

The following position paper, entitled "Concerning Cultural Politics and their Economic Repercussions" was written by the editors of Cinema Canada last March. It was written just as they decided to combine the trade paper CineMag with Cinema Canada, and refers to the magazine Cinema Canada as it existed prior to this year, not as it is currently conceived.

The paper was prompted by the brochure "Speaking of Culture" which had been published by the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. Although the brochure outlined the concerns of the committee and suggested lines of inquiry which it hoped the cultural community would follow, it nowhere so much as mentioned the word "politics." The paper was subsequently submitted to the committee.

Cinema Canada is published by a charitable foundation, the Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation, and was originally the house organ of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers before becoming an independent publication in 1972. Since its inception, it has endeavored to marry elements of the cultural debate with the realities of the growth of a film industry in Canada.

MANDATE OF CINEMA CANADA

To publish a monthly magazine concerning Canadian filmmakers and their films, to interview, review and comment. To reflect the state of the industry from a Canadian point of view, covering all aspects of filmmaking: commercial, educational, documentary, theatrical feature and short production. Some attention is also given to distribution and exhibition, censorship, government policy, film education, foreign festivals, etc.

CONTEXT

We offer our comments essentially as publishers. Over the last ten years, we have been involved deeply in the development of the film industry in Canada through a variety of publica-

The war within: culture vs. industry

by Connie Tadros

tions, and also as journalists, broadcasters and teachers.

Because of our intense relationship to the film industry, it is not always easy to divorce the difficulties and successes we have had in publishing from the vagaries of the film industry itself: its strength has, in large measure, determined which possibilities were open to us as publishers. Its understanding of the cultural and industrial tensions inherent in its activities determined the tone and direction of our involvement.

From the beginning, and still today, our interest has been to underline the growth of the industry, with special emphasis on films of quality which make a cultural contribution. Of necessity, we have followed government policy closely over the years, for federal policy is absolutely determining in the film industry.

We are not aware of any government policy which is especially geared to promote publications such as ours,

exception made of Canada Council grants.

As our publications have always been independent of any sponsoring body, they have depended upon three sources of revenue: sales of subscriptions and copies, advertising, and cultural grants. Last year, 73 per cent of our revenues came from advertising.

CULTURAL POLITICS

Nowhere in "Speaking of Culture" is mention made of cultural politics. But there is a war on for the minds and money of the Canadian consumer, and the stakes are enormous. The federal government has not been able to stave off the arrival of pay-TV, though there is serious question about our readiness to embrace the new technology. Program production is the key, and naturally one looks to the film industry in an effort to test its battle preparedness. Americans have dominated our theatrical screens since the beginning, and have continued

to mold Canadian sensibilities through the strength of their television production.

Unless the government recognizes the political dimension of the fight for cultural survival, there is little sense in promoting a film industry, or a publication industry. Canadian cultural policy should not contribute to the strengthening of the American hold over the imaginations of Canadians. The United States, by its very vitality, wealth and opportunity, will always prove attractive to Canadians, and many will make their way there. Meanwhile, it is up to Canada to make evident to its citizens just why they should care about the nation and its future. The promotion and sustaining of those elements which contribute to Canada's cultural definition must become a priority for the government and for its agencies.

Among the questions not asked in the discussion paper are the following:

1. Are the Canadian culture and American culture the same?
2. What differentiates them?
3. What price is Canada ready to pay for a specific cultural identity?
4. What political price will it pay to defend this culture?

CULTURAL COMPETITION

In several areas - recording, filmmaking, publishing - those working in Canadian cultural industries come up against American interests having a stake in those same industries. Certainly, special support must be forthcoming to shore up the Canadian efforts.

Our experience in publishing *Cinéma Québec*, then *Cinema Canada* and finally *CineMag* should serve as an object lesson in the impossibility of promoting Canadian cultural interests through publications dependent upon advertising from the private sector when that same sector becomes financially interwoven with American interests (Annex I).

It is clear that the film industry must meet the challenge of competing in the American market. But to the degree that it tailors its product to suit American tastes, it dilutes the specific Canadian nature of that product.

The past years have seen a marriage between the Canadian and American film industries which should be of great concern to policy makers. This marriage will last as long - and only as long - as the tax shelter offered by the Canadian government for film production.

Other countries - England, France and Italy - have experienced similar moments, and in every case, the eventual withdrawal of American interests has left indigenous film industries in a shambles.

In light of the current Canadian experience, publishing in the interests of the film industry has been difficult, for there has been no consensus about those interests. Pressures from the United States on the Canadian government and its agencies have led to the promotion of American interests within the industry to the obvious detriment of Canadian culture. In fact, it is not far-fetched to suggest that a climate of cultural oppression has been established (Annex II).

Cinema Canada has seen an erosion of financial support through advertising. Film producers and distributors have clearly said that they are not interested in a publication which promotes Canadian film culture. Neither are they interested in writers who take a critical look at the state of the industry and suggest that things are amiss.

THE CINEMAG EXPERIENCE

Prior to the April 11, 1978 policy speech on film by the Secretary of State John Roberts, the Americans were nervous about the possibility that Canada would vote for a box-office levy, revenues from which would go into film production. Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, visited Ottawa, and the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association (CMPDA: the major American distributors) lobbied Ottawa vigorously.

In August, 1977, the CMPDA circulated a proposal to create a film trade paper through advertising guarantees from the members of the CMPDA and the two theatre chains, Famous Players and Odeon. This publication, *Film World*, became a reality in December 1977.

We got wind of the original proposal during the summer 1977, but failed to take it seriously. After all, the CMPDA had backed a revival of the *Canadian Film Digest* the year before and, after one issue, the magazine folded.

In November, we got confirmation that the trade paper was indeed

going ahead. Our reaction was instinctive: if we didn't put up a fight and compete with the new paper, *Cinema Canada* would be the eventual victim. There simply had never been enough advertising revenue in Canada to support more than one film publication. In the heated-up atmosphere created by the capital cost allowance, a culturally oriented magazine had little chance against a trade paper with backing from the Majors who control the distribution network throughout the world.

Within two weeks, we had written and published the first issue of what was to become *CineMag*, beating *Film World* to the draw by two weeks.

During the three years that followed, both papers grew and changed a great deal. *CineMag* was consistently first with the news, breaking important stories and eventually becoming bi-weekly to cope with the volume of news on the industry.

After a first lackluster year which almost cost it the backing of the Majors, *Film World* hired new staff, revamped its format, and launched a marketing campaign through controlled circulation. It moved ahead strongly.

During the first year, *Film World* received 73 full page ads from the Majors vs. 14 full pages placed in *CineMag*. Obviously, competing financially was going to be difficult.

As the Canadian industry became increasingly dependent upon Americans for distribution and marketing, the center of decisions moved to Los Angeles. During the release of Canadian films like *Meatballs*, *Phobia* and *Middle Age Crazy*, the Majors placed the ads and nothing was forthcoming for *CineMag*. As Canadians sought to link up with the American connection, what advertising they did control followed suit.

What is most disheartening is that producers who, two years ago, were ready to support a Canadian trade paper with a Canadian perspective can no longer identify with the Canadian cause. As the Canadian film industry grew in response to the federal policy allowing a 100 per cent capital cost allowance, marketing, sales and distribution have caused producers - almost to a man - to accept the notion that Canada and the United States are, indeed, one domestic market. Since the federal government has provided no policy, no mechanism, spent no effort to create an alternative, they have little choice. "I am an American," Stephen Roth of R.S.L. claims proudly. "Los Angeles is my second home," echoes Pierre David of *Filmplan International*.

This is not an atmosphere in which Canadian cultural concerns can flourish.

Although never formally organized, there used to be a Canadian film lobby which backed culture.

Members of the Toronto Film Cop, the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre and the Directors' Guild of Canada could be counted on. Quality was the only criterion of the Canadian Film Awards, and the boisterous Council of Canadian Filmmakers kept everyone active, backing notions like quotas and levies for Canadian films. At the CFDC, Michael Spencer, in a cautious approach, gave leadership and was respected. He built consultative committees and met with them regularly, striving toward the production of Canadian films of significance.

Today, this constituency has disappeared, made obsolete by the chance so many have in the industry to work on big budget films. Hang the content!

During the past few years, structural changes have occurred in various organizations which document the move from a cultural pre-occupation to an industrial, commercial one.

These changes have been made to strengthen the producers' control over the decisions the industry must make periodically.

Item: The CFDC has abandoned its consultative committees, and no longer meets with representatives from the actors', directors' and technicians' unions. Only the producers are now consulted about the direction of the corporation.

Item: The producers, through the Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers and backed by distributors and the CFDC, caused the Canadian Film Awards Committee to be replaced by the Academy of Canadian Cinema. Whereas an international jury used to vote on the merits of Canadian films, using quality as the only criterion, now only the members of the ACC vote. The organization is elitist. It is generally accepted that the majority of the members do not screen all the eligible films; they nevertheless vote in all categories for the Genie Awards. The resulting vote is the product of promotion, pressure and industry alliance rather than a measure of quality.

Item: The pre-selection committee for the Cannes film festival used to be a large but representative body made up of directors, actors, producers, distributors, critics and representatives of government agencies. Producers were so outraged by the selections made in 1980 - all low-budget, 'cultural' films - that the Film Festivals Bureau changed the composition of the committee. In 1981, only four people, all producers, sat on the committee along with two representatives from the Festivals Bureau.

Item: Traditionally, Canadian representation at the Cannes festival was handled through the Film Festivals bureau which has a cultural mandate. In 1980, the CFDC took over that responsibility, believing that Canada needed a higher industrial profile. Culture was nowhere apparent in the CFDC approach to promotion at Cannes. Repeatedly, foreign critics last year asked, "What has become of Canadian films?" "Where are the directors?" "What are you doing to yourselves?"

This last question is worth pondering.

CAN CULTURE TURN A PROFIT?

Of late, the idea that culture should be able to pay its own way has been gaining ground. The emphasis is on "cultural industries." Government agencies like the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Film Development Corporation are looking for ways to become profitable and projects which can't justify themselves economically find little support.

At Cinema Canada, we long thought that our publications should be able to turn a profit, or at least to break even, given the effervescence of the film industry. What we were slow to realize was the extent to which "culture" and "industry" war with each other.

Cultural content opens the door to analysis, criticism, the probing of intentions and the measuring of quality. Industrial success, at least in film, is often a function of publicity and promotion. Questions of quality for its own sake are unwelcome.

When, as publishers, we met the commercial challenge of moving with the film industry into the economic arena and began to publish a trade paper, there was no longer any pretense of cultural bias. Cultural questions remained the domain of Cinema Canada while reporting on the industry of film became the domain of CineMag. Naively, we thought that by publishing the best film trade paper in Canada, we would receive the backing of those financial giants, the American Major distribution companies which operate in Canada.

By their own admission, those companies were unable to dissociate CineMag from Cinema Canada, and we were found lacking because of our interest in the cultural aspects of filming in Canada. Advertising revenues from the Majors, which were meager to begin with, were simply withdrawn in the third and fourth year of publication (Annex III).

One of the unsettling realities of the Canadian film industry at present is that no one does anything without asking permission from the Majors. The Secretary of State recognized in his April 11, 1978 policy speech (Annex IV) and every producer in this country has made his pilgrimage south to ask the Majors to look kindly on his project.

In the absence of any viable Canadian distribution and marketing system, one has a hard time in the theatrical film industry without an understanding with the Majors. Similarly, one can not publish about film unless the Majors have given their blessing. This has been our experience. And this is the challenge facing the Policy Review Committee.

4

EXCERPTS FROM THE FILM POLICY ADDRESS, delivered by the Secretary of State John Roberts on April 11, 1978

"A continuing concern to me is the degree to which the revenues generated at the box office in Canada are drained out of Canada, and contribute very little to the financing of Canadian productions. Of a total box office of roughly \$240 million in 1975,

MEMORANDUM

August 15, 1977

TO: CMPDA DIRECTORS
FROM: M.S. ROTH
RE: INDUSTRY TRADE PAPER

cc: CMPDA P.R. COMMITTEE
B. ALLEN D. PERLMUTTER
W. ANTONISHYN C. POSEN
C. CHAPMAN B. RICHARDS
G. DESTOUNIS H. ROSS
H. GULKIN C.R.B. SALMON
F. LAWSOON B. SIMMONS
B. MAYER N.A. TAYLOR
D.C. MENZIES C. TREMBLAY
B. MYERS D. WATTS
J. PATRY M. ZAHORCHAK

For some time now we have been working to develop a concept that would permit the launching of an industry trade paper.

The attached proposal "FILMWORLD" is in our view a sound undertaking for this purpose and we will solicit your support by telephone next week.

The prime co-ordinator for Filmworld will be Mr. Paul Januzzi, the publisher of Showbill. We have met with Mr. Januzzi and in our view he is a knowledgeable and reliable publisher for this purpose, and has agreed that the proposal originally submitted to the CPMFDA Public Relations Committee by the late Mr. Richard Schouten and Miss Bette Laderoute, can be viable. The one adjustment that has been made is a reduction in the contractual undertaking from three to two years.

Encl.

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Culture can not pay its own way in a country as small as Canada. And cultural enterprises like our own can certainly not compete with American interests without the enthusiastic support of the Canadian government, both through policy positions and through direct and indirect measures from its various agencies.

At present, Canada Council grants are a bit like intellectual welfare. They provide enough to survive, but just barely. And the minute a publication begins to generate revenues for growth, the grant is diminished.

When a publication like ours seeks funds elsewhere among the government agencies, we are told to go back to the Council: funding culture is its job. But those other federal agencies - the CBC, the NFB and the CFDC - are our primary clients, the producers and distributors of culturally interesting films.

They have a stake in Canadian culture.

And if the government cannot wade up the nation and its own bureaucrats to the importance of publications like Cinema Canada, then the cultural battle will indeed be lost.

The mediocrity of many Canadian publications is a function of their financial weakness. There is simply no money to pay the best writers or to initiate the proper research. On another level, there is never adequate funding to do the proper promotions, the direct mailings. Publishers and editors redouble their efforts, trying to make up in sheer energy for the lack of funds. In the end, the exercise becomes self-defeating.

Publications like ours can remain culturally viable only as long as they remain economically strong. Funding and financing does indeed, often, seem to be the one and only problem.

3

REVENUES FROM THE MAJORS

The advertising revenues to CineMag listed below come from the following companies: Columbia, 20th-Century Fox, Paramount, Warner Bros., Universal and United Artists.

	1978 (12 Nos.)	1979* (24 Nos.)	1980 (24 Nos.)	1981 (24 Nos.)
Full pages	14	22.7	9.9	1
Total revenue	\$4,200	\$9,988	\$4,356	\$465

*In January 1979, the executive director of the CFDC spoke to the executive director of the CPMFDA and requested that the Majors treat both Canadian trade publications with an even-hand. That same year, 58.5 pages were placed from the same companies in Film World, which published only 12 times a year.

roughly \$60 million was paid out in rentals to foreign distributors, and much if not most of this \$60 million left Canada. In contrast Canadian-produced feature films earned only about \$3 million at the box office. Clearly an imbalance of such a marked degree should not continue.

"I have discussed these concerns with both the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors' Association and its parent the Motion Picture Association of America. I have brought home to them that the present imbalance of rentals and the returns on investment for Canadian productions cannot endure. I am hopeful that they will take steps quickly to ensure greater investment not simply in films made in Canada, but also in

vestment in films which meet the criteria for Canadian films under the 100 per cent capital cost allowance. I intend to assess over the next twelve months their practical response to the problem I have described and to judge to what degree they have met our concerns."

"As with the problem of financing, I have discussed this question (distribution) with both Canadian and American distributors. I believe that they now have a strong sense of our determination that the present imbalance should not continue. I expect them to find methods not only to provide a better distribution of Canadian films in Canada, but in the international market as well."

Out of the mainstream

by David Clarke

The New Cinema, I'm by no means sure that I know what it is. But after spending a week watching it being displayed at the 10th International Festival of New Cinema, I'm mightily impressed by it. And by the good-natured efficiency of the festival's organizers. By the viewers who turned out some 10,000 strong to watch some 50 films shown over the 10 days of the festival. And by the filmmakers, who seemed to be everywhere, and willing to answer any question.

In short, the festival was very successful in bringing the New Cinema to a large, and obviously very appreciative, public. Cultural authorities, take note: Dimitri Eipides, Claude Chamberlan and the rest of the festival staff are winners. Backing them by allocating them the shekels they need for next year's festival makes every kind of sense. Cast your bread upon the waters.

Now, on to the best part of every festival: arguing about the films.

David Clarke is a free-lance writer living in Montreal.

Dans le cinéma commercial comme dans le cinéma marginal, les maîtres existent tout comme les vedettes du guichet.

— Nathalie Petrowski, *Le Devoir*, Nov. 2, 1981

Stars are to film festivals as oil rigs are to Arctic landscapes. When they appear it means money, action and adventure. But the environment suffers.

Now, I don't know that I would go so far as to say that Marguerite Duras reminds me of money, action or adventure. But her appearance at the festival certainly caused a stir. Her press conference drew a score of journalists, because in New Cinema circles Duras is a star. A couple of days later, I was having a cup of coffee with a morose fellow of no few years who told me that 28 journalists had been invited to his press conference — and that not one had come. What he said aroused my sympathy for the under-dog, of course, but it also made me wonder why I felt uncomfortable with the programming of such heavy-weight films as *Nick's Movie* (*Lightning Over Water*) by Wim Wenders and Nicholas Ray, or Syberberg's *Hitler*,



• Amos Poe's *Subway Riders*

un film d'Allemagne, alongside the others.

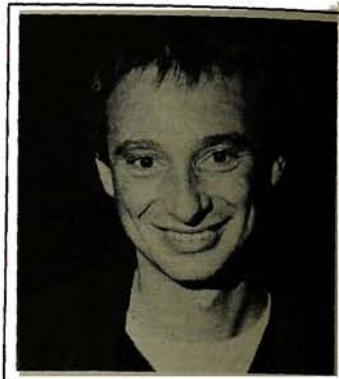
Without trying to banish anyone from the groves of New Cinema respectability, I'd just like to mention that in the course of *Nick's Movie*, Wim Wenders goes off to Hollywood to work on *Hammett*. I'm sure the press-less conference suffers in the audience must have felt a twinge at that. (This is not meant as a criticism of the film itself. *Nick's Movie*,



• Eric Mitchell

which depicts the final days of Nicholas Ray, is as piercing, as truly heart-breaking a film as I have ever seen.)

When underground filmmakers surface to breathe the fresh air of commercial and/or critical success — as Duras, Wenders and Rivette have — then the relationship between their work and the dominant culture becomes incestuous, to say the least. It becomes a struggle for them to maintain creative tension; for the dominant culture is no longer their bitter enemy but their gracious host. This can be a bitter struggle, but it certainly isn't the same battle most of the filmmakers at the festival were fighting. (Then again, some of the filmmakers I talked to were hoping to have their challenges-to-the-dominant-culture's-conventions-of-expression appro-



• Ken McMullen

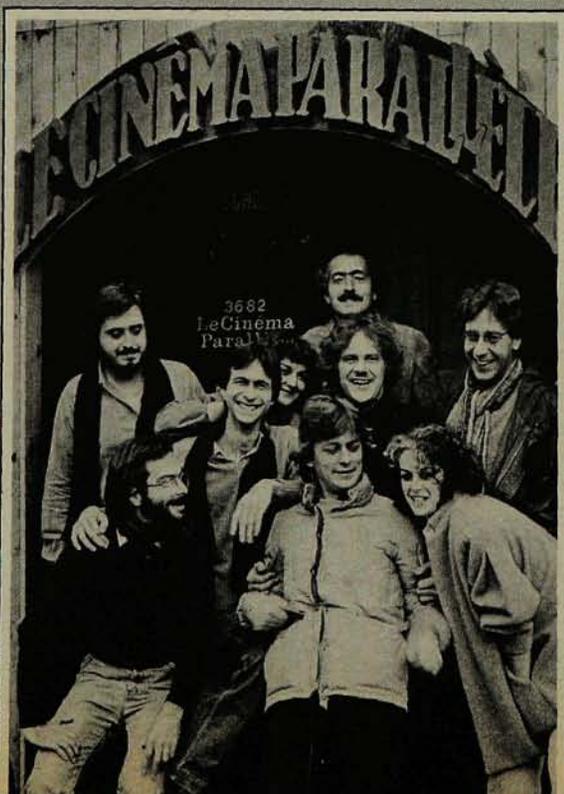
priated as quickly as they could arrange it. Indeed, I had a disconcerting discussion with one director who started off talking about de-constructing the narrative, and ended up discussing how to sell a youth-action-adventure script.)

In any event, the picture I was wild about — Ken McMullen's *Resistance* — and the pictures I thought were right up there — Bette Gordon's *Empty Suitcases*, Tim Burns' *Against the Grain*, and, of course, *Nick's Movie* — all garnered their fair share of attention.

Resistance, by Ken McMullen, a 31-year-old British filmmaker, is as subtle, complex and richly textured a film as I have seen in many a year. McMullen uses improvisational actors, newsreel footage of the French resistance, video, film, the musical talents of Brian Eno,

The festival

In an era of tight money and intense competition for public funding, the 10th International Festival of New Cinema has made its mark. In all, 48 programs were presented in over 100 screenings, and 10,587 admissions were recorded. Working with a staff of 24, most of whom were volunteers, the Festival covered 38% of its expenditures from sales alone. Putting the rest of the financing together proved more difficult, and a media offensive was mounted early in the year to overcome the disinterest sensed among the grant-giving bodies. At first, it seemed that provincial authorities would have been happier backing a "Semaine de Cinéma Québécois" than the Festival; but the former wasn't able to pull itself together, and no *Semaine* was held this year. The field clear, the Festival finally received \$38,500 from municipal, provincial, and federal agencies. The final tally: 10 days of New Cinema for \$75,000. With only a \$6,000 short-fall, and some revenues still expected, the organizers have given us one of Canada's most interesting, most reasonable festivals.



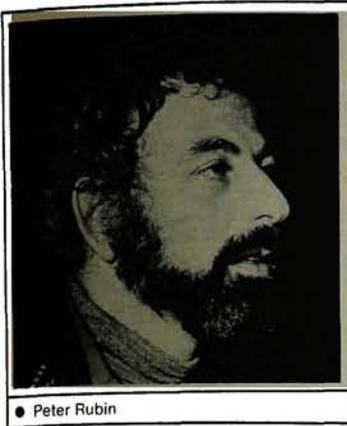
• Smiles all around for organizers (L to R): Thrassyvoulos Giatsios, Norman Ethier, Denis Couture, Marilyn Bilodeau, Demiti Eipides (far rear), Claude Chamberlan, Daniel Lapierre, Lynne Crevier, Richard Stanford.



• Claude Chamberlan, Marguerite Duras

and a real psychoanalyst to recreate a psychodrama conducted by an analyst in 1948.

The purpose of the original psychodrama was to help a group of ex-resistance fighters who had become disturbed by the problems of readjusting to peace. The purpose of the film is, on one level, to recreate this event in order to come to some kind of understanding of



● Peter Rubin

what those people went through. At the same time, McMullen is interested in probing the meaning of the act of resistance, the motives of his improvisational troupe, and the nature of film itself.

The film seems unwieldy and in danger of becoming so complicated that it threatens to dissolve into a welter of contradictions and misunderstandings, until one of the actors takes matters into his own hands. By staging his own suicide (over the objections of the psychoanalyst and the director - who enters into the film at this point) the actor shows us the radical implications of an act of resistance to authority figures. At the same time, he exposes, by the spontaneous vigour of his act, how self-involved and timid the other improvisors were really being by sticking to the original premise.

McMullen has constructed an elaborate, wonderful artifice. The delicate dance he performs between the levels of meaning in this film is something to behold: moreover, at the end of it one is left with a strong sensation of an England poking among other people's identities and pasts for something to borrow and call its own. If that sounds like too heavy a burden of meaning for any 90-minute film to hold then that is the measure of McMullen's accomplishment.

Car le nouveau cinéma (le bon comme le moins bon) passe par la littérature avant de faire frémir la rétine de l'œil...

- Nathalie Petrowski, **Le Devoir**, Nov. 2, 1981

My retinas enjoyed Bette Gordon's *Empty Suitcases* no end. There are shots of New York in this travelogue through post-radical, feminist academia - long, lingering shots of the harbour, the roof-tops, the neighbourhoods - that are the most striking images I saw at the festival. They demonstrate pure visual power.

The ears were having a good time, too. The narration of this film, sometimes presented as text on the screen (which kind of confuses things), is intense, and supple, and the words are beautifully chosen for their incantatory power.

It's the ideas I didn't like. The film tells the story of a woman's anger after her highly politicized experiences; supposedly her ideas are meant to signify characterization. But I found them banal.

The film itself was very good. The political ideas and literary conceits (i.e. the narrative dressed up to look deconstructed à la Robbe-Grillet) we could have done without.

Tim Burns' *Against the Grain* wins the prize for the single most muddled political viewpoint displayed at the festival, and the most deranged pacing.

Nonetheless, this account of the largely comic adventures of a Baader-Meinhoff acolyte in Australia is told with so much verve that I suppose it ranks as a success. David Cronenberg move over.

The director seems to have changed his mind several times about what he was trying to say in the course of making this film, and toward the end seems to have given up. I wasn't too surprised when he told me that they didn't seem to like his film in Germany, where they take terrorism a little more seriously.

There are some suspenseful moments in the beginning of the film, and a hilarious scene where the fleeing terrorist tells his mother what kind of trouble he's got himself into. And the idea of terrorists delivering their bombs in video-cassettes is pretty amusing, too. But the literary territory this film passes through isn't anywhere near the Frankfurt-School. It's where Abbott and Costello Meet Godzilla.

Having criticized *Against the Grain* and *Empty Suitcases* for their thin con-

tent on the level of ideas, I still include them among my favourite films at the festival because they showed so much film style - something that was in short supply. I wasn't expecting to find strobe lights and op art, but I did think I'd see more tinkering with the purely visual possibilities of cinema.

Two films which struck me as being quite clever, were at the same time so visually constrained as to be annoying - *Le Voyage en blanc* by Werner Schroeter, and *Underground U.S.A.* by Eric Mitchell. They both featured amusing storylines and some fine acting, but were lacking in visual sophistication. Schroeter may have been reaching for a sort of 'toys-in-the-attic' effect, but the sets were just so understated it hurt the movie. As for Mitchell's film, he unfortunately lacked the money he needed to achieve the visual effects called for by the storyline.

Another aspect of the visually underwhelming film trend I noted was the use of an opaque, neutral, documentary

style in films such as *Video and Julia* by Sander Francken and *A Calculated Extinction* by Arthur Lamothe and Jean-Daniel Lafond. While the former (a satire on home technology) was amusing, and the depiction of psychological terrorism against Canada's Indians in the latter horrifying... well, I just found the films incongruous in the context of the festival.

In a festival displaying such a wealth of options, one has to choose. I found myself avoiding most of the star turns by established directors and the comfortable films with little, or too-conventional, visual style. Whatever I may have missed, I still walked away from the festival with a head bursting with images - so I guess I didn't do too badly. ●



● Sander Francken

The films

AGAINST THE GRAIN

T. Burns (Australia)

AGATHA ET LES LECTURES ILLIMITÉES

M. Duras (France)

L'ARBRE QUI GÉMIT

M. Hanoun (France)

ARREBATO

I. Zulueta (Spain)

BERLIN, DE L'AUBE À LA NUIT

A. Leroy (Belgium)

I BERLIN HARLEM

L. Lambert (West Germany)

BORED

K. Luner (U.S.A.)

BRUXELLES TRANSIT

S. Szlingerbaum (Belgium)

CALCULATED EXTINCTION (A)

A. Lamothe, J.D. Lafond (Québec)

CECI EST MON CORPS, CECI EST MON ART

M. Poulette (Québec)

C'EST PAS LE PAYS DES MERVEILLES

H. Doyle, N. Giguère (Québec)

CHAMBRE BLANCHE (LA)

J.F. Garsi (France)

COURS DES CHOSES (LE)

J.B. Menoud (Switzerland)

CHANGE

C. Janetzko (West Germany)

CLIMAT

C. Pépin (Québec)

DEPUIS QUE LE MONDE EST MONDE

S. Van Brabant, S. Giguère, L. Dugal (Québec)

DISTORSIONS

J. Godbout, F. Sauvageau (Québec)

DREAM ON

E. Harker (U.S.A.)

DUR DÉSIR DE DIRE (LE)

A. D'Aix (Québec)

EMPTY SUITCASES

B. Gordon (U.S.A.)

ENVIRONNEMENT-MOI D'AMOUR

A. Chapdelaine (Québec)

LA FACTURE D'ORGUE

F. Gonseth (Switzerland)

FAUX PAS DE DEUX

L. Lambert (West Germany)

FICTION

G. Holthuis (Netherlands)

FILMING MUYBRIDGE

J.L. Gonnet (France)

FILMING OTHELLO

O. Welles (West Germany)

GAYPOWER-GAY POLITICS

G. Diekhans, G. Grile (U.S.A.)

GUY DAO-SUR LA VOIX

G. Dufaux (Québec)

HITLER, UN FILM D'ALLEMAGNE

H.J. Syberberg (West Germany)

HOMME ATLANTIQUE (L')

M. Duras (France)

HORS D'OEUVRE

Monster & Wiering (Netherlands)

ÎLE DES SIRÈNES

H.I. Rabinovitch (Switzerland)

IN EXTREMO

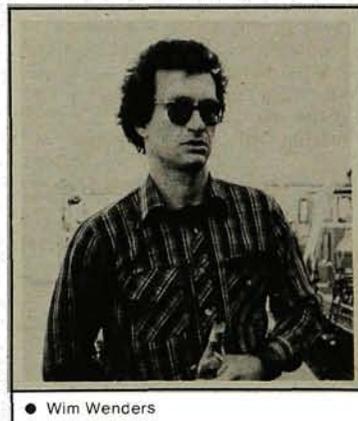
F. Zwartjes (Netherlands)

IN MOTION (En mouvement)

M. Sercombe (England)

I REMEMBER

G. Holthuis (Netherlands)



● Wim Wenders

IT IS COLD IN BRANDERBURG

(Kill Hitler)

V. Herman, N. Meienberg, H. Sturm (Switzerland)

JUSTOCOEUR

M. Stephen (Québec/France)

LOVER'S EXILE (THE)

M. Gross (Japan/Canada)

MAKING OF A PROSTITUTE (THE)

S. Imura (Japan)

MAN WHO COULD NOT SEE FAR ENOUGH (THE)

P. Rose (U.S.A.)

MAX FRISCH, Journal L-III

R. Dindo (Switzerland)

THE MIRROR

M. Zeillemaker (Netherlands)

NICK'S MOVIE (Lightning over water)

M. Wenders, N. Ray (U.S.A.)

NIGHTMARE WOMAN (THE)

L. Lambert (West Germany)

NO FUN

D. Damave (Netherlands)

NO MAN'S LAND

N. Herkens (Netherlands)

NOTRE-DAME DE LA CROISSETTE

D. Schmid (Switzerland)

(LA) NUIT CLAIRE

M. Hanoun (France)

ON EST PAS DES ANGES

G. Simoneau, S. Guy (Québec)

PEOPLE PASS THROUGH ME IN AN ENDLESS PROCESSION

F. van de Staak (Netherlands)

PERMANENT VACATION

J. Yarmusch (U.S.A.)

PLEXI RADAR

D. Chase (U.S.A.)

(LE) PLUS BEAU JOUR DE MA VIE

D. Létourneau (Québec)

(LE) PONT DU NORD

J. Rivette (France)

PROJECTION

J. Ketelaars (Netherlands)

(LA) REPETITION GÉNÉRALE

W. Schroeter (West Germany)

RESISTANCE

K. McMullen (England)

SALOME

C. Bene (Italy)

SOUVENIRS DE PRINTEMPS DANS LE LIAONING

A. Mazars (France)

SUBWAY RIDERS

A. Poe (U.S.A.)

TIERGARTEN

L. Lambert (West Germany)

TULIPE INACHEVÉE (LA)

F. van de Staak (Netherlands)

TWO (DOS)

A. Del Amo (Spain)

UNDERGROUND

E. Mitchell (U.S.A.)

VEGETARIANS (THE)

P. Rubin (Netherlands)

VIDEO AND JULIA

S. Francken (Netherlands)

VIE ET MORT (LIFE AND DEATH)

J. Roelofs (Netherlands)

(LE) VOYAGE EN BLANC

W. Schroeter (Switzerland)

YOU ARE NOT I

S. Driver (U.S.A.)

Abitibi summers and winters

by Piers Handling

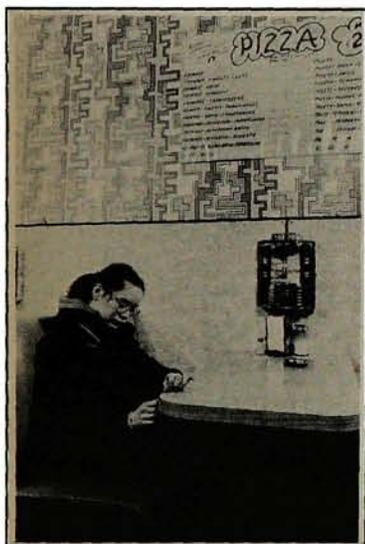
When Jean-Pierre Lefebvre talks about a cinema in this country that bears some relation to its economic base, he must surely be talking about films like André Blanchard's *L'hiver bleu* and *Beat*, as opposed to the multi-million dollar productions emanating from Toronto and Montreal. In fact, of all the Canadian films made in the last decade that speak directly to me, I think that the majority have been low-budget productions. The argument that this lack of money means a concurrent loss in production values is a specious one. However, it is a myth that production values immediately allow one access to the marketplace. *Beat* was made in 1975 and cost \$12,000. The more achieved and ambitious *L'hiver bleu*, shot in 1978, was made for \$80,000 and joins a list of illustrious predecessors made on similarly minute budgets: *Goin' Down the Road*, *The Only Thing You Know*, *Bar salon*, *The Hard Part Begins*, *Rejeanne Padovani*, *L'ange et la femme*, *Outrageous!*, and virtually all of Lefebvre's remarkable body of work.

The first thing one notices about *Beat*

and L'hiver bleu is the deeply-rooted regional base of the films. Set in the Abitibi region of Quebec, in the mining town of Rouyn-Noranda and its immediate environs, these films do not attempt to erase or deny their physical and psychological landscape. Quite the contrary is true; one feels a close communion between Blanchard, and the country and its people. Indeed he celebrates them. They are from Abitibi. Their problems are local, specific, identifiable, yet of course universal. This 'feel' that Blanchard has for his subject is evident in every short, every character, every situation.

Abitibi is a chronically depressed area, with many of its youth on welfare or unemployment; listless, they face a limited economic future in the region. This aimlessness is powerfully conveyed in *Beat*, a portrait of the drop-out society

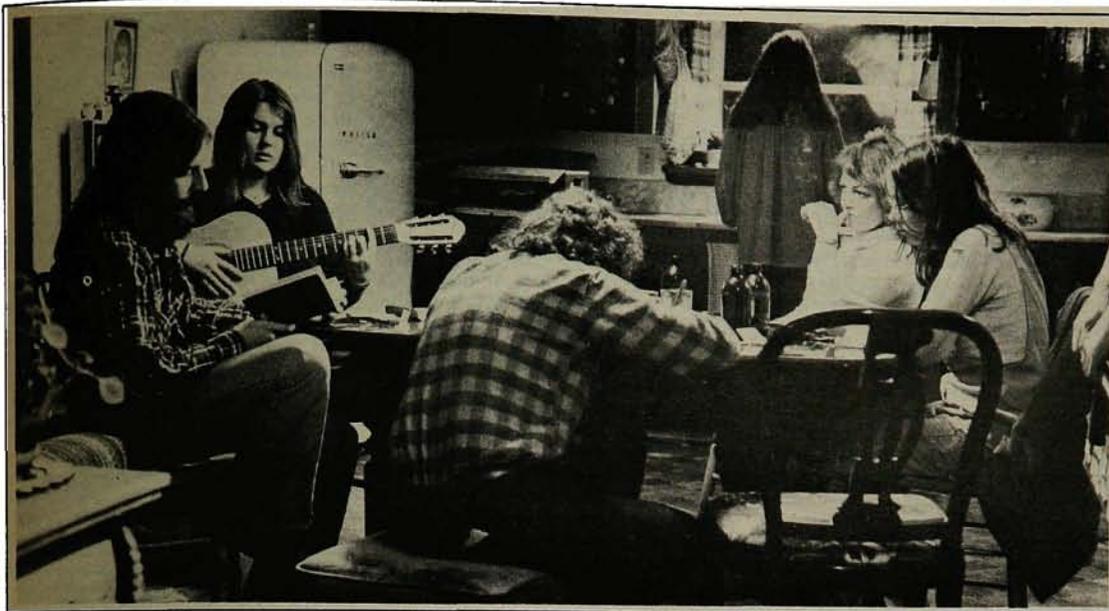
in Rouyn-Noranda, centering on Yvon, a local pusher, and his coterie of friends and acquaintances. The boredom of Abitibi life seems inevitable. Rouyn is a small, isolated community providing few outlets to occupy the energies of its youth, beyond the local taverns and pool-halls. Yvon, despite the remonstrations of his parents, and a job-counsellor who wants to give him some self-respect, refuses to get a job, preferring instead to live a marginal existence, confined to the fringes of society along with most of his friends. His life is free of commitment even though he is living with his girlfriend Diane. The passion seems to have gone out of their relationship along with any spontaneous affection. She is as directionless as Yvon. Seen applying for welfare in the opening scenes of the film, she seems to have few expectations of life, making few demands and remaining coolly uninvolved. She is also very defensive, suspicious of outsiders, while possessively



● "The boredom of Abitibi life seems inevitable." Christiane (Lévesque) in *L'hiver bleu*

● The old wooden mining towers - once symbols of a dynamic, prosperous age; now, images of decay





● Passing time in the co-op house in Rouyn-Noranda. Michel (Chenier), Alice (Pomerleau) with her guitar, and Christiane (Lévesque) far right.

guarding Yvon from other women.

It is with the appearance of one of Yvon's old girlfriends that *Beat* begins to articulate its points. Jocelyne is an effective foil to Diane. Lively and vivacious, she seems a more suitable match for Yvon. She is an actress, touring the region with a local theatre troupe. Their theatre is communally oriented, and it attempts to interact with the local community. While Diane is somehow afraid of life and interaction — she is shown locking herself into their apartment on a number of occasions, actions that suggest the defensive nature of her personality — Jocelyne is the opposite, an extrovert with none of the fear that seems to pervade Diane's life. While Diane is shown to be essentially alone, Jocelyne enjoys the company of others, and works and lives with a group of people. While Diane wants to get away — she suggests a trip to Vancouver — Jocelyne is tied specifically to Abitibi.

Although he is not really aware of it, Yvon is confronted by a choice in these two women. Yvon is a complex person, obviously intelligent. Society has not managed to contain his energies. He dabbles with clay sculpture and once painted, but these interests have not held his interest. Having grown cynical from his experiences at college, he has decided to opt out in the easiest possible way. Pushing drugs keeps him alive, and uninvolved in a society that he inwardly despises. There is something of the child in him that refuses to grow up.

At one point Jocelyne mentions that he has lost the ideas and values that he once had. He feels betrayed because those ideas are worthless to him now, the adult world has proved more complex than he imagined. So he indulges in daydreaming about how he would spend a million dollars, or finds amusements in childish schemes to turn the smoke stacks of Rouyn into revolving restaurants for American tourists. Even though he has a momentary fling with Jocelyne, the end of the film shows him back with Diane, in a number of scenes that do not augur well for the future health of their relationship. This reconciliation has been prompted by what remains for me the most enigmatic part of the film. Pursuing Jocelyne, who has wandered off from a party with another woman, Yvon spies on the two of them

making love in the fields. Yvon cannot, it seems, deal with Jocelyne's bisexuality. His feelings of betrayal appear, however, to be partially mixed with envy. Nevertheless, his return to Diane is seen as limiting his potential for growth. Back at the party, Diane tells him that she is pregnant. This he can't deal with, and his anger is only subdued when he is overwhelmingly relieved to discover that it was only a joke meant to test his love. In the last shot of the film Yvon is back drinking in the taverns with his friends. Their rowdiness results in the arrival of the police and an ensuing scuffle. Diane is shown trying to restrain him. It is a moment of directionless anger, a meaningless gesture.

This final sequence speaks for the rest of the film. *Beat* ultimately remains a film of frustration and anger, apparently offering few alternatives. Escape is equated with Diane, and consequently has negative connotations. The drop-out attitude of indifference is epitomized by Yvon but he is shown as tragically trapped and incapable of real growth. Jocelyne remains the only character in the film who exhibits a potential for growth. Yet despite this I find Blanchard's attitude to her and the theatre group ambivalent. They (and she) have a vitality that stands in stark contrast to the layabouts in *Beat*, and particularly to Diane. Their exuberance is energizing and infectious, even Yvon is affected by it. They attempt to relate to the community, handing out flyers for their play in the street. But their theatre is abstract and narcissistic, convoluted and frivolous. It appears to have little value, and only a handful of people come to watch it. Blanchard's interrogation is perhaps indicative of the questions that were beginning to absorb him, including that of the place of his own art and role in Abitibi.

Similar questions inform *L'hiver bleu*, a more achieved and confident film in every respect than its predecessor. Blanchard's second film covers similar territory but in a far more complex and complete manner. While *Beat* is a film of the summer washed over by a sultry sun, *L'hiver bleu* opens on shots of a frozen landscape, swept by a howling cold wind. The contrast couldn't be more marked. Two young women, sisters, Christiane and Nicole, leave a communal farm for the local city of

film is invested with a visible sense of decay, yet balanced by a number of options that point forcefully to the future. Whatever is passive or static is seen as inhibiting, that which is active has a potential releasing force. Individual creations like Nicole's drawings, or Michel's pottery, are portrayed as having little contact with society (similar to Yvon's sculpting in *Beat*), while communal action, particularly the demonstration of the disabled workers, is positively defined as working for change. This is one major difference between the two films. While there is some ambivalence towards the theatre group in *Beat* and its communal function, this has disappeared in *L'hiver bleu*.

Blanchard uses powerful images of deterioration throughout *L'hiver bleu*, yet finally it is a film that has at its centre the birth, or re-birth of one of its characters. Christiane is placed in numerous situations that offer her alternative ways of dealing with Abitibi, or that conversely close doors to her during her voyage of discovery. This static, yet restless quality is continually held in counterpoint. The house in Rouyn provides the centre for her life, yet she is engaged on a search, and this is conveyed through travel. There are innumerable shots of the passing countryside interspersed throughout — the trip to Val d'Or, the journey back to her parents, the drive into college each day. That the film is indeed a symbolic journey is evident from the first sequence, when the two sisters set out on snowshoe for Rouyn, dragging their toboggan of belongings behind them.

Values of the past are disintegrating, with an equivalent sense of irrelevance surrounding them. The toppling of the old wooden mining tower, fallen into disuse, is a striking visual image of deterioration and decay. The economic order seems to be changing — these towers, once symbols of a dynamic, prosperous age have been abandoned and forgotten. Houses are for sale, snow covers the land, things are seemingly lifeless. Yet at the same time nothing has really changed: the modern smelting mills have simply replaced the old mining towers, and the dissonant electronic music Blanchard uses is associated with both the old and the new. The deception of apparent change, however, only reinforces a feeling of frustration that underlies much of *L'hiver bleu*.

Family ties are disintegrating as well. Nicole and Christiane, once inseparable, slowly drift apart, until they only meet

Rouyn-Noranda. Christiane wants to continue her studies at the local community college, while Nicole looks to make money so that she can travel. The film's dialectic is contained within these two characters: Christiane who goes back to school, lives out another communal experiment in Rouyn and becomes interested in political action; and Nicole, more self-centered, who gets a job, first as a waitress, then as a receptionist, leaves the cooperative house that she joined with her sister, and eventually departs for South America. Essentially the entire film — and the questions it raises — revolves around the two sisters, the choices they make and what these choices imply.

For Christiane, Rouyn is a way of re-involving herself in society; the struggle is just beginning for her as it was for Jocelyne in *Beat*. However, Nicole only wants to get away, to escape, much like Diane in the earlier film, and as if to reinforce the point Blanchard has the same actress play both roles. Rouyn opens doors for Christiane, yet Nicole cannot involve herself in its life. Finally, staying in Abitibi is seen as either offering the positive alternative of commitment, or its opposite — stagnation, boredom and frustration.

L'hiver bleu is a film about dislocation and degeneration on one level, and regeneration on the other. The entire

● "Working through the problems and questions of the Abitibi region." André Blanchard and Nicole Scant



in chance encounters – or, towards the end of the film, to say goodbye. But the most overwhelming evidence of fragmentation appears within the onemolothic, Québécois, Catholic family in a sequence portrayed with stunning economy – the wedding anniversary of the sister's parents. While the kindly, local curé presides at one end of the table mouthing traditional rhetoric about family stability, happiness and spiritual health, powerful tensions are at play between various members of the family. These tensions are given visual authority by placing Christiane and her father at one end of the table, with her mother and the curé at the other. Christiane, sitting beside her brother who works in a factory, also faces her older brother, a doctor, and his wife. The growing discomfort and animosity that pervades the meal somehow goes unnoticed by the curé, who is shown to have lost touch with what is happening. He is little more than a figurehead, the spokesperson of conventional values. The power and significance of the church has declined to the point where it is almost unrecognizable, a point that Blanchard makes by having him dressed in a jacket and tie, "unfrocked" so to speak.

Christiane's antagonism towards her married brother is tied closely to her growing awareness of the society around her. She feels that as a doctor he is guilty of exploiting people by charging high fees. She talks about the need for medicine in communal terms. He is more egotistical and selfish, in effect divorcing himself from the community. The values of the family, once hierarchical and unanimous, have crumbled into suspicion and confrontation. Despite this, the dinner does reveal the strong affection Christiane has for her father – a man who dreams of owning a piece of land with no fences around it. "Why can't we be like the young?" he asks. However, this filial affection is somehow transitory and elusive. Their relationship is marked by an inescapable loneliness, a feeling which Blanchard reinforces when he rapidly intercuts a flashback of them embracing, into Christiane returning, alone, to her house in Rouyn. Other moments of warmth and contact are tinged with sadness, reflection and separation. Gain is balanced with loss.

If Nicole is shown throughout the film as withdrawing into herself, enclosing and limiting her choices, Christiane develops in the opposite way. She involves herself and begins to define her life. Growing away from her family she instead looks for her collective experience in the co-op house she shares. Ultimately it does not provide her with any answers, but it is an important waystation. It brings her into contact with people and ideas. With Michel she travels to Val d'Or to join a picketline for a day. This also marks the first tentative step of her politicization.

Throughout *L'hiver bleu*, Blanchard intercuts scenes of a group of irate workers from the Federation of Disabled Workers demonstrating outside government offices responsible for industrial accident claims. At first these moments disorient us and appear to have no connection to Christiane's and Nicole's story. They lack a context, showing another world, a separate reality. Yet they have a tremendous importance that is slowly revealed to us. The leader of this clamorous group is shown as dealing with real problems, indigenous to the area – compensation for injured

workers stricken by silicosis or asbestosis. His demands are specific, concrete and community-oriented. While hitch-hiking back to their parents' anniversary celebrations, the two sisters are picked up by a local businessman, a building contractor, who first extols the virtues of his huge American car, before making sexual advances towards Nicole. While of the same background and age as the union leader, he is shown as selfish and myopic. He is totally regionally centered, which leads him to assert that "the bosses should come from here, they're better than the English bosses." Christiane sees through his shallow self-interest and condemns this idea as merely replacing one kind of exploitation with another. In some basic way, the attitudes and actions of these two very different men act as a reflection of what separates Nicole and Christiane. These opposing 'realities' recur frequently throughout *L'hiver bleu*. During one scene two sturdy, but elderly, women join the demonstration to lead in the singing of an old union song which admonishes the workers to fight for their rights. The mention of silicosis and asbestosis situates the specificity of their song. Placed next to this is another song, performed by a local group of bar musicians. It is a typical, vacuous love song. The lyrics are aimless. The scene is shot so that it separates the people singing the song. The audience is not shown, the singers face away from the camera. The union song is presented exactly the opposite way. It brings people together, it unites the group, it is socially motivated, they sing to the camera, to us as an audience.

Towards the end of the film, Christiane is presented with a series of choices, which we feel will affect the future course of her life. She listens with great care, first to a student discussion of politics. She meets Lise, thoughtful and politically committed, and they strike up a friendship. The two of them meet Alice, a woman who has hitherto just been visible on the periphery of the film. (In an earlier scene she has bizarrely adorned a girl with make-up. There is a vague, narcissistic tone to their conversation about Montreal, a sense of escapism in their attitude.) Alice is an actress, only emotions are important for her. She justifies the bar-life that she

lives as providing emotional contact. Lise and Alice argue two diametrically opposed positions, one rational and intellectual, the other emotional and subjective. It is the strength of *L'hiver bleu*, that neither of these positions become 'prescriptive in Blanchard's hands.

Christiane senses however, that her destiny lies with Lise, who begins to introduce her to the history of the area, the mine and its origins. She talks in general terms, relating Abitibi to the world outside. Near the film's conclusion they walk by the industrial accidents office, where the workers have been picketing, and try to get in the building. A policeman bars their way. They peer in through the windows, excluded from events happening inside, yet curious about what is going on nevertheless. This scene encapsulates the film. The two realities are on the verge of connecting. Christiane is not yet an active participant in the struggle but we feel that her curiosity will lead her in this direction.

That Christiane has indeed resolved something in her life is confirmed by the final section of the film. Nicole has by now finally left for South America. She has made her escape. Michel asks Christiane to join him in the Gaspé for the summer, another form of flight. Michel has also been shown as dislocated in a way, listless and uninvolved although teaching at the local college. But his teaching is not connected to anything. (Indeed, a general boredom and irrelevance pervades all the classroom scenes shown in the film.) But Christiane declines, she has found a job for the summer in Rouyn. She has moved in with Lise, dropped out of college. This is where she belongs. Michel leaves, the screen belongs to her. She selects a song from the jukebox which expresses not just what she is thinking but Blanchard's feelings as well. It talks of things you cannot change – snow in January, forest fires in spring, the wind on the St. Lawrence – but it also asks why things are the way they are: "Sometimes I wonder why some have it and others don't – CHANGE IT!"

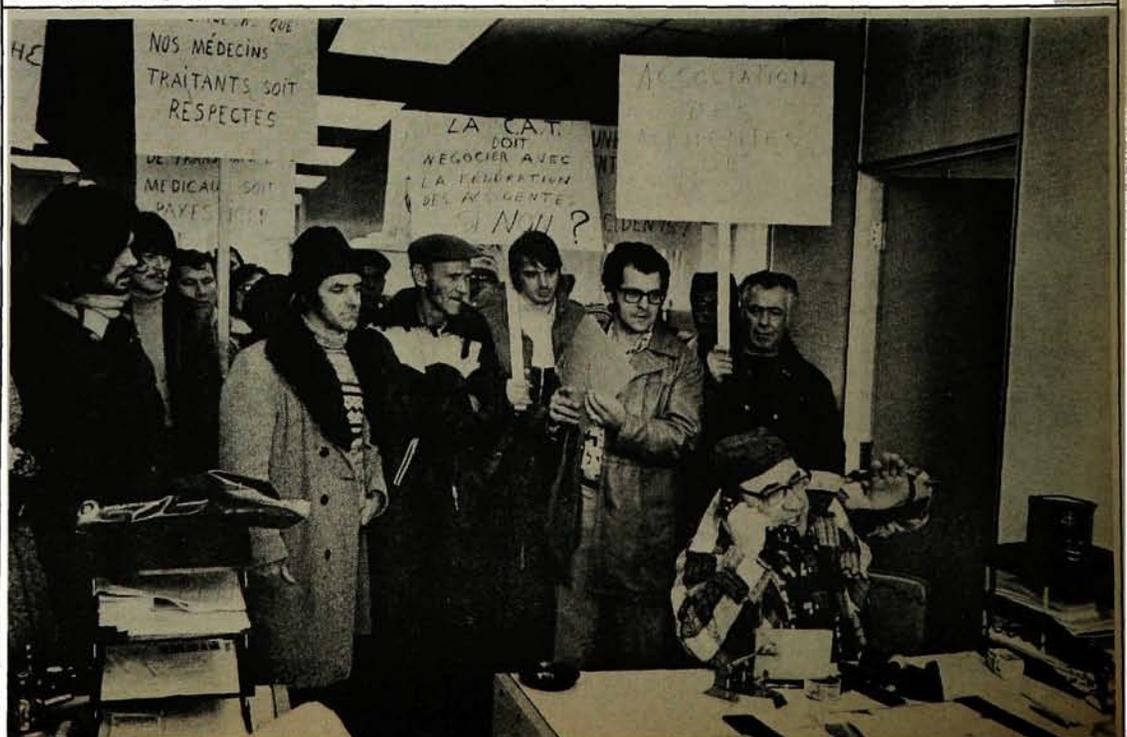
While *Beat* ends in a frustrated, directionless anger, *L'hiver bleu* suggests a quiet, yet deep, resolve to stay and make things work. More importantly, the em-

phasis has shifted from the cynicism of Yvon to the idealistic dreamer that is Christiane. In *Beat* Yvon accuses Joice, lyne, another dreamer, of not being able to face life. In *L'hiver bleu*, it is Christiane who faces life, while Yvon's counterpart in this film, Michel, is the one who wants to leave. This reversal is not as schematic as I suggest here, but it does represent a significant reformulation of the basic theme in Blanchard's two films. Indeed he is working through problems and questions of the Abitibi region with great care. Both *Beat* and *L'hiver bleu* depict everyday events and deal with people who are gradually moving towards some kind of definition in their lives. They take small steps. Blanchard suggests that this is fundamental for change of any sort. ●

BEAT d./sc. André Blanchard camera Alain Dupras sd. Robert Girard ed. Francis Van Den Hurvel mus. Maurice Comtois, Rick Nault, Gilles Côté, Michel Jété, Vianny Miljsour, Claude Vendette, Guy Piché, Georges Borowitzky, Jean Racine, Danilo Levi, Louise Girard, Michel Blais, Gilles Paquette, Laurier Blais, le groupe Abitibi b.p. asst. Ghislaine Camirand, Louise Laferte, Daniel Laurendeau, Denise Levesque, Jacques Marcotte, Jean Racine, Madeleine Ste-Marie neg. cut. Gilbert Ferron mix. Gilbert Ferron special asst. Daniel Jobin (final print), Antonine Maes (asst. ed.), Gilles Prince (titles), Claude Langlois (N.F.B.), Gilles Quintal (N.F.B.) sp. efx. Les Films Truca Inc. l.p. Bertrand Gagnon, Nicole Scant, Dominique Ayotte, Daniel Laurendeau, Gilles Deschatelets, Richard Fortier, Alice Pomerleau, Réjean Roy, Micheline Sauvé, Jean-Pierre Scant, Pierre Olscamp, Destination Masters, Les Hordes de Montbrun, Monsters of the Road, Antoinette, Rejeanne Asselin, Gérard Baril, Pierre Brouillette, André Cyr, Roger Fortier, Daniel Gosselin, Ginette Grodine, Sylvie Hébert, Rita Lapointe, Bertrand Larouche, Pierre Lord, Gaetan Lockhead, Richard Menard, Marc Mercier, Mario Parent, Michel Pronovost, Jacques Racine, Alain Rheault, Claude St-Pierre, Pierre Trudel col. 16mm (1975) running time 65 min. dist. Les Films du Crépuscule Inc.

L'HIVER BLEU d. André Blanchard p. Marguerite Duparc p. man. Louis Dallaire p. sec. Claudine Fauque sc. André Blanchard, Jeanne-Mance Delisle a.d. Camille Belhumeur d.o.p. Alain Dupras. Madeleine Ste-Marie, Jacques Marcotte sd. Robert Girard ed. Francis Van Den Heuvel. Ginette Leduc cont. Louise Laferte unitman Luc Quesnel. Andree Barrette stills François Ruyh l.p. Christiane Levesque, Nicole Scant, Michel Chénier, Roland Pelletier, Claire Nault, Léo Cantin, Réjean Roy, Alice Pomerleau, and others... p.c. Cinak Ltée col. 16mm running time 84 min. dist. Les Films du Crépuscule Inc. prizes: Le prix de la critique 1980 from L'Association québécoise des critiques de cinéma, and Le Ducat D'Or 1979, Festival du film de Mannheim, West-Germany.

● "This clamorous group is shown as dealing with real problems indigenous to the area – workers stricken by silicosis or asbestosis."



Double trouble

Caught between North American resistance to dubbed films, and French law, the Quebec dubbing industry is feeling the pinch.

by Judee Ganten

It is rare that Anglophone audiences get to see a film dubbed in English, mainly because of the limited demand in this country for foreign films. Unlike most other cultures, our cinematographic diet is consumed largely in our mother tongue. And, if we are curious enough to see a foreign production, it is usually an artistic film with subtitles.

Despite this lack of exposure, we have all sorts of preconceptions about dubbing. We screw up our noses at the prospect of watching dubbed films. We think they seem unprofessional; we're distracted by the lip movements that don't correspond exactly to the dialogue. We find the actors' voices unrealistic. But this is a privileged perspective, rooted in our North American xenophobia, and one which may no longer be affordable.

In cultures where foreign-language films are daily fare, they are not so quick to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The adapted version of a film is considered a small price to pay to see a good production. In Quebec, dubbing has been a part of the filmgoers' experience for 30 years. Last year, over 50% of the feature films shown in the province were dubbed and only 7% were subtitled.

"The English market is spoiled," says André Fleury, president of Sonolab, the largest of Quebec's dubbing houses. "They are simply not used to films with lip-sync, so they reject them as second rate."

Despite the objections of Anglophone audiences to dubbing, Fleury predicts our tastes will change. "With increased programming requirements from pay-TV and more openness on the part of U.S. distributors to the international market, dubbing is slowly penetrating English culture."

Currently, however, despite the predicted boom, the \$2 million-a-year Quebec dubbing industry is experiencing lay-offs and empty studios. In this report, *Cinema Canada* examines dubbing, how it's done and the issues facing a troubled industry.

The job of a dubbing studio is like that of a repairman. Both must doctor someone else's material. People in the business concede that, at best, a dubbed version is an approximation of the original, not a duplication.

Dubbing a film really means dealing with constraints. Translation must be done culturally as well as linguistically. Unfamiliar references, plays on words, sense of humour and accompanying gestures all present problems. Casting must be done according to the ability to

imitate rather than interpret. And these problems are compounded by the limitations of synchronized lip movements. Additional difficulties are presented by musicals or characters speaking slang.

Some films cannot be dubbed. For example, *The Life of Brian*. There is the obvious problem of the humour being untranslatable outside a select milieu, coupled with the fact that each actor plays several different roles using various accents. How would that work in Japanese?

Action films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* are the easiest to dub because of the sparse dialogue and limited characterization. Dramas, on the other hand, present more of a problem. Especially if they are top quality. The finesse of a fine screenplay and the subtlety of a superb performance are difficult to do justice to in translation.

It would seem, then, that with so many obstacles, most films would suffer drastically through dubbing. But this is not necessarily so. Dubbers have solved some of their problems through standardization. Take casting, for example. Big film stars like Marcello Mastroianni and Marlon Brando are always dubbed by the same actors. So there is an Italian Brando, a French one, a Czech one and so on. Initiated audiences have become so accustomed to the translation that someone who has only heard 'Brando' speak Italian finds his real voice bizarre and uncharacteristic.

The problem of lip-syncing is solved through technical means. The process, which is the basis of dubbing work, originated in post-war France to cope with the inundation of U.S. films. In the early days of dubbing, lip-sync was a hit-and-miss proposition. Actors simply entered the studio armed with a translated script and, while listening to the original version through headphones, recorded the first take. Hélène Lauzon, director of dubbing at Sonolab, recalls that "every French émigré living in Montreal was improvising as an actor" because of the strong precedent for mid-Atlantic or Parisian accents. Today, actors' unions offer special courses in over-dubbing and specialized technicians insure that the script is already synchronized before actors even step into the studio.

The synchronized script is prepared in a series of slow, painstaking processes. First, a technician, called a 'detector,' records and codes every lip movement of each character in the original version onto a clear band of film. This is done on a modified editing machine where the coded band runs in sync with the picture. Particular attention is paid to labials (sounds which require closure of the lips such as p, b, m, f, v, w, and vowels in which the lips are rounded such as o). A translator then follows, adapting a translated text to the coded band so that the labials, sentence length and meaning correspond to the

original. The adapted version is recopied by a calligrapher, to allow the actors to read it easily. In effect, then, the entire text of the film is recopied three times by three different people.

In the recording studio, the original picture plus the legible synchronized band are flashed on a large screen. The actors recite the translated dialogue as it moves across the screen on cues from a director. Several takes later, the new version is recorded. An editor then checks the recorded version, adjusting any errors in synchronization. Later, after incidental sound effects have been reproduced, the whole package is mixed and sent off to the lab for printing.

The total average cost for a feature film can range anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000, depending on the complexities of individual films. Subtitling costs about half the price. The process is the same whether a Japanese animation is being dubbed into English or a Bulgarian documentary into French.

Though most countries have established independent dubbing industries, Paris is still the dubbing capital of the world. In Canada, the industry is localized in Quebec. Since the early fifties, the province's several studios have been processing features and TV series as well as advertisements, training films and shorts. But business is shrinking.

Despite the fact that the Quebecois watch seven dubbed hours of prime time television per week (plus additional hours of reruns and late-night movies) and dubbed versions of half of the films seen in theatres, studios are facing the prospect of closing their doors. The problem is that most features and TV shows are dubbed in France and imported into Quebec. The province's industry is up in arms, fighting for a bigger share of the market.

Though imported French dubbing is not new to Quebec, the added pressures of a slumping economy and the trend of networks to produce more of their own shows compounds the problem. Pierre Dequoy is president of L'Association Québécoise des Industries Techniques du Cinéma et de la Télévision (AQITCT), which is an association of dubbing and service houses. He is concerned about the limited possibilities for growth of the industry. "We're not gaining any business; and when you don't gain you automatically lose..."

Dequoy feels the solution to the problems facing the members of his association lies in current efforts to wrestle away from France the work they see as rightly theirs. But this solution is not a simple one. At the core of the dispute is a French law protecting its industry. It states that all foreign language films and most television shows shown in France must be dubbed or subtitled in France. While this does not directly affect Quebec, it does make the decision clear for distributors who pay the dubbing costs. Since the choice to dub in

Quebec would automatically eliminate the more substantial French market and restrict distribution to North American French-speaking audiences, distributors invariably choose to dub in France, then import the dubbed version into Quebec where there are no such restrictions.

Dequoy does not expect distributors to voluntarily pay the cost of two dubbings nor to ignore the much larger French market in favour of Quebec. What he and his members are after is protective legislation.

"In Mexico, it's not possible to import more than a negative. Here, we accept the final version with only a token tariff per foot. Mexicans re-dub Spanish imports into their own colloquialized Spanish and in Quebec we calmly accept Parisian idioms as if they were our own."

Though Dequoy admits that Quebec represents a much smaller market than Mexico, he feels certain that if he gets the restrictive legislation he's looking for, it would not be self-defeating. "I don't think any major distributor could say, 'Let's forget about Quebec.' This market is quite important to them. They all have offices here."

At present, AQITCT is appealing to the Federal government for increases in import tariffs as a way of discouraging what they refer to as "dumping." As previous negotiations with France, held at the highest level, have so far proved fruitless, the Quebec government has reacted to AQITCT's proposal with a 'let's-forget-about-it-for-now' attitude, according to Dequoy.

Adding salt to the wound is the recent decision to have *Les bons débarras* dubbed into English in France, for screening on American cable networks. The winner of the 1980 Genie Award for Best Canadian Film will also be re-treated (with subtitles or dubbing) for French network viewing. The original version was produced in québécois French. Ron Weinberg, spokesman for the U.S. distributor and world sales agent, International Film Exchange in New York, defends the decision by saying "it was the safest one we could make. We went to the studio in Paris which has the most experience; the one with the longest list of credits in doing the biggest titles."

Quebec dubbers are incensed by the inference that they might not do as good a job as Paris if given the opportunity. In the case of *Les bons débarras* it was no less expensive to have the work done in Paris. This example only serves to reinforce dubbers' demands for protective legislation.

Despite a disinterested Quebec government, Pierre Dequoy and AQITCT still plan to continue their appeal. Since feature films fall under provincial jurisdiction, it might be their only hope for change. As Dequoy says, "They protect shoe and clothing manufacturers. Why not dubbing? We're not asking for any grants or subsidies, just a chance to recoup a market which is our own." ●