

J. Lee Thompson's
Happy Birthday to Me

It's a continent-wide 'phenomenon,' if the term can be so employed: the target audience as target. Movie producers are convinced that North American teenagers derive some kind of vicarious thrill from watching their film counterparts kill and dismember one another, and box office returns back them up. Whereas the horror genre was once synonymous with low budgets and small-time, independent producers, it now ranks as one of the industry's most lucrative sectors - an apparent sure bet in a business that runs on risk. Gore has gone legit; it's big time now, replete with expensive ad campaigns, massive budgets and major studio backing.

That all these factors would make an indelible impression on the spanking new Canadian film industry was inevitable. This year, DAL Productions has been kind enough to supply a companion piece to *Prom Night* and *Terror Train*. *Happy Birthday to Me*, which gleefully offers up "six of the most bizarre murders you will ever see," is stock schlock with a footnote: as the latest and potentially most offensive entry in the 'multiple murder for kicks' sweepstakes, the picture is a grotesque little barometer for the state of the 'art' in this country.

Like both its predecessors and at least two yet-to-be-released Canadian films to follow, *Happy Birthday* is another reworking of the 'ten little indians' theme. Virginia (Melissa Sue Anderson) suffers traumatic brain damage in a car accident, undergoes rehabilitation, returns to her home town and college pals, and the kids start dropping like flies. There are red herrings galore, an overabundance of gratuitous gore, and all the wit and grace of an afternoon at the abattoir. Except that no one ever really suffers here; death in this movie is as casual as conversation, devoid of any purpose other than the obvious. And it's working. Kids are forking over \$4.50 apiece to scream and bounce in their seats, even if the whole thing's a massive dose of déjà vu. *Happy Birthday to Me's* script has been shot at least six times over in the last few years under different titles, and the budget's gone up every time. And the more money they spend, it seems, the less imagination they bring to the package. *Happy Birthday* has no tongue in its sallow cheek; as if to justify the expenditure, Canadian horror flicks have lost the crazy edge

they used to have. The scariest thing about all these films is their deadly dullness; the fact that they account for so large a percentage of this country's total product is enough to give you the creeps.

Anne Reiter ●

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME. d. J. Lee Thompson line p. Stewart Harding p. John Dunning, André Link assoc. p. Lawrence Nesis mus. Bo Harwood & Lance Rubir p. design. Earl Preston d.o.p. Miklos Lente sc. John Saxton, Peter Jobin, Timothy Bond exec. asst. to p. Irene Litinsky p. man. Ginette Hardy unit man. Estelle Lemieux loc. man. Cary Ross p. compt. Leo Gregory p. acct. Lucie Drolet, Trudi Link asst. to line p. Marilyn Majerczyk p. sec. Carole Laflamme a.d./2nd unit d. Charles Braive 2nd a.d. François Oulmet 3rd a.d. Robert Ditchburn casting by Casablanca Productions Inc. extras casting Francine Brasseur cont. Monique Champagne p. ed. mix Richard Lightstone boom op. Jim Thompson, Jean-Claude Matte 2nd unit ed. Susan Schneir cam. op. David Douglas focus Mathieu Décaré 2nd asst. cam. Michel Bernier 2nd unit cam. Ernst Michel, Michael Jones, Don Burgess, Mosh Levine asst. art d. Michel Denuet, Claude Benoit (2nd asst.) set buyer Katherine Wadas asst. set dresser Armand Thomas set props Charles Bernier, Ryal Cosgrove (asst.) property-vehicle co-ord. David Phillips construc. man. André Brochu art d. asst. Jim Hodgson, Mark Montebello, Réal Paré, Brian Campbell cost. design. Huguette Gagné ward. Marie-Hélène Gascon, Elisabeth Lamy, Denys Proulx (asst.) make-up Jocelyne Bellemare, Monique Cogez (asst.), Normande Campeau (asst.) hair Bob Pritchett, Benjamin Robin (asst.) key grip Jean-Louis Daoust grips Emmanuel Lépine, Pierre Charpentier, Jacques LeFlaguais, Claude Gingras gen. Donald Saari best boy Charles Hughes elec. Gérald Proulx, John Lewin, Jacques Paquet 2nd unit elec. Walter Nichols gen. op. Guy Rémillard, Eddy Trempe sp. efx co-ord. King Hernandez, Bill Doane, Warren Keillor, Ron Ottesen efx tech. Jacques Godbout, Gilles Aird, Louis Craig, France Belisle sp. make-up efx The Burman Studio neurosurgery consultant Dr. Burke Dial stunt co-ord. Max Kleven bridge loc. man. Tim Rabbit stunt perform. Bennie Dobbins, Brad Bovee, Tony Jefferson, Ben Scott, John Clay Scott, Karen Pike, Dwayne McLean, Jerome Tiberghien, Jean Lyaight, Susan Charest, Lyne Fournier, Eve Robin asst. ed. Michael Karen, Jaki Carmody L.A. superv. Peter Thompson sd. ed. Jeff Bushelman, Pat Somerset re-rec. mix. Les Fresholtz C.A.S., Stan Polinsky, Robert Fernandez C.A.S. mus. ed. Kirk Hawkes unit pub. Elizabeth Morris stille Piroška Mihalka sec. to Mr. Thompson Kathy Flynn craft serv. Gisèle Bolduc asst. loc. man. David Bailey transp. capt. Neil Bibby drivers Christopher Gilmore, Sidney Goldberg, Michael Borlace, Edward Sanden, John Ellis, Jim Disensi, Michel Côté, Victoria Frodsham, Marc Hébert p.a. Stuart Woolley, Gregory Dunning, Beverly Lev, Alain Desrosiers p. typists Kathy Wolf, Danae Vilandre L.p. Melissa Sue Anderson, Glenn Ford, Lawrence Dane, Sharon Acker, Frances Hyland, Tracy Bregman, Jack Blum, Matt Craven, Lenore Zann, David Eisner, Lisa Langlois, Michel-René Labelle, Richard Rebiere, Lesleh Donaldson, Jerome Tiberghien, Vlasta Vrana, Gina Dick, Walter Massey, Len Watt, Victor Knight, Rollie Nincheri, Keith Sutherland, Joe Wertheimer, Paul Board, Bruce Gooding, Alan Barnett, Marc Desgagné, Aram Barkev, Herbert Vool, Maurice Podbrey, Terry Haig, Louis De Grande, Nick Kilbertus, Damir Andrei, Murray Westgate, Earl Pennington, Griffith Brewer, Ron Lea, Alan Katz, Stephanie Miller, Karen Stephen, Steven Mayoff, Nancy Allan, Karen Hynes, Tracey-Marie Langdon, Debbie McGellin, Kathy Reid, Lori Timmons, Debbie Tuill, Lynn Wilson animals trained by Mike Klingbell, Catman Productions p.c. The Birthday Film Co. Ltd. (1980) dist. Columbia Pictures running time 110 min.

● Sweetness and light turns to murder and mayhem for *Birthday's* Melissa Sue Anderson and Tracy Bregman photo: Piroška Mihalka

