

IN PROGRESS...

Virus

The following credits were received from the production company and seem to indicate Canadian performers to the exclusion of others.

p.c. Haruki Kadokawa Films Inc. p. assist. John Roberts, Glen McCloud assoc.p. Takashi Ohashi, Yutaka Okada loc. unit man. Jason Paikowsky (Canada) assoc.p./man. Susan A. Lewis (Canada) p. account. Molly Tharyan p.sec. Françoise McNeil, Susan Keleman (assist) d. Kinji Fukasaku a.d. Tony Rainbow (1st-Canada), Jesse Nishihata (2nd-Canada) dial. coach/cast. Howard Ryshpan (Canada) cont. Toshiko Adilman (Can.) art. d. Yoshinga Yokoo, Tom Urquart (assist.) set dress. Patricia Gruben (Can.), Michael Bowkett (tech.), Fernand Durand (props.), Don Miloyevich (props.), Akemi Tanaka (assist. props.) draftperson Lindsey Goddard d.ph. Daisaku Kimura cam. assist. Masahir Kishimoto, Toshifumi Nobusaka, Tsutomu Takada gaf. Hideki Mochizuki light tech. Isao Koyama key grip Jim Craig (Can.) best boy grip Daniel Narduzzi (Can.) elec. Adam Swica (Can.) sd. mix Kenichi Benitani sd. tech. Minoru Nobuoka boom Brian Richmond (Can.) ed. Akimasa Kawashima, A. Suzuki ward. Kat Moyer (Can.), Arthur Rowselle (Can.) make-up Kathleen Mifsud (Can.) hair Tom Booth transport coord. Robert Bartman stills Takeshi Ikeda APS rep. Grace Yu p. interpreters Shizuki Kumada, John Wales, Maya Koizumi, Takeshita Kazumi dailies p. assist. Marilyn Hammond, Howard Hutton dailies assist. set dress Jackie Field dailies cont. Nancy Eagles dailies special effects Mark Mollen l.p. Richard Ayres, John Bayliss, Jim Bearden, Cec Linder, Ken Camroux, Eve Crawford, Martin Donlevy, John Evans, Ted Follows, Colin Fox, Jon Granik, Dick Grant, David Gardner, Stuart Gillard, Ron Hartmann, Matt Hawthorne, Peter Heppleston, Ara Hovan, Alfred Humphreys, Julie Khaner, Diane Lasko, Pat Leggo, Jefferson Mappin, Terry Martin, George Wilbur, Jan Muszynsky, Tyler Miller, Ian MacKenzie,



Stephanie Faulkner (far left), Cec Linder (in the hat), Eve Crawford (far right) and company

Charles Northcote, Laura Pennington, Ken Pogue, Roger Periard, John Rutter, Larry Reynolds, Kate Reid, Henry Ramer, Danielle Schneider, George Touliatos, Gordon Thomson, Michael Tough, Chris Wiggins, William Binney, Nicholas Campbell, David Griffiths pub. Isao Natsuki col. 35mm year 1979

Virus is a fifteen million dollar (U.S.) sci-fi epic being shot in six different countries. With almost four million of the total being spent in Canada, we could develop a yen for doing things the Japanese way.

There are fifteen Canadian actors with

speaking roles in the film and literally hundreds of extras. Arriving on the set each day was like old home week, and before it was over I felt as if I had run into almost every Canadian actor I have ever worked with. There is a fulltime Canadian crew of thirty-nine, with an occasional ten to fifteen extra crew. In an industry that chronically suffers from underemployment, this is good news indeed; especially since **Virus** was shooting in Canada during the winter months, normally a slack time for Canadian filmmaking. "Now," to massacre the Bard of Avon, "is the winter of our discontent, made glorious summer by this Land of the Rising Sun."

And get this! All the money for the film was raised in Japan, where they expect to recoup all of their investment. There is no Canadian co-production money, or CFDC funding, involved in **Virus**. More films of this nature could help solve Canada's balance of trade deficit.

If all goes well with **Virus** internationally, the producers hope to shoot more features in Canada. It will be very interesting to see how the marketplace responds to the film, because its style is

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photo: Takeshi Ikeda

Virus attacks the splendid setting of Machu Picchu in the Peruvian Andes

distinctly different from most of the Hollywood fare that dominates the international market. A short-term vogue might even be generated for this genre, similar to that created by the spaghetti western a few years ago.

Judging from rushes I saw at Film House, the style is more abstract and perhaps more demanding of an audience than typical North American product.

There appears to be a strong influence from traditional Japanese Kabuki, and the director apparently likes a full, rich film frame with lots of ensemble action by the cast. He seems to revel in complicated physical movement by groups of actors. Because of the shooting style, working on **Virus** was certainly a unique experience for performers used to acting in North American films.

As a former Texan, I found it delightful to discover myself playing the small part of a German officer (all my dialogue was in German) in a Japanese film being made in Canada. What an international mélange! To quote the punch line of that tea commercial, "Only in Canader, eh?"

Work on a North American film generally scans as follows: the scene is run through a time or two with the director while he decides how to block and shoot it; then the scene is lit; shooting begins and continues until a good "master" or establishing shot is made with appropriate reverses, close-ups and cutaways; only those shots that are deemed acceptable are printed. The Japanese approach to filmmaking is very different. When the actors arrive on the set the lighting is already done, which infers a good deal of pre-planning. Then the director describes the action to the performers through an interpreter. This is rehearsed exhaustively — fifteen to twenty times is not unusual — until the director and the d.o.p. (who also functions as head cameraperson) are satisfied. Finally, the action is shot, usually in one or two takes at most, and occasionally employing as many as five cameras simultaneously.

For a North American actor, this can be quite a singular experience. Our way of shooting is looser, less controlled, giving an actor more room for spontaneous creativity. The Japanese style of shooting requires more discipline, and there is a



photo: Tom Booth

Jim Bearden, a Texan-Canadian-German, in **Virus**

constant battle to bring a feeling of freshness to very rehearsed and regimented action.

Working through an interpreter is a trying experience, primarily because it is time consuming, and — to the uninitiated — a bit inhibiting. The first couple of days on the set I was reluctant to question the director simply because the logistics



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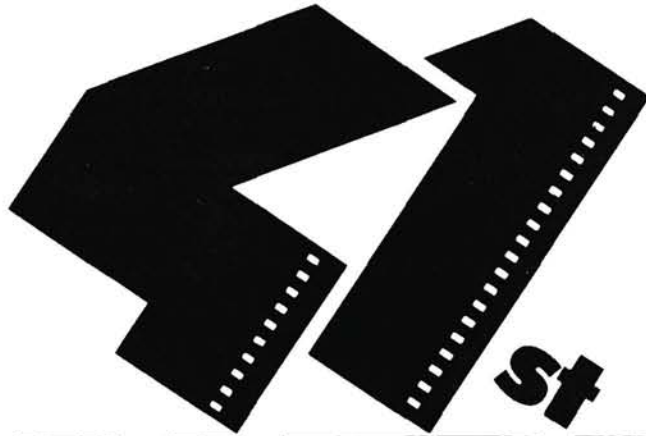
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seemed so awesome. Consequently, I attempted to do just what the director asked, whether or not I understood it, so as not to make waves. By the third day I finally broke down, and began to take the time to ask questions, because I could not rationalize some of the actions requested with my concept of the character. This soon generated feed-back from the director, and I was surprised at how quickly we

established a rapport while dealing through a second party. In a film where you can freely converse with your director, quiet conversations between takes can often solve most problems. It is somewhat intimidating when such casual conversation is impossible, and every interchange takes on the unreal air of a summit meeting.

The language barrier creates other

problems. Most of **Virus** is in English, although it is being directed by Kinji Fukasaku, who speaks virtually no English. In this film, as in most, the director is the final artistic authority. But it is difficult to conceive how the final artistic judgment can come from one who cannot understand what is being said. Though he could surely grasp whether or not he was achieving the feeling he wanted, he would not know, for example, whether some of the Japanese performers were intelligible to an English-speaking audience. (Most of the problems I observed in the rushes, however, could be corrected with post-synching — if they are presided over by someone with a super-critical ear, whose first language is English.)

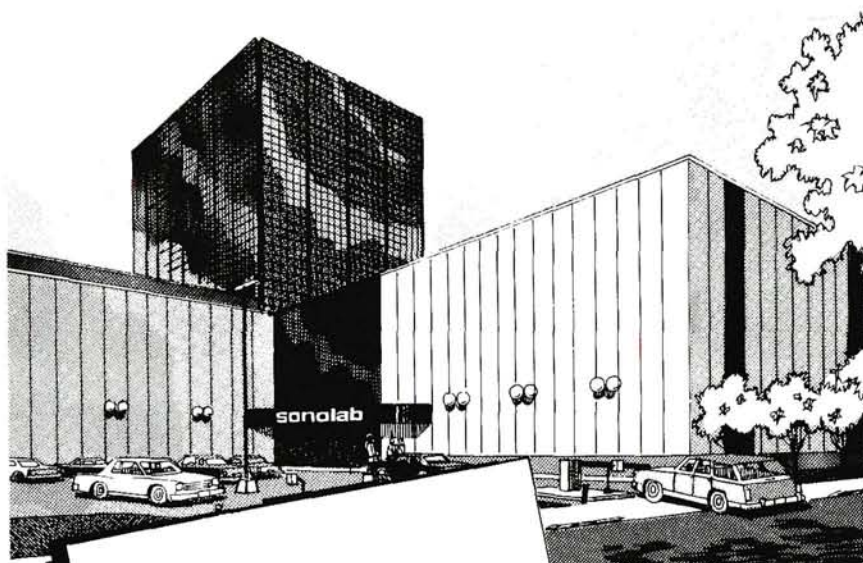
Kinji Fukasaku is certainly a thoroughgoing, professional director. **Virus** is his forty-fifth film. Among his many credits is one for co-direction on **Tora! Tora! Tora!**

The film clips I saw from the Antarctic shooting were breathtakingly beautiful, and may alone be worth the price of admission. It was also pleasant to see artists who live and work in Canada turning in finely crafted performances, that compare more than favorably with work being done by some of **Virus's** internationally recognized 'stars.' This makes it all the more regrettable that a press conference was held in Toronto for the Japanese and Canadian press, and no performers living and working in Canada were invited. Since the Japanese have been consistently thoughtful and courteous in their relations to the Canadian performers and crew, this oversight is difficult to understand.

Although I cannot predict what the international market response to **Virus** will be (at the time of this writing no international distribution deal has been locked down), I am sure that many people in Canada will be interested in seeing the final product. Personally, I'm hoping that it works like gangbusters for them and that they come back, time and again, to make more films and create employment in Canada.

Jim Bearden

*Jim Bearden has worked professionally in Canadian theatre, film, radio and T.V. for ten years as an actor and singer/composer. He is co-author and illustrator of the critically-acclaimed book, **Shadd**, as well as a co-writer of plays and film scripts. He has produced and directed for stage, radio and T.V. in Canada and the U.S.*



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