**Zale Dalen's The Hounds of Notre Dame**

Canadian filmmakers have often haled a weakness for rambunctious, larger-than-life central characters, the kind of people who normally inhabit Reader's Digest-style 'real' and 'evocative' fiction. Pere is one such character. From The Bowdymam to Outrageous, such characters have been the focus of attention, and have inveased up uneventful plots simply by being there. At first glance, The Hounds of Notre Dame (produced by Fil Fraser, directed by Zale Dalen) looks as if it falls into the same mold. "Pere" Athol Murray is a priest who chainsmokes, drinks whiskey, sweats moderately (never more than a "goddamn") or a transmuted "muckery", reminisces about reading St. Augustine, coaches a hockey team at an impoverished school in Saskatchewan, and says unfashionable things about the C.C.F. The Bowdymam Riders West.

But it's not quite as simple as that. The real strength of The Hounds of Notre Dame is not so much the reinforce priest but — as the title suggests — the community built up around him. Most of the minor characters regard Pere's blustering eccentricities with humorous indulgence, and quietly go about their business undisturbed. Pere dominates the community, but it also has an existence apart from him; the climactic events of the plot — one boy's decision to leave, and another's to stay — take place independently of him. The film is emphatically not an exercise in idolatry.

Most of the actors contribute to this feeling with a nice sense of underplaying, only David Ferry as Fryer, the "new boy" who has to be initiated into the community, is guilty of overstating his part. At the other extreme, Frances Hyland underplays so much that you scarcely notice she's there — not at all a normal reaction to this actress. The dynamic reaction to this actress. The dynamic reaction to this actress. The dynamic reaction to this actress. The dynamic — if boys don't like poetry, box him up the "Hounds", a collection of things possible.

The major strength of the film lies in Ken Mitchell's tightly structured and intelligently written screenplay. Rather than try to cover all of the Murray's chequered career, Mitchell compresses events into a classic 24-hour span, beginning with a political rally at which Pere says all the wrong things and continuing through the next day (the official rebuke from the bishop, played — mainly with his eyebrows — by Barry Morse to the climactic hockey game and the inevitable blaze). This compression does at times produce some implausibilities. Fryer passes through successive stages of rebellion, humiliation, acceptance, and leadership all in about 12 hours — but it serves its dramatic purposes admirably. Murray is seen in relation to the historical period it is 1930, and on the radio Mackenzie King is appealing to the young people to defend Christian civilization, to his political views (the C.C.F. are socialist, but the Nazis burn books, to his educational — ahem — methods (if boys don't like poetry, box their ears and recite Hopkins), and to his foundation in religious faith. "Gang," he says cheerfully in the middle of a Latin mass, "if's a great thing to hold God in your hands.")

It would perhaps be expecting too much for a film set in Saskatchewan to do without a blitzkrieg scene, or to restrict itself to less than two oathouse jokes. But the atmosphere of small Western towns is quite splendidly evoked in the hockey game sequence, with its fiercely partisan crowd, its fumblingly inept but enthusiastic play, and Coach Murray ringin' the changes on inspirational dressing-room pep talks.

The Hounds of Notre Dame's direction is largely unobtrusive and efficient. As in his earlier film, Skip Tracer, he keeps the action moving at a clean, crisp pace. If Hounds doesn't quite have the same dark overtones as Skip Tracer, that may be largely attributed to producer Fil Fraser's desire to appeal to a more family-oriented audience. Which is not to say that The Hounds of Notre Dame is sentimental fare. Dalen's fast direction, combined with Mitchell's tight script, avoids all the perils of cliche. (Well, most of them.) Much of Hounds is indeed predictable, and the ending has no dramatic surprises to pull out of the hat. The new boy does not turn out to be a hockey star who saves the team from defeat; and no one gets lost in the blizzard. The blizzard scene does have some unfortunate voice-over moralizing, punching home the point for those too dumb to get it. Ron Orieux's photography is elegant and, again, understated. I only remember one grain elevator.

All in all, The Hounds of Notre Dame is a very pleasant, well-made, unpretentious, thoroughly likable film. It doesn't make cosmic statements, it isn't trying to be The Great Canadian Hockey Team. Its not an earth-shaking contribution to culture. But it is the kind of film that could be made on a shoe-string, the kind of film on which a genuinely Canadian cinema can model itself more profitably than on the spurious spark of "Hollywood North."

**Stephen Scobie**

The Hounds of Notre Dame

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**Marty Gross' The Lovers' Exile**

Classical Japanese art contests the assumptions of most of Western art. It contests the relationship of illusion to reality, of speech to gesture, of intelligence to artifice. In the early days of cinema, for example screenings in Japan were conducted in a most unusual way. Rather than on closing spectators in a darkened room and fixing their attention on a luminous screen, Japanese "cinemas" consisted of a series of tatami mats in front of which was a banashi — a professional narrator who told the story of the film. To one side was the screen, to the other were the spectators. The attention of the spectators was thus divided in three: in front of them was the verbal text as animated by the banashi; to one side was the visual text as existed in the film; and to the other side was the apparatus that made the picture possible.

Film screenings were thus hierarchically and non-illusionist. It was the banashi that the spectators came to hear; to see the actors on the screen. In fact, so strong was the banashi that they managed to delay the introduction of talking pictures to Japan for over three years. For the talking picture necessitated the demise of the banashi and of the unique conditions of viewing...