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 Marianne 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, exotic Gypsy Wife. She appears in colour, with their 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 Nikolic'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 advertisement...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, to the embroidered sheet-metal wall of a telephone booth in a hotel hallway. The new compositions and re-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 Maritime, nor the embittered young man back from the war, but a finely-drawn composite. Witter 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 effectively 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.
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