

Village voice, New York 5/5 -87

FILM

Ice Guys

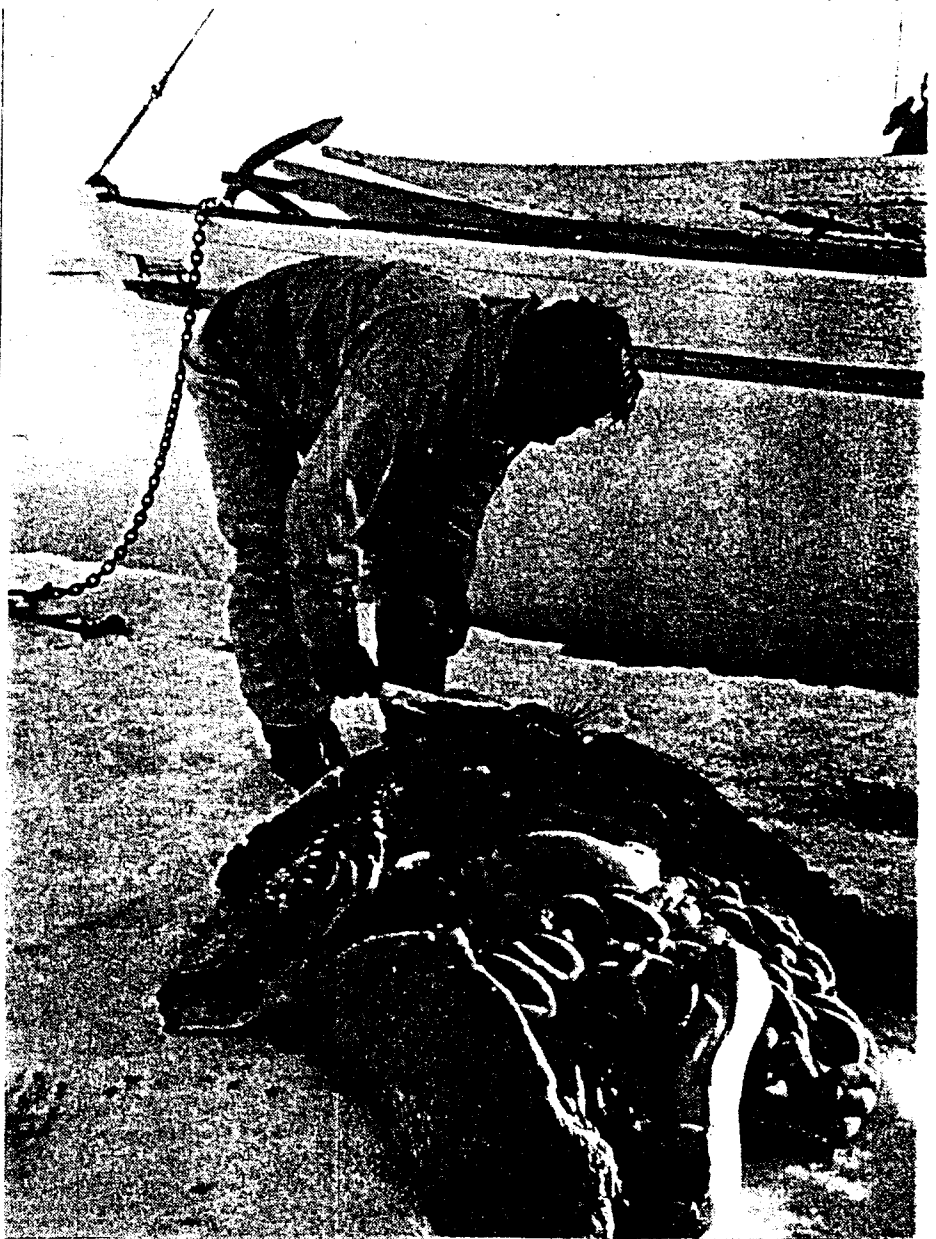
BY J. HOBERMAN

INUGHUIT: THE PEOPLE AT THE NAVEL OF THE EARTH. A film by Staffan Julén and Ylva Julén. Distributed by the Swedish Film Institute. At the Public Theater, Saturday and Sunday afternoons at 2, through May 17.

The arctic landscape is the most elemental on earth. Its colors are blue and white; its hall-of-mirror components (ice, sea, and sky) are the same matter in different states; its seasons dovetail with its days. The sun sets in late October, and vanishes for four months. *Inughuit: The People at the Navel of the Earth* gives this startling environment a human component—documenting a raw settlement in upper Thule (northern Greenland) that's home to 800 Inuits (as the Eskimos call themselves), 30 Danes (who administer Greenland), one Japanese (apparently gone native), and the American military base that displaced several Inuit villages in 1945.

Produced by Staffan and Ylva Julén, a Swedish brother-sister team, *Inughuit* was made without any voice-over save that provided by the Inuits themselves. The film is basically observational, offering an immersion in Inuit life (reduced to hunting and hanging out) and thought. There's a stunning sequence in which a whale is stalked and harpooned from a kayak, but no less visceral is a postnuptial banquet of raw seal liver and several varieties of blubber. "This is what a wedding feast should be," one guest exults. "Nothing is missing."

In methodology as well as subject, the film demands comparison with Robert Flaherty's epochal *Nanook of the North*, perhaps the most celebrated—and over-rated—documentary ever produced. Rather than make a straightforward record, Flaherty eliminated all evidence of modernity to create a sort of costume drama in which the Inuits of 1922 dressed up in antique clothes and played at being their grandparents. "I am not going to make films about what the white man has made of primitive peoples," wrote Flaherty, as if he weren't a white man himself. "What I want to show is the former majesty and character of these people, while it is still possible—before the white man has destroyed not only



The raw and the cooked: *Inughuit* offers a smart perspective on the culture it surveys.

their character, but the people as well."

The Juléns take a less paternal, more dialectical view of their subjects. The Inuit babies are amused by wind-up E.T.s, the children play with Frisbees, the men watch *Dirty Harry* on TV. One young woman goes to school in Denmark so that she can teach Danish to the people of her village; another Inuit recalls that the first time he heard commercial radio, it reminded him of the day that he and his wife saw "angels flying in the air." *Inughuit* is smart as well as eye-catching—the film acknowledges the phenomenal human capacity for adaptation, which is at the very heart of supposedly static tradition.

Inughuit, which had its local premiere at last year's Margaret Mead Film Festival, is currently showing as part of the Public Theater's "public service program." Admission is free, with tickets distributed (one per person) at 1 p.m. on the day of the screening. ■

Lulu in Hollywood

BY KATHERINE DIECKMAN

FOREVER LULU. Written, directed, and produced by Amos Kollek. A Tri-Star Pictures Release.

It was pity, pure and simple, that kept him from doing it. I mean there was Hanna Schygulla, Fassbinder goddess and accomplished actress, under a rain machine on White Street, waving a little silver pistol and screaming, "Shit! Shit, shit, shit!" take after take. She looked so sad—trying to be professional in what was clearly a disastrous career move. Sad enough that

Help Wanted

Rule #1: Do not position the camera at a low angle in every other shot so that tent direction. Also, do not dress the poor woman up to look like Michael