

Changing Reals - Bruce Saunders For REDZONE

Dec 1997

Curtis's Charm is another in Movie Monday's series of films and discussions about mental illness. This film is special in several ways.

Three years ago Joseph Egoyan, (father of Atom, "Victoria's pride", a very hot independent director right now, with his current **Sweet Hereafter** scooping major prizes at Cannes), sent me a clipping about "Rendezvous With Madness" a film festival in Toronto that features a week of films videos and shorts focusing on madness in the medium.

Of course I was intrigued. Here was a funded fest doing what I had independently embarked on through Movie Monday. I soon sleuthed out Lisa Brown, who was mentioned in the article. She runs the Workman Theatre Project, a non-profit company that integrates people who receive mental health services in stage productions. "WPT is founded and guided by the principle that the creative process is integral to the quest for personal and spiritual development." Even more interesting as I was discovering in my own experience how important expression of ones creative self can be hugely empowering.

Every November Lisa's company puts on this fabulous festival. They've found serious funding. It's seriously publicized, with handsome posters, detailed programs containing rich offerings of recent film art. Each evening with a feature film followed by a panel discussion. For instance 96's fest opened with Scott Hicks' breakthrough **SHINE** with "The Fragility of Brilliance" as the multi-disciplinary panel's focus. Another feature was **JUPITER'S WIFE**, a documentary about a homeless person, with schizophrenia, living rough in Cental Park. (Movie Monday presented that last June and Shine in September) Oh, I'd love to be in TO in November!

Lisa's husband is a filmmaker so she puts much emphasis on giving the struggling Canadian film independents as much exposure as possible. **Curtis's Charm** is particularly interesting to me as its vision has an authenticity born of experience. John L'Ecuyer, the director, was born in Montreal where he spent the majority of his teenage years struggling with a heroin addiction. John attended Ryerson Polytechnical University's film program. In a short period of time he managed to create a body of work, both in short films and published short stories, that enabled him to take the next step towards writing and directing this first feature film.

An interesting twist is that Atom Egoyan was a co-executive producer. He helped to find financing, he "believed in the project and believed in John"

Lisa early on had suggested that Rendezvous had considered a "satellite fest" on the West Coast, were thinking Vancouver but maybe I'd consider looking for some funding. Well, funding or not, it's happening thanks to the magic of Movie Monday. Don't miss **Curtis's Charm**, Dec. 15

Info 595-FLIC

Rendezvous With Madness web site: www3.sympatic.ca/rendezvous/
MM's web site: <http://www.islandnet.com/~dsaunder/MM.html>
also Freenet - Movie Special Interest Group menu

(under graphic Freud with red and green 3-D glasses
was Rendezvous' '96 mascot)