when you consider the possibilities offered by all those corridors. Perhaps they were using a camera too large to negotiate the space, or maybe director of photography John Alcott was still suffering from motion sickness after all the vertiginous, swooping movement in his last film, The Shining.

The story is pretty simple, despite a couple of truly bizarre plot twists. In their first year at college, the sweethearts of Sigma Phi played a rather gruesome sexual joke on a fellow freshman. Now, at their graduation party aboard an excursion train, the conspirators who planned the joke begin to be murdered by someone lurking on the train. Is it the Mephistophelean magician (a type-cast David Copperfield), or is he yet another red-herring in a plot that reeks of that fish.

While the film is well-shot and exceptionally edited (by Anne Henderson), the acting is nothing special. Ben Johnson, as the conductor, is himself and thus is pleasant. Jamie Lee Curtis, the Hollywood child with her mother's eyes and her father's jaw, is again allowed to exploit her marked ability to scream. Hart Bochner (son of Lloyd) reprises his smirking big-man-on-campus role from Breaking Away, but seldom seems intelligent enough to play an incipient medical student.

Terror Train is certainly a well-packaged little thriller, and, given its saturated advertising budget, it will probably make a bundle for the boys at Astral. But it is really yet another example of the bareness of a genre's cupboard. Aside from Halloween, an extraordinarily rigorous and controlled formal exercise in point-of-view, none of the best horror films of recent years have had anything to do with the "hack'em to death with the kitchen knife" school of sadism. Rather, they have dealt with the body's rebellion against repression (Cronenberg's films), portrayed the imminent detonation of the nuclear family at ground zero (Carrie, The Shining), or attempted to project a legitimately surreal, dream-state (Phantasm).

Terror Train is, to use that most damning of critical phrases, "good of its kind." What is truly unfortunate is that this kind of genre gives us thrills by promising the brutal murder of defenseless young women. (Note Robin Wood's comments on Psycho's shower scene as surrogate rape.) It is a dead-end genre, which possesses neither honour nor value, and offers little possibility for growth.

John G. Harkness
ment — is that it fails to catalyze into anything greater than merely the sum of its parts. The film's tenacious collective stance and its refusal to resort to "obvious" narrative artifice, result — paradoxically — in a distinctly artificial and fragmented product, which might have fared somewhat better as theatre, where tradition and subsequent audience expectation allow for greater experimentation.

Also, the film's sets, as well as its best moment — a patently absurd conversation between the bride's mother and the groom on the relative merits of 14, 18 and 22-karat gold jewellery — are in fact, highly theatrical in nature; as is the scene in which an unemployed Spanish immigrant recounts his tale of woe to the women.

However, it is doubtful that this production would have succeeded fully even as theatre. Avant-garde art, since it resorts to none of the traditional narrative devices used to engage the viewer's attention, must force him to participate in some other way — by mystifying him, making him uncomfortable, curious or whatever-you. La cuisine rouge suffers from a sustained inability to move us, except in rare, isolated moments.

Lucienne Kroha

La cuisine rouge

d./sc. Paule Baillargeon, Frédérique Collin

Robin Spry's Suzanne

After the disheartening premiere of Suzanne at Toronto's Festival of Festivals last month, Robin Spry withdrew his film and made several changes to it before it was released commercially: the result is a better film, although five minutes here and there cannot transform an ugly duckling into a swan. It is nonetheless, for reasons I hope to make clear, an estimable film, and one wonders whether the sharp criticism of it is now justified.

The Canadian imagination has always had a self-conscious predilection for ideas. Maybe in our early factionalism ideas were weapons to defeat our opponents, religious or cultural; maybe ideas gave us a sense of civilization in our harsh surroundings. But rarely were they absorbed into the imaginative experience of the country. Suzanne fairly begs to engage us with serious ideas. The opening scene — the disruption by political agitators of a Corpus Christi procession — is splendid and has been appropriately praised; the clash of traditional and modern forces in Quebec in the fifties is, we now realize, one of Canada's crucial conflicts. And Suzanne, the young girl who is the film's subject, ponders her own dual — French and English — background. "There must be more to me than being split in two, never knowing who I am." The sectarian differences between French and English, Catholic and Protestant, wealthy and poor, figure in the movie as they did in our history. But the ideas do not mesh with the plot, and they are left dangling as the movie goes its predictable way.

Predictable, because Spry and Ronald Sutherland (who wrote the screenplay with Spry) are reduced to using tired, time-worn plot and characterization. Every figure is a walking stereotype, and as the movie progresses one starts checking off the dreary familiarities: Presbyte-