

Paule Baillargeon/  
Frédérique Collin's  
**La cuisine rouge**

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

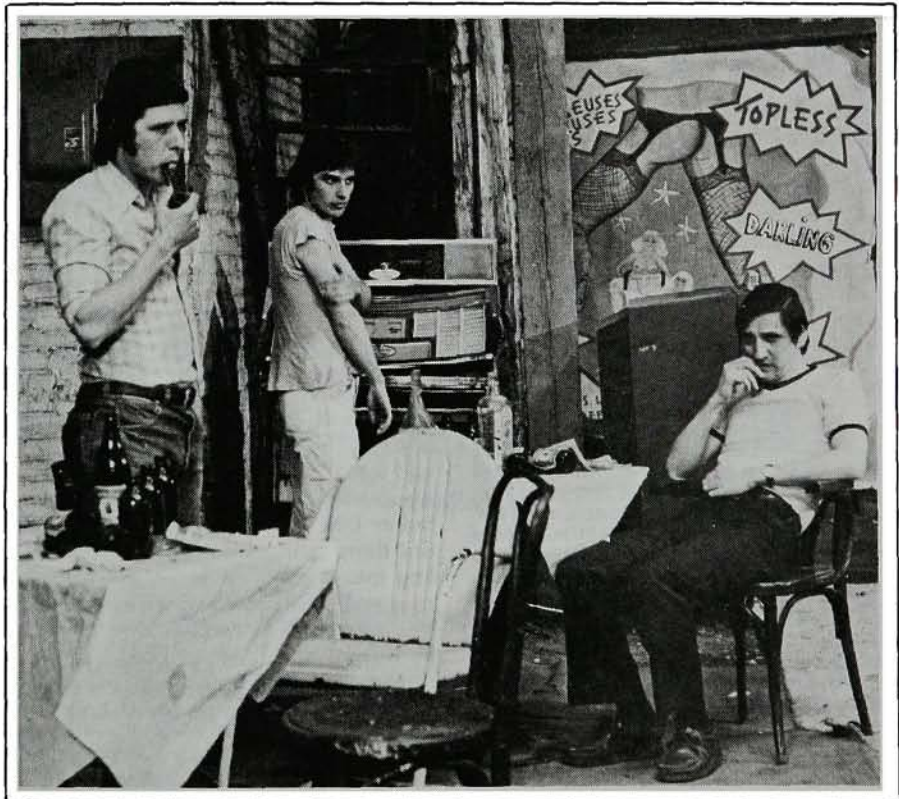
Plot, character development, dramatic tension and other devices which usually give film viewers something on which to hang their hats are all missing from this avant-garde Quebec film, whose technical adequacy is not enough to redeem it as a valid cinematographic product.

*La cuisine rouge* is meant to depict the social anarchy which has set in since women have become aware of their oppression. However, rather than dramatize the experience of one or two individuals, the film has chosen to represent collectively the many faces of woman — in all her anguish and contradictions — in this era of transition to who-knows-what. However, for a number of reasons, it fails to engage our emotions and comes off more as an abstract political tract than anything else.

The film opens in a rather deceptive traditional manner. A young couple has just tied the knot at Montreal's Palais de Justice and is on its way, with the bride's parents to her place of work where the wedding reception is to take place. They unload at an unlikely spot — a rather seedy bar-cum-strip joint, only to find the remains of the previous night's business untouched. In short, a mess, and nowhere any sight of imminent festivities.

The bride repairs hastily to the kitchen, where she finds her colleagues in a state of emotional disarray equal to the physical disarray of the premises: having refused to carry out their usual duties, they find themselves totally at loose ends. What ensues is an essentially plotless, tedious acting out of their confusion. The scene switches occasionally from kitchen to back yard, to bar, where a group of men, disoriented by the women's rebellion, eventually "examine" their own positions in a series of incredibly simplistic harangues reminiscent of sometime-Godard.

The trouble with all this delirium — rendered with minimal camera move-



Hardly enthusiastic about the imminent wedding reception are *La cuisine rouge*'s Pierre Curzi (left), Bertrand Carrière and Jean-Pierre Saulnier

photo: Camille Maheux



## FILM REVIEWS

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 what-have-you. *La cuisine rouge* suffers from a sustained inability to move us, except in rare, isolated moments.

Lucienne Kroha



Holding on for dear life? *Suzanne's* Jennifer Dale and Winston Rekert

### La cuisine rouge

**d./sc.** Paule Baillargeon, Frédérique Collin  
**exec. p.** Bailon Blanc **assoc. p.** Claude Desagné, Renée Roy **p. asst.** Denis Hamel **p. sec.** Lucie d'Amour, Lise Roy, Colette Martin, Manon Lefebvre **a.d.** Lise Abastado, Claire Wojas **p. man.** Marie-Andrée Brouillard, Jacques Laliberté **d.o.p.** Jean-Charles Tremblay **asst. cam.** Pierre Duceppe (1st), Camille Maheux (2nd) **ed.** Babalou Hamelin, Marie Hamelin (asst.) **sync.** Sophie Bissonette **sd. ed.** Claude Langlois **sd.** Serge Beauchemin, Jacques Blain, Esther Auger **art d.** Réal Ouellette **props** Chantal Pépin, Gilles Ducas (asst.), Michel Lussier (asst.) **make-up** Dale Turgeon, Micheline Foissy **ward.** Louise Jobin, Lise Bédard **elec.** Normand Viau, Daniel Chrétien **machinists** Emmanuel Lépine, Pierre Charpentier, Patrice Bengle, Nathalie Moliavko-Visotsky **cont.** Marie La Haye **stills** Camille Maheux **mus.** Yves Laferrière **musicians** Richard Beaudet, Richard Perrotte, Gilles Beaudoin, Yves Laferrière, Monique Fauteux **boom** Gilles Perrotte **sd. mix.** Michel Descombes **craftservice** Albanie Morin, Jacques Leduc (asst.) **i.p.** Michèle Mercure, Han Masson, Catherine Brunelle, Marie Ouellet, Monique Mercure, Valérie Desjoe, Claude Maher, Gilles Renaud, Guy Thauvette, Raymond Cloutier, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Pierre Curzi, Bertrand Carrière, Claude Laroche, Ghyslaine Tremblay **p.c.** Les Films Anastasie Inc. (1979) **col.** 16mm **running time** 82 min. **dist.** Les Films du Crépuscule.

### 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-