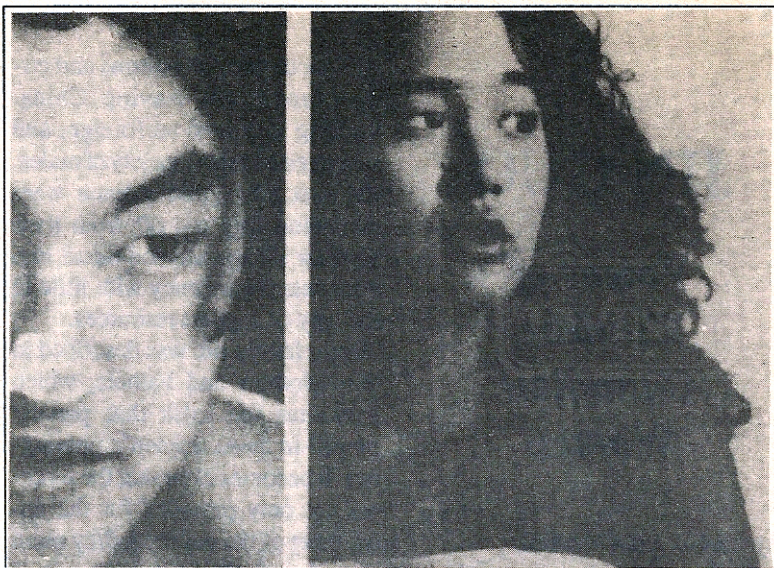


three cranes in flight

presents



Composite from *My Niagara* by Helen Lee

By DEIRDRE TANAKA

How often do we see oriental faces in the media? Not often, and yet the media is such a crucial force in shaping perceptions of ourselves and society. "three cranes in flight" hopes to remedy this situation and promote the creation of more films dealing with Asian Canadians and Americans. Who are these three cranes?

"They aren't anybody," laughs David Ikeda. "The three cranes stand for Japanese, Korean and Chinese heritages and the idea was to show films made by and about people with these heritages. It all started with the showing of *Who Shot Vincent Chin*. We had a really good turn out that night. After that Sandy Usami, Jay Kim and Eunmi Shim began formulating the concept of 'three cranes in flight'. I joined later on along with Gord Fujimoto."

Whenever possible, the group invites the director to the viewing. The first film in the series was *Displaced View* (Midi Onodera). Sandy Usami describes how it went.

"The main reason we began was to encourage discussion among East Asian Canadians. We decided film was a good means to achieve this end. Midi's film which dealt with the search for identity and cross generation communication really struck a chord with the audience, so there was a lively discussion following the film. One woman who was Italian and East Indian background had just been through a similar search and described how

she had struggled to discover her East Indian roots initially against the wishes of her mother. Another interesting comment was that the Korean community often looks to the Japanese community, because it is basically one generation ahead and may be an indication of what the Korean community can expect."

Then on January 13, "three cranes in flight" presented *My Niagara* (Helen Lee) and *Be Good My Children* (Christine Chang). Helen Lee was present at the screening and in her introduction said, "I made this film to depict a romance between two Asian-Canadians, because we never get to see this on film." I thought for a moment and it was true. I could think of no movies I'd seen in Canada that centred on a romance between two Asians. Of course, I had seen many in Japan and there were elements in *My Niagara* that reminded me of these films. For example, the importance of "ma" or the temporal space between what is said or done is a key element of Japanese drama and very present in *My Niagara*. Helen, who has a MA in film from NYU, listed many directors as her inspiration for making the film but none of them were Japanese. Was this use of "ma" intuitive? How much was the influence of Kerri Sakamoto, the co-scriptwriter? I also found the drifting, abstract quality of the central figure reminiscent of several Japanese actresses.

Shot on location in Toronto, the film depicts a Japanese-Canadian

young woman as she struggles to come to terms with her mother's death and her identity. We see her in relation with her nisei father, her non-Asian ex-boyfriend, her wacky girlfriend and her new boyfriend (a recently arrived, resident-Korean-in-Japan). There were times when the film was so ambitious that it missed its mark, but as Helen later said, "when you think it may be your last film you try to cram everything you've wanted to do into one film." I certainly hope it isn't her last.

Be Good, My children was a sharp contrast to the meditative mood of *My Niagara* with its brisk pace, tongue-in-cheek humour and vaudeville type musical interludes. The generation gap was not depicted in quiet symbols, but with arguments and sarcastic comments. Nothing is sacred in this funny, critical look at why a Korean mother immigrated to America. "For you (her children) of course!" she shouts at them, but the children are not convinced.

"three cranes in flight" has scheduled the next showing at 8:00 pm on Feb. 17 (Wed.) at The Euclid Theatre (925-8104). Brenda Joy Lem will be there in person to discuss her films, *Open Letter: Grasp the Bird's Tail* and *The Compact*. Also showing is *Two Lives* by Pam Tom.

If the three cranes are the three cultural heritages, what is the flight? Perhaps it is the viewing, the sharing and the discovery. I hope there will be lots of support for "three cranes in flight" and look forward to the films to come. Gambatte.