Richard Pearce's
Threshold

"This is like Lourdes. People given up for dead come here expecting miracles and you give it to them," says an admirer of eminent heart surgeon Thomas Vain at the outset of Threshold. Curiously enough, the lines could easily have been directed to those of us crammed into the Elgin theatre and to the hundreds who were turned away from the Festival of Festivals' premiere of this much-awaited picture. Many indeed came seeking a miracle, having endured a dismal year of Canadian cinema. Would this be the miracle, having endured a dismal year of Canadian cinema. Would this be the Festival of Canadian cinema. Would this be the

unrestful, throbbing heart of Threshold opens flawlessly, stimulating our hearts to beat a little faster. Our delinquency? and the shenanigans in Alt-Hospital gone is the need to demythicize our bodies to its threshold. We shudder at

art dept.

Vain's apothecary shows symptoms of disease. The elements which seemed inspirational in the beginning of Threshold threaten to resemble the follies of a 'born again' sermon. Endless exaltation turns into a bore.

Vain tries to keep Vrain down to earth with hints of family trouble and an exaltation turns into a bore. Pearl tries to inject some life by strumming up some contrived musical background can convince us of what little story line there is.

Even the invention of Carol, the sweet-faced young patient who eventually becomes the first recipient of Vain's artificial heart, can't revive Threshold. While Marc Willingham manages to make Carol empathetically vulnerable in a short period of time, her effect is painfully negated by Pearce's tendency to turn sentimental moments into saccherine. We never really find out how Carol feels about having the device fuel her life. Pearce, once again, resorts to trying to wow us with the sartorial aura of Threshold's visage. It no longer works.

Only Jeff Goldblum as Gehring brings much-needed ambiguity to the film. Before his fall from grace by succumbing to the temptations of fame, we were beginning to suspect that everyone in Threshold floated on air, propelled by ankle wings. But Goldblum's character is too minor to affect the crawling plot. By the supposed climax of the film, Carol's operation, we are experiencing apnea. Threshold's lifeblood has been spent some time back.

We had crowded into the Elgin seeking a miracle. And for a time it seemed entirely possible. But alas, Toronto is not Lourdes. Miracles don't happen too frequently here. This is not to say that those associated with this film should feel discouraged in any way. Threshold deserves a lot of praise. After all, a near-miracle is a lot better than nothing.

Stephen Zoller

*By all rights, the man should be dead.* Allan Nicholls, Donald Sutherland