

Images 90: what really goosed my gander . . .

by Letitia Tendentious

The line-ups weren't as long as for Toronto's Festival of Festivals, although, in keeping with its traditions, the opening night's programme did start 45 minutes late. There wasn't as much skin as there is at Cannes, although the warm weather did prompt the wearing of too many short shorts, if you ask me. Speeches by the filmmakers were not nearly so long, and far more comprehensible than New York.

I am referring, of course, to Images 90, the third annual festival of independent film and video held recently at the Euclid Theatre. Images 90 had one thing the other festivals didn't: a black and white tabby who tried getting affection from the characters on screen, reducing the dramatic climax of films to black comedy (as Alex Roshuk found at the end of *Le Gout de Mon Espoir*).

Now, when I was a youth, I was taught that certain subjects were not to be discussed in polite company: religion, politics and, of course, physical relations between, umm, people. Times must have changed when I wasn't looking, because, lordy, lordy, there was something at Images 90 to offend everyone!

Take the "Neato — It's NIFCO" programme, a tribute to the 15th anniversary of the Newfoundland Independent Film Co-operative. It was a cute little package — a couple of highly effective documentaries followed by three outraged (and outrageous!) comedies that you just know couldn't have been made anywhere else. But, it was the last minute addition to the programme that really goosed my gander, if you know what I mean: *Extraordinary Visitor*.

In *Extraordinary Visitor*, the Pope opens a 60 year-old letter from girls who claim to have been

visited by the Virgin Mary in Fatima. The letter reads: "Newfoundland, get out of Confederation." The Pope sends John the Baptist to St. John's to investigate. Now, jokes about Priests abusing young boys may seem prescient to some (the film was made in 1982, long before the problem hit the national spotlight), but, I mean, really!

Somebody will be burning in the eternal pit for this one.

Politics was everywhere. Two separate programmes were devoted to the works of Sara Diamond, a Vancouver video artist who combines documentary with fiction, feminism with anti-racism and unionism. Pieces like *The Lull Before the Storm* and *Keeping the Home Fires Burning: Women, War Work and Unions in British Columbia* show an intelligent, mature artist in complete control of her medium (now, if only she would get control of her hair).

Programmes like "Acts of Denial" and "Unbroken Spirit" dealt with issues of race and equality. *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, a feature length documentary originally made for PBS was okay, I guess, and shorts like *Video Stories* and *Colour Schemes* had a good message, interestingly presented; but, well, I was just brought up in a time when politics was confined to the back of the bar after everybody had had a few too many. All this talk of justice can only lead to freedom, and who knows where that will lead!

"Media Paranoia" was about images and their relationship to reality (tenuous, my dears, very tenuous). Now, I believe that civilization is predicated on limits; when sitting in front of the telly to relax for a few days is considered a political act, well, I must draw the line!

As for the sex, well, let's just say that the "I Long For Your Touch" programme contained more erections than downtown Toronto during a construction boom, and "Demarcations of Desire," which



The Lull Before the Storm (directed by Sara Diamond) and *Who Killed Professor Wordsworth?* (INSET, directed by Andrew J. Paterson) from Images 90. Okay, it's avant garde, but is it art?

featured — well, never mind what it featured! Disgusting!

Not only that, but, as with most film festivals, there were some entries which threatened to push back the boredom envelope. Philip Hoffman seemed such a nice young man when he was introduced, but his film, *Kitchener-Berlin* seemed pointless and boring to the point of anesthesia.

My good friend Agatha Pimpumper accused me of suffering from Film Festival Overload Syndrome, a strange loss of humour attributable to spending too many hours in darkened theatres. "Now, Lettie, don't get your support hose in a knot!" she said to me over tea at her boy Floyd's apartment. I always liked Floyd, even if he did go a little strange when he turned fifty and — well, there's no need to rehash that personal tragedy. After all, Floyd did replace the rabbits and the aluminum siding.

Anyway, Aggie said that, of course some of the films might offend some people. The whole point of creating artworks independently was to challenge the status quo, to make things that people couldn't see in other places. If independent artists didn't do something different, they might as well go to Hollywood and make Arnold Schwarzenegger movies.

"What's wrong with Arnold's movies?" I demanded.

"Get with the nineties!" Agatha replied. "You don't have to like every film or tape to see that the

Canadian independent film and video scene is doing some of the most creative, vital, challenging work in this country. They deserve the support of everybody who is tired of the same old mainstream — yes, I'll say it — crap. And, the Euclid Theatre should be supported for their independent programmes all year round!"

Well . . . my goodness . . . I wonder what was in her tea that afternoon!

Sometimes, at the end of *Globe and Mail* film festival reports, there are quotes from some of the participants. Now, the *Globe and Mail* is a fine newspaper since they got rid of all those wimpy, bleeding heart columnists, even if the news section is often less substantial than a politician's promise.

Anyway, if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me. Try these quotes on for size:

"It'll be time to go to the party, soon," opening night audience member waiting for the films to begin.

"Number of works featuring business men with ties: five. Number of works featuring condom dispensing hairdressers: one," from the Images 90 Fact Sheet.

"A terrible fucking filmmaker," director Ron Mann (*Comic Book Confidential*, *Imagine the Sound*), explaining the pleasure he had working with Ivan Reitman on the screenplay of *Hoods in the Woods*, at the "Script Development" seminar.

"I needed the money," director

Ron Mann, explaining why he had the pleasure of working with Ivan Reitman on the screenplay of *Hoods in the Woods*.

"I think seminars like this are great, but I think they're boring," director Ron Mann, explaining the pleasure he had attending the "Script Development" seminar.

"Image 90 T-shirts are on sale now — they look great with Calvin Klein underwear," Paul Wong, curator of the "Acts of Denial" programmes.

"Do you wanna do dares?" a six year old girl in an Images 90 T-shirt outside the Euclid Theatre.

"They [the jury who selected the films] were upset there wasn't enough sex," b. h. Yael, programme coordinator, apologizing for the "I Long for Your Touch" programme.

"He's a clone! Oh . . . help . . ." closing line of the terminally strange exploration of language, meaning and cheap detective clichés, *Who Killed Professor Wordsworth?*

Albert and Dolly Cake are a pair. Although they may not seem so, they are both domestic comedies and stories about frustrated love. *Dolly Cake* recycles Gothic passion through the garburator of everyday life, while *Albert* deposits the weight of myth and legend deep within the psyche of its pitiable protagonist. Albert suffers under the load of the fateful Three Promises given at birth to prevent his withering away while Dolly just seems to be in a bummer relationship. Both Dolly and Albert are victims of their own created circumstances. Both need to get out more. Both lunge briefly at a concocted freedom: "I could twirl in the street," says Albert. In the end, it is a rather normal world (Cheez Whiz et al) that sustains them both . . . from the catalogue description of the "Neato — It's NIFCO" programme.

"NIFCO is known for its funny films, because we're a funny . . . simple people," David Pope, or possibly his brother Paul, both members of NIFCO, introducing the programme.

"A little media . . . a little paranoia . . ." b. h. Yael introducing the "Media Paranoia" programme.

"I'm just finishing my latest film," half a dozen audience members over a period of four nights; sometimes, I felt like the only civilian in the place!

Letitia Tendentious wrote a column called "Lunch with Lettie" for Excalibur 23 years ago. Nobody is quite sure why she returned to York University last year.

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If they came in every day, it would take Kelly and his teammates 10 years to eat every possible combination of an Ainger bagel or bread.

I hope they start soon!

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