

Glenn Walton Nova Scotia Song first serious film

By KIM McCLENAGHAN

For Glenn Walton, *The Nova Scotia Song* is "my first serious movie — the first one I'd like to show to people." In the film, Walton gives a superb account of the history of this traditional song.

The Nova Scotia Song is a musical documentary honoring Helen Creighton and work she has done in the folklore of Nova Scotia.

The movie consists of three parts. In the first part, Helen Creighton "ranges over her life and work, from initial friendships formed with fishermen and their wives to her later recognition." She then goes on to describe some of her own psychic experiences and in the final part recounts the collecting of *The Nova Scotia Song*.

Folksinger Clary Croft is featured in this film as an "on-camera interviewer" who also sings various songs from Creighton's collection.

Walton describes Creighton as being "tremendously charismatic", a woman who has collected and published over 4000 folk songs. She began collecting in the 1920s and has since compiled many versions of ghost stories and folklore, among her most famous books being "Bluenose Ghosts" and "Bluenose Magic". Creighton says the film's account of her is going to be "hard to live up to".

Walton became involved in recording the folklore of Nova Scotia through a mixture of interests. "I've always been interested in history and music — to me, folklore is a natural combination of the two."

Walton says the highlight for him during the making of the movie was the trip out to Devil's Island, where they filmed the actual singing of *The Nova Scotia Song*. The island was at one time a fishing community but has been deserted since World

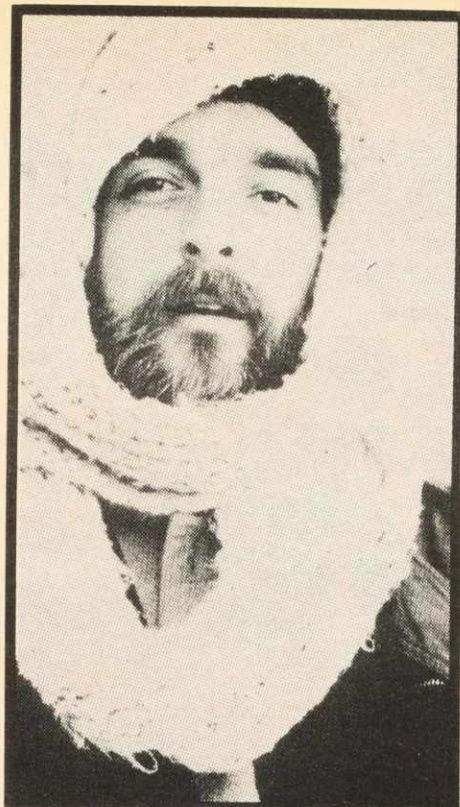


Photo: Ariella Pahlke

War II. To him, the island serves as a "poignant symbol of lost heritage". "We can only honor Helen Creighton as people who preserve this heritage", says Walton.

Walton has been with the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-operative for two years. He is not only a filmmaker, but also a stage director and a part-time English professor at St. Mary's. Among his stage credits are *Joseph and Jesus Christ Superstar* (DSU), and *The Telephone* (Mt. St. Vincent Playhouse).

Walton is currently working on the pilot for his new film, *Ragged Island*, a historical drama. He says there is a lot of positive feeling towards this movie and has received coverage from CBC already.

The Nova Scotia Song will premier Thursday, Oct. 23, 7:00 p.m. at the National Film Board Theatre. The film is a part of the Atlantic Film Festival and is open to the public.

Andy Jones

Faustus draws on Irish roots

By Heather Hueston

The Atlantic Film Festival opened last night with *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood*, a black comedy directed by Michael Jones, and one of Newfoundland's first home-grown feature films. Nearly 1000 people, a large part of the Newfoundland arts community, were involved in the ten-year project.

The complex set of plots follows the split life of Faustus, played by Andy Jones, who co-wrote the script with brother Michael.

A dull clerk in reality, Faustus becomes, in his gory fantasies, the president of an independant revolutionary Newfoundland. But he's only one of the many bizarre characters, several of whom are played by members of CODCO, the Newfoundland comedy collective famous for political lampoons and satirical revues.

Jones was a teacher making silent black and whites with his high school classes when he heard about a Canada Council grant that was going to Memorial University for lack of a local film co-op. He quickly filled the gap by co-founding the Newfoundland Independant Film Co-op (NIFCO) in 1975. He was eventually taken on by the NFB as a filmmaker trainee but continued his independant dramas such as *Codpieces* in 1976. The style of the films he has produced influenced by the multi-talented nature of the artists.

"Most acting in St. John's is collective theatre. The actors are writer/performers

and the story will develop with the actors," explains Jones.

Jones takes no responsibility for expressing the island psyche. He says it's possible that the darker elements in *Faustus* reflect the Irish roots of Newfoundland humour, "the laughing at the wake." The outrageous, sometimes crude CODCO skits draw on the Irish, as opposed to the English, experience.

That may be why the movie had a mixed reaction in St. John's. "Some people may have been repulsed by what they saw as tastelessness," says Jones, "but for the people committed to indigenous theatre, the downtown people, it was okay." He also says the poor reviews were written by theatre critics who didn't judge *Faustus* as a piece of cinema.

Although Jones doesn't entirely agree that *Faustus* is a cult film, he says he never expected it to have wide acceptance—"its not a Spielberg"—but the "aware audience, the people who love film" will like *Faustus*.

In the next 10 years Jones expects other world-class films to be made in Newfoundland, though they may be mainly for the alternative film circuit. He would also like to see Canadian Film funding agencies "seed and develop component." Jones doesn't want money if it means buying into the homogenized marketable formulas. "I bought my independance at great cost" says Jones. With the credibility he has now, financing his next picture should be a different story.

Lulu Keating Camped-up rock video for Lulu

By HEATHER HUESTON

You may have seen a woman with long frizzy red hair tied with a large bow. She is Lulu Keating, the owner of Red Snapper Films.

Keating is probably best known for the 1984 local CBC late night "Atlantic Filmmakers" series she co-hosted with Bob Joy of Newfoundland's CODCO. She and Joy shot the six shows in three days, a "high-stress situation" but one that boosted her exposure and made her more critically aware of what worked in films.

While cleaning films for the N.S. Lung Association, Keating noticed how condescending the films were. "*Starting Right Now*" gives a camped-up rock video version of the anti-smoking campaign. "I knew this was going to be a very strange film" says Keating, "but the kids like the pace of it and they get the message."

An Antigonish native, she began making films when she joined the Atlantic filmmakers Co-op in 1979 which provided her with tools and resources.

"You could do whatever idea you had. You didn't need a salary, just enough for basic expenses" Keating used her first two-minute short plus clippings from two other films to get her first major Canada Council grant for the 25 minute drama "City Survival", which has been broadcast several times on CBC.

She produces mainly dramas but the business "redefines itself all the time". She says she won't move full time into the production side because of the headaches involved. "For example, if we go over budget, I get sued."



Photo: Heather Hueston

Currently she is co-directing an NFB documentary, casting parts for a Dutch film company, and has been second assistant director on "John and the Missus" starring Gordon Pinsent. Keating and her crew spent three weeks in Japan filming Rita MacNeil's concerts at the Canada Pavilion. Despite the logistical and language problems involved, the long hours were "exhilarating". And the Japanese culture was like "seeing the future. Technical innovations we saw 18 months ago are just arriving over here."

Upcoming projects include an on-location shoot in Africa in 1988 of a script Keating has written. Her film "*Rita MacNeil*" will be screened at the World Trade Centre, Thursday at noon and "*Starting Right Now*" will be screened at the NFB Friday at 5:00 p.m.

Jim MacSwain Flowers second animated short

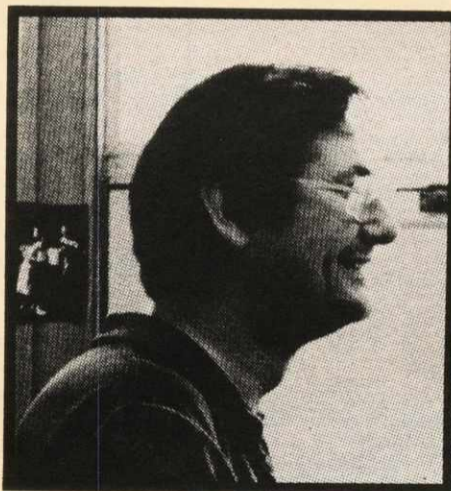


Photo: Ariella Pahlke

By Heather Hueston

Jim MacSwain's film *Flower* is the second animated short he has produced at Halifax's Domsday Studios. The first, "Atomic Dragons" is narrated in a bedtime-storybook voice. It describes the military's plans to dump our nuclear waste into orbit where the space dragons eat it all up, get hooked and go looking for more. The frantic dragons head for the source and eat up Planet Earth.

"That was a little pessimistic," says MacSwain. *Flower* has a more positive ending. In the *Flower*, images symbolic of love and humankind are only temporarily blotted out by the war image. The narration consists of quotations from the Romantic poets, the last line of which contains the essence of the film, "We are wreathing a flowery band to bind us to the earth."

MacSwain likes to deal with "mythic" subjects. He says dragons and human stupidity, love and war, are universal themes which every one can respond to.

The films' animation isn't drawn but is made by manipulating cut-outs and moving images. MacSwain says holding the camera himself gives him more scope.

MacSwain has also made four experimental documentaries with the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op. Unlike in theatre, "there are no actors to inhabit your characters for you".

Development of the film relies not on dialogue between characters but on the narration. And whatever does get put on film, stays there, a fact which makes film "more scary" for MacSwain than the ephemeral nature of theatre.

MacSwain's experience in theatre comes from five years with the Gargoyle Puppet Troupe and work on his play, *Survivors*, which was performed in 1981. In addition to playwriting, filmmaking and puppet workshops, he has been an art administrator for the AFCCOOP as well as running a film distribution network for the Atlantic provinces.

"To support yourself as an artist in Halifax, you need a varied background," MacSwain says. The funding base is narrow, divided basically between the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Fitness and the Canada Council, which awards on merit rather than on a regional basis.

"We're competing against better-trained artists with more resources," he says.

As for the future of independent filmmakers, MacSwain says the term "independent" is blurring.

"Traditionally it meant someone who wasn't part of an institution, such as the NFB." But now there are degrees of independance depending on artistic content. But if you want total freedom, then you have to go the bureaucratic route to get funded. These two variables of money and product define the status of an independant filmmaker.

Flower will be screened at the NFB, Thursday, Oct. 23, at 12:15.