

ENTERTAINMENT

Festival animation series

'Toon fest no jest

Roman Pawlyszyn

The Animation Series is a new addition to this year's Festival of Festivals, and it's about time. Many other cities hold major annual festivals devoted entirely to the screening of new animated films, while Toronto has almost avoided this most creative facet of the cinema.

"People here are preoccupied with stars, directors, and 'events,'" says programmer Kelly O'Brian, who is also the director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival. "At the Ottawa Festival it feels closer, more intimate, and the audience more receptive."

Perhaps as a symbol of Hogtown's haughtiness towards animation, O'Brian's series has been tucked away into the Backstage II (a less than ideal theatre under any circumstances) and has been beset with technical difficulties. One of the problems is that O'Brian is busy running around doing everything herself. In Ottawa, I have two projectionists working for me. Here I'm the announcer, the curtain framer, the projectionist, even the ticket taker," she jokes. "Still, it's my baby, so I don't mind."

The breadth and variety of animated films and animation techniques are astounding, going far beyond the familiar Saturday morning cartoon. O'Brian points out that "cartoon" is to animation what "documentary" is to film—

merely one aspect of a broad field. Some highlights of the animation that have appeared so far:

• *Dream Doll*, a British film about a man and his love affair with a life-size inflatable doll. His heart gets broken but his tale ends happily.

• *Mindscape*, from the National Film Board of Canada. A surreal journey into a painting, it uses the pinscreen technique, a painstaking and complex process in which thousands of black pins are inserted into a white board. By varying the length that the pins stick out from the board, the animator creates various shadings from black to white. The effect in *Mindscape* is superb.

• *Kick Me*, a film about a being who consists of a pair of legs joined together, and who gets chased by a giant baseball. Everything was drawn directly onto the 35mm film stock, a laboriously meticulous technique.

• also from the NFB, *T.V. Sale*, a parody of television programs, with commercials from the "North American Tragedy and Death" life insurance company and "Pit-Stop Sonic-Spray Deoderant."

• *The Censor*, an inside look

at how the Ontario Censor Board makes its decisions: clay animated censors throw darts at a board divided into "General", "Adult", "Restricted", and "Ban". Very pertinent.

• *The History of the World in Three Minutes Flat*, which is precisely that. "And then there was light," says the Creator as a light switches on. In the end when he sees what he has created he turns off the light, yawns, and says "Oh well, I'll try again."

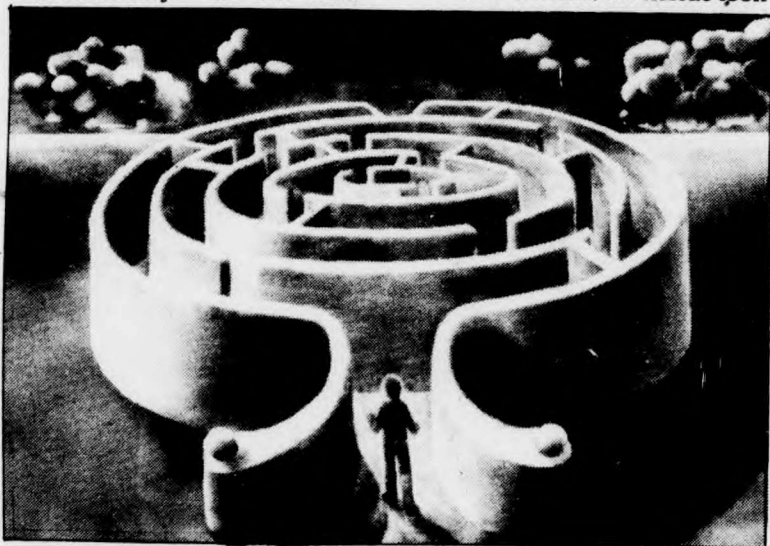
• *Thanksgiving*. The animators took an actual turkey—basted and roasted—put eyes on its rear and animated it to walk around like some mutant beast. From the Vancouver School of Art.

• *The Fly*, a Hungarian film in brown pencil depicting life from a fly's perspective, with a tragic ending. Very unusual, almost dizzying, and last year's Academy Award winner.

• *Babfilm (Scenes with Beans)*. Animated lima beans are people who drive cigarette-box and sardine-can cars, live in milk carton high-rises, and harvest their wheat with a Bic razor mowing a yellow shag carpet. Ingenious.

Does O'Brian have any problems selecting which films to show from among the thousands available? "Usually I can pick my favourites, but sometimes they're not available so I just have to take the distributor's word on something I haven't seen. On a few films, I took the chance and lost. There's a lot of bribery involved."

The Animation Series continues today and tomorrow with animation from Quebec, Parts I and II, and Saturday with a selection of the best films screened during the Festival. Hopefully, the Animation Series will become an annual affair, and perhaps next year the projection conditions will be improved to a level deserving of the subject matter.



Mindscape: Jaques Drouin/NFB

...and Malevil

Nuke flick no Irwin Allen

Roman Pawlyszyn

A wine cellar in Malevil, a provincial French village. The mayor of the village and a group of locals are making some small business dealings. Suddenly, the transistor radio goes dead.

Brilliant beams of radiant blue light streak in under the crack in the cellar door. The pealing reverberation of thunder. The people break out in profuse sweating, sweating that is so unbearable they writhe. Wine bottles burst, violently expelling their contents.

When the commotion ends and the people carefully emerge from their protective basement hideaway, they discover their village in ruins, debris floating through the air, mummified horses, charred bodies, and a perpetually overcast sky. They discover that they are the survivors of a nuclear holocaust.

Imagine what Irwin Allen would have done with a scenario like this one and you'll know what *Malevil* is not. It's a human

drama, not a special effects thriller. The premise of nuclear destruction serves only as an initiating force — the atomic age's equivalent of the shipwreck. From there, it's the story of this group's survival in a post-nuke wasteland, their determination to carry on as if it were only another hurdle in a normal lifetime of challenges. As one character says while surveying the parched bleakness around him, "I thought it'd be worse." It couldn't possibly be.

We see how, in the ensuing months, this disorganized group of people who saved their lives purely by accident, advance and become a self-sufficient community. An important moment in the lifting of the gloominess present at first is the occasion of the first rainfall since the explosion. Although everybody has been waiting for it, when it finally does rain all are cautious to avoid the possibly-contaminated water—against their initial impulses. When they

discover that the rain is safe, inhibitions disappear; it is quite a joyous moment seeing these people frolic in the rain fully dressed.

The community is a microcosm of life. When the resident electronics whiz removes parts from the lovable grandmother's washing machine to build a transmitter, the grandmother becomes upset. "No use ruining it," she says. When she is browsing through a glossy magazine that has just been unearthed, she admires a photo of a gala dinner party. "Those lucky people," she editorializes, not considering the possibilities. When the members of the group engage in a roulette game, they play for real money, and, just as a real money game would inspire, avarice and cheating pervade the affairs.

As time passes, living conditions improve and things become quite peaceful. Their

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Neige—Godard goddess Juliet Berto

Ticket to Festival

Robyn Butt

Ticket to Heaven

Ticket to Heaven can't touch Harry, sitting outside in his leather jacket. But it should retire forever the persistent and invidious notion that Canadians always make bleak rambling inept movies, often about snow. The film is a dissection of the Moonie movement, and the acting is competent (although occasionally self-conscious), the camera-work is efficient, the pacing is faultless. Saul Rubinek, as the nut-with-a-heart-of-gold who saves his best friend from Mooniedom, is cute and convincing; and for the 15 minutes R.H. Thompson appears as the de-programmer, possesses the screen like a glorious demon. His presence has a James Dean-like energy with a veteran stage-actor's polish. Then there's Nick Mancuso, playing the guy the Moonies get, and redeeming himself from the abysses of *Stratford and Nightwing*. If he sometimes seems one-dimensional, the problem isn't his, so much as the movie's.

In the end, *Ticket* is a core with no outer layers. Moonies brainwash through malnutrition, no sleep, and verbal manipulation. Since we all are potential victims, we must view the film in this light, and this is where it starts to fall short. It doesn't examine why brain-

washes are susceptible in the first place. Because frankly, anyone who believes people whose idea of music is "Amazing Grace", deserves to be Moonified. All we know about Mancuso is that he's just had a fight with his girlfriend before he's off to the farm to be freaked out. We haven't a clue why someone who not only acts too intelligent, but looks too intelligent to be a Moonie, gets taken in by a compulsive teeny camp-counsellor with a whistle, and a Brit lecturer who's ridiculously pompous. All of which is too bad, because the ignored secret is right in the line: "a wretch like me." This could be *Ticket to Heaven's* alternative title. Or should have been.

Neige

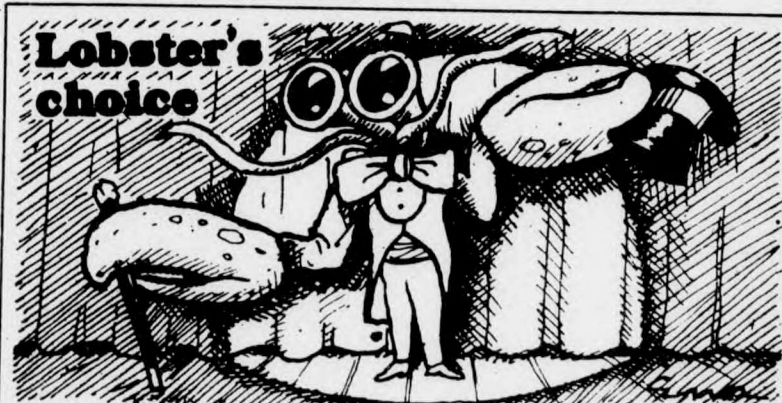
Neige is another Godardian street-film. Gradually becomes amazing for the choked innocence threaded consistently though every wandering scene. People afterwards complained that its hopefully hopeless protagonists weren't realistic, but if anyone going to the movies nowadays wants "realistic" films to present reality they should be chained to the corner of Queen and Jarvis for two hours.

Not A Love Story

Not A Love Story is a film in which the film-maker set out to

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Extended by popular demand!



Name-the-Contest Contest!!!

The Lobster's Choice column is traditionally devoted to tipping you off on the most interesting events taking place on campus. Since there's nothing much happening this first week, we are devoting Pere Lobster's space to our weekly contest/quiz thing. Since this quiz doesn't have a name yet, that'll be your first dangerous challenge—Name the contest! And if your entry is chosen, you get a free copy of the new Triumph album, Allied Forces, courtesy Attic Records. So get your suggestions (include your name) to Excalibur, Comrade Lobster, 111 Central Square by Wed., Sept. 23 at noon. No Excal slaves need apply. S.R.