

# NFB's offerings run gamut from superb to so-so

Eleven National Film Board productions — most of them world premieres — are slated for this year's Montreal World Film Festival, which opened yesterday. We got a look at most of them — and the verdict is that they range from the terrific to the not-so-hot.

Following is a guide to what you can expect when you go to see your tax dollars at work.

The board has two features, both in the festival's Cinema of Today and Tomorrow section. The better of them is *Dark Lullabies* from Irene Lilienheim Angelico and Abbey Jack Neidik.

It's an extremely moving documentary that will be shown tomorrow at 11 a.m. and Sunday, Sept. 1, at 5 p.m.

Lilienheim's father left her a diary recounting his experiences during the Holocaust — including his internment as a Jew in the Dachau prison camp.

Several of Angelico's subjects — including a German woman who hasn't come to terms with her grandfather's record as a Nazi — break into tears during the interviews.

Leaving that material in the film might be deemed exploitative by some critics.

Angelico herself also frequently breaks into tears — on camera. That might be deemed manipulative by some critics.

But let's face it. Her film is about a subject which merits a strong reaction — even 40 years after the fact. Watching her movie is a gut-wrenching experience you're not likely to forget.

## Lighter vein

In a much lighter vein, former Oscar nominee Giles Walker has come up with something billed as the sequel to *Masculine Mystique* — a controversial docu-drama first screened at last year's festival.

*His 90 Days* is a vast improvement over its predecessor, an essentially humorless look at men whining over their non-problems with "the new woman."

Walker's latest is about two men trying to cope with the socio-sexual revolution from complementary angles. One of them is so desperate for stable, dependent companionship he resorts to sending for a "mail-order bride" from Korea. Meanwhile, his pal weighs a cold-blooded, but lucrative proposition that he makes a donation of his sperm to an anonymous woman who wants to get pregnant — but doesn't

want the hassle of dealing with the daddy.

It's a fairly entertaining piece of work, with a delightfully whimsical performance from Christine Pak. Screenings during the festival are this Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 4:30 p.m. at the Parisien.

## Ironic contrast

Two of the NFB's animated films have made it into the Short Film Competition. Richard Condie's *The Big Snit* uses conventional animation to draw an ironic contrast between a petty domestic quarrel and the nuclear war raging all around it. Though Condie's subject matter may be deadly serious, his characters are about as zany-looking as you can get — and that gives the film a most peculiar, but intriguing tone.

*Sylvia*, the other official competitor, is a brilliant little parody of humdrum family life. Using conventional animation and montages from photo-romance comics, it tells the story of a bored housewife who escapes into a fantasy world while she goes through the motions of catering to her boorish husband and kids.

Two of the offerings outside the competition are half-hour dramas by Robert Fortier. His *The Last Right* is a docu-drama about a family trying to cope with the moral right of a severely ill grandfather to kill himself. While it captures the old man's agony, the drama is painfully slow-moving at times.

In *Running Scared*, Fortier uses the troubled relationship between a Yuppie couple to demonstrate that jealousy, possessiveness and dependency have nothing to do with love.

In the stunningly beautiful *Paradise*, Oscar-nominee Ishu Patel uses a unique system of back-lit pinholes and brilliant colors to re-tell an old Indian folk tale.

It's a much more memorable piece of work than the routine dance of lines and dots in *A Matter of Form* or the apparently McLaren-inspired play of abstract forms, figures and textures "illustrating aspects of the human conditions" in *Bioscope*.

But there's a certain originality to the form — if not the content — of a wordless eight-minute piece called *Bounds*. Director Georges Mauro makes clever use of pixillation (the illusory animation of real actors and objects) and a shifting picture frame to tell a little fable about a man using his imagination to break free from his mind-dulling work.

— Bruce Bailey