



Mina Shum

Countdown to happiness

Double Happiness is the story of Jade Li, an ambitious, irreverent Chinese-Canadian actress who tries to find love and her place in the world in opposition to the family traditions she's been brought up in. Double Happiness is being produced for approximately \$800,000 through the New Views program, a co-venture of B.C. Film, Telefilm and NFB Pacific Centre.

“Our hiring practices on the film are pro-active. When other people start being taken to task for hiring lily-white crews, then we can talk.”

only Italian folk went to see *Medi-terraneo*. My argument: don't hold a Black film up to criteria that are not applied to any other kind of film.

There are additional difficulties in making Black films in a culture that is intrinsically founded on false notions of white supremacy. Those narrow cultural assumptions and biases prevail in the halls of our bureaucracies despite the preponderance of white liberalism, even as these attitudes are vigorously denied. But whether anyone likes it or not, Canada's population – and necessarily its audience – is changing. The movies we make are gonna have to reflect that, or fall into obsolescence.

With regards to the Black community, several things need to be said. First of all, this “Black community” in my experience is not some monolithic mass, but rather a rich, varied, heterogeneous group. I depend on having a significant Black presence in crew, talent, production staff, for emotional support and practically, for the craft skills these folk bring. As we in this country are still in the early stages of creating a Black crew and talent base, many of the experienced keys will end up being white, and I'm not about to fuck with one million tax-

payer dollars.

So our hiring practices on the film are pro-active, while being at the same time mindful that we gotta have the strongest project possible. Certain-

ly there are grumblings in some quarters about this kind of affirmative action. My response: tough. When other people start being taken to task for hiring lily-white crews, then we can talk.

I, like many others, am excited by the prospect of there being not only one, but two Black-directed films being made this year. Not only will it mean two different perspectives, it will also relieve the burden of responsibility for any one of the films to speak for the entire Black population in Canada.

Because they are being financed under different guidelines, it's hard to speculate on how one has affected the other. I think the naysayers will wait until the films' performance at the box office can be measured. If the films don't kick, watch out. The backlash will be upon us in a big way.

I hope that this film does well enough critically and with an audience, particularly the primary audience for which it is intended, so that I can keep making films. Beyond that, I hope that this film will present another piece of the puzzle – which is the place of African peoples in the West.

One love, Jah guide and peace.

JAN. 27/94: Somehow, in the chaos and excitement of going into pre-production for my first feature, this metaphor came to me. Filmmaking is a rollercoaster: just make sure you have fun, don't get scared, don't throw up and hang on. When we (First Generation Films: Rose Lam Waddell, Stephen Hegyes and I) first got the green light, we said it was our dream come true. Now, I just pray for those nights when I can get REM, let alone dream. When I was selected over 56 other projects, I relooked at the first draft (it was entitled *Banana Split* then) and noticed the date: *June 1/91*. Scary. It took three years. Three years and everyone's help: from the first Summer Lab at the Canadian Film Centre, to the Canada Council, to the Praxis Screenwriting Workshops, to official development with story editor Dennis Foon.

Feb. 1/94: Found this entry in my ongoing journal. This was just before moving to Montreal to do the New Initiatives in Film internship at the National Film Board. I went there with the intention of staying a year to make a half-hour drama about falling out of love. But I had to put that contract on hold and come back when *Double Happiness* got the green light. Here's the entry: *Aug. 20/93*: Moving stuff for the garage sale and being overcome with feelings of sadness, bizarre because life is really exciting now. Don't really know what's gonna happen now. I know that for the next year I will be making *Forced Exposure* in Montreal. But if I win New Views, I will be back here sleeping on someone's floor, making the film I've always dreamed of making. It will be good. I know that if I get the chance to do it, it will be good. What if it doesn't happen? Fuck, I couldn't take it. But I do know that I have Council funding, so

◀ it will happen, maybe as a small art film, but it will happen... Does Atom Egoyan wonder when his next film will happen?

Feb. 6/94: On Jan. 7th, my preventative health doctor prescribed 12 sleeping pills for me. He wouldn't give me anymore than that because he doesn't want to get me addicted. I asked for the pills purely as a just in case thing. Sometimes, I'm told that while shooting, a director can get so wired and tired, that they can't sleep. Well, I need my sleep, so I got them for emergency purposes only – I have six left. But with one month to go before the cameras start rolling, I feel more confident than ever about this film. Everything I've taken in in my last 28 years of my life is being called up to communicate to my key creatives (DOP Peter Wunstorf and production designer

Clement Virgo

Hit the ground running

In Rude, the sexy, irreverent female voice and operator of a pirate radio station, guides us through three of the ten million stories in the naked city.

Rude is being produced on a cash budget of less than \$350,000 through the Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film Project.

FEB. 3/94: I can't sleep because I got so used to spending the last month staying up till 4:30am... Spoke to Damon (D'Oliveira) and Karen (King)

cream all day. There is a stylistic choice I make in the film where the natural functions on the same level with the super-natural or spiritual. Karen and Colin needed one of these elements clarified. It became a bit tense when I felt they wanted a literal interpretation of what the symbol meant. In the end they understood and everything was cool... Karen updated me on our crew situation. Now we have a number of people wanting to work on the show, and willing to do it on the money we have – which isn't a lot. We were having trouble finding Black and people of colour crew members, now it sounds like we might have another Black technician in the key crew. This is great.

Feb. 5/94: Barry is very enthusiastic about shooting this film. He has years of



“Filmmaking is a rollercoaster: just make sure you have fun, don't get scared, don't throw up, and hang on.”

Michael Bjornson); everything from a Duane Michaels photograph, to my minimal knowledge of guitar pick-ups, to the fact that my drawing hasn't improved since I was six years old. We start official pre-production next week.

first thing... Met with Barry Stone, my cinematographer, today and screened a test that went through a special film processing technique. We were hoping that this technique could be used as one of the stylistic languages in *Rude*. We were both disappointed. Anyway, we are working on a kick-ass visual style for the film... Called Richard Chevolleau to get his schedule. He's doing a television series now, but we have him for the film. The boy can act his ass off.

Feb. 4/94: Script meeting with Colin (Brunton) and Justine (Bateman) up at the Canadian Film Centre. Damon read the descriptions and he and Karen played all the parts. Right away you know what works and what doesn't. Some of the scenes are very funny and everyone was laughing, that's always a plus. Everything wasn't peaches and

experience; his last feature, *Paris, France*, looked great. They took a lot of chances on that film, which is why we chose Barry. His energy is so high it's like *Rude* is his first show. We rented *Raging Bull* for the camera moves and boxing sequences. And *JFK* for the lighting and transitions. The first twelve pages of the script introduce the characters, I want to hit the ground running. On the short film, the opening was calm and controlled, bluesy. This time we are jumping out of the speakers with our fists pumping.

Feb. 7/94: After seven hours in a smoke-filled room, I was very frustrated. I've spent the last four days going through the script with Bruce (McDonald), Colin and Barry trying to compromise, trying to see where I can cut costs. Over the weekend I felt like I was