

A Planet For The Taking Suzuki's latest CBC effort

By JEAN LeBLANC

HAVING BEGUN ON FEBRUARY 6 and lasting through March 27, one of the most ambitious and important science programs ever made by the CBC, *A Planet for the Taking* will be aired weekly at 8:00 on Wednesday evenings. This special series, more than three years in the making, sets out to explore our fascination with nature. The series will show that this fascination provides us with unprecedented powers which threaten to destroy the very life we enjoy now. *A Planet for the Taking* also sets out to find out where this power originated and its implications for the future.

The series was produced by the world-acclaimed "CBC Science Unit." Their credits include the production of *The Nature of Things* as well as other science projects for the CBC. *A Planet for the Taking* also has the advantage of having some of the most distinguished workers of the CBC. These include James Murrey, executive producer of

The Nature of Things for 12 years and three ACTRA award-winning writers, including the host David Suzuki.

In the series, Suzuki argues that man must stop his drive to control nature and learn to live in harmony with it if we are to survive. To prove the argument that nature cannot be pushed too far, Suzuki uses examples of environmental devastation and global hunger to demonstrate the results of stretching nature's limits.

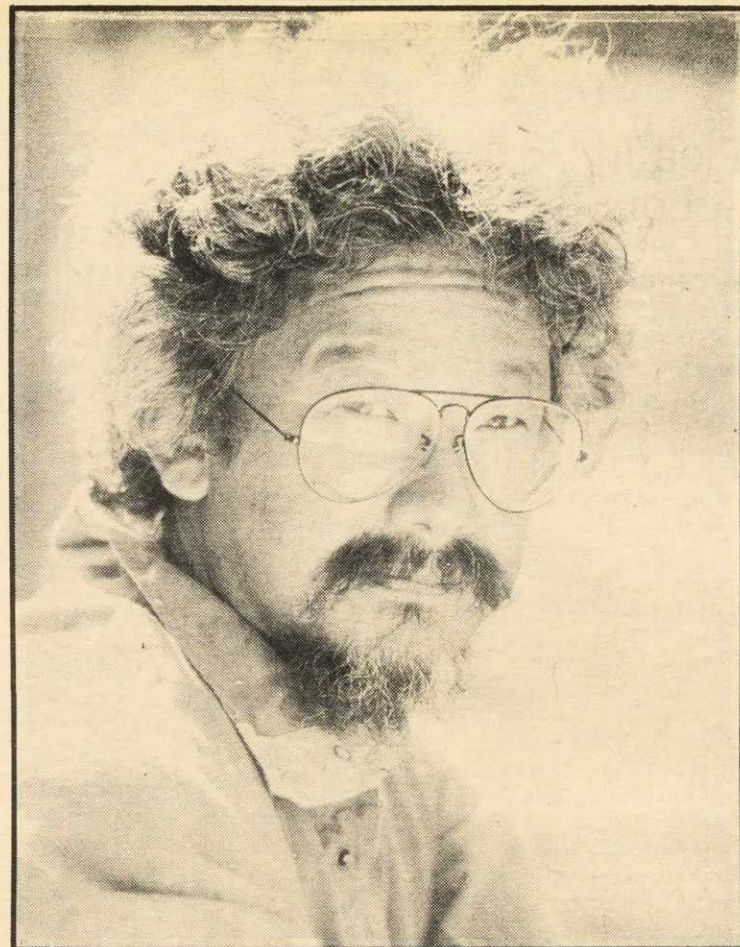
To investigate the problems and solutions concerning man and his relationship to nature Suzuki circles the globe. Investigating people in the past and present he looks for what they believe their role on earth is. As well, interviews with some of the world's best-known and most important thinkers build up to a new perspective on the human place in nature. *A Planet for the Taking* also describes modern man's compulsion to control and manipulate nature's power. Examples of man's failure to manipulate nature's power show

that man must live with nature.

Already the series' first and second episodes, shown on Feb. 6 and 13, have begun to explore man's role in nature. The first episode explored man's recent arrival on the planet and his common biological links with other forms of life. Also explored was the evolutionary process that has separated man from the other animals and allowed man to dominate the world. The second episode showed us how man has changed from idols and myths to science in order to express and impose a sense of domination over the world.

Next week, *A Planet for the Taking* explores man's desires to make himself superior over other forms of life in an on-going battle for survival. With this episode, evidence points out that if we continue on our present course we may soon be left alone and behind in the world. This may occur unless we discover that the natural order can be peaceful co-existence rather than an ultimate survival of the fittest. Future episodes will explore many other avenues, including man's response to modern technology, genetic manipulation and man's danger to himself.

Suzuki has said that there will be something in the series that will make just about everybody angry. Yet he hopes that viewers will come out with an overall feeling of optimism that man can live in harmony with nature. This is his description of *A Planet for the Taking*:



"As we rush towards the 21st century, science and technology are altering our world dramatically. We've long thought of ourselves as masters of the natural world, but now that drive to dominate and control is having dangerous con-

sequences.

Can we change the way we see our relationship with the other life forms on the earth?

A Planet for the Taking presents an alternate perspective on the way things work in nature—and our place in it."

I've touched the sun and found it cold...

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Colwell Brothers while a video crew cluttered around him like a bunch of crows. No matter how plastic we all thought he was, there was a certain charm that seemed to entice even the most intrepid back-to-the-land earth mothers among us. The bastard.

I came up behind them, recognizing the voice first — Tom's. "Would you believe they paid me a grand to fly to Toronto for one day to do a commercial for jockey shorts. Can you believe it? Ten minutes parading in front of a lens in Fruit of the Looms and I finished off paying for the slop. Some life. Look at this. I got to keep the samples." I was too far away to see what he was doing, but I could hear Darlene giggling. She had had a bit much to drink. I shouldn't have brought her maybe, I don't know. Not able to bring myself to interrupt the two, I went searching for a phone to call the sitter. Maybe she had lost the number we gave her. Maybe something was wrong at home and she didn't know how to get in touch.

I found the black princess phone on a table outside of Felice's bedroom. Noises were coming from behind the door. I tried not to listen.

"Hello." It was a male voice on the other end, at my house.

"Hey, who the hell is this?" Then I heard Kim come on the line.

"Oh, hi, Mr. Kurtz. No, it's just, well, it's my boyfriend. He stopped over."

"How's the kid?" I tried to be polite.

"Asleep. Do you want me to tell Ronnie to leave? I didn't know he was coming over, honest."

"It's O.K. We'll be home soon."

"Thanks." Kim said and then Ronnie apparently grabbed the phone. "Hey, you're alright, ya know that. Everything's cool here. I appreciate ya not hassling the chick. See ya."

As I held the dead phone, I tried to place

the quality of the voices from the other end. Not quite straight. Not drunk. Not stoned. My guess was downers. Nothing totally destructive mind you, but not quite the scene I had hoped to have happening at the old homestead. Behind Felice's natural wood door I could hear the water bed sloshing around. Time to leave.

Coming down the hall toward me was Carla. "Steve, I think we should have put in better drainage. And fans or something. All of that extra humidity getting into the house. What if the insulation in the walls soaks it up? I heard some architect talking about wood rot. It's frightening what could happen to a house even just a few years old. What do you think we should do?"

"Let me think on it I said," and lurched in front of her into the bathroom to take a piss. She kept talking to me through the door. Something about root rot in her tomatoes. The damn toilet was stopped up again. I tried the plunger once or twice to no avail, thought of interrupting Felice to tell her, then just shut off the water valve, closed the lid and went looking to grab Darlene.

She was hovering by the Jotul now with Tom Marshall still on her case. He was holding her wrist while he poured more Donnini for her, spilling a few drops onto the stove's ceramic finish. I could hear the sizzling from across the crowded room. The homebrew churned around in my gut. Carla was following me with more humidity problems. She was certain they should have opted for an active solar system for domestic hot water.

And before I could reach Darlene, one more obstacle. A girl who worked in PR for the provincial department of the environment.

"Damn you, Kurtz. You made my job very difficult, I just want you to know that."

"What the hell did I do?" I looked down

at a very short girl with close cropped hair and an evil look on her face.

"All that baloney about the highway spraying program. 2-4-D never hurt a human soul. And your damn article about some old fart's cows having a miscarriage was a load of crap."

I remembered the article. One of my best. Yet everybody had got down on me for it. The editor, the Minister of Highways. Later that week, the provincial tax people audited me. I hadn't met the PR girl before. "Look I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make life difficult for you. It's just that, well, I felt that I had to take some responsibility. A lot of research has proven that those chemicals can be harmful."

She wasn't listening. "Do you have any idea what I had to go through. The Agriculture people got down on us. The hunters got down on us. Some guy who said he'd been eating strawberries along his road for years now claims he got cancer from the spray. There's a lot of loonies out there waiting to capitalize on your story. Thanks a lot, shithead." And she walked away, giving me the finger.

Off in the corner somebody fell into a potted ginko tree. Alex and Bif were arguing about the ethics of professional sports. "But dammit, a goalie's got a right to have his frigging nose dislocated if he's willing to put up with it for a hundred thousand a year," I heard Bif chortling.

Marshall had his arm around Darlene. Not around exactly, but hovering above her shoulder on the sofa. Asserting territorial rights, I collected her abruptly and unceremoniously headed for the door, leaving our coats for some other time.

"Why can't you just relax and have a good time?" she said to me in the car. "Tom Marshall did not show me his jockey shorts."

"O.K., well, he was putting the make on you."

"What?"

"He was dammit. The man's a jerk. How could you put up with those stupid stories of his?"

"You looked a little cozy with Big F, yourself, Steven."

"You know I can just barely tolerate her. Besides it was her party. Let's skip the next one."

"So now you want to cancel our social life because you think Tom Marshall wanted me to check out his underwear."

I wanted to tell her that I was just looking out for her. I felt a certain sense of responsibility. Call it duty. I'm glad I didn't say it out loud, it would have sounded like crap. We both sat like stones, each leaning against the opposite doors.

"Would you mind putting your seat belt on?" I asked. She didn't answer or oblige my request.

"Hey, look, I'm sorry, alright?" I offered up into the gathering gloom inside the car.

"Well how come everytime that I'm having a halfway decent good time, you're getting bummed out?" Darlene sounded bitter.

"I don't know." Darlene was angry.

There was a funny vibration in the steering wheel that seemed to rivet my attention. Wheels out of balance, probably. Nothing serious mind you, but I would make a point of getting it fixed before Darlene took the car to town to go shopping later in the week.

The sky was grim: overcast save for one small gap where a lone star shone through. There was no wind at all. I tried to focus for an instant on the star but it moved and was gone; a satellite no doubt. A few drops of rain appeared on the windshield and I turned on the wipers.

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