



Rita Tuckett plays 'Nana' in *The Silence Upstairs*, a film about abuse of the elderly.

Mario Scattoloni

Fourth year filmmakers show on the job injustice

PAULA TODD

While it may seem that university is officially over for the Fall/Winter students and the next year already begun (as evidenced by the huge line-ups for registration), some students are only just beginning to exhibit the fruits of an arduous year.

The York film department annually hosts screenings of their first, second, third, and fourth year class projects. These films are the culmination of tremendous amounts of time spent in the underground that houses the department. Like many other York disciplines, film is highly competitive and the quest for artistic success keeps students in editing rooms long after many of us have gone home for the night.

This year was no exception. Third and fourth year film production diehards have worked frantically to prepare for the screenings. The floor is a sea of junk food wrappers; celluloid shavings lie in tangled masses on cluttered desks; harried students vie for time on movieolas and flatbeds. And the staff at PFA, a leading Toronto film lab, wants to know what's going on: "It's York, York, York. They're in here all the time."

From the 401 Production class, a select group of 15 students, comes four films which will be shown at a public screening in May.

One of those is *Union Made*, a social drama about the trials and tribulations of a cocktail waitress who fights the system and probably loses. We aren't sure, however, because the film attempts to depict a situation rather than solve a social problem.

Co-written by Andrea Youngman and Robert Levine, *Union Made* centres on a young university student (yes, it's York and there is ample footage of Central Square) who objects to the skimpy uniforms she is forced to wear in the strip joint where she works. Her protests get her in trouble with the boss as does her trip to the union. And while she is obviously within her rights to protest, she fails to garner the sympathy or support of her co-workers; they aren't willing to sacrifice their pay or their tips for justice.

The film explores the predicament of the exploited worker who, paradoxically, gets in more trouble when she seeks help from her union.

Union Made is one of the two films selected to compete in the coming CBC Telefest. It will also be entered in the Universiade '83 International Student Film Festival in Edmonton.

After reading the letter by Janice Joseph (in last week's issue) concerning the persistent racial harassment she faced and is still facing, we are deeply concerned for her well-being. We are writing to the *Excalibur* because we could not locate where she lives.

We are writing to make it known to Janice (and the racist) that if for months the Housing Services, the York Security, the Human Rights Commission, and even the Metro Police could not do anything, we believe we can and we will. Yes, we will do something for her if she does not object to this idea and will let us know how we can get in touch with each other.

Concerned

The Silence Upstairs:

Film gives a voice to the elderly

PAULA TODD

Film can be a medium of social change. It can encourage discussion and stimulate improvement. And it is commendable when its sometimes overwhelming ability to influence is used responsibly. York University film majors, Marshall Golden and Alexander Van Ihinger have again collaborated on such a film.

The Silence Upstairs, a film about the neglect and abuse of the elderly follows closely on the success of *The Best Kept Secret*--a film which drew accolades last year for its succinct and bold presentation of incest. The new film deals with a less sensational, but by no means less important issue.

The 'younger generation' is growing old and the problems that are arising from this change in our social make-up form the thematic basis of *The Silence Upstairs*, a 13-minute narrative film which presents a typical family and its attempt to deal with its oldest member, an 82-year-old woman who finds herself alone and dependent after the death of her husband.

According to the research Golden did while writing the script Van Ihinger, almost one-half of the population will be senior citizens by 1995. *The Silence Upstairs* illustrates the problems that can occur when people begin to age in a world that isn't willing or able to accommodate them.

In the film, a lower middle class family's routine is interrupted when the father's mother, Nana, comes to live with them. Her arrival is seen by the mother, who has just returned to university and begun to develop some personal independence, as a disruption in her life and as a burden other members of the family seem unwilling to share. Nana's presence begins to affect the structure and quality of the family's relationship. Mother's life and studies are hampered by her obligation to care for Nana; Sandy, the 16-year-old daughter, begins to resent babysitting the old woman; the younger son tunes out family problems with a

turn of the Walkman dial and a flick of the television switch; and marital tension between the husband and wife is heightened by the strain the situation places on their relationship.

A intricate pattern of guilt and accusation develops as the mother blames her husband for the extra responsibility she feels he fails to share. And the daughter accuses her mother of treating Nana, who has been relegated to the attic, cruelly and seek the help of her high school guidance counsellor. The problem intensifies when the mother demands a solution. Nursing homes are investigated and found to be expensive and crowded--"My husband doesn't make this much in a month." And the father is called upon to act as an intermediary when his wife suggests, in frustration, that they put Nana "in a nuthouse," because "at least it's free," and Nana begs to stay.

The question of blame permeates the film. Who is to blame for the lack of adequate social support? Who is responsible for the care of the elderly? Who should protect their rights? How will society adapt to the increasing number of senior citizens?

Golden is quick to point out that the film is not intended to provide solutions, "I hoped to create a film that would raise people's awareness about the current problems facing the elderly. The best solution for now is for people to recognise the problem, accept its existence and put pressure for change on those who can affect change."

He does suggest, however, that an increase in available housing for the elderly is imperative, citing the fact that present facilities can accommodate only eight per cent of the elderly. As well, there is an average waiting period of four to five years for the limited space.

Golden (who co-wrote the script and directed the film) and Van Ihinger (cinematographer and co-writer) are third-year film majors who formed Rhinestone Productions last year with classmate, Kathy

Smith. Not involved in *The Silence Upstairs*, Smith is currently working on her own film, *Loose Ends*. Rhinestone is interested in making educational films, 'discussion starters' that provide schools, social organisations, professionals and government agencies with filmic depictions of social problems.

"Film is an incredibly effective medium of communication. I want to make films that will help people," said Golden. He explained his reasons for choosing to write about the elderly, "A lot of people are under the mistaken impression that the quality of life diminishes with age. There is no reason a person growing old shouldn't live with the same dignity as he or she did when they were younger."

Golden's feelings are reflected in the delicate treatment of the subject matter. Nana (Rita Tuckett), is shown as a fragile but alert woman who is an unwilling victim of her own mortality. The mother (Anna Ferguson) is caught between her need for self-fulfillment and the demands of her mother-in-law. The father (James Morris) and son (Sean Fagan) are reacting, rather than acting in the conflict. And the daughter (Sarah Levy) sympathizes with her grandmother; she becomes increasingly alienated from her mother. "This film shows how stress can lead to abuse," said Golden. "And illustrates some of the damaging effects."

According to Golden, approximately ten per cent of the elderly are abused--financially, emotionally and/or physically. But as this film suggests, the silence grows louder every day: the needs of the aged can not long be ignored.

The Silence Upstairs, edited by John deCorso, with sound by Dan Daniels, production management by William Carson, and an original score composed by Charles Kert, is being distributed with a study guide by Mobius International.

For further information call 862-0255. The third-year films will be presented on Thursday, April 14 at 7:30 in Curtis Lecture Hall "L".

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Unofficial election results--Referenda

	YES	NO	Difference:
OFS	679	500	179
CFS	760	433	327
RADIO YORK	719	747	28
EXCALIBUR	935	589	346
OMBUDSPERSON	646	782	136

EXCALIBUR

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David Spiro
Elizabeth Santia
John Notten
Merle Menzies
Paula Beard Chairperson

I can't believe that all the whining and whimpering, rejoicing and cheering has come to an end. That I'm still in one piece is amazing. That I need a million grams of Vitamin B and a good primal scream is to be expected. How can you say thank you to the kind of people who helped Excalibur this year? They stayed up so late, they worked so hard, they fought, screamed, cried, laughed and searched everywhere for a dictionary. Many of them carry away a piece of my heart. Thanks to Joe Carione who dug me out of my office every day; to Merle who promised to share a beer with me; to Paulette who blossomed; to Mark who kept on trying; to Elissa Freeburg from Paula Toddbaum: you're right, you're one in a million; to Barb who never gave up; to Brian who cannot be described such is his superior intelligence and motivation; to Greg who really thinks; to Roman the rescuer who saw us through to the end; to Mario the great photographer; to Steve who introduced me to Steve Kuhn; to Adam who trusted the lady on the bus; to Sylvia who kept me sane with coffee and concern; to Marshall who convinced me in September that I needed a picnic and who has indulged and supported me ever since; and to all of you wonderful ones I don't have space to name.....THANK YOU.....IT'S THE BIG 30.....