

others — the segments are so short and choppy that you've no sooner settled into a groove than you're jerked right out of it again. After a while, you start to feel like you're watching the world's longest K-Tel commercial.

The good idea is further cluttered by a conflict between the documentary and "entertainment special" aspects of the show. The latter phrase is Brunton's and he insists it describes how he always conceived *Heart Of Gold* to be. But he's given us lots of documentary material and often at the expense of the music. Time after time we are given only fragments of very good songs and songs interrupted for a line of narration or artists' commentary. True, the interruption points are well-chosen, but if music is the point, then any interruption is jarring and destructive of what is very often a fine performance.

On the other hand, there isn't enough documentary material. In one segment, Robbie Robertson tells how he and The Band joined Bob Dylan and got booed from one end of the earth to the other. You're never told why and, if you're at all curious, that omission may make you very resentful (it was because Dylan had never played rock before — this was 1965 — and his folkie audience despised the stuff. So, when he showed up with electric guitars, they decided he was selling out). There are lots of other examples and they all follow the same pattern: enough information to awaken your interest, not enough to pay it off.

In addition, there are a few flat-out factual errors in Donald Sutherland's orotund narration and a couple of unintentional structural howlers, the best being that right after Randy Bachman delivers his seriously-held belief that Canadian music is a world-wide force, we get no-talent Lisa dal Bello desperately shaking her breasts to sell us her one hit, "Pretty Girls."

Most of the moments in *Heart Of Gold* that I liked have faded from memory. What remains is the overall feeling of profound irritation and frustration at seeing a good idea wrecked for bad reasons. Despite this, I hope Brunton got the numbers he wanted, because they just might get him the money to do what he says he really wants to do: a series of 13 half-hours on the same subject. That, rather than *Heart Of Gold*, is what both artists and audiences deserve.

Andrew Dowler ●

**HEART OF GOLD** p. John Brunton, Iain Peterson d. Peter Shatlow assoc. p. Ann Mayall exec. p. John Brunton asst. to p. Susan Hutt narrated by Donald Sutherland ed. Cathy Gulkin photographed by: Mark Irwin, Rene O'Hashi, Robert New, Philip Earnshaw, John Walker, Rick Mason, D.A. Pennebaker, Larry Wood asst. camera Robin Miller, Carl Harvey, John Hobson, Donna Mobbs, Marvin Midwick, Michael May, William Brown sd. rec. John Thompson add. sd. rec. Bryan Day, Randy Johnson, Ron Judkins, Gene Bernard, Chris Edges sd. ed. Peter Thillaye re-rec. Paul Coombe asst. ed. John Brooke film asst. Daphne Pallon grip. Maris Jansons and David Hines asst. grip Christopher Dean & Rodney Daw research consultant Larry LeBlanc researchers John Brooke, Charles Lazar, Claudette Jaiko theme music Fred Mollin titles & animation Stuff processing FilmHouse p.c. Insight Productions Co. Limited in association with CBC and Labatt Brewing Co. Ltd. running time: 3 hours, 16mm Cdn. dist. Insight Productions Lp. The Diamonds, The Crewcuts, The Four Lads, Paul Anka, Bobby Curtola, Ronnie Hawkins, The Band, Ian & Sylvia, Mandala, Joni Mitchell, Lovin' Spoonful, The Mamas & The Papas, Steppenwolf, Neil Young, David Clayton-Thomas, Andy Kim, The Guess Who, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Murray McLauchlan, Valdy, BTO, Anne Murray, Gino Vannelli, Dan Hill, Bruce Cockburn, Rough Trade, Loverboy, Chilliwack, Lisa dal Bello, Triumph, April Wine, Saga, Rush, Burton Cummings.

## Fernando Arrabal's *Odyssey of the Pacific*

Over a year later than its originally anticipated release date, Fernando Arrabal's *Odyssey of the Pacific* has chugged into Canadian theatres, and the suspicion is that this anachronistic clunker will be ordered to pull out fast.

It concerns the daydream fantasies of three children who plot to escape the unimaginative confines of their bourgeois life, on board a resurrected steam locomotive. Unfortunately, the film is deplorably scripted, poorly acted and technically flawed. Its principal problem lies in the leaden inauthenticity of its language — not surprising considering the international melange which contributed to this English-language film. Spanish-born Arrabal does not speak English himself, yet he bravely (or foolishly) made the film in English. The internationally reknown playwright/director co-scripted the film with Quebec writer Roger Lemelin of *Les Plouffe* fame, and his words were conveyed into English by an on-location translator. Another factor compounding this linguistic contrivance was that the actors were predominantly French-speaking, were directed in French, yet delivered their lines, for the most part, in English. That is, when they weren't being dubbed! One is tempted to ask: why was this film even made in English? Surely it would have rung truer in French, not just in terms of language, but also in the actors' delivery and even the film's very content. The impression one is left with is that the film keeps missing the station, as its European sensibilities drive it in one direction, and its attempted North American commercialism drives it in another.

The story begins when nine-year-old Liz and seven-year-old Toby (Anick and

Jonathan Starr, both in their first film roles) spend their summer vacation at the well-to-do country home of their Uncle Alex (Jean-Louis Roux) and Aunt Elsa (Monique Mercure). The childless couple dote dutifully on their charges, dressing them immaculately in Victorian clothes and surrounding them with gadgets, toys and television. One day a young Cambodian refugee boy named Hoang (Ky Huot Uk) arrives, and the three fast friends take to exploring together in the surrounding woods. Their day-trips lead them to the discovery of a crippled ex-locomotive engineer, Thubal (Mickey Rooney), who lives as a hermit in a decrepit railway car. Thubal, who calls himself the Emperor of Peru, sits astride a wheelchair-throne, and with darting eyes, flashing teeth and an annoying glisten of spittle at the corner of his mouth, pontificates magniloquently about whatever madness comes to mind. It is all very reminiscent of Lewis Carroll minus the profound, poetic lunacy. The children stumble across Thubal's hidden locomotive and set themselves the task of restoring it to its original glory. So that Hoang can rescue and marry his mother, they plan to travel to Cambodia on the resurrected train, with Thubal at the engine. Thubal encourages and stokes their fantasies, but at the last minute declines to go with them, proving that even a "mad" adult can't share the fantasies of children.

Arrabal has said that his own children's fantasies were the inspiration for the film, and ironically the fantastical side of the film does seem genuinely linked to a child's imagination: the one believable thread in this whole improbable concoction. A good part of the film consists of Toby's dreams of grandeur. Each of his fantasies involves some ingenious stroke of inventiveness on his part, turning potentially disastrous situations into triumphs in front of an adulatory crowd. But these wildly cheering crowd scenes are so sloppily inserted that they bear no continuity with Toby's filmed fantasies. They are too obviously what they are: shots of ballgame and

concert audiences. Contrasted with Toby's narcissistic daydreams are Hoang's real and tragic memories of his separation from his parents and his desperate escape from Cambodia.

Although the film essentially poses the children as mere vehicles for their own fantasies, nothing can excuse the wooden expressionlessness of their acting, especially that of Starr and Ky Huot Uk. And Mercure's and Roux's efforts are marred by the weary vapidity of the dialogue. Rooney did his scenes on weekends (usually in one or two takes), travelling back and forth from a play he was then doing on Broadway (*Sugar Babies*). He too is a victim of the film's dialogue, but his hyperbolic rantings are hammed to the hilt, even though delivered from a wheelchair. Widening the film's credibility gap even further, the extras appear embarrassingly aware that they are in a movie. Apparently, the playwright-turned-director Arrabal has little skill extracting from actors what it takes to give a film authenticity.

On a more positive note, there is an anachronistic element to the film which harkens back to age of steam. It is manifest in the children's outmoded clothes, in the vaudeville troupe they encounter on the railroad tracks, in the locomotive, and in the very feel of the photography itself. Appropriately, the Acadian folk singer from New Brunswick, Edith Butler, arranged the musical score. Just as through her ballads she attempts to keep alive the spirit-memory of a displaced people and their obsolete Acadian language, in *Odyssey* the haunting song which accompanies shots of the locomotive seems to be attempting to raise the extinct machine from the dead. Unfortunately, this film is stillborn, if only because Arrabal refused to deliver a potentially poetic vision in its appropriate language.

Lyn Martin ●

**ODYSSEY OF THE PACIFIC** d. Fernando Arrabal sc. Arrabal, Roger Lemelin d.o.p. Ken Legargeant art d. Rene Petit, Fernand Durand cost. des. François Laplante ed. John Broughton sd. Claude Hazanavicius p. Claude Leger, Romaine Legargeant assoc. p. Fabien Tordjmann, Joel Nuffer asst. to p. Ann Burke p. man. Suzanne Roy unit man. Michel Siry asst. unit man. Harold Trepanier coor. Yolaine Rouleau chief acct. Micheline Bonin, Armand Soussan, Natacha Poloudnenko, Anne-Marie Berthier accts. Jeannette Ruffet, Christine Guilbault p. sec. Jacqueline Soussan, Pascale Reiher, Noëlle Guichard a.d. Michel Gauthier, François Chopineau, Michele Mercure, Pascal Roulin cont. Catherine Breton cast. Daniel Hausmann, Michele Mercure cam. Claude Larue asst. cam. Daniel Jobin, Joslin Simard, Camille Maheux 2nd cam. Maurice Roy, Georges Archambault stills Takashi Seida, Fred Smith sd. ed. Nadine Muse asst. ed. Elizabeth Guido, Sarah Mallinson ad. eff. Henry Humbert, Jean-Pierre Lelong dia. d. Hubert Fielden, Hélène Lauzon mixer Michel Descombes ward. mist. Dominique Forest ward. asst. Louise Rousseau make-up Micheline Foisys props Serge Bureau asst. prop. Simon La Haye, Pierre Gros D'Aillon, Herminio Billette, Philippe Chevalier sp. eff. Louis Craig, Jacques Godbout, Henri Simard head elect. Denis Baril elect. Brian Baker key grip Raymond Lamy grip Philippe Palu drivers Daniel Mercure, Yves Lamarre, Pierre Siry, unit pub. Lucienne Appel, Monique Mollette teacher Sandra Saint-Laurent lab. Sonolab Inc., Montreal mixing studio Sonolab Inc. equipment Cinémarl optical effects Film Docteur du Québec Inc. music produced and published by Les Éditions Lise Aubut Enr. 1981 Produced with the financial participation of Film Corp. Entertainment Finances Ltd., Canadian Film Development Corporation, L'institut québécois du Cinema, Antenne 2, Le Musée Ferroviaire Canadien, Canadian Pacific Ltd., p.c. Ciné-Pacifique Inc./Babyline Films, S.A. running time: 59:21 colour, 35mm Lp. Mickey Rooney, Monique Mercure, Jean-Louis Roux, Guy Hoffmann, Anick, Jonathan Starr, Ky Huot Uk, Valda Dalton, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Marie-Josée Morin, Maurice Podbrey, Vlasta Vrana, John Stanzel, Michel Barrette, Michel Bartolini, Georges Taborky, Kim Ny Ith, Trach Chanh, Jean-Pierre Ronfard, Annilie Schmidt, Andre Melançon.



● Ky Huot Uk, left, Jonathan Starr, and Anick: Lewis Carroll minus the lunacy