Louis Malle’s
Atlantic City

The first shot after the opening credits shows an ancient luxury hotel being demolished by explosives, while a wrecking ball smashes another condemned building as the end titles roll. In Louis Malle’s Atlantic City, images of decay predominate. An ironic, poignant, darkly comedic study of life amid the grim underside of the American Dream, Atlantic City examines a society in transition between old and new, and a culture disintegrating through progress. The film’s strength rests in Malle’s position as a detached observer looking between the Venetian blinds, the way he looks after Grace, a former beauty contestant and subterranean dressing rooms, hotel toilets, canine beauty parlours, hotel rooms. Atlantic City achieves a certain seedy, grimy milieu through conscious vulgarity and deliberate bad taste. Malle opens the film with a bedridden hypochondriac. Sally, a small-town Saskatchewan girl living next door to Lou in their condemned building, dreams of making it as a dancer. But the shame of her husband and sister Criais having run off together still torments her, and Dave’s criminal record threatens her employment status at the casino.

David Cronenberg, space out children, show up out of context. Though structured and edited like an action drama, the film’s pace is more languid than its action’s effect on character. Though less interested in action alone than in its demands, with the hoods who have violated. But such a code has long ceased to exist, and Lou can live in it for no longer than a brief moment of glory. When he lets Sally go it is as an act of kindness, an act intensified by our knowledge that he has the power to make her stay.

On paper, Atlantic City is everything that those who clamour for an indigenous Canadian film industry say a Canadian film shouldn’t be: its director is French, and its script, stars, setting, theme, and even its title are American.

Yet the excellence of its cinematic achievement makes all such discussion fade. For “Is American-Canadian?” it seems ridiculous. Canadians should be proud such a film was made here, and could be more under the American system. The advantages of talented, experienced international directors such as Malle working with Canadian crews are obvious after the fact that after working with Malle, Richard Ciupka has since directed his first feature, Curtains.

What Canadians should really be asking about Malle’s American film, in fact, is: can we . . .

Such utilizes humour to end a scene on a comic note (as at the end of one of the film’s key lines), with the hoods who have violated. But such a code has long ceased to exist, and Lou can live in it for no longer than a brief moment of glory. When he lets Sally go it is as an act of kindness, an act intensified by our knowledge that he has the power to make her stay.

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Christopher Chapman's Kelly

Exclusive of horror films that follow their own formula, the movies of English Canada observe certain clichés. Exploit the landscape: fly over, around, up and down the mountains, linger on the prairies; shoot the sunset; look for possibilities in snow, water and trees. If the action flags, make use of rapids, blizzards or dust storms. If you must specify the location, call it Alaska, Long Island, Montana, Texas or Bear Island; otherwise, keep mum. Include among the characters a wise old Indian or a philosopher-sage rooted in an earlier, simpler time. Growing up should be the theme, generally plotted around the search for a father, dead or alive. Whether, in the end, this values are accepted or rejected, the finding of that father is necessary to future fulfillment, because mother, when she appears at all, is ineffectual. Show the seeker as troubled or disruptive, but establish from the beginning a sensitivity that indicates a basic natural goodness. Gather a chorus of quaint rustics or ethnics to comment wryly on the action, to add colour and to define the community. Furthermore, don't forget to display a confusing ambivalence toward nature. It must be beautiful or sublime in the best eighteenth-century aesthetic tradition, with the power to heal the wounded psyche. On the other hand, it must be genuinely threatening, and capable of nurturing mad trappers and killers.

Above all, remember that animals respond instinctively to good people. Relationships with animals, in fact, be they birds, dogs, horses, wolves or Kodiak bears, provide the window into the human soul. To guarantee a General rating, a touch of Walt Disney's sentimentalism is not amiss, although surely not to the point where seven Trappist monks play the Seven Dwarfs in Kelly's Alberta-as-Alaska forest. But perhaps that's just an in-joke, not a model to emulate. Indeed Kelly is not a model to emulate.

Kelly provides a study in why the rules that it so faithfully observes prove no substitute for a sound dramatic screenplay. The landscape, as photographed by Paul Van Der Linden, is marvelous; the rapids are dangerous, the Eskimos are wondrous. But it is in the way the story is made worthwhile that gives the most interesting performance. But the script scribes everyone.

Kelly pretends to be the story of a young girl, frustrated by dyslexia, who has become a problem for her mother. Equally frustrated, her mother ships her to Alaska, to a bush-pilot father whom she has never met, since her parents divorced when she was born. In nature, she will learn to accept animals, her father, her mother and, most important of all, herself.

The first weakness in this screenplay concerns the characters. Aside from the fact that their dialogue is excruciatingly predictable, the story itself doesn't give them any scope. Susan, Kelly's mother, well-played by Elaine Nalee, has to be incurably urban. Her father, Dave (Robert Logan), also the author of this simple-mind, is a man of much potential and warmth: he smiles, showing even white teeth. The villain, who doesn't fit comprehensively into the theme story, is a mysterious character (Doug Lemmons), who snarls, revealing horrific black teeth. The young heroine (Dovva-Dawn Vokins), because she changes, should be interesting, but the script snatchs the opportunity away from her. Engaging as a defiant problem child, game for every gesture including bank robbery, once she reaches the mountains, her resourcefulness is not allowed to function.

The primary device for establishing character in Kelly is the animal. Father and Clute are introduced rescuing a wolf caught in the mad trapper's snare;
therefore, they are good. Beechum traps
piration, and kills a pet raccoon. Mother
on Indian land, a sure sign of corrup-
wears a fur coat that speaks volumes
Brother Robin, in an un-
Snow White.
she receives a tame wolf as a gift from
Alex Willows, is accompanied by an
"alaking on water, no doubt a failure
in tiinf with natui'e. He stops just short
Famous Players
Paramount Pictures
Roberts, Film House
Nalee, Doug Lennox, Alec Willows, Dan Granirer,
Moreover, the plot-lines are so separate
facing of herself- that should reveal the
from each other that the movie ends
At the end, healthy in mind and spirit
the processes of perception. As usual,
Michael Snow's new film is his most
genorous, exuberant and buoyant offer-
yet. As usual, it's a meditation upon
their character, but they also seem gratuitous. The scenes at
the monastery for instance, appear to have been
written simply to feature the bear.
Robin Sims
Whitewater consult
m. d. Steve Shewchuk
"we're free.
"A unique exploration of the medium: Michael Snow's Present2."
RE V I E W S
Michael Snow's Present2
Michael Snow’s new film is his most
quantities, these people interact with each other within the
limits of an inept plot. Not only do the
episodes fail to contribute to any un-
folding of Kelly’s character, but they
also seem gratuitous. The scenes at
the monastery, for instance, appear to have
been written simply to feature the bear.
Moreover, the plot lines are so separate from
each other that the movie ends three
times. The major resolution, Kelly’s
facing of herself—she should reveal the
extent of her transformation—occurs first,
and far too early. The second, a
miasma that ought to have been
edited out, involves a renewed attraction
between her father and her remarried
mother, who is soon removed from the
story. Eventually, almost as an after-
thought, the villain is set up to get what
he, if not Russia, deserves. But because
Kelly cannot take part in the
revenge, the joke falls flat. This ending, however,
reminds us that the movie is not just bad
but objectionable.
Kelly is not really the heroine’s story,
and hemmed in as she is by clichés and
stereotyped behavior, she has no chance to act.
Always rescued by a father who knows
best, a spunky kid dwindles into a passive
girl. Kelly insults children.
Anna Carludotte ●

MICHAEL SNOW’S
PRESENTS

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KELLY D. CHRISTOPHER CLAPPEN P. SAMUEL F. FRIENDSHIP'S NARRATIVE IN BUSINESS.
NATIONAL GESTALT E. STUART V. BRIDEVIALE THE ART OF COMMISSIONING.

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Vic Sarin's

You've Come a Long Way, Katie

Social problems frequently serve as good television fodder. They tend to provoke strong audience reaction, which consequently improves the show's ratings. In the past, such diverse topics as venereal disease, male prostitution, and child beating have been handled with varying degrees of success. Now, You've Come a Long Way, Katie treats the subject of cross-addiction. This recent CBC mini-series of three one-hour episodes is a serial docu-drama as well as good entertainment; the subject is treated with intelligence and good taste.

Cross-addiction is an addictive dependence on alcohol and tranquilizers combined. It is much the same way as did the old Ray Milland classic, The Lost Weekend in 1945. Producer Jeanine Locke, veteran director of numerous documentaries, including The Die Today and Friends of Ireland, utilized a documentary approach to capture the life and character of the cross-addicted heroine, a role written by writer Jay Telfer, who was cross-addicted himself for ten years.

Katie Forbes (Lally Cadeau) is the appealing lead of the popular daytime show, "Straight Talk." In episode one, Madder Music, we see the beginnings of her downfall from stability, her life of hard work and hard job stress. Katie has trouble coping with her problems and seeks a solution in alcohol. When drinking fails to provide the extra lift she requires, the boozing is supplemented by healthy doses of Valium. "This is shaping up to be a three-Valium show," she chortles before one difficult scene.

Eventually, Katie is physically and emotionally impaired to the point where Virginia, her producer (Irene Mayeska), issues an ultimatum: she must seek help or be fired. Rather than lose her job, Katie decides to spend a month at the Brentcliffe Clinic, and it is here that the second episode, A Month On The Unravels.

During her stay at the clinic, Katie undergoes a comprehensive therapy program of exercise, group therapy, anti-hoax pills and psychological counseling. With the help of fellow patients, doctors, nurses, and Stuart (Booth Savage), the new man in her life, Katie seeks and finds solutions to the problems that have gripped her. Once the clinic is over, she returns to her life with high expectations.

Episode three, The Bottom Line, sees Katie back at her hosting duties, and bored by it all. Realizing a change of scenery is in order, she decides to try for a position on a top nightly news show, and fervently sets to work on her audition piece for the screen test. However, she falls to impress the show's producers and loses her chance for the job. Katie's first impulse is to have a drink, to calm her nerves and locked up in the darkness of her apartment, she turns to Canadian Club and Valium for moral support. The end result is tragic.

Despite its sometimes soap opera qualities, this show works well on the screen, due mostly to the talents of Lally Cadeau as the doomed Katie. After a fair number of television commercials and variety shows, Cadeau has recently become the golden girl of the CBC, and star of their weekly sitcom, Hangin' In. She possesses the ability to change mood at a moment's notice when playing Katie, and uses humour well in portrayal of the cross-addicted heroine, a role requiring great skill.

Ken James, as Katie's friend Lee, turns in a similarly powerful performance, and is backed up in his efforts by a fine supporting cast including Catherine O'Hara (formerly of Second City) as the cross-addicted Chris, and Larry Solway as egotistical anchorman Dave Richards.

Despite the cast's fine acting and competent script, this production occasionally falls prey to the same illnesses that seem to have crippled many similar American productions — the undying desire to make a social statement. At several points during the show, Telfer and Locke forget they are telling a story and begin to preach. This is most ob

SHORTS

David Fine's Viola

David Fine's new short Viola conveys the feeling of hands-out exploration - a young director trying on an attitude for size. In this case, the attitude is rudimentary aesthetics: it is a lovely film to look at, bold in no way, but still lovely and simple and full of life.

The viola itself is shown as an object of obvious sculptural beauty, and Fine has been lucky in his chance to work with Mark Irwin, whose camera work here is so lush and epurean. We are shown the making of the instrument in detail, and Otto Erdese's especially sensual approach to his craft. His attitude towards the creation of the instrument suffisons it for the viewer. At the end of the film, the craftsman's wife/musician, Rivka Golani-Erdese, plays the viola with intensity that both touches and holds the audience. Fine and Irwin have managed to sustain the emotion and the integrity of the subject matter in document. If at times this film reads like the classic "artist's film" (step back and see Moore and his bone), on this level it is true to its subject matter, which is exciting in itself.

In the past Fine has worked primarily in animation. His short films have picked up a number of awards in various competitions, in the student division. Live action is a new direction for him and Viola is a respectable effort. With greater experience and confidence in his abilities, Fine may allow more of that imagination of his earlier work to come through -something we can look forward to.

Jeffrey Reid

Paul Mason's Dragoncastle

Dragoncastle is a claymation (plasticene animation) short. It won First prize for animation, the Chris Statuette, at the Columbus International Film Festival. It has also been a finalist in several other festivals, including the Canadian Film and Television Awards. Although Dragoncastle is ostensibly "an animation film for kids, made by kids," intended for kindergarten through grades three or four, it has much a broader appeal.

The story is as simple as it is imaginative. It takes place in a strange, ecologically balanced kingdom. A Disneysque castle presides over the productive par­toral of the village. There are the requisite fairy tale characters: the king, the queen, the knight, monkeys, the dragon, and the townpeople. Yet these protagon­ists quickly break out of their stock exclamations and commentaries.

As the story opens, the farmers tend their cows and fields, the women do their chores, and the children play. All is best in the best of worlds, or almost.

Once more the king is petitioned by the villagers. The knight is sent for, commanded to find the dragon and "polite­ly" ask him to return. The knight swallows his pride and rides off on his charger. He finds the slyk dragon who, after a bit of hot air, agrees to leave his desolate cave and return to the kingdom, where he receives a hero's welcome. He quickly dispatches the mons­ters to their moat, cleans his cave, and begins heating the cold, damp castle above. The balance is once again restored. The villagers rebuild their town and tend their gardens. The dragon in his cave. Peace on earth.

Although Dragoncastle will be marketed as an educational film, it was not originally intended as such by those who conceived it. Becky and Paul Mason began working on Dragoncastle at the ages of 11 and 13, respectively, after receiving a kit. The plasticene as a Christ­mas present. They built a castle for fun, and also, just for fun, decided to try a few seconds of animation. Their father, Bill Mason, an award-winning NFB director, helped them with the more technical aspects. Five years later Dragoncastle was in the can.

Technically, the film is very accompl­ished. The animation is alive and believable, with great attention paid to often humorous detail. The editing is well-paced and there is a good variety of camera angles. The monsters and humans have distinct, endearing per­sonalities. Remarkably, there are no "bad guys and good guys."

Becky and Paul began with the plasticine castle in the living room of their home. As the set grew, and the two began to take their game more seriously, their father allowed them to move into his studio. Yet the living room floor is never really abandoned. The film is never pedantic or moralistic. The fun of a child's game on the floor is pre­served.

The original score is by Andrew Hug­gett. The string ensemble playing "early renais­ance" music provides a sophis­ticated backdrop or the many of the two young narrators play. The dis­tance between the childish commen­taries and the adult music is teasing and intriguing. Considerable time is devoted to the head, and the dragon sadly moves off, not with a sure head but with hurt feelings.

Of course, no one realizes that in driving off the dragon the ecological balance of the entire kingdom has been drastically disrupted, until it's too late. The "most monsters," without the dragon's flames to keep them swim­ming benignly around the castle, go on their prettily desolate way, destroying much of the village. As if this weren't enough, with­out the dragon's flames to provide cen­tral heating, the towers of the castle are soon bending and staking with the combined coughing and sneezing of its inhabitants.

Paul Mason • Dragoncastle

(continues on p. 37)

Score one for culture

Appearance of the new format prompts me to write a long-delayed note of appreciation. I think the magazine is making a very important contribution to our cultural growth and to the representation of that growth both at home and abroad. This last number has been really fine. The only thing that gives me a funny feeling is the description of your selves in the masthead as a "charitable organization." The choice of the cover photo was made by Beryl Fox, the producer of Design. We endorse her choice, and expect Claude Jutras's film to be neither cheap nor exploitative.

Sharon Thomson

Vancouver

LETTERS

The ad got the results intended; no one forgot it, and the Cannes coverage, as you can see, is super.

Just a note about the ad being sexist. A sexist ad is one which uses sex gratuit­ously to sell a product, exploiting the means and was taken on the beach there. Not only would she be thrilled with the additional exposure she got through our ad, but the ad itself goes a long way to render one of the visible attractions of the Cannes fest itself. Think of it as a documentary! Ed.

Good and disgusting

The new format of Cinema Canada is clearly a step forward; however, I find your choice for the cover of No. 73 and your advertising for coverage at Cannes both sexist and disgusting. Further­more, if your magazine is, as you claim, the "best film magazine in Canada which isn't about Cannes every year, and was taken on the beach there. Not only would she be thrilled with the additional exposure she got through our ad, but the ad itself goes a long way to render one of the visible attractions of the Cannes fest itself. Think of it as a documentary! Ed.

Natalie Pawlenko

Toronto

The choice of the cover photo was made by Beryl Fox, the producer of Design. We endorse her choice, and expect Claude Jutras's film to be neither cheap nor exploitative.

(top) • "Otto Erdese's especially sensual approach to his craft."

PHOTO DAVID FINE

PHOTO DAVID FINE

PHOTO DAVID FINE

DRAGONCASTLE • Paul Mason, Becky Mason, Andrew Huggett, Lillian Moore. Original score by Andrew Huggett. 27 min. 50 sec. Dist. Studio International p.e. Mason Productions.

VIOLA


PHOTO DAVID FINE

PHOTO DAVID FINE

PHOTO DAVID FINE
YOU MAY NOT RECOGNIZE US
BUT WE WANT TO RECOGNIZE YOU

September 20 to 30, 1981—BANFF, ALBERTA, CANADA

It's TV at the top! During the second Banff International Festival, we'll be recognizing the best of television programming from around the world. The festival features competitive screenings, retrospectives and seminars for television professionals.

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