

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS

At any rate, Colicos did say that his part had been cut drastically when it hit the screen, so perhaps there was more editing than was intended by those listed on the credits. That's beside the point, because the audience judges what is actually on the screen, and on this screen is a mess.

The violence is not mindless, to use a much-employed term. It was conscious, and each disgusting event revolted because of that fact, not because we felt sorry for the victim or awe for the doer. And after the group leaves the city to move to Canada, they travel on a superhighway, until they near the border. Then the road becomes single car-width through dense, scary bush, and the border consists of a well-armed threatening guard who asks for papers; exactly, we know, how one gets to Toronto, because Toronto is now some Eastern European city in a Graham Greene World War II thriller.

I may seem to be harsh on what is, after all, only another junk movie that even failed at the box office. But I don't think so. I'm not against "commercial" movies (that's a misnomer if there ever was one; every movie is commercial because the filmmaker wants someone to see it and wants to make another movie). In fact any industry needs action films as well as every other kind of film. I'm against this kind of film because, first of all, it's badly made. If you're going to do it, do it right. It can be cheap, good and make good money. Roger Corman proves that. And so did David Cronenberg; his horror film was a first-rate example of the genre. But the bargain basement party scene and insulting violence in **Breaking Point** is inexcusable.

Furthermore, at the preview I attended, held for the press, cast and crew, a disturbing note was sounded, or rather blared. Several heavies, first from Fox and then from Astral, conveyed the wisdom that this film was an example of the kind Canadians should be making in order to establish a film industry, a film made for the world market that shows what Canada can do.

Well, this is most emphatically not the film to hold up to international scrutiny. It insults its audience, and Canadians can surely make action pictures that are first-class and have respect for their audiences. Certainly Canadians working in the US and Europe have done so.

Stephen Chesley

A Sense of Place

d. René Bonnière, **narrator** Barry Morse, **ph.** Michel Thomas d'Hoste, **ed.** Barrie Howells, **sup. ed.** Tina Viljoen, **sd. ed.** John Knight, **sd. re-rec.** Jean-Pierre Joutel, **exec. p.** Colin Low, **p.** Roman Bittman, **p. manager** Marcel Malacket, **p.c.** National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Habitat Secretariat, 1976, **col.** 16 mm., **running time** 56 minutes 50 seconds, **dist.** NFB.

Vancouver was the site and Habitat was the conference — the "other" world gathering hosted by Canada this summer. The subject was vast: human settlement and all the contemporary and future problems inherent in living on the planet. Despite the infusion of politics by the small-minded opportunists who deflected the goals of the gathering, some aspects of the conference worked, especially the films shown. Over 120 films were screened, and the National Film Board's one-hour documentary, **A Sense of Place**, was the keynote effort, created to outline the conference's concerns and to raise questions to be possibly answered during the official discussions. How fitting to



Modern contrasts in **A Sense of Place**

have the great Canadian documentary tradition combine with the NFB, the great Canadian documentary makers, and produce the main film. It's too bad the film fails to generate excite-

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FILM REVIEWS

ment, and perhaps the reason can be found in that documentary tradition.

Producer Roman Bittman, a veteran CBC producer who has worked mainly with the documentary series *The Nature of Things* – and his past shows directly in the style of this film – heads the NFB's environment studio. His list of consultants drips with prestige: Barbara Ward, Lister Sinclair, and various specialists. He took his crew through eight countries for material, and director Rene Bonnière provides straightforward dispensation of the facts and visuals involved in the current urbanization of the world, wherein people are flocking to cities, abandoning a rural heritage for what is, despite privation, a better life.

Population control, health concerns, the tide of immigrants (emphasized by the gates of cattle-car-like trains spilling out their cargo into congested railyards in Asia), birth control, all are discussed in simple, direct fashion. Fact to example to possible solution with no final answer; the basic documentary formula. At times an

interesting and fresh idea seeps through: in Chicago we see how building codes developed to protect homeowners now prohibit rehabilitation by engulfing the prospective buyer in red tape. In western Canada the farms that offered hope to settlers at the turn of the century now offer hopelessness. Frustration at red tape and a direct uprooting from the family's past are two aspects that present a filmmaker with the chance for emotion, a concept totally lacking in this film.

The style of the film is pure 1950s documentary in its uncluttered, dispassionate examination of its subject matter. But that kind of documentary, so effective when it revealed new worlds, doesn't work when an audience needs to be shown new aspects of that now-familiar world. On a purely functional level of getting the information across, this film works; on the level of audience involvement, it misses. Somehow, the latter is now as necessary as the former.

Stephen Chesley

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