

way it is. It's because the right touches structure, while the left touches individuals. It's always people from the right who break down forms, people who are related to existing structures. And I think that for Hémon, it's a bit the same thing; he broke the ancient pattern of the love story to construct a new one, based on the waiting of the woman, and the desperate effort of the man to reach her. And this pattern is also expressed in the landscape, the land, the country, with all those rivers and those waterfalls, symbols of ejaculation, of masculinity; and the lake, level and calm, not too deep, a lake that warms up easily (laughs), symbol of femininity. Harlequin books have cornered 12% of the international market, using the same story over and over again. Harlequin books, romance, they all copy *Maria Chapdelaine*. But getting back to Hémon, he was also revolutionary in his own way: he was the first sports columnist ever, he fought against pollution, he did his jogging...

Cinema Canada: Do you still believe in what you called "production families"; do you still believe, as you once said, that that's the only solution to Quebec cinema?

Gilles Carle: I personally believe, as I always did, in small production teams, in production families. I always try to have my own. Apart from my personal talent, this is what helps me continue shooting. But the big mistake with beginning filmmakers is that they associate with people like themselves. You need a truck driver who prefers to carry sets than to carry coal, or an accountant who would like working with a theater group better than at Household Finance, you know. You need people like that. I have my own family, and they have been constantly working with me for ten years now. We need these small teams. The other day, I saw a group from the south-shore (of Montreal) getting lost in the corridors of the NFB, and I was disappointed. Why go to the Board? We must organize ourselves, find money, do new things, but many people are afraid of accountants. But accountants are your friends, you know; you must deal with them. The more you have production teams, the more cinematic freedom; it's simple. Because if I shoot alone, there isn't much cinema freedom. Everybody has to make a film.

But cinema is disappearing anyway. It's finished; now it's television, and I don't know what's going to happen. These electronic instruments are very costly, you know. Bill 109 on the cinema in Quebec, like every law, comes too late. Everything is changing now; we have pay-TV, and all that, and it's all under federal regulations. I don't know what's going to happen, really.

Cinema Canada: And what do you think about closing down the NFB, as recommended by the Applebaum-Hébert report?

Gilles Carle: Damn it! Let's open the NFB, not close it. Closing it is not the solution, we must open it to young filmmakers, to new artists, give them a chance to work. If we close the NFB, where will the beginning filmmakers do their first film? You know I started there. Some changes, many changes, have to be made in the structure of the NFB, of course. But the solution is to open the NFB, not to close it. All that would do is put more people on the unemployment rolls. And who needs that?

Richard Martineau •

Gilles Carle's *Maria Chapdelaine*

Gilles Carle's new movie, *Maria Chapdelaine*, pushes all the right buttons to assure its success in Quebec, if nowhere else (in its first week alone, after opening Apr. 29, it brought in over \$190,000). Based on the 1913 novel of the same title by French expatriate Louis Hémon, the movie deals with the travails of a beautiful, taciturn, young woman trying to survive against all odds in the wilds of Lac St-Jean.

Quebec novelist Roch Carrier claims the novel has captured the Quebec imagination because it's not a work of precise ideas but rather what he calls "a vast emptiness" upon which readers can impose their own ideas or fantasies. Carle, working with a \$4.5-million budget, impose ideas all right - the virtues of obduracy ("j'y suis, j'y reste"), romanticization of alienation, *mon pays c'est l'hiver* and all that - and achieves a vast emptiness of his own: a hollow epic.

An overheated hack at the Montreal *Gazette* once called Carle's next-to-last film, *Les Plouffe*, Quebec's *Gone With the Wind*. This may mean that *Maria Chapdelaine* is our *Dr. Zhivago*, for all that that entails. There certainly is a lot of snow, and when there isn't, woodsy types pick blueberries and do countless other photogenic things, like walking by waterfalls or playing with the famille Chapdelaine's lovable mongrel.

The publicity material accompanying the movie makes a great deal of its authenticity and the difficulties the director faced in shooting four seasons in two months. It feels like Carle shot a lot more seasons than that, but then you tend to lose track after a while, as the authenticity marches steadily sidewise toward nostalgia. (Why, by the way, did no one think to age the costumes? Were lumberjacks really this stylish?)

Carle came late to the project, the third in a series of directors hired to make both a theatrical feature and a four-hour mini-series for Radio-Canada (think of the seasons in store for us there). He and his co-scenarist, Guy Fournier, have been publicly squabbling about which man's interpretation of the novel is the more correct, but in all their ideological wrangling, they didn't get around to solving the central dramatic flaw: Maria and her dashing suitor, the aptly named François Paradis, are almost never on screen together. When they are, they mainly moon about: he asks her to wait for him, she says OK, he departs, and the rest of the movie she waits. And worse, we wait with her.

The casting of Nick Mancuso as Paradis goes a long way to making us under-



• Quebec's answer to *Dr. Zhivago*: Nick Mancuso and Carole Laure in *Maria Chapdelaine*

stand this wait: who wouldn't wait for him? He has such dash and sense of his own presence - he even stands out in long shots of crowd scenes - it's a shame all that's left for him to do is get lost in the snow. He's too well-coiffed for a bucheron, but we can see the energy in him, the eagerness to do something, to make his part real, and that's so much more than can be said for most of the cast. There are at least a dozen acting styles going on here, running from pure maple-cured ham to *téléroman*-gothic, but then this is in keeping with the slapdash style of the whole project. There's no subtlety, no thought-out perspective. Nothing's left in the background for us to discover for ourselves, everything's dragged center-screen and klieg-lit, with Lewis Furey's incessant music providing the wholly unnecessary italics.

The darkly elegant Carole Laure plays Hémon's indomitable, homespun heroine. Laure and Carle have been working together for a long time now (*Fantastica*, *L'Ange et la femme*, *La tête de Normande St-Onge*, *La mort d'un bucheron*), and it's time someone told them to cut it out: they're absolute poison for each other. Laure has revealed a flair for comedy with other directors (in Blier's *Get Our Your Handkerchiefs* and Joyce Bunuel's *Dirty Dishes*), but Carle doesn't seem to want her to act - he poses her. (Their previous collaborations have been notable for her nudity, so much so that local wags who saw the 1975 *La tête de Normande St-Onge* promptly renamed it *Les fesses de...*) For all the dramatic intensity he gets out of Laure's sophisticated, slightly ironic beauty, he might as well be shooting

magazine covers. In Carle's scheme of things, Laure is indomitable all right - indomitably chic. When she goes out to slop the hogs, that trademark blue-black hair sleeking down her slender back, her pancake applied to perfection, delectably soigne in that layered look so popular in the bush, it's the giddiest piece of miscasting since Marie-Antoinette played shepherdess at Versailles.

Will Aitken •

MARIA CHAPDELAINE d. Gilles Carle exec. p. Harold Greenberg p. Murray Shostak. Robert Baylis sc. Guy Fournier. Carle, based on the novel by Louis Hémon d.o.p. Pierre Mignot art d. Jocelyn July 2nd unit photography Richard Leiterman ed. Ayde Chiriaeff sd. eng. Patrick Rousseau p. man. Lorraine Richard head unit man. Mario Nadeau 1st a.d. Jacques Wilbrud Benoît prop. master Ronald Fauteux cost. des. Michele Hamel head cost. dresser Blanche-Danielle Boileau head make-up Micheline Poisy hair. Andre Lafresniere cont. Ginette Senecal head elect. Daniel Chretien head machinist François Dupere sp. efx. John Thomas unit man. Ginette Guillard public relations David Novak Associates Inc. unit pub. Mark Lalonde stills Pierre Dury compt. Fred Shacter p. acct. Carole Lagace p. sec. Micheline Cadieux p. coord. in Montreal Marie-Hélène Roy 2nd a.d. Monique Maranda 3rd a.d. Jacques Laberge asst. unit man. Louis-Philippe Rochon 1st asst. cam. Jean Lepine 2nd asst. cam. Christiane Guernon 3rd asst. cam. Nathalie Mollavko-Visotsky 2nd unit asst. cam. Larry Lynn elect. Claude Fortier. Robert Lapierre Jr. machinist Michel Periard boom Veronique Gabillaud asst. art d. Raymond Dupuis props. Alain Singher asst. props Philippe Chevalier. Henri Gagnon, Jean Labrecque, Josiane Noreau set dresser Patrice Bengle 2nd set dresser Simon La Haye const. Andre Bochu, Michel Bochu, Jean-Marie Vallerand, Gaston Brassard head painters Robert Breton, Rejean Paquin painters Guy Lalonde, Gilles Desjardins, Jean-Paul Montreuil sp. efx. asst. Bill Orr. Ken Johnson sp. efx. Roby Baylis asst. cost. des. Christiane Tessier, John Stowe asst. to cost. des. Pierre Perrault cost. dresser Renee April make-up Joan Isaacson p. asst. Michel Veillette. Andre Ouellet, Angele Bourgault messengers Ellen Berube, Alain Belhumeur drivers Pierre Guillard, Sylvain Falardeau chief cook Kitty Baylis cook Leo Evans asst. in kitchen Richard Carroll l.p. Carole Laure, Nick Mancuso, Pierre Curzi, Donald Lautrec, Yoland Guerard, Amulette Garneau, Stephane Query, Guy Thauvette, Gilbert Sicotte, Josee-Anne Fortin, Louis-Philippe Milot, Gilbert Comtois, Paul Berval, Claude Rich, Claude Evard, Dominique Briand, Marie Tifo, Jean-Pierre Masson, Angele Arseneault, Jacques Thisdale, Rod Tremblay, Claude Prengt, Patrick Messe, Guy Godin, Denis Blais, Michel Langevin, Cedric Noël, Jose Ledoux, Renee Girard, Roch Demers, Gilbert Moore, Gilles Valiquette, Yvon Sarrazin, Rolland Bedard, Michel Rivard, Georges Levtehouk, Raoul Duguay p.e. Astral Film Productions Limited, in collaboration with La Societe Radio-Canada and TF1, the first television network of France. colour 35mm running time 108 min.

• *Maria Chapdelaine* gets strong acting assists from France's Claude Rich and Quebec's Marie Tifo

