to continue in an open-ended manner. It also marks the return of the director's essentially apocalyptic vision (in Film Comment, Cronenberg remarked that he didn't want to see an apocalypse in his lifetime - yet Shivers, Rabid and Scanners all move in that direction.)

For many years, a small group has been touting Cronenberg as Canada’s finest, most visionary director. Partially, this is in reaction to maudlin, much-loved memoirs like Lies My Father Told Me and Who Has Seen The Wind, and partially, it was because anyone that the upholders of good taste and high culture (e.g. Robert Fulford, Clyde Gilmour) reacted against so strongly could not all be bad. But with the release of Scanners, there is no need for defensiveness. Cronenberg is our greatest director, and Scanners should be the first in a long line of commercial and artistic masterpieces.

John G. Harkness

**Bob Clark’s Tribute**

Tribute is the story of an irrepressible life-of-the-party who refuses to confront the grim horror of cancer for fear that he will exit this life with not a belly laugh but a whimper. It is also, sadly, a film that for the most part refuses to take itself seriously, given the gravity of its topic.

The death-of-a-clown concept is pregnant with dramatic possibility, but screenwriter Bernard Slade (Same Time Next Year), and TV's The Partridge Family, has little mind for the untidy aspects of cancer. A joke for him is like a drink for an alcoholic: he does not know how to joke moderately, and so goes on long gratuitous gag-jags that wreak havoc with the film.

Jack Lemmon is a New York PR man with an endless supply of jokes and friends. Three minutes into the film he is told — sledge hammer to the temple — that he has cancer. His son (Robby Benson), an earnest, bespectacled sort, visits him for the summer. Their conflicting worldviews, along with the question of mortality, become, ostensibly, the meat of the film.

But then the magic lure of 'comedy' presents itself. And Slade, seemingly, has no will power. Vaudeville schtiks abound. Every ringing doorbell becomes an opportunity for Lemmon to drop his pants, cross his eyes, and go into yet another daffy bit. If it is Slade's fault that the film is loaded down with so much sitcom material, it is to director Bob Clark's (Murder By Decree) discredit that Slade and star Lemmon are allowed to indulge themselves in such shameful burlesque.

At times it is difficult to figure out where the schtiks stop and the film begins. Sandwiched between one scene, where Lemmon throws a testimonial party for a down-on-her-luck hooker (Gail Garnett), and another where Lemmon jumps out of a door as a fertile yellow chicken, there is the scene where young Benson meets up with his love interest Kim Cattrall (a vacuous model type who could not act her way out of a fashion supplement). Benson and Cattrall are sharing a pastrami and some laughs, on what appears to be a nice summer’s afternoon, when out of nowhere the skies open, rain falls, and they are forced inside for a romantic fireside picnic — just like in the movies. Tribute lurches forward in similar stock.
ing all his tricks in his one big scene. There is no pace to his performance. His miscalculated energy unbalances the film and makes it an often enervating chore to watch.

Lemmon's manic work in *Tribute* comes as a surprise. In the '70s, in films like *Save the Tiger* and *The China Syndrome*, Lemmon portrayed the Sick-Soul-of-the-Establishment — the good man fallen victim to the unscrupulousness of the times. His role as Scottie Templeton here marks a return to the Clown-in-the-Grey-Flannel-Suit roles he perfected in the late '50s and early '60s (*Some Like It Hot, The Apartment*). But whereas Lemmon invested those roles with a beguiling comic energy, his performance here is at times almost senile in its lack of control. Only the fact that we know he is dying keeps the film from being apocalyptic.

As to whether or not *Tribute* "addresses the Canadian experience" — or some such CFDC homily — the film is no more Canadian than Herbert Ross's next pop-corn muncher. The film's establishing shots are New York, the beer is Bud, and the principal actors are all American. I am sure that producer Garth Drabinsky, screenwriter Slade, and director Clark — all Canadians — never intended to make anything other than a Hollywood film in Canada. They have succeeded. Good for them; it's a big club. My only hope is that the next time they paint Toronto up to be New York, they seal all the holes.

There is, in *Tribute*, one reference to Canada (a mistake I hope), where Benson complains to his father about a hooker the ol' man set him up with: "And when I got back to Canada I found out I had the clap." So Canada is rendered in the eyes of the world as an exotic venereal disease clinic.

Stephen Cole

**Tribute**