

BALIFILM

Directed and produced by Peter Mettler. Grimthorpe Film. 28 min. 16mm. 1997.

While he has worked on other films as a cinematographer, *Balifilm* is Peter Mettler's first film since *Picture Of Light* (1994). Shot as a visual diary on two trips to Bali, it is a poetic documentary in the tradition of Joris Ivens, Arne Sucksdorff and Werner Herzog. Not unlike his "intuitive" experimental road-movie-cum-diary, *Eastern Avenue* (1985), *Balifilm* is an evocative observational journey into another culture and into the filmmaking process itself. Filming landscapes, traditional Balinese dancers and musicians, and an astonishing shadow puppet performance, Mettler stitches fast and slowmotion, optically printed, black-and-white and colour sequences into an extraordinary tapestry of perception. As usual with Mettler, the production process itself informs the result: he shot the film on short ends and old stock, transferred the footage to video for editing, then transferred the finished video edit back to film. The music, performed mainly by the Evergreen Club Gamelan ensemble, guided Mettler's rough edits and the soundtrack is largely a live performance the group did with the final cut of the film. Authoritative and inquisitive, *Balifilm* is a rewarding exploration of cinema's unique fusion of sound, silence and vision. ■

SHIFT

Directed by Shaun Cathcart. Written by Tricia Fish.

Produced by Dean Perlmutter. The Canadian Film Centre. 19 min. 16mm. 1997.

Rites of passage happen at the oddest moments in the oddest places. In *Shift*, a mother and her adolescent daughter experience them in a remote roadside motel. While her mother ponders whether to leave an abusive marriage, the supremely disaffected Krista (the luminous Nadia Litz) becomes attracted to the young man who works at the motel. While her younger sister wanders around the dingy room pretending to be Helen Keller, Krista takes action and initiates her own sexual awakening. Written by Nova Scotia screenwriter Tricia Fish, *Shift* is a penetrating dramatic vignette about inner strength. This rich short work is full of finely balanced familial, emotional and sexual tensions, as well as subtle observations about life's exhilarations and disappointments. Directed with sensitivity by Vancouver-based filmmaker Shaun Cathcart, *Shift* is an intelligent update of the archetypical Canadian dream of escape by highway; only this time, they'll make it. Message to Pete and Joey: next time you're goin' down the road, take these women with you and you just might have a chance. ■

UNCLE

Directed by Christopher Grismer. Written by Christopher Grismer and Michael Melski. Produced by Chan Park and Allison Lewis.

The Canadian Film Centre. 19 min. 16mm. 1997.

Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes once described his country as a place inhabited by happy children and sad parents. Perhaps Fuentes has seen too many Canadian films, as our national cinema is filled with narratives of children or adolescents beginning to perceive the sadness of their often perplexed, lonely progenitors. To such dark child's eye glimpses of adulthood as *Mon oncle Antoine*, *Who Has Seen The Wind* and countless others, we can add another: Christopher Grismer's taut, assured *Uncle*. When the parents of a suburban

Photo courtesy of Grimthorpe Film.



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teenager named Angela (Jessica Barrera) head out for a ski weekend, a recently divorced uncle (Kevin Jubinville) visits to watch over her. When his avuncular supervision grows increasingly predatory, Angela literally fights for her life. Jessica Barrera is a revelation as Angela, full of poise, awkwardness, fear and strength; her performance outdistances those around her, and elevates the solid, somewhat conventional narrative to startling heights. With this intense and troubling film, Grismer and co-writer Michael Melski render a convincing reminder of what psychosexual murk bubbles beneath spotless suburban colonies huddled in orderly rows on cold Canadian landscapes. ■

CREAM SAUCE

Directed, produced and written by Susan Terrill. Lazy Susan Productions.

7 min. 16mm. 1997.

Food and sex. Memory and desire. Sweat and lust. Nature and civilization. All this in seven minutes? All this and more, actually. An amusing and incisively oblique film about generational tension and body consciousness, *Cream Sauce* delivers a stylish, politically spiced defence of female appetite. This playful drama of desire and repression weaves three stories about creamy dishes told by a woman from childhood to adulthood. Recalling her mother's painful secret of eating less and remembering her grandmother serving up an appalling swill called "shipwreck," Helen (Kristen Thomson) tries to enjoy a creamy dish at a restaurant. When she finally decides to fight for food against her mother's loud protests, not only is she affirming her appetite, but also her independence as a woman and a lover. *Cream Sauce* is a short film filled with insight and humour, as well as a distinctive visual style. An award winner at the National Screen Institute (Edmonton), Ottawa-based writer and director Susan Terrill is a talent full of promise. ■