

# Get a taste of Canada at the Festival of Festivals

by Ira Nayman

If you're one of those people who run screaming in the opposite direction when somebody mentions Canadian film, you should check out the Perspective Canada program at the Festival of Festivals. It combines strong documentaries with several interesting short and feature length works of fiction.

The best films, as you might expect from Canada's reputation, are documentaries. *Manufacturing Consent: The Media and Noam Chomsky* and *Artemisia: A Woman's Story* (see the overview of Canadian women's films, for instance, are excellent works which deserve a wide audience. Two other feature length documentaries are worth seeing: Nicholas Campbell's *Stepping Razor Red X* and Mark de Valk's *The Pool: Reflections of the Japanese-Canadian Internment*.

*Stepping Razor* is about the life, and murder, of reggae legend Peter Tosh. Archival footage of Tosh and images of modern Jamaica are combined with a tape he started recording a few months before his death — Red X — to reveal a troubled man.

The film offers a complex portrait of the artist. Our admiration for Tosh as a fighter for black rights is tempered by his belief that he was fighting a war with the devil, who didn't want him to spread his message of legalizing marijuana and living in peace.

People who are not fans of Tosh may find the film too long and overly detailed. However, it contains many long scenes of Tosh performing his best loved material, making it necessary viewing for people who love reggae music.

*The Pool* is about a shameful event in Canadian history: the forced relocation of thousands of Canadians of Japanese descent to the BC interior from their homes on the coast. As the film dramatically shows, these citizens were herded into unclean camps and stripped of their land and possessions, something for which they were only just recently recompensed.

Archival footage is mixed with modern footage of the cities of the relocation and interviews with a couple of survivors, including Joy Kogawa, whose novel *Obasan* was one of the first to portray the events from the Japanese perspective. *The Pool* is an emotionally affecting reminder that Canada is not always the tolerant, pluralistic society it would like to see itself as.

Documentaries aren't the only Canadian films worth seeing at the Festival. There are a number of feature fiction films whose reputation precedes them (including *Montreal Sextet* and *Tectonic Plates*) and some pleasant surprises (such as *Secret Nation* and *Giant Steps*). And, although the quality from film to film varies as you might expect, each program of shorts has at least one or two films worth viewing.

Six of Canada's hottest directors were commissioned to do short films about Montreal to celebrate its 350th birthday. The results, *Montreal Sex-*



Anne Wessels (left) and Christine Reeves in Annette Mengard's *Let Me Wrap My Arms Around You*.

**movie**  
The Toronto International Film Festival of Festivals  
September 10 - 19, 1992  
at various theatres throughout the city

*tet* (original French title: *Montreal Vue Par...*) are a mixed bag, with something to appeal to everyone.

The strongest segment comes from Lea Pool, who, with often startling images and an uncanny ability to highlight just the right details, tells the story of a woman whose life flashes before her eyes as she is taken by ambulance to hospital after a car crash. Almost as good is Denys Arcand's segment, which, with his customary combination of humour and drama, brilliantly equates the longing to return to the city with the yearning to recapture long lost love.

The two segments by Ontarians are lighter. Patricia Rozema's, starring Sheila McCarthy, contains the same type of whimsy which made *I Have Heard the Mermaids Singing* so popular; if you didn't like the feature, you probably won't enjoy the short (although it Rozema has some clever fun with subtitles). Atom Egoyan's segment continues his obsession with communications (international wordless signs and an English taped tour of the city are two obvious examples), which will be entertaining for people who share it.

Jacques Leduc surveys Montreal's history by following the portrait of the city's first mayor (intelligently using rear projection). Michel Brault tells a typical story of a woman leaving her husband after 30 years of marriage in an unusual setting: the

Montreal Forum during a Habs game. These films are tied the closest to the city, which makes them the least accessible to people from other places.

Peter Mettler's film adaptation of Robert Lepage's *Tectonic Plates* contains the sort of stunning imagery for which the theatre director is famous; in one scene, for instance, two women walk up a staircase in a real building only to end up climbing out of a piano on stage. It also contains some achingly funny

scenes, such as the one where a transvestite Quebecois is picked up by a naive anglophone.

It is sometimes difficult to follow the characters as they move in and out of cities and identities. Otherwise, *Tectonic Plates* is a remarkable

conspiracy on the part of the Canadian and British governments to fix the vote.

*Secret Nation* has a very CODCO sense of humour, caustic and revealing; this should come as no surprise considering the director, Mike Jones, and some of the actors, Cathy Jones, Mary Walsh and Andy Jones, were involved in that television show. Beyond the humour, however, the film effectively paints a portrait of people who feel disenfranchised and are seriously questioning their role in Canadian confederation. Torontonians who cannot understand regional alienation should consider *Secret Nation* required viewing.

*Giant Steps* is a coming of age film about a young Estonian boy enchanted by a jazz musician. As it happens, I hate coming of age films, about Estonian boys or otherwise. But *Giant Steps* is more sophisticated than most, with an often engaging sense of humour, and it boasts a delightful over the top, scene-chewing performance by Billy Dee Williams as the jazz piano player.

*Blue* is one of two shorts directed by Bruce McKellar, who wrote and starred in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*. You'll probably be hearing a lot about it: it's the one that stars horror film director David Cronenberg. The story, a middle-aged businessman buys and reads pornographic magazines intercut with scenes from a pornographic movie with a voice over narration by the

woman who starred in it, makes an interesting point about humanizing the women in porn, but the humour is so subtle it tends to get lost, and the ending, although worthy, is predictable.

Subtle, often surreal humour is the attraction of *Coleslaw Warehouse*,



Daniel Maclor stars as a depressed fairy who wants his wings cut off.

the first film directed by Kid in the Hall Bruce McCullough. Andy Jones stars as a once-proud coleslaw wholesaler who has to come to terms with the fact that tastes have changed and there is no longer a market for his product. A sharp directorial eye makes *Coleslaw Warehouse's* combination of bizarre humour and elegiac tone somehow work.

## Affordable PC Now Available !

### TREND 386 DX - 40 MHz

#### Complete system configuration:-

- 128k cache memory
- 4Mb RAM ( 70 NS ); up to 32Mb on board
- Fujitsu 5.25" AND 3.5" floppy drive
- Fujitsu 105 Mb hard drive ( Japanese )
- " MAGNAVOX " Super VGA 14" color monitor
- Trident 512k SVGA card
- 101 enhanced keyboard
- AMI BIOS with password protection
- 2 serial, 1 parallel & 1 game ports
- Heavy duty case & 200w power supply

**MAGNAVOX**  
" smart choice monitor "  
PC Magazine  
Award !  
**FUJITSU**  
hard drive  
" 3 years headache-free warranty "

Only

**\$ 1399**

FREE MS DOS 5.0 & Windows 3.1 & Mouse  
PLUS 5 YEARS WARRANTY 5 years labor  
2 years parts

#### Communication Products

- Zoltrix 2400 Modem int. \$ 45
- Zoltrix 9600 Fax modem S&R int. \$ 75
- Magnavox pocket modem 2400 ext. \$ 75
- Zoltrix 9600 pocket Fax modem ext. \$ 155

#### Sight & Sound

- Sound Blaster \$ 123
- CD ROM Drive \$ 399
- SONY \$ 399
- Mitsumi \$ 250

#### Printers On Sales

- Brother 9 - pins dot matrix \$ 189
- Fujitsu 24 pins dot matrix ( 110 cols ) \$ 299
- Fujitsu 24 pins COLOR printers \$ 369
- Cannon Bubble jet portable printer \$ 375

#### TREND 386 - 25 MHz System

##### Complete system configuration:-

- 2Mb RAM ; up to 8Mb on board
- Fujitsu 5.25" AND 3.5" floppy drive
- Fujitsu 45Mb hard drive ( Japanese )
- Magnavox VGA 14" mono monitor
- VGA card with 256k VRAM
- 101 enhanced keyboard

Free DOS 5.0 & MODEM \$ 995

Upgrade  
your

#### MOTHERBOARD

- 286-12MHz \$ 79
- 386SX - 16 MHz \$ 150
- 386DX - 33MHz \$ 275

**PC**

### COMPU TREND

HOURS : Mon to Fri - Saturday

10AM - 7 PM 10AM - 5 PM

Scarborough  
( Ellesmere & Kennedy )  
1350 Kennedy road

288-0325

Mississauga  
( Dundas & Whiston way )  
1870 Dundas st. e.

279-1988

Thornhill  
( Steeles & Yonge )  
330 Steeles ave. w.

889-0199