

Wasaga

directed, written and produced by
JUDITH DOYLE

with LOUISE LILIEFELDT, TRACY WRIGHT,
DANIEL MACIVOR, ANDREW J. PATERSON

"Life is a beach...and then you drive" is the promo line that aptly tags Judith Doyle's first feature, *Wasaga*. This quirky film about Wasaga Beach, Ontario's answer to Coney Island, combines documentary, narrative, home movie and video art techniques used by Doyle in her previous, shorter pieces.

The film, written, produced, and

B Y J A N E P E R D U E

directed by Doyle, tells in an amusingly digressive style, the story of Rebecca (played by Louise Liliefeldt), a video artist who has escaped Toronto for a few weeks of solitude at her family's summer home. She hopes to complete a video which she describes as "my own version of Wasaga." Quickly realizing that she is isolated without a car, Rebecca decides to learn how to drive, a skill she has always avoided. She hires Judy (Tracy Wright), a driving instructor, who is keen to chauffeur Rebecca around and hopes for something more in the relationship, maybe even a little romance. Locals, an antique dealer (Daniel MacIvor) and a musician (Andrew J. Paterson), meet up with Judy and Rebecca as they negotiate their way through Wasaga. With this odd trio of characters, Rebecca re-discovers Wasaga Beach, recording images and interviews

with bikers, beach bums, video arcade owners and local entrepreneurs. Many of her memories are distanced and neutralized through other characters, other voices. As her video camera travels across the cottage interior full of antiques and knickknacks, Rebecca describes George, the local auctioneer as a person behind a lot of childhood memories. He turned someone else's private property into my personal history." This "seller of memories" appears on both film and video.

What is the appeal of Wasaga Beach? Why do vacationers return year after year to a beach that was for decades polluted with bikers and cars? Doyle's clever script points out the tawdry elements

inherent in Wasaga's charms. Rebecca admits, "I hate the rain. It washes up the Wasaga weirdos." And where do some of these "weirdos" hang out? In a seedy club where Andrew J. Paterson holds court with an up-dated version of "Flat Tire" from his long-defunct Queen Street West punk band, The Government. Wasaga's Main Street video arcade offers escape from the tedium and reality of small-town Ontario. Unsuccessful in overcoming her driving phobia, Rebecca visits the arcade and tries out a learn-to-drive game with high speed car chases. A specially created animated video game combines still photography, Hi 8 imagery and computer effects on the full screen; Rebecca's worst fears are confirmed as her "car" races helter skelter through town. By introducing fast-pace computer animation, Doyle catapults a dated recreational sport into the 90s

world of technology. Wasaga, we realize, is keeping up with the times even if Rebecca is not.

Doyle has created an alternative personal travelogue, a homage to her childhood summer memories, a rich blend of archival film and digitally enhanced video footage juxtaposed with computerized music and animation. Black and white footage, colour film, Super 8 footage (some in slow motion) and a dated travelogue add to the mix of fiction and reality.

Though a feature film, *Wasaga* looks and feels more like a video tape. The low budget, coupled with Doyle's lack of experience in directing actors results in some scenes not being strong enough for the large screen. Doyle's talents lie in her ability to layer images and text as she questions contemporary issues by unscrambling memories and myths. As such, *Wasaga* is a perfect vehicle for Doyle, and her most sophisticated work to date ●

an alternative personal travelogue: LOUISE LILIEFELDT as Rebecca and TRACY WRIGHT as Judy

In the Dark with Eclipse

In the last issue of *Take One*, I reviewed *Eclipse*, a new work by Jeremy Podeswa which I had already seen at a rough cut screening earlier in the year. Mr. Podeswa has written the magazine, taking us to task for the piece which was entitled Getting Eclipsed.

He states, in part, that "Glassman was given a video copy of a slightly advanced cut of the film (as reference only) to write a background piece...if I had had any idea that *Eclipse* would be reviewed on the basis of this tape I would not have allowed it to be viewed... Any writer is entitled to any opinion of a film; but reviewing a film before it is offered for review, and before it is a finished film, is unconscionable."

As a critic, it is my function to contextualize and analyse work that is presented to me. Mr. Podeswa knows that I have often viewed films at rough cut screenings; presumably, that is why he sought my opinion on his film months prior to the Toronto festival article. I agree with him that it is unusual for a film to be critiqued when still in a rough cut stage; however, I made no agreement with him to write a "backgrounder" on his film. We had already done that in issue No. 3.

If there was a misunderstanding, I am sorry, but frankly I do not view my article on *Eclipse* as "an unconscionable act."
Marc Glassman

