Less **un beau sans-coeur** than a working-class victim with a polluted heart, Savoie reacts to his damnation by flaunting it. Grinning maniacally, cracking primitive jokes ("Why do beaver have flat tails? Because they got sucked off by ducks..."), suggesting film savages like Cagney in **White Heat** and Pacino in **Scarface**, Reggie is on a suicidal joyride toward the ultimate getaway—from himself. Well into **Requiem**, an oddball scene reveals that he has painted a bull's eye onto his chest.

On another level, Morin uses Reggie's exploits to make various points about crime in an era when killers negotiate TV mini-series deals. Reggie keeps tabs on his press, takes bows in strip clubs, and constantly videos himself. And the glamour quotient is low. Morin is clearly entranced by scuzzy, low-life detail: a big, ugly ring on a prison guard's finger; hideous home furnishings; a foul-mouthed girlfriend; an alcoholic argument climaxing with an elderly woman stomping on her antagonist's dentures.

Requiem is also distinguished by its formal experimentation with multiple points-of-view offering a jigsaw of contradictory impressions. Morin structured the picture into eight chapter-like sequences, each shot from a different character's perspective and with an entirely subjective camera. In each "chapter" you hear, but don't see, the point-of-view character (Savoie's mother, lawyer, henchman, and so on) unless she or he happens to be looking into a mirror. As far as I know, the last feature to attempt this trick was Robert Montgomery's 1946 adaptation of Raymond Chandler's **Lady in the Lake**. New York film critic Pauline Kael called that picture's relentless subjective camera a "nuisance."

Watching **Requiem**, you are more acutely aware than usual of the screen actor's relationship to the camera, and vice versa. The camera—constantly standing in for an invisible character—often seems to take on the status of one. You might find yourself wondering about people who can lateral track through bingo parlours, whip pan their heads from side to side, and cut to close-ups.

If you like movies to provide their own deconstruction, Morin's method offers plenty to mull over. On the other hand, when it falters, it is labored, discombobulated, working against itself with its incongruities and zany twists. In the longest takes, actors in front of the camera tend to grimace and cavort as if they're in the midst of a screen test that isn't going well. Morin took chances with his experiment. Obviously, one of them is that it interferes with his sulfureous portrait of a tormented soul, in a movie summed by the line: "We're all part monster. And there are all kinds: pretty and not so pretty."

Maurie Alioff writes film reviews, articles, screenplays, and is a contributing editor to Matrix.

Reviewed by Rachel Rafelman

Blast 'Em

Written and directed by Joseph Blasioli, co-directed by Egidio Coccimiglio and produced by Anders Palm. A Silent Fiction Films production.

■ "A picture celebrity is like hard currency," says an unidentified paparazzo in Joseph Blasioli and Egidio Coccimiglio's documentary **Blast 'Em**. "You can sell it anywhere on earth...and photo editors do not care who made it or how it was made."

As we learn during the next 100 minutes, the best celebrity photos are taken by the paparazzi, a.k.a. "assault photographers." They take them any way they can, and as far as **People** magazine and the **National Enquirer** are concerned, the more tasteless and intrusive the better. It's war. It's the paparazzi versus the celebrities, and the paparazzi are winning. Still, it's hard to know which side to root for. There is a suggestion of the Bacchanalian about the hungry aggression of the paparazzi, as if they would just as soon tear the celebrity apart as take his or her picture.

Victor Malafronte is a 29-year-old New York City paparazzo and the subject of **Blast 'Em**. In choosing to hang their entire film on Malafronte's twitchy shoulders, filmmakers Blasioli and Coccimiglio have taken a considerable risk, one that for the most part pays off. An incessant, emphatic and rapid-fire talker, Malafronte relates his photo-escapades as if delivering reports from war-torn Sarajevo; he is a guerrilla fighter in his own personal combat zone, determined to win at all costs. Fortunately, Blasioli and Coccimiglio and their camera are every bit as resolute in their pursuit of Malafronte as he is of his own subject-victim. While his prey escapes, the filmmakers have Malafronte in sharp focus. This irony eludes Malafronte. Sneering at two Michael J. Fox fans, he says, "You can tell they're fans. You can tell there's something wrong with them...with someone who has nothing better to do than stand around just to see a celebrity."

Malafronte's fixation on Michael J. Fox provides the film with a structure of sorts. His goal is a clear head shot of the star's baby son, never before pictured in the press, and he goes to great lengths to get it, including stakeouts outside Fox's home. It is a form of revenge, and the viewer's realization that it is so is a bit chilling.

Malafronte thwarted is not a pretty sight, although in **Blast 'Em**, it is a common one. A smiling Christie Brinkley, who has had the effrontery to sweep past without a glance in Malafronte's direction, evokes a violent volley of obscene epithets, most of them derived from the female anatomy. Madonna, who has repeatedly refused to pose for him, is called every name in the book, as well as a few that aren't. Publicity people who refuse him entry to events and whisk the stars away from the camera are even lower in his estimation. He accuses them of cowardice. "They're just afraid to ask their celebrities to do anything. And they wonder why we keep sneaking around and trying to crash their events."

Malafronte must be the gate-crashing champ of NYC. Watching him duck down halls, leap over gates and hustle through an immense hotel kitchen is more like a sequence from an action flick than a documentary. It takes your breath away. Finally inside the event, Malafronte cooly and deftly mingles with the accredited press, even commandeering a chair to stand on for a better

view. The celebrities, however, emerge from the elevator and stride quickly past, and he is unable to get the shots he wants. "This is the worst!" Malafronte ejaculates angrily. "Jeremy Irons won't even stop for us!"

Malafronte's professional reflexes are always rapid, but no one galvanizes him like Michael J. Fox. In one scene, after a long stakeout, we see him sprint across the street after Fox has finally emerged from his home for a run with his wife, Tracy Pollan. Fox spots him and ducks back into his apartment building. "It's unprofessional," Malafronte whines.

In a few masterstrokes, the filmmakers show us at least one of the compelling reasons why the celebrities avoid these photographers. An ordinary shot of Jack Nicholson flanks the lurid headline, "Jack Nicholson had a gay affair with Marlon Brando," along with a picture of Brando that dates from his **Apocalypse Now** days. Another equally generic photo of Mary Tylor Moore in a low-cut gown illustrates "Mary Tyler Moore in breast surgery disaster." Not nearly as amusing (but probably intended to be) are the candid comments of second-tier actress Sally Kirkland who makes four appearances, which is about three too many. She loves the camera, but it does not love her and the footage of her histrionic self-promoting is embarrassing, almost cruel.

There are a few wonderful moments with one of the original Italian paparazzi in 1960 who was shot with a bow and arrow and kicked in the groin by Anita Ekberg when he tried to take a picture of her with her married lover. A real pro, he kept shooting throughout, and the photos of Ekberg taking aim with the bow appeared in magazines around the world. The sobriquet "paparazzi," as he tells us, was picked up by the press after Federico Fellini included a photographer named Paparezzo in **La Dolce Vita**.

The paparazzi seem to lead a life of perpetual discomfort and frustration. Why do they do it? The only answer is implicit in the action of the film. There is that split-secondness to it all. It seems to charge them up, the thrill of the chase. Celebrities become visible for a beat only as they emerge from doorways or taxis. There is another beat, and they are enveloped by the crowds of fans and the many security men and bodyguards. Blasioli and Coccimiglio have given the audience the sense of how the celebrities must feel. Bernadette Peters, putting on a brave smile, is clearly terrified by the swarms of paparazzi jostling each other and calling out her name. Jack Nicholson, enigmatic behind his trademark dark glasses, is stony-faced and phlegmatic. Jane Fonda and Ted Turner grip each other's hands, smile wanly and walk away.

The filmmakers give Malafronte a lot of rope and, predictably, he hangs himself. There is one moment when someone off camera asks him why he feels he has the right to intrude on people's private lives in this manner. The camera has him pinned down, and we watch him squirm as he casts about for a quick answer. Finally he says, "I don't even think about questions like that." Malafronte is a sociopath with a Nikon. But there is something perfectly cinematic in his feral on-screen presence, and for the first hour of **Blast 'Em** his hyped-up hustle is fascinating to watch.

However, Blasioli and Coccimiglio neglect to provide their subject with either a professional or personal context. A few magazine editors (or we assume that's what they are) are interviewed on camera but not identified and this happens throughout. Talking heads appear and re-appear without any mention of who they are. It is impossible to evaluate the information or the speaker and issues are not being addressed. Malafronte is never placed in any critical or sociological context, so we are never quite sure how to evaluate him. He believes he has talent but the few photos of his we see are undistinguished, the result of his crafty opportunism rather than artistic ability. With his characteristic candour, he admits to distancing himself from his peers. "People are afraid of me. They're afraid of my potential," he says. No doubt. But his potential for what?

At one point there is a shift in our perspective on him. It comes with the recounting of an incident involving JFK Jr. Malafronte has already captured him on rollerblades on a New York city sidewalk but he wants more. In one scene, Kennedy spots Malafronte outside and takes off across the street to avoid the camera. The rest, which happens off camera, is only recounted but even so is one of the film's more memorable moments. Malafronte tells us how he took a short cut and arrived at Kennedy's house before he did. This was too much for John Jr., who, in desperation, confronts his pursuer. "Why are you doing this?" and urges Malafronte to "look into himself."

That Malafronte is unable to do so is perhaps his greatest failing. That the filmmakers cannot look into him either is, ultimately, their film's greatest failing.

Rachel Rafelman is a Toronto freelance writer.

Reviewed by Christopher Harris

Secret Nation

Directed by Michael Jones, written by Edward Riche, produced by Paul Pope, with Cathy Jones, Mary Walsh, Michael Wade, Rick Mercer and Ron Hynes. A Black Spot Inc./Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative production.

■ If you're one of those people who always thought Newfoundland was just another province, see **Secret Nation**. You'll probably never look at the place in the same light again. With his second feature, Newfoundland director Michael Jones has added 110 minutes to the body of Canadian film culture and in doing so has made a unique contribution to that culture.

Secret Nation has been compared, on numerous occasions, to Oliver Stone's **JFK**. But it's hard to compare **Secret Nation** to anything. Like **JFK**, this accomplished 1992 production is driven by revelations of a well-covered-up conspiracy of immense proportions. And it blends real and fictional characters. But that's about as far as the similarities go. Jones' creation is far less self-important than Stone's and far more funny. More to the point, **Secret Nation** seems somehow free of the taint of paranoia that clings to **JFK** and most other conspiracy dramas. Sure, there's abundant paranoia within the bounds of its storyline, but the film itself (in its own