

that most of us have no sense of national identity until we leave home.

Rasky gradually reveals Cohen's private and public relationships with women: asked at one point if he is obsessed with women, Cohen replies that it's the Divine Scheme, and everyone is preoccupied with the opposite sex. The sequence in which he sings "Won't you let me see your naked body" is superb concert footage, capturing the self-conscious smiles on girls' faces as they watch the brilliant, twisted veteran with the blue guitar. It is also about as close as Rasky gets, within the boundaries of CBC decorum, to including the visceral, Dionysian side of Cohen in *Song*. Where is the possessed, vindictive persona of a poem like *O Wife Unmasked*, "with his mind on cunt/ on cunt only/ heart money attention talent art/ tuned entirely to cunt", who recalls that "her buttocks relax in my hands/ like meat freshly killed"? Wisely restrained for family viewing.

When Irving Layton visits Cohen with his wife, he offers many extravagant words of praise for Cohen's genius, and remarks on the appeal of their poetry: "When you don't feel secure, when you don't feel happy — that's being Jewish!" According to Layton, the modern-Western-urban neurosis for which they are the voice is basically a Jewish world view. (Would Woody Allen agree?)

When the soundtrack takes up *So Long Marianne*, there is a nice series of stills of her and Cohen in the sunwashed simplicity of Greece, and Rasky creates a powerful dissolving and expanding image of her as the Ideal Woman, the blond Muse. She is contrasted later with Suzanne (not the one in the song), Cohen's dusky, exquisite Gypsy Wife. She appears in colour, with her two beautiful children, primarily as another incarnation of Cohen's desire, and his loss. We begin to see that *Song* is also about nostalgia.

As a concert film, *Song* does for Cohen what *The Last Waltz* did for The Band. It's a rich evocation of his lifestyle on the road, the compromises, the "forms of boredom disguised as poetry", the idolatry and rewards. The knowledge that "the singer must die for the life in his voice" is never far from the surface.

In the final sequence of the film, a series of flashbacks to the multiple stances and costumes in which Cohen has appeared acknowledges the iconoclastic emphasis of the film's visuals; the way they meld with the song *That's No Way to Say Goodbye* is another example of Paul Nikolich's sensitive, seamless editing. *Song* is a complex portrait of Cohen with

the landscape of his precarious, perhaps broken marriage of Heaven and Hell; in the process it becomes a poetic investigation of our preoccupations and anxieties. For my tastes, the ending would have benefited from something like Cohen's commentary on his wry prose-poem, *How to Speak Poetry*, in the collection *Death of a Lady's Man*: "I hate him for this. He will pay for this religious adver-

tisement...I hate his fucking face, all serious with concern. Don't let him go to the good movie, and don't let him hear the merry tunes in the Music Hall. Never let him sing again. And let him sit outside with his stinking educational corpse while the stripper on the little gilded stage turns us all on."

Chris Lowry

## Martin Lavut's War Brides

It is a truism, in fact almost a platitude, that Canadian movies tend to be about losers. At times, they certainly seem to have been made by losers; so that the audience ends up losing as well. What a pleasure then to see *War Brides*, a CBC feature-length film for television in which everybody wins, on both sides of the screen.

*War Brides* was written by Grahame Woods, produced by Bill Gough, and directed by Martin Lavut — all men with established credentials, recently from the CBC's *For The Record* series. However, the four women who star as the brides (Elizabeth Richardson, Sonja Smits,

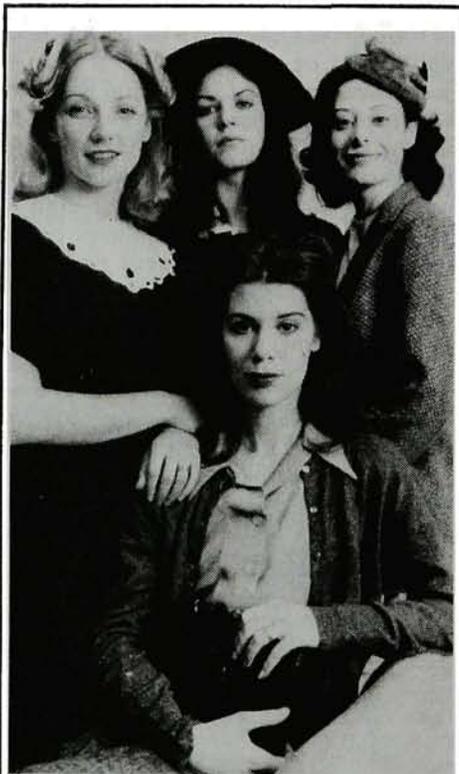
Sharry Flett, and Wendy Crewson) are none of them household names — at least, not yet. Geoffrey Bowes, Layne Coleman, Kenneth Pogue and Timothy Webber, as the husbands, come off just as well.

The four couples are presented in a believable and winning way. At the outset, we see a trainload of frazzled women winding its way across the winter landscape. We care about the women immediately, in a warm, old-fashioned way, as we follow them to their destinations.

Producer Bill Gough says of the film, "We've tried for the best in '40's movies, both in style and in entertainment value, in addition to revealing many aspects of what Canada was like at that time." Certainly the film does have the feel of the '40s, from the hairstyles, to the sounds of the radio, even to the embossed sheet-metal wall of a telephone booth in a hotel hallway. The new compositions and recordings of period music, by Tommy Ambrose and musical arranger Rick Wilkins, seem aptly sentimental but never cloyingly nostalgic.

Some moments stand out. Sharry Flett, as the deserted wife, has one of those spunky roles that are uncommon in these days of the woman-in-jeopardy television film: she brings to it so much character, determination, and humour that almost all her scenes are a delight. Layne Coleman plays the soldier who brings back a German wife. He is neither your stereotyped stolid Maritimer, nor the embittered young man back from the war, but a finely-drawn composite. Writer Woods has given him a telling scene that he handles particularly neatly. He is teaching his wife to drive, and while she is behind the wheel, tensely manipulating the big truck, he takes advantage of her preoccupation to tell her how beautiful she is and how much he loves her. He knows that she is too busy trying to drive to react effusively and perhaps embarrass him.

Doris Petrie plays his mother, a beaten-down farm wife. Although she has little to say until later in the film, she still manages to convince us of just how hard life has



Forsaking their homes for love in a strange land are the *War Brides* (left to right) Sharry Flett, Wendy Crewson, Elizabeth Richardson and (front) Sonja Smits.

## FILM REVIEWS

been; and how the conflict resulting from the 'enemy' (German) girl in her house and in her town is tearing her apart.

Another moment: Timothy Webber and Wendy Crewson, as the couple for

### War Brides

d. Martin Lavut p. Bill Gough assoc. p. Janet Kranz sc. Grahame Woods story ed. Alice Sinclair a.d. Rob Malenfant (1st), John Rainey (2nd), Richard Beecroft (3rd) unit man. Alan McPherson cont. Carol Fisher p. sec. Vicki Ohashi d.o.p. Vic Sarin, Michael Storey, Dave Towers mus. Tommy Ambrose, Rick Wilkins (musical arranger) sd. Gerry King light. Archie Kay, R. Huckfield, J. Wilson, Len Watier boom Ian Challis designer Barbara McLean, Marian Wihak (asst.) set dec. Al Laurie, Bruce Ruppell, Doug Tiller cost. Suzanne Mess, Ted Burbine, J. Alles make-up Daisy Bijac, Sandra Sokol, M. Koekke hair Anita Miles design co-ord. Torben Madsen staging W. Holcombe, B. Stunden, R. Stos sp. ex. Sandy Smith cast. Gail Carr, Annika McLachlan post-p. Toni Mori ed. Myrtle Virgo l.p. Elizabeth Richardson, Geoff Bowes, Sonja Smits, Layne Coleman, Sharry Flett, Kenneth Pogue, Wendy Crewson, Timothy Webber, Mary Savidge, Joseph Shaw, Alberta Watson, Sean Sullivan, Doris Petrie p.c. CBC running time 120 min. colour 16mm.



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whom everything goes well, sit on a park bench talking about having another child. The husband says quietly that if he had a son, he wouldn't want him to go to war. Up to this point he has not mentioned anything about his experiences in the war, or anything else of importance. His wife smiles at him uncertainly, not knowing quite how to take it. The scene isn't milked, but we get a lot in a few seconds.

Alberta Watson has the small role of Geoffrey Bowes's old girlfriend, who tried to commit suicide when she heard he had

married and who starts an affair with him after his return. She has little to say or do but she is a compelling presence, a fascinating blend of the neurotic and the firm.

**War Brides** must be judged a success — the result of the firm grasp that is demonstrated by all concerned in the conception and execution of the film. It succeeds as a made-for-television film by any standards — and in many cases transcends those standards.

Alan Stewart

## Louise Carré's Ça peut pas être l'hiver, on n'a même pas eu d'été

Given our culture's current preoccupation with the problems of women, it comes as no surprise to find that someone has finally made a film about the adjustment of a mature woman to widowhood. The subject is a potentially challenging one: as a theme, widowhood in late middle-age has none of the notoriety or easy appeal of, say, divorce earlier on. This ought to make it more difficult to incorporate the many new clichés which now plague "trendy" films about the changing role of women.

Nonetheless, **Ça peut pas...** is curiously reminiscent of precisely such a film — Paul Mazursky's **An Unmarried Woman**. Admirers of this film will concede that its success was due much more to the performance of Jill Clayburgh and to the timeliness of the subject matter than to the script, which was, all things considered, rather flimsy. **Ça peut pas...** has neither Clayburgh (though Charlotte Boisjoli certainly puts in an adequate performance) nor a "hot topic", — nor,

for that matter, glamorous Hollywood sets. So, the script has to stand on its own. And it does, but just barely.

Filmed mostly in the area around Sorel, it tells the story of Adèle Marquis, a comfortably-off 57-year-old woman who loses her husband after almost forty years of marriage, during which she raised eight children. Her immediate reaction is naturally one of depression, but after a winter of mourning she decides she's had enough. A few surprise moves — like taking in a boarder to avoid selling her heavily-mortgaged home; and a few lucky breaks — the boarder turns out to be a suitably personable widower in need of companionship; and Adèle gradually regains full control of her life. She changes her hairdo, learns to drive, goes places she has never been before, all the while gradually developing a discreet friendship with Germain, the new man. But when he proposes marriage she prefers — surprise! — to opt out — rejoicing, though not without some trepidation, in

## Ça peut pas être l'hiver...

p. Louise Carré d./sc. Louise Carré mus. Marc O'Farrell d.o.p. Robert Vanherweghem, Daniel Fitzgerald (asst.) light. James Gray, Denis Ménard grip Claude Bresseur cont. Claudette Messier ward. Martine Fontaine stills Takashi Seida unit pub. Danielle Sauvage sd. ex. Michel Charron, Ken Page, Roger Lamoureux sd. mix. (mus.) Louis Hone sd. mix. Jean-Pierre Joutel titles Jean-Marc Brosseau NFB liaison Gaétan Martel ed. André Théberge sd. ed. Anne Whiteside song interp. Louise Lemire, Pière Sénécal lyrics Louise Carré mus. Marc O'Farrell piano/voice Mario Parent 1st unit/a.d. Marianne Feaver p. man. Daniel Louis sd. Alain Corneau, Marcel Fraser (asst.) loc. man. Claire Stevens make-up Brigitte Mc-

Caughry props Charles Bernier, Marie Dupont (asst.) sec. Carole Villandré p.a. Louis Douville, Yolande Paré 2nd unit/a.d. Pierre Gendron p. man. Marie-Andrée Brouillard sec. Suzanne Comtois sd. Jacques Blain, Marcel Fraser, Yvon Benoit (asst.), Esther Auger (asst.) make-up Micheline Foisy props Pierre Fournier p.a. Louis Gascon l.p. Charlotte Boisjoli, Jacques Galipeau, Céline Lomez, Mireille Thibault, Serge Bélair, Daniel Matte, Marie-Ève Doré, Martin Neufeld, Peter Neufeld, Anne-Marie Ducharme, Gaétane Laniel, Illia Esopos, Guillaume Tremblay, Isabelle Doré, Lucie Mitchell, Guy Bélanger, Hélène Grégoire, Louise Arbi- que, Pepper, Jean Richard, Annick Chartier, Réal Côté, Félix Chartier, Wilner Boulain, Jean Belzil-Gascon, Claude Saint-Germain, Martin Lyons, Kathleen Butler, Marjorie Godin p.c. La maison des quatre running time 87 min. col. 16mm dist. J.A. Lapointe Films Inc. (Quebec).