

WHEN PONDS FREEZE OVER

Directed and written by Mary Lewis. From Here Productions, 23 min. 1998.

Winner of the Best Canadian Short Film at the 1998 Toronto International Film Festival, *When Ponds Freeze Over* is Newfoundland filmmaker and actor Mary Lewis's expansive, heterogeneous, utterly absorbing drama of memory. One night in St. John's, a mother (Lewis) tells a story to her daughter of how she once fell through the ice while skating and had her life flash before her eyes. From this terrifying accident and in the panic of attempted escape from the cold water, Lewis mixes various styles of animation, dramatic reconstructions and visual puns. As she says at the outset, this rush of anecdotes, images and sounds illuminate, recover, preserve and revive "things I have forgotten." Part home movie, part genealogy, part ethnographic record, part history of Newfoundland, this rich and multifarious film (to a fault, occasionally) hurtles us across the 20th century through the loves and lives and lies of several generations of the Lewis family. Anchored in the storytelling traditions in Newfoundland or, going back further still, like Scheherazade who begs for one more story to tell to keep us alive for another night, *When Ponds Freeze Over* is an engaging reminder of how essential is the act of tales being told, retold, and told again. ■

Mary Lewis's award-winning *When Ponds Freeze Over***AROUSAL**

Directed, written and produced by Sharon Hyman. Machartis Productions, 35 min. 1998.

Montreal filmmaker Sharon Hyman also stars in this unflinching but uneven study of the gnarled little wars of relationship. Having recently split up, Diana (Hyman) now spends her time lounging around in bed, trying out depressing singles chat lines, eating junk food and recalling the unremitting cruelty of her ex-boyfriend. She also eavesdrops on her neighbours, a couple with its own set of peculiar problems. Weaving together memories of her boyfriend, failed attempts at dates via telephone, and the strange dysfunctions next door, *Arousal* only half succeeds. Overly long due to the awkwardly integrated neighbour subplot and an unnecessary scene with a confidante (Aimee Lee), this promising effort comes perilously close to collapsing under the weight of its desire to offer sociological, psychological, sexual and satirical readings of its subject. Nonetheless, when Hyman concentrates her penetrating gaze on Diana and her former boyfriend, who harangues her viciously, selfishly and continuously off camera, her film is a riveting, intelligent dissection of the pain of either staying in a relationship or leaving one. ■

IN MY CAR

Directed, written and produced by Mike Hoolboom. 5 min. 1998.

Shakespeare stole. Cervantes plundered. T.S. Eliot once remarked that mediocre artists borrow, great artists steal. Later in the 20th century, the idea of theft became theorized, valorized and championed as "postmodern pastiche." So where does this place Mike Hoolboom? His latest effort, *In My Car*, is a montage of stolen images, sequences and music from the 1987 international anthology film *Aria* (Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, Jean-Luc Godard, et al), Fellini's *8 1/2* and Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. Loosely assembled out of scenes of a car theft by a little boy who is pursued by police (or is it the devil?), a car crash, a church and kids watching television, the film's obscure narrative concoction is made both more dense and more clear as Hoolboom has his own poem scroll across the screen. The poetic text explores, in its tale of a dying

brother, ideas of memory, faith, technology, solitude and imagination. Haunting, elegiac and almost tangibly melancholy, *In My Car* is a short, devastating journey. With his thievery and his originality, perhaps Hoolboom has fashioned a pre-millennial, media-saturated visual vocabulary of our dying century. At the very least, in this concise fusion of soul and form where theft has become both the disease and its cure, Hoolboom has made the real *Crash*. ■

A GRANELLIAN ENCOUNTER

Directed and produced by Colin Mackenzie. 15 min. 1998.

Jazz meets hip-hop in this striking, visually arresting record of an encounter in Halifax of master jazz drummer Gerry Granelli and rap/hip-hop artist Stinkin' Rich. No simple meet, greet and perform documentary about two musicians, this is a work that tries to be as formally innovative as its subject matter. It mostly succeeds. Mackenzie makes sound and image interact in inventive, surprising ways. Indeed, for most of this piece what you're hearing is not what you're seeing and vice versa. As Granelli talks about his illustrious career in jazz and his interest in emergent musical forms like rap and hip-hop, his drumming performances are made to collide with sundry sonic shards on the asynchronous soundtrack. The effect is dazzling. Photographed in brilliant black and white by Nova Scotia filmmaker Chuck Clark, *A Granellian Encounter* is an innovative, impressive slice of Maritime cinematic cubism, a tone poem about two sprawling musical forms which, like their practitioners, attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct themselves at the same time. ■