

SEA

Winnipeg

A recent surge of documentary filmmaking in Winnipeg has led to new films about desperate poverty, the morality of murder, women's safety, and the cinema obsessions of Guy Maddin. John Paskievich (*Sedna, If Only I Were an Indian...*) is shooting a film about the wrenching poverty of Gypsy life in Slovakia. "It's a very hard project...lots of dirt, disease and anger," said Paskievich. He travelled to Slovakia last summer with Jeff McKay, shooting his footage on digital video for the first time. George Godwin is editing Charles Konowal's film about a Minnesota couple who travel to prison to meet one of the men convicted of killing their daughter. The family's attempt to understand the mind of a murderer is a moving look at conscience, morality and forgiveness. Paula Kelly's *Personal Alarm* explores the powerful social and cultural reasons why record numbers of women are arming themselves in the face of a perceived increase in violence. Finally, Noam Gonick and Laura Michalchyshyn are shooting a documentary about Guy Maddin and the making of *The Twilight of the Ice Nymphs*. The film is earmarked for Bravo! in April and will feature narration by Tom Waits. In conjunction with Video Pool and Videon, Winnipeg artist Murray Toews has assembled an ambitious cable TV series called *Blender*, giving artists free reign to create a wildly eclectic assortment of work. The seven-part series includes works from 30 Winnipeg video artists and filmmakers. Carole O'Brien's *Motus Maestro*, the first French-language drama to be made independently in Manitoba, was screened at the World Festival of Short Films in Huy, Belgium; Richard Condie's *La salla* won Best Animated Short at the Vancouver film fest. From the Winnipeg Film Group comes *Good Citizen: Betty Baker*, a hilarious film by performance artists Shawana Dempsey and Lori Millan about a straight-laced, do-good housewife drawn into the world of gay bars; and, finally, Lorne Bailey's *Green Peril*, featuring Kyle McCulloch and John Kozak, premiered in Winnipeg after five years in the making.

Dave Barber

Toronto

Some may find Spencer Rice and Kenny Hotz's guerrilla style filmmaking to be admirable, but the young directors found themselves ostracized from every press conference and symposium during the past Toronto film fest because of their aggressive in-your-face tactics while filming their *Roger & Me-meets-The Player* mock documentary, *Pitch*. "The movie is essentially a documentary about selling a script in Toronto and Los Angeles," explains Rice from his office in Toronto. "We wanted to showcase our talents as writers, actors and directors. We wrote some sketches that were thematically related to the material so there is mock documentary mixed in with comedy and *verité* documentary. We've made enough documentaries which adhered to the rules, so now I can break the rules." Indeed. After producing the successful *Telewhore*, followed by *It Don't Cost Nothing to Say Good Morning* and *Bloor Hawaii*, Rice wasn't shy in cornering Al Pacino, Neil Simon, Arthur Hiller, Eric Stoltz, Roger Ebert, Norman Jewison, Matt Dillon and others on the do's and don'ts of pitching a script. Principal photography has just ended on Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*, based on the novel of the same name by Russell Banks. The movie is the first Egoyan has adapted from a source that is not his own. It tells the story of a lawyer (Ian Holm) who represents the members of a small community following a tragic school bus accident. The ensemble cast includes Arsinée Khanjian (of course), Sarah Polley, Bruce Greenwood, Gabrielle Rose, Tom McCamus and Maury Chaykin. Other features wrapped in Toronto include Daniel Petrie Sr.'s *The Assistant* with Joan Plowright and Armin Muehler-Stahl, Sidney Lumet's *Critical Care* with James Spader and Helen Mirren, and Dwight Little's *Executive Privilege* with Wesley Snipes and Diane Lane.

Angela Baldassarre

Spencer Rice and Kenny Hotz's *Pitch*

