

The PHANTOM of the OPERATOR

A film by **Caroline Martel**
65 minutes, Québec (2004)

"...An enormously imaginative docu...
an hour of non-stop visual and intellectual stimulation."

VARIETY

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERATOR invites us into a world where science meets fiction — breathing poetic new meaning into archival films and revealing a little-known chapter in industrial history.

The 20th Century had its invisible workforce: telephone operators. Not merely "voices with a smile", they were shooting stars in a universe of infinite progress. They were test pilots for the management systems of their time.

Caroline Martel takes overlooked artefacts of cinema history — one hundred industrial, advertising and scientific management films produced in North America between 1903 and 1989 — and turns them into a dreamlike montage documentary. She also resurrects from the past an arcane electronic musical instrument: the ondes Martenet, adding to the mood set by the voice of award-winning actor Pascale Montpetit.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERATOR sheds light on the corporate, scientific and popular imaginations of the past century to provide a wry yet ethereal portrait of human society in the technocratic age.

"Caroline Martel's illuminating brilliant work is that rare and shimmering example, that instantly classic film which manages to be both a history of the medium and a vibrant consideration of the role of women in telecommunications... It takes the art of compilation to new levels."

Peter Wintonick

"★★★★ — spellbinding film "
Vancouver Sun

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