# THE AQUANAUT

Zenon is a product of the most up-to-date technology and so displays an unusual characteristic for a computer: he is conscious! Orbiting the Earth, he is in constant contact with Estelle, who is in charge of a major, planet-wide research project on water. Faced with the disturbing situation he observes, Zenon soon becomes bitter and disillusioned — to the point where he substantially alters his mission.

Could Zenon's creator, the mysterious Professor Nguyen, have foretold how the mission would turn out?

A film by Michel Murray Produced by Jacques Vallée



18 minutes 25 seconds

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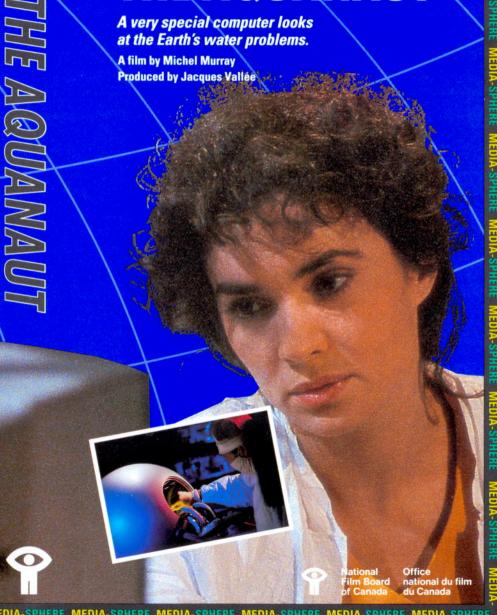
Closed-captioned for the hearing impaired.

PRINTED IN CANADA

# THE AQUANAUT

A very special computer looks at the Earth's water problems.

A film by Michel Murray Produced by Jacques Vallée



MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA

## THE AQUANAUT

"Thirsty! I'm thirsty", repeats a strange voice from far away and far above the Earth.

The film **The Aquanaut** shows us scenes from the life of Zenon (he is the one we hear talking). Zenon is an extraordinary creation — a product of the latest generation of computers equipped with biological chips, which make him conscious!

He has been placed on board a satellite orbiting the Earth as part of an advanced research program to examine drinking water on our Blue Planet. He is programmed to send scientific data back to the Almeda base. From there Estelle, who is responsible for communications, maintains contact with Zenon. Between them, a special relationship develops which goes far beyond the mere exchange of numerical data.

Through Zenon, the film gives basic information (chemical formula, properties, reserves, uses and problems) on a vital natural resource: water. Striking images add to the impact.

As he takes stock of the current situation and the disquieting picture it presents, Zenon thinks out loud. This surprises Estelle, but it will not be her only surprise.

We witness a gradual change in Zenon, as his planetary consciousness begins to override the computer program. Staggered by the extent and the urgency of the problem, he feels helpless. Faced with the bad faith and bad management which many of us show towards this precious resource, he rebels.

Estelle is a helpless witness to this sudden change of mood. She tries to talk about it with one of her colleagues, but he is very dismissive. However, she does find someone who is more interested: Zenon's creator, the mysterious Professor Nguyen. But had the Professor predicted Zenon's, to say the least, bizzarre behaviour?

The action leads directly to the point where Zenon refuses to send back data for fear it will be used for ends not intended by the program.

Then there's a break. Zenon cuts off all communication with the Earth, leaving a bewildered Estelle staring at an ambiguous message on her computer screen. What does Zenon really intend to do?

Why has he made this decision?

What will be do?

See inside for suggested activities

### MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPH

### SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS FILM

The following series of activities aimed at young people can be done as oral or written exercises, discussions or group work.

### A) Examine

- Show how drinking water is unequally distributed over the globe.
- 2. How have people used water:
- · for their daily needs?
- · as a tool?
- · for transportation?
- **3.** Make of a list of the benefits of and necessity for water as well as its negative effects.
- · Make a poster to illustrate them.

### B) Consider

- Describe the role water plays in your daily life.
- . Is it a problem for you?
  - For your country?
  - For other countries?
- Does Canada have problems with drinking water?
- Show how water was an element of vital importance to the first explorers and to the creation of economic links between different countries.

- 3. Do you feel Zenon is right to be worried? What is his contribution as regards water problems facing the different peoples of the world?
- 4. What solutions would you propose for the following problems?
- · acid rain
- desertification (including erosion, soil degradation)
- · waste of drinking water
- pollution caused by spills of chemical and toxic elements
- 5. Do hydro-electric dams and nuclear reactors represent a danger for fresh water?
- 6. Do you think that Zenon's biological chip is true to life?

### C) Discover

- Explain the following sayings and expressions that have to do with water
- Blood is thicker than water. Still waters run deep. Water under the bridge. Water, water everywhere / Nor any drop to drink. Mouthwatering. Like a fish out of water. Oil and water don't mix. It doesn't hold water. Pouring water into the ocean.

- 2. Can you make a list of films (fiction and documentary) which have water as their subject?
- 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.
- · The Big Blue
- Jaws
- Moby Dick
- Jacques Cousteau's documentaries
- 3. The great myths give an important place to water. Identify some of the most important gods and places associated with them.
- · Poseidon (Greek)
- · Neptune (Roman)
- · the Styx (river of death)
- Atlantis
- 4. What great symbolic ideas has water been associated with?
- · purification
- · fertility
- life
- healing
- **5.** Research and identify works of art and engineering associated with water.
- · Crossing the Styx
- The Panama Canal
- · The Suez Canal
- Great hydro-electric dams
- **6.** Water is a tireless worker (and artist). Show how it is continuously modifying the Earth's crust by its triple chemical, physical and mechanical action.

### **DO YOU KNOW**

- ... How much water it takes to produce an egg? (1 m³) a litre of petroleum? (10 l) a kilo of paper? (100 l) a kilo of wool? (600 l) a tonne of cement? (4.500 l)
- ... How much drinking water lies beneath the Sahara?
   (620,000 km<sup>3</sup>)
- ... The total amount of water on our planet?
   (1.34 billion km³)
- ... That the total amount of water on the Earth always remains constant? (The water you use to boil your potatoes may have been used by Archimedes for his bath.)
- ... The area of land lost to desertification each year? (Six million hectares, or 60,000 km². To compare, Nova Scotia covers an area of 55.490 km².)
- . . . To what depth the United States would be submerged if it were covered by all the water on the planet? (144 km)

# Bio-filmography of Michel Murray

Yvon Provost, and **The Aquanaut** (1990). He is preparing two follow-up films to the latter for the MEDIA-SPHERF Born in 1959 in Montréal, Michel Murray completed his college studies in graphics and earned a degree in film scriptwriter. • At the NFB he has directed **Sylvia** (1985), **Tocade** (1987), **La Débâcle** (1989), co-directed with communications. • He has been involved in several films on the level of initial ideas and as an animator and

The essential aim of this film is to stimulate discussion. As such it does not claim to give all possible information on the subject. Above all, it is meant to be thought provoking and help change attitudes towards major global problems.

The film **The Aquanaut** is a science fiction story which uses various film techniques (computer-generated images, documentary footage, animation, photographs) and a documentary section giving basic information about water.

It emphasizes global interdependence: pollution and the supply of drinking water are not merely other people's problems.

The language is always accessible and the subjects examined in the film fit nicely into fields such as geography, ecology, history, science, ethics and mathematics.

Like many adolescents today, Zenon shows an awareness of the major problems facing the planet. In fact, like them, both his reactions and his questions are often... troubling.

The aim of **The Aquanaut** is not to provide solutions. There may be many of them, but none of them are readymade. **The Aquanaut** gives us a unique opportunity to reflect together, to reach the common conclusion that it is up to each of us to deal with the Earth's water problems, acknowledge our responsibility and find our own solutions.

But perhaps that was exactly what Zenon was getting at.



### NFB films about water

The following is a partial list of films available in all video formats from NFB video libraries. They are basically scientific and informative in nature and would appeal to a wide audience. They are described in the NFB Film and Video Catalogue.

HERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-SPHERE MEDIA-

Acid Rain: Requiem or Recovery	27 minutes	1 0181 527
Element 3 (Film only)		1 0165 126
Gulfstream		1 0180 032
A Handle on Health	27 minutes	1 0186 079
The Intertidal Zone		1 0185 040
Not Far from Bolgatanga		1 0182 530
Not Man's to Command (Film only)	14 minutes	1 0174 508
The Other World	19 minutes	1 0176 001
Second Frontier (Film only)	21 minutes	1 0174 597
Top Priority		1 0181 065
Wastewater Technology Center (Film only)	25 minutes	1 0178 542
Water - The Hazardous Necessity	26 minutes	1 0177 662
"Water, water, everywhere"		1 0171 024

### Coproduction Films

Bengladesh: Land of Earth and Water	57 minutes	1 0187 142
SRC in collaboration with CIDA		
River People	29 minutes	1 0186 160
Productions du Pogard in collaboration with	CIDA	

Productions du Regard in collaboration with CIDA

### **Additional Information**

The Magazine UNDER THE SAME SUN - WATER (distr.: MEDIA-SPHERE) (publ.)\*

### Other MEDIA-SPHERE films available:

The Invincible (Mali-Africa) by Monique Crouillère, 16 minutes 2 seconds Silence the Earth by Catherine Fol, 13 minutes 11 seconds

African Journey by George Bloomfield,

6 episodes of 25 minutes 50 seconds each

Episode 1 : Under One Sun
Episode 2 : Brothers
Episode 2 : Brothers
Episode 3 : The Price of a Bride
Episode 6 : One World to Share

Youth Editions, P.O. Box 1310, Postal Station B, Hull, Quebec, J8X 3Y1, Fax: (819) 953-6381

D-50, P.O. Box 6100, Postal Station A, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5, Fax: (514) 283-4300

<sup>\* (</sup>For Publications): MEDIA-SPHERE

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Written and Directed by **Michel Murray** 

With

Marie-Josée Gauthier Khanh Hua Jean L'Italien Bruno E. Landry Carole Vallières

Script Consultant Jean Charlebois

Consultant

Michèle Matteau Director of Photography

André-Luc Dupont Location Sound

**Yves Gendron** Sets Claire Alary

Directed by Céline Mineau Michel Murray

Computer Animation

Georges Mauro Computer Animation System

> SOFTIMAGE Inc. Animation **Yvon Mallette**

Soundscape Serge F. Lafortune

Music **Jocelyn Therrien** Music Re-recording

**Louis Hone** Re-recording **Shelley Craig** Production Manager

Laurence Paré Assistant Director **Guy Bouchard** 

Camera Assistant Séraphin Bouchard Continuity

Johanne Boisvert With the collaboration of

Diane Coudé Brigitte Mc Caughry Martine Picard Jean-Philippe Morin Céline Mineau Serge Fortin Paule Bélanger Jacques Normand Marie-Gabrielle Forget Clermont Lapointe Guy Rémillard Paryse Normandeau Julie Warren Yvan Nikolov Jacques Charron Jean-Marc Côté

Maurice Beaulieu Maurice Pion Pierre Landry Christian Fortin Editing Michel Murray Eric Genois

Sound Editing Lucie Fortier Serge F. Lafortune On-line Editing

**Eric Genois Julie Monette** Analog Component Video Mastering

Télépoint inc. Administration

**Denise DesLauriers** Production Jacques Vallée

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