



Bruce Spangler's *Protection*

THE PRAIRIES

A new service to the industry is gaining fans daily not only in Western Canada, but also around the world. MediaGopher at www.mediagopher.com, is a customized up-to-the-minute on-line directory for film, video, TV and new-media professionals. Producers and other talent seekers can find companies, services and people in a flash in the directory system, which now features over 350 categories. Search by name is also possible. Anyone can subscribe to the free newsletter and be kept up-to-date on the industries in Alberta with a spotlight on Calgary. MediaGopher has re-evaluated the functions offered and user response to peripheral offerings such as weather and classifieds, which were discontinued after a hacker had his way with the site. A revamping is underway with an emphasis on helping industry professionals get work rather than support features that are of fringe benefit.... David Winning's credit as director on an episode of *Twice in a Lifetime* will be flashing on TV screens across North America. Starring Markie Post, and entitled "Hard Knock Life," the episode also stars Al Waxman and Sandi Ross. It tells the story of a bitter woman who dies and returns to her past in an orphanage. Shooting wrapped in June. Broadcast dates are scheduled for the 2000/01 season on CTV.... Following the lead of other successful feature films shot on the prairies, *War Bride*, a U.K./Canada co-production, headed for the Alberta ranch country. This big-budget co-pro is directed by Lyndon Chubbuck (*Kiss Toledo Goodbye*, *The Right Temptation*), produced by Alistair MacLean-Clark and Douglas Berquist, and executive produced by Melvyn Singer, Jordan Randell and Bill Talmadge. The love story, written by Angela Workman, stars Anna Friel (*An Everlasting Piece*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Oscar-winner Brenda Fricker (*My Left Foot*), Loren Dean (*Billy Bathgate*, *Mumford*), Aden Young (*Molokai*) and Molly Parker (*Kissed*), and features Julie Cox and Ben Weinberger. *War Bride* was filmed in and around Edmonton, Alta., for five weeks before continuing in London, England, where the war-torn scenes were recreated. *War Bride* is funded in part by the A-Channel Drama Fund. International distribution is through AKA Pictures.

Tim Christison

WEST COAST

There has been a changing of the guard at the Canadian Images section of the 19th Vancouver International Film Festival, running from September 22 through October 5 this year. Diane Burgess and Michael Ghent are the new co-programmers of the sidebar, replacing four-term head Ken Anderlini who left to concentrate on his teaching at Simon Fraser University. Burgess had been Anderlini's second-in-command for the past two years while Ghent moves over from his role as director of Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour. Asked for some sense of how things were coming together, Ghent said, only half-jokingly, "It's shaping up to be the Canadian Images substance-abuse festival. An unusually large number of the films have a lot of heroin and cocaine use by the leads. It's not the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll type of high-octane drug use but the down-and-out, skid row type." For Burgess, the most promising aspect of this year's program is the "strength of the local features." It seems that, finally, the film programs at the various schools around Vancouver are producing filmmakers interested in local material (instead of settling for third-assistant-director jobs on U.S.-produced TV shows).... If critical mass has finally been achieved, then Cineworks, Vancouver's filmmaking co-op (currently celebrating its 20th anniversary and busier than ever), deserves recognition for its efforts to serve as a central collective for local filmmakers. One film that perfectly illustrates both the "substance abuse" and the "coming together of local talent" angles mentioned above is Bruce Spangler's remarkable *Protection*, a gritty, classical humanist look at insoluble problems faced by social workers trying to deal with heroin-addicted clients and their client's efforts to toe the line while leading miserable lives. Reminiscent of the best of Ken Loach in its treatment of social issues, of Jean Renoir in its "everyone has his reasons" humanism and of the Dogma 95 aesthetic in its hand-held, ultra-realistic approach, *Protection* also features brilliant work from cast members Nancy Sivak, Jillian Fargey, William MacDonald and solid technical support on all levels. While not perfect—it makes two small narrative turns that I disagree with—it is one of the finest local features—no, Canadian features—I've seen in two decades. Although nobody out east will care, it would be a major scandal if, as rumour has it, it does not make the cut at the Toronto festival. (It didn't. *Ed's note*)

Jack Vermee

FROM SEA TO SEA