

By BONNIE BOBRYK

THE FILMS FEATURED AT the Atlantic Festival Atlantique covered the whole spectrum from slickly finished work to rougher, low-budget productions; the good, the bad, and the ugly.

One very special event at the festival was the premier of *Linda Joy*. This 25 minute film is very difficult to write about objectively because, like many of the audience members at the screening, I knew the film's subject (though not well). Linda Joy Busby was the co-ordinator of the Atlantic Film Co-op before she died of cancer in November of 1984, and this film is made and co-directed by Linda Joy from footage of her prior to her death.

Before the film's screening, co-director Bill MacGillvray said he wanted to make the film very simple, and in many ways it was just that. The majority of the film is taken up by Linda Busby sitting in front of, and speaking directly to, the camera. She speaks of her experience with discovery of breast cancer, her family's reaction, the difficulty with doctors and she gives an account of her stay in the hospital. Several times in the film the screen goes completely black and the monologue continues, as when she is in the hospital for the first time. It also remains black for a lengthy monologue near the end by MacGillvray as he describes what she looked like in her last days and what she meant to him.

Unfortunately, this monologue from MacGillvray takes away from the film's intended simplicity. It runs on too long and perhaps unintentionally is more about him than it is of Linda Busby — his feelings and his impressions. The film's strength lies in her and her alone. It shows the strength and character of one woman, and as she speaks a real sense is communicated of who this person was. As most of the film was shot when she believed her cancer had been cured, what comes across most is her spirit, especially in the final shot where she laughs and talks about having beaten the disease.

Among the works viewed on opening night was a first film by local filmmaker Rod Malay. *Squash Time* was an entertaining satire about paranoia. The main character crouches bewildered in a forest, then in panic begins to run. There was no dialogue, rather an impressionistic soundtrack chronicling the character's state of mind. The pacing of the film and soundtrack are the strong elements in this production.

Another entertaining but very different short film was *Fiddleheads*, directed by Art Makowski. It uses time lapse photography as an old-time waltz, featuring fiddle as the lead instrument plays liltingly and lush, green fiddleheads unfold and wave their fronds about, seemingly in time to the music. For its excellence, it won one of the Festival awards called the Moonshail, after the festival's symbol. Technically and aesthetically this film was a little gem, beautifully filmed and edited.

This was not the case with

Atlantic Festival Reviews

By Jean J. LeBlanc

La journée d'ouverture du Atlantic Festival Atlantique le 23 octobre, deux films avec des textes français ont été exhibés. Ils ont été bien reçus par la foule présente au festival. Cependant je ne peux pas présenter les deux films comme égaux car *Les Joies de Noël* était supérieure à *De l'Autre Côté de la Glace*.

Regardons maintenant au premier des deux films, *Les Joies de Noël*. C'est un film d'animation d'une fête que se passe pour célébrer Noël. J'ai trouvé le film très réaliste car je suis certain que nous avons tous vu des scènes qui se présentent dans le film, prendre place dans nos vies.

Le film commence avec la mère en train de nettoyer la maison avant que les festivités commencent. La nourriture et les produits de confiserie abondent. Une fois que ses amies et relations sont arrivées on commence à s'introduire et de conter de nouvelles ou vieilles histoires. Ici et là, ils en disent qui peuvent affronter certains, mais la plupart rient, surtout les hommes.

Les enfants mangent les bonbons qu'avaient été placés en forme de décoration sur l'arbre de Noël et aussitôt leurs mères viennent les gronder. Le père de Noël est éva-

nouit, entourer de bouteilles de bière vide et un des invités est en train de vomir. Une dispute érupt mais c'est aussitôt oublié. Quand le temps de quitter a venu on dit combien qu'on ça bien amuser et on se promet de le faire de nouveau l'année prochaine. Finalement tout étant fini on se souvient dans un air désespéré que l'année prochaine est seulement dans une semaine.

Le film finit quand on voit le chat de la maison accrocher sur le plancher. Il regard comme s'il avait justement passé à travers d'une guerre. Il fait penser à "Bill the cat" de le dessin animé de *Bloom County*.

Les Joies de Noël est la meilleure description de Noël que j'ai vue pendant les quelques dernières années. La préparation, la fête même et les résultats sont les interprétations les plus réalistes mis sur l'écran durant les dernières quelques années.

Le deuxième film est *De l'Autre Côté de la Glace*. Ce film concerne le gardien de but de l'équipe de hockey des Aigles Blue de Moncton. Tragiquement après ce point on est perdue. On saute à travers d'une multitude de scènes qui n'ont presque pas de point commun.

On saute de les scènes avec la mère du gardien de but, à son père et même son petit frère. Aux

même temps on voit l'équipe de hockey en train de se préparer pour jouer contre une autre équipe. A ce point l'histoire se perd complètement. Le gardien de but a de drôles idées dans les quels on voit le match de hockey en train d'être joué sous un style mieux vu comme ballet-opéra. On est aussi délogé par des masques, de drôles de costumes et autres scènes mieux vu comme médiéval.

De ce point l'histoire vient encore plus compliquer parlant d'un père qui porte un masque à son lieu de travail. Le frère du gardien de but raconte le chef des Aigles Blue et on dit à jeune gardien de but comment bien jouer. La manque de continuité reste jusqu'à la fin du film. A ce point le gardien de but dans le ballet-opéra casse ses chaînes qui l'entourent et le gardien de but des Aigles Bleu marque un but.

Donc *De l'Autre Côté de la Glace* est trop mêlé et manque trop d'unité. Si le thème de cette histoire est celui des masques il a un superflus de matériel qui bloque et mêle totalement l'histoire. Si le thème n'est pas les masques, le film est un désastre continué. Donc même si *Les Joies de Noël* était brillant, *De l'Autre Côté de la Glace* a besoin d'un couteau d'édition.

other films however. *Plunge into the Past* by Robert Woodcock, while competently filmed and edited, suffers from a dull, sometimes clichéd script and unenthusiastic narrators voice. The continual guitar picking in the background becomes quite irritating by the film's finish. This documentary film about an underwater archaeological dig off the coast of Newfoundland could have been exciting with a more imaginative soundtrack.

Another documentary film, *The Last Log Drive* (directed by Poly Bennel), filmed the enactment of a traditional log drive during the Bicentennial celebrations of the founding of Shelburne, Nova Scotia.

While this half-hour film also uses a voice-over narrator, its role is limited. The audience hears the men participating in the log drive telling their experiences and stories about past log drives. There is

a memorable sequence showing closeups of the footwork on the logs, then dancing in the community hall with emphasis on the dancing feet. With the dance music still playing, the visual image switches back to the rapidly moving feet on the log. The rhythm of the music is matched to the rhythm of the feet.

Halifax filmmaker James MacSwain's nine minute short, *Picnic*, begins well but the film's pacing causes it to lose steam towards the end. It is a political film in three sections about gay liberation — liberation from the psychological pressures of the city. In a voice-over MacSwain explains his reasons for needing to occasionally escape the city as the screen shows Halifax's skyline and newspaper headlines of the Pope's visit and the Tall Ships.

Unfortunately, the film's pacing slows when he heads outside

the city after the opening section, with the slowest part of all being the final scene. In the third section, MacSwain picnics with four gay friends. (He had earlier said nature doesn't care whether they're gay or not). The film is well made, but isn't well served by dragging on too much at the end, even if its point was to demonstrate a slower speed of life outside the city.

Trilogy was the best-realized experimental film at the Festival and at 46 minutes, by far the longest as well. It dealt with memory and family, overlapping the past and present in director Barbara Sternberg's effective use of montage.

The film dispenses with narrative and instead creates moods and impressions through the use and repetition of various scenes. A young boy runs up a hill and rolls down the other side in a

scene shot to suggest it is occurring in the past; an affluent couple with child prepare breakfast in the morning with the CBC radio news on; a home movie-type film shows another young mother walking into water with a young child. Nothing final occurs in any of these scenes (and several others), but they have a cumulative effect, especially as parts of them are repeated.

One jarring effect in the film was the repeated appearance of text on the screen. In one instance, as the sound of the CBC news is heard on the sound track the screen goes white, and a list of historic events leading up to the present appears on the screen, such as the beginnings of World War I.

What is left after the film is more a memory of the montage between scenes and bits of scenes than any individual shot itself.

Video productions was well as films were screened during the four day event. *Cold Toast* by Doug Porter utilized computer generated graphics and imagery. Throughout the duration of the video, text appeared like a computer printout on the screen. *Cold Toast* presented a systematic approach taken to an extreme about the steps necessary for getting ready for work.

Depersonalization, not entertaining the subjective and condition in to fit the norm are emphasized. There are programmed steps for showering, shaving, dressing, preparing breakfast and eating. The language used and its ironic message about maintaining preset, rigid codes of behavior worked very well within the format of the computer generated imagery.

Three 60 second video commercials by Jim MacSwain, Rose Adams and Cathy Quinn were part of the performance game show *Gasping for Grants*. Artist Touch featured on K-Tel style of advertisement for a paint-by-number portrait of Brian Mulroney. The second ad *U-Can Rail* offered a train ride to the capital of Culture (Ottawa) with a sidestop first to the place with all the connections — New York.

Art-Kik Power was the most successful of the three ads. It combined the formats of a fast paced cop show and a soap commercial. As the typical detective TV show music plays, a black car screeches to a halt and three burly FBI types spill out. They march in a determined manner up the outside stairs of the Nova Scotia Art Gallery. Their mission is to identify and remove any forms of art with do not conform to government standards. They seize video tapes which are sent spinning into — the washing machine. Using Art-Kik Power the tapes come whiter than white with all dubious traces removed.

These three works by the Popular Projects Society use satire and popular cultural forms to get across their message.

These short films and videos were only a few of the many works screened at the festival. This year's festival was the largest film festival held in Halifax yet. Hopefully it will continue to get bigger and better, bringing film and video to Halifax.