

Wheat Soup is more than just consomme

By Trevor Cunningham

"Wheat Soup", a film by Brian Stockton and Gerald Saul, premiered in the Museum of Natural History Saturday, November 14th. If you were unable to attend the screening, then you should the next time it is playing in town.

"Wheat Soup" is the story of a young farm boy who leaves the homestead to discover the world. Now before you start groaning and snuffing about the idea of seeing yet another Saskatchewan film about wheat and struggling farmers, let me point out there's a twist to this one. The setting is post-nuclear war with a storyline full of oddball characters such as wheat poachers, a religious fanatic who has an anvil dragged around, and a squeaking appliance "salesman" to mention a few. The film is humorous and

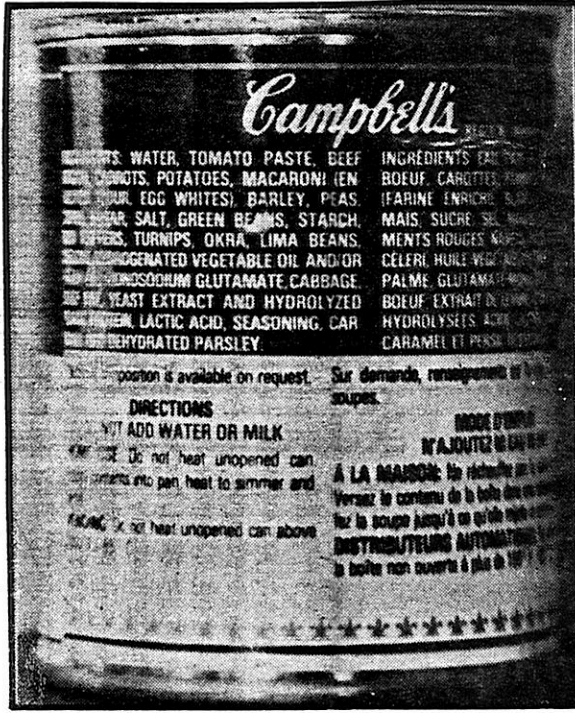
insightful and has a quirky aura about it that is refreshing and likable, unlike many films and videos produced in this province.

This quirky aura is due not only to the film's direction and writing, but to its cast as well. The protagonist, played by Shaf Hussein, was the only character who suffered a few stilted lapses in character, but over all it was a fine performance. The show stealers were Mike Benny and Brian Stockton, the director of the film. Mike Benny uses his personality to give life to a guy who smokes wheat and walks the railway tracks for fun. If the name sounds familiar, well it should, because he used to be a local radio personality on CKCK. Brian Stockton's performance is Woody Allen-esque as a wheat poacher who befriends the farm boy. Even though the character is a criminal he is the only one

who is really normal and this is due largely to Stockton's calm, funny portrayal.

The film, having won quite a few awards at the Saskatchewan Film and Video Showcase, finally pokes fun at existing attitudes about Saskatchewan agriculture, especially outside the province. It seems everybody else thinks people live in Saskatchewan to grow wheat. Stockton and Saul seem to have emphasized this by making all the characters crazy for wheat. I hope people outside of the province see this as well and get the point.

"Wheat Soup" is nicely shot to capture the flatness of the prairies, but it's claustrophobia while inside buildings. Stockton and Saul have collaborated to create the kind of film that should be made in this province. It's inventive with a small budget, and grasps the feelings and attitudes of Saskatchewan, as



Carillon file photo

well as the other prairie provinces. That doesn't mean every film has to be about heritage and rural areas, but it should be effective and interesting. "Wheat Soup" is just that.

Though the film does have its flaws, they are small and technical. Overall, "Wheat Soup" is a fine film with a

good cast of actors and an atmosphere that is the stuff of cult films. Hopefully we will see films from Brian Stockton and Gerald Saul in the near future. In the meantime, let's hope the people at CBC and CKTV see this film and get an idea on how to be original, inventive and use local talent to make the difference.