavy coat over the shoulders of actress Terri Hawkes (of *Prom Night II* fame) and most of the crew and cast retires inside the butcher shop on Danforth Avenue to thaw out. The day is far from over, especially for this crowd who have almost three pages of script left to shoot before "it's a wrap".

The cheerful determination of this crew (many of whom worked with Musallam when he was first a. d. on David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*) is made all the more poignant by the idea that they are all working on deferral; doing

it either for the love or credit (not so ironically Mahabba, the name of Musallam's production company means "love" in Arabic).

A low-budget feature film whose total deferred budget is \$1.3 million, *Foreign Nights* (formerly *Daughter of Jerusalem*) was shot over a period of three weeks on \$170,000 cash with the aid of an \$80,000 distribution deal from Norstar. The script, which was turned down for development money, was written for free by Musallam and co-writer Alan Zweig (*Where's Howie*, *Adderly*) in between well-paying jobs on U. S. productions. Says Musallam about the lack of government support for this project: "I don't understand it. I don't know if they work against or with indigenous Canadian filmmaking. These organizations are a separate entity which has its own censorship and ideas about what's good and what's bad. I don't think they are very complimentary to first-time filmmakers. They look at the script but it is my feeling that you cannot criticize a script because that is not a film. The script is 50 per cent. They lack the ability to see where the potential is."

Undeterred by a lack of government funding, *Foreign Nights* went into pre-production late last fall with Justine Estee, Allan Goluboff and Fred Kamping (producers) and Shawky Joe Fahel and David Semple (executive producers).

A sort of extended ethnic version of *Father Knows Best*, *Foreign Nights* details the adventures of an aspiring young dancer named Leila who runs into conflict with her immigrant father (played with a sober intensity by Toronto actor Youssef Abed-Alnour) who threatens to send her back to the Middle East to marry an Arab. Her trials and tribulations - as in the scene described above where she is harassed by her brother - are the result of Musallam's own observations: "The idea came from my own



PHOTO: JACKIE DEUBA

Director Larry Bauman (right) with (l. to r.) a. d. Elizabeth Scherberger, art director John Blackie and gaffer Bruno Bittner on the set of *The Great Electrical Revolution*

See "Production Guide",
page 59
for other productions on location

background and observing my friends. I noticed a difference between how the girls are treated and the sons are treated."

Musallam's heroine, Leila, rebels against the submissive role-model provided by her mother, played by Bushra Karaman (*Wedding In Galilee*) and wrestles with her own libido under the ever-present forbidding Freudian gaze of Daddy as she encounters threat after threat to her well-guarded virginity.

"Because of my background", states Musallam, "I thought I could introduce a European way of filmmaking. I think we got that. Narrative is consistent with the main character but the subtext keeps changing. Characters come and go. They don't stay. Not every loose end is tied up... I think this is a very simple film. The people are simple. The audience will care about these people. I don't think North Americans or Canadians understand what an immigrant family here goes through."

Bushra Karaman, who plays the part of Basma, the timid mother, comments on the script: "Lots of it is realistic. Some of the scenarios would be much more abusive in real life. It illustrates the problem at least. There are

some immigrants who come here, and there is this clash of cultures. It's very hard. I am opposite to the character I play. She was very submissive. I've tried to make her subtly strong. She is like most wives. She understands what he's all about and sympathizes and respects him. She tries to steer him his daughter's way without clashing... Everybody says this is a feminist film, but I don't think it is. Women are the minority of minorities."

Musallam found it problematic to cast the lead, as there was some difficulty in finding a young Palestinian actress who would agree to play the role. I asked some of the Palestinian actors on the set how they felt about the very anglo New York actress Terri Hawkes adopting the role. Mohamed Bacri (*Hanna K.*), who plays the benevolent best friend of the family said, "Good actors can play anything. You musn't be Palestinian to do Palestinian. As actors we are not prisoners of that kind of thinking. I don't think it is a problem to be a Canadian and act Palestinian because it is very usual that you find minorities in Canada."

"There are two ways to be a stranger. One is to be a stranger by choice as with Leila's father in this film. The second way is to be a stranger in

your own country as what happened to Leila's father in Palestine. For me it was very pertinent to be in this film. The immigrant father in this film is a victim and therefore makes his daughter a victim. Leila is a victim because nobody asked if she wanted to be the daughter of a refugee born in Canada. It is harder for her, because unlike her father, she is not a stranger.

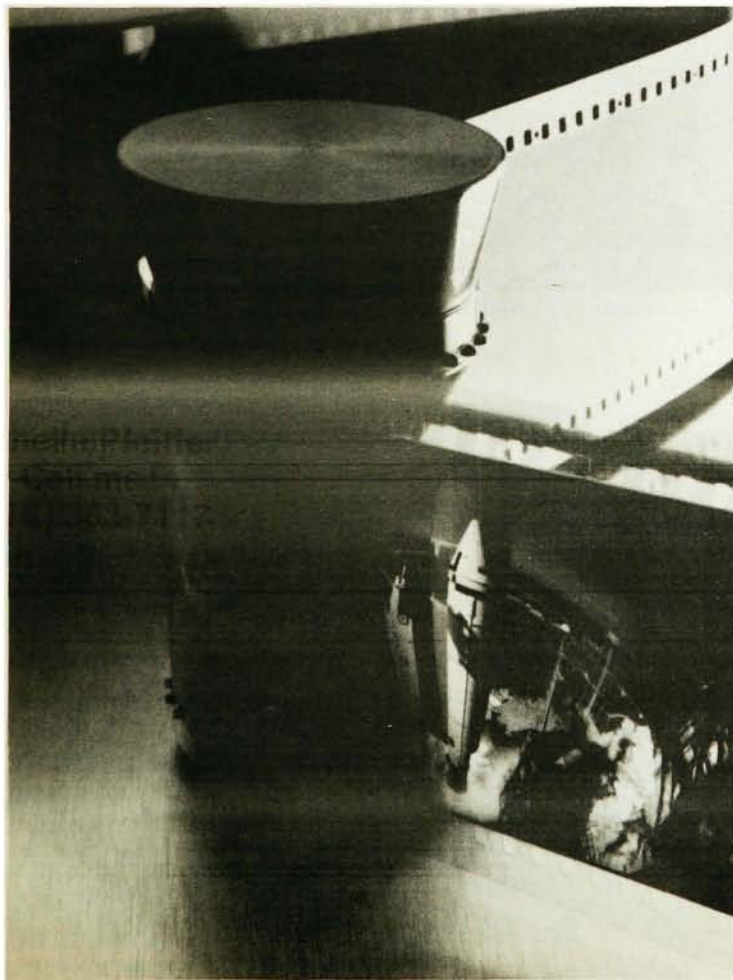
"What is important about this film is that it is a way of life, a way of work. People are working on it for no money. They are working for ideals."

Youssef Abed-Alnour agrees: "I don't think these characters are stereotypes. We avoided the stereotypes in this film. Terri is not a stereotype. For that reason too I was comfortable with my role. We tried to suggest and change the script to make it as good as possible. To make it more realistic from the point of view of Israeli Arabs specifically."

After a reality-numbing eight hours of shooting outside in the freezing cold in Little Greece and outside the Studio Dance Theatre, the crew adjourned to the basement of a nearby church for their dinner break during which they were paid a visit by Don Percival from the Director's Guild. After stating the obvious to the crowd of 50 or so cast and crew — "People don't

work for nothing unless they want to assist in indigenous productions" — he proceeded to inform the financially and physically demoralized crew that unbeknownst to them, they were working on a Director's Guild picture. This announcement caused some confusion amongst the crew, who were mostly non-members and who apparently were not informed of this by the producers. After two hours of wrangling and emotional arguing, during which tempers flared among union members of the film, and during which an explanation was demanded of the producers by the non-union members who understood that this was a matter of profit-sharing, it was generally agreed that the misunderstanding could be chalked up to a "communication problem". Oddly, on a film about the generation gap what we saw unfolding here was a generation gap of a different kind — between the old and the new way of making films in Canada. Making films, not money, that is. By the time the meeting ended, the film was two hours behind schedule. With another four hours to shoot, the crew returned to the location where it was an indigenous Canadian 20 degrees below.

Donna Lypchuk •



For Filmmakers With A Flair For The Big Time.

An expanding network of theatres worldwide has resulted in an increased emphasis on film development, production and distribution at Imax Systems Corporation, the inventor and developer of the giant-screen motion picture systems. For further information about current developments in film, please contact **André Picard**, Vice President, Film Division.

IMAX®
OMNIMAX®

For the experience.

IMAX SYSTEMS CORPORATION
38 Isabella Street
Toronto, Canada M4Y 1N1
Tel: (416)960-8509
Fax: (416)960-8596

George Simhoni/Reader's Digest