THE DISAPPEARANCE

Nearly six years after it was originally to have been released, Garth Drabinsky's first production, The Disappearance, finally made it onto Canadian screens and almost simultaneously went to pay TV. When a film has been that long on the shelf, the natural reaction, given the recent history of Canadian cinema, is to suspect a work of dubious merit. However, when compared to some of the "lost" films made in 1973-1980, this 1977 production is not without interest, though it must, in all honesty, be called a failure.

Two notable cinema stylists loom large in the background of this picture. The dark narrative, fractured by numerous flashbacks, calls to mind the work of Nicolas Roeg, and not without reason. In addition, the presence of Donald Sutherland in the lead role - he appeared in Roeg's Don't Look Now - the script is by Paul Mayersberg, who also wrote for Roeg The Man Who Fell To Earth.

Similarly, John Alcott's photography, aided by Anne Pritchard's production design, clearly suggests the work he has done for Stanley Kubrick. The Canadian sections of the film, shot in and around Habitat and Man's World in Montreal during the winter, show the influence of A Clockwork Orange in its functional, sterile settings. The British segment, meanwhile, with its setpiece in a converted Elizabethan coach house and an adjoining greenhouse, has some of the busyness and decadence (though not the dim spooky lighting) of Barry Lyndon.

There is, however, something clearly wrong in what purports to be a thriller if those technical matters are the best aspects of the film. To be sure, director Stuart Cooper does not go as far as the British commercial directors such as Alan Parker, Ridley Scott, Adrian Lyne and Hugh Hudson, who have tended to subordinate plot almost totally to technique, but The Disappearance is clearly heading that way. For it is the story, and the inability of the filmmakers to convincingly execute it, that has kept the film in storage for so long.

Donald Sutherland plays Jack Mallory, a professional assassin, whose employers (the "Office") use an international advertising agency as a front. Mallory has been resisting a new assignment, because he prefers "simple plotting, has cut the character's role in The Mechanic, for whom he suspects Celandine has left him. From his contact Atkinson (John Hurt), he discovers that Deverell is also his target, but only so that he can go to England to aid by Anne Pritchard's production in Roeg's

**ALL IN GOOD TASTE**

*Do you really want to do that to yourself?*

Andrew Dowler

*Caught with his pants down is Jonathan Welsh in the tasteless All in Good Taste*

The ugliest, smallest genitals in the Western world, receding down a confining corridor while female laughter rings cruelly on the soundtrack. It is the closest thing the movie has to an emotional centre and is, I think, the true colour of Kramreither's obsession. He ought to go at it more closely - maybe he'll be inspired to do for the human form what Edward D. Wood did for the pink angora sweater.

It's possible these problems will disappear in future works - the money one seems especially likely to get a fast cure - and Tony Kramreither will go on to produce a work that, again in Haberman's words, "projects a stupidity as fully awesome as genius." If he does, we may be in for a Kramreither cult, if so, a word of warning is in order.

Watching anti-art is not like watching the ordinary bad movie. It has a very real consciousness-distorting power that is not unlike that ascribed by William Burroughs to heroin and that has never been better described than by St. Anselm of Ghent, the 15th-century mystic who wrote of the experience of extended flagellation: "...then did Creation reveal an other face, The wall before mine eye did become as stones apart and unjoined each from the other, though none I knew had moved. And all sound, however sweet before, was now as many voices of men raised in anger in an unknown tongue. Sickened I was, yet not sickened, for this other, cruel. Creation did bendbome with the weight of its horrors and so did protect me from full and destroying apprehension of them. And this other face of Creation did stay before mine eye even after the scourgic had ceased its blows for several hours." (Bryden's Lives of the Saints, Oxford University Press, 1958)
his own theatres as well. But, in spite of
films have been able to reconcile com-
ercial and artistic aspirations. Like
a cast of characters who not only cannot
communicate with one another, but
are in a state of near daily hostility. Open
House. The justification for Frank's
intentions will lose an inattentive
It is obvious from the beginning that
almost loses his audience. In fact, at the
critical moment he will lose an inattentive
audience. The justification for Frank's
peculiar behaviour and incompetence
is because the audience is not paying
attention you will miss it. Being too
obscure is as inexcusable as being too
obvious. At times Open House is too
obscure.

COMBINING LINEAR NARRATIVE WITH EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKING TECHNIQUES IS A DANGEROUS GAME. LIKE WALKING ON A PRECARIOUS TIGHTROPE, AT ANY MOMENT YOU MAY ALIPOFF. ATOMIC EGONY S SHORT FILM OPEN HOUSE IS ON THAT TIGHTROPE, AND THE ONLY REASON IT DOESN'T FALL APART IS DUE SOLELY TO EGONY S MASTERY AS A FILMMAKER.

THE TIGHTROPE ALMOST GETS THE BETTER OF EGONY ON MANY OCCASIONS, BUT HIS COMBINATION OF MASTERY WITH EXPERIMENTALISM IS LOGICAL FOR THE STORY HE WISHES TO TELL. HIS USE OF HIGHLY STYLIZED CAMERA MOVEMENT IS BORN OF FINER FILMMAKING, BUT EGONY USES IT VERY EFFECTIVELY TO GIVE THE AUDIENCE SOME MUCH NEEDED INFORMATION.

THE STORY HE TELLS IS PAPER THIN, AND LIKE EGONY S MOST RECENT 16MM SHORTS, THIS ONE FLAVORED WITH GRAD WITH DAD AND THE OBSCURE PUPPET, IS THE UNSPOKEN, UNSEEN MOTIVATIONS OF HIS CHARACTERS ARE EVERYTHING. FRANK (ROSS FRASER), A SEEMINGLY INCOMPETENT REAL ESTATE AGENT, IS TAKING A YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE (MICHAEL AND MAUREEN, PLAYED BY MICHAEL MARSHALL AND SHARON CAVALAUGH) TO SEE A DILAPIDATED HOME IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO. IT IS OBVIOUS FROM THE BEGINNING THAT FRANK IS NOT GOING TO SELL THE HOUSE AND AT THE END HE DOES NOT.

THIS SHORT STORY IS NOT WHAT CONCERNS EGONY. HE USES THIS FRAMEWORK TO DRAPE A CAST OF CHARACTERS WHO NOT ONLY CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER, BUT THERE IS AGGRESSION AND HOSTILITY BETWEEN THEM AND JUST BELOW THE SURFACE OF EACH CONVERSATION. OPEN HOSTILITY IS REVEALED ONLY WHEN ONE MAN (PLAYED BY BRUCE BELL IN A COMEDICALLY INFECTIOUS CAMEO) CHASTISES FRANK FOR ALMOST RUNNING HIM OVER. "YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE A STRANGER?" THE MAN YELLS FROM FRANK S CAR WINDOW. "IT S BECAUSE YOU'RE STRANGE."

A THEME EGONY HAS USED INEFFICACIOUSLY BEFORE, BUT IS PICKED UP INGENUOUSLY IN OPEN HOUSE, IS SUBJECTIVE REALITY. SUBJECTIVE REALITY FASCINATES EGONY AND IT FORMS THE CORE OF THIS FILM. THE YOUNG COUPLE, AFTER SPINNING DIFFERENT TALES OF WHAT EACH OTHER DOES FOR A LIVING, FRANK HIDES UNDER A BALE OF DOGS FACADES AND THE OWNERS OF THE HOUSE ARE CONVINCED THEIR HOME USED TO BE A CASTLE. THE AUDIENCE IS NEVER TOLD WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS IMAGINED REALITY. THAT IS THE BEAUTY AND THE FLAW OF OPEN HOUSE.

IN HIS ATTEMPT TO BE SUBTLE, EGONY ALMOST LOSES HIS AUDIENCE. IN FACT, AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT HE WILL LOSE AN INATTENTIVE AUDIENCE. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR FRANK'S PECULIAR BEHAVIOUR AND INCOMPETENCE IS ON THE SCREEN, BUT IF YOU ARE NOT PAYING ATTENTION YOU WILL MISS IT. BEING TOO OBSCURE IS AS INEXCUSABLE AS BEING TOO OBVIOUS. AT TIMES OPEN HOUSE IS TOO OBSCURE.

EGONY HAS LEARNED MUCH IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE FILM HE DEMONSTRATES A FIRMER UNDERSTANDING OF THE FILMMAKING PROCESS AND TO WHAT LIMITS HE CAN PUSH IT. THUS, EVEN WITH ITS FLAWS, OPEN HOUSE IS A SMOOTH AND LOGICAL PROGRESSION THAT LEADS TO HIS NEXT AND MORE AMBITIOUS FILM.

DAVID CHURCHILL

OPEN HOUSE/P.O. BOX ATOM EGONY AND S.P.
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