

REVIEWS

Claude Fournier's **Bonheur d'occasion**

It's the easiest thing in the world to dismiss *Bonheur d'occasion* (*The Tin Flute*) as just another six-handkerchief weeper. God knows misery and tears abound in this two-hour French-language adaptation of the late Gabrielle Roy's novel of the same title in which young Florentine Lacasse, daughter of Montreal's working-class St. Henri district, learns that when you're poor life isn't about what you want, it's about what you can get.

Father shiftless, mother perpetually aproned and pregnant, little brother dying of TB (and in the bountiful arms of *les Anglais*, no less) – hell, the sacred heart polychrome is practically bleeding onto the antimacassars as the neighborhood wolf seduces our Florentine on the parlor couch, leaving her pregnant and then leaving her, period.

I was going to say that the movie's greatest virtues are really negative ones – it's not dishonest, it's not insincere – but when you come right down to it, *Bonheur d'occasion's* real strength lies in its fidelity to its source.

You don't go to this picture expecting a great movie; *Bonheur d'occasion* isn't a great novel, despite unrelenting attempts by high-school lit teachers throughout the nation to elevate it to classic status. The book must have seemed old-fashioned even when it first appeared in 1945, since it harkened back to the style and values of the social realists of the previous decade, with its dogged, uninspired prose and over-emphatic stoicism.

The movie plods along so reverently in Roy's wake you can practically feel the pages turning (the whole thing has been boiled down from a much longer version destined for television), and yet that reverence carries us along too. Roy

was closer to Steinbeck than to Dostoevski – there's something broad-shouldered and strongbacked about her work, and *Bonheur d'occasion* gets that on film along with her deep understanding of what poverty does to most people. In her books it doesn't usually make them heroic or mad or even criminal, it just reduces them to so much less than they might have been under different and slightly better circumstances, forcing them to compromise in ways most of us never have to.

Veteran Quebec director Claude Fournier gets the right look for the book – St. Henri's dirty snow and peeling paint and a sky choked with blue-black smoke from coal-burning furnaces and the trains that sever St. Henri from the very feet of Westmount. Not that reproducing the *quartier* could have been that hard – St. Henri now looks much as it must have done in 1945, still shabby and cut off, although gentrification is blooming at the edges of its tree-lined parks now the Metro goes there.

A lot of trains run through *Bonheur d'occasion* – their proximity signals poverty as much as starchy food and cold-water flats. Rumbling to the syncopated saxophone of the movie's theme, they chug mournfully along through the darkening air. Unfortunately the movie takes its shape as well as its mood from these trains: it lumbers along, car after car filled with so much misery and pain, that instead of registering the enormity of it all, we end up counting the cars and longing for the caboose. The movie has a muffled clacking regularity about it. Nothing builds, every scene seems to strike exactly the same note of futility. This may be true to the monotony of poverty itself, but surely what we need here is a film about the poor and not a poor film.

What saves *Bonheur d'occasion* from leaving us absolutely numb is the central performance of Mireille Deyglun as young Florentine. Her Florentine is no beauty, but you sense that with more money she could be. Her clothes are ugly and cheaply fashionable, her hair too sculpted and her lips too red, even for the war years, giving her the hardness

we associate with Warner Bros. shop-girls of the same period. And yet Deyglun, with her wide-set eyes and blunt features, reveals in the most unobtrusive ways just how vulnerable and worn-down Florentine is as she schemes her way upward into respectability by conning a man she doesn't love into marrying her. For an experienced film actress, such a carefully shaded (and frequently funny) Florentine would be a major accomplishment; as Deyglun's first screen role, Florentine is nothing less than a triumph.

Marilyn Lightstone, who plays Florentine's mother with decidedly mixed and bathetic results, has been cackling to the press about the movie's reception at the Moscow Film Festival earlier this summer. The Soviets thought *Bonheur d'occasion* was portraying present-day Canada. "I think it appealed to the Russians," Lightstone said, "because they like to see North Americans in pain." She went on to say that an introduction was added to the film to explain to Moscow audiences that it does not depict current conditions. Maybe that's true, maybe families of ten no longer live in slum conditions in St. Henri. For that maybe you have to travel farther east to, say, the Centre-Sud district, where the average yearly income for a family of four is \$7000 and where life expectancy is ten years less than on the western end of the Island of Montreal. In another 40 years or so, maybe someone will make a movie about that.

Will Aitken ●

BONHEUR D'OCCASION d. Claude Fournier exec. p. Marie-José Raymond and Robert Verrall p. Marie-José Raymond sc. Claude Fournier and Marie-José Raymond add. writing B.A. Cameron based on the novel by Gabrielle Roy assoc. p. Dorothy Courtois Lecour and Paterson Ferns ed. Yves Langlois p. man. Sylvie de Grandpré 1st a. d. Mireille Goulet sc. sup. Monique Champagne mus. François Dompierre theme song performed by Diane Tell lyrics Nancy Ward and Mouffe p. des. Charles Dunlop sd. rec. Jacques Drouin cost. des. Nicole Pelletier make-up Marie-Angèle Protat hair Gaëtan Noiseux stills Attila Dory color 35mm running time 121 minutes dist. Ciné 360 Lp. Marilyn Lightstone, Mireille Deyglun, Michel Forget, Pierre Chagnon, Martin Neufeld, Charlotte Laurier, Linda Sorgini.

Jules Dassin's **Circle of Two**

When *Circle of Two* was finally shown, after several false starts, on CBC's winter series of Canadian films, it brought to an end the rather sorry history of the Film Consortium of Canada. The hopes engendered six years ago after the unexpected success of *Outrageous*, that Bill Marshall and Henk Van Der Kolk would be the bright lights of the English-language film boom, have been proven to be yet another of the many mirages that came and went in those years. In fact, *Circle of Two* stands as a prime example of what went wrong.

The first, and perhaps the most basic mistake the producers made was to attempt to adapt Marie-Terese Baird's novel "A Lesson of Love" at all. This was a book about which reviewers used words like "wooden," "unbelievable," and "preposterous" with considerable frequency, and it never achieved a best-seller status that could offset these negative comments.

Then there was Tom Hedley's script. He did a creditable enough job translating the story from the provincial town of Windsor in England (best known as the site of a major royal castle) to Toronto, and for once that city played itself. But Hedley is something of an incurable romantic in genres where sentimentality proves deadly – as the scripts for the quirky *Mister Patman* and the frankly silly *Flashdance* bear witness.

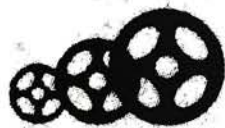
And *Circle of Two's* plot offered more than a few sinkholes for Hedley and director Jules Dassin to fall into. It is the story of a romance between Sarah Norton, a 16-year-old private-school student, and Ashley St. Clair, a sixtyish artist who has been suffering from a creative block for ten years. Sarah first meets him in a theatre where she has snuck in to see a porn film, and then again in a Yorkville restaurant after she has a fight with her boyfriend. For some reason, Ashley is fascinated by this superficially precocious girl, and she agrees to sit for him. Sarah, meanwhile, works overtime trying to seduce the reticent painter. Paul, the erstwhile boyfriend, gets into a fight with Sarah, who fractures his skull. Sarah's parents, who consider Ashley just a dirty old man, lock Sarah in her room, where she goes into a deep depression. Eventually Ashley and Sarah reunite, but are forced to admit the end of their platonic relationship.

Under Dassin's heavyhanded direction, this turns out to be as dismal as it sounds. Tatum O'Neal should have known after *International Velvet* that she had no talent for drama. The perky insouciance that won her the Academy Award at the age of nine for *Paper Moon* has totally vanished, leaving the same pretty blandness that characterizes her father's dramatic roles. O'Neal is never able to take Sarah any higher than temperamental brattishness.

Richard Burton, who plays Ashley, fares only marginally better. That rich intonation, as it has in many films before, can cover a multitude of defects, including the ravages of several decades of hard living and even harder drinking.

● Triumphant first-timer: Mireille Deyglun as young Florentine Lacasse steals the show in *Bonheur d'occasion*





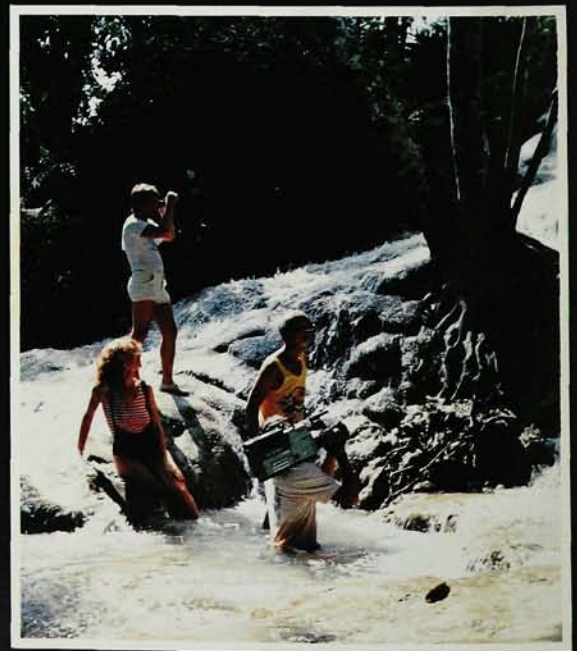
Sonolab inc

FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN

**CANADA'S
LARGEST
MOTION PICTURE
PRODUCTION
CENTRE**

1500 PAPINEAU STREET, MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA H2K 4L9 (514) 527-8671 TELEX 05 561 722

BETACAM



Video Production: Film-style

BETACAM IS : QUALITY YOU CAN CARRY

You've always wanted to use video but found the existing formats lacking either in image quality or in the mobility you required. Betacam – Sony's new, revolutionary 1/2" integrated camera/recorder system – offers you superior picture and sound quality in a field package weighing less than 18lbs. ! The quality approaches that of 1" C-format VTRs and conventional video cameras. All in a low-cost, 20-minute re-usable Betamax video cassette system.

BETACAM IS : PRODUCTION

Superior quality performance and added mobility has encouraged numerous advanced production facilities to adopt this remarkable 1/2" component system for program origination. Glen Warren Productions, Toronto EFP, The Eye, MPI, Palette and Visual Productions are but a few of the facilities using Betacam for this purpose. Betacam's ease of integration with existing 3/4" BVU or 1" BVH formats allows for editing with a minimum of conversion costs.

BETACAM IS : NEWS

Betacam's use is now wide-spread in Canada with the CBC, CTV affiliates (CJOH-Ottawa, CFTO-Toronto, CFCF-Montreal) as well the the Global Television network, using it for electronic news gathering.

The reason for this conversion to video was simple. Betacam possesses handling characteristics similar to film methods, but with the efficiency of video.

BETACAM IS : AVAILABLE

With over 100 Betacams now in use or ordered to date in Canada, this unique production system will soon be available to independent producers on a rental basis.

For further information on rental facilities or on Betacam please contact :

Sony Broadcast

SONY OF CANADA, LTD.

MARKETING HEADQUARTERS
411 Gordon Baker Road
Willowdale, Ontario M2H 2S6
(416) 499-1414

CENTRAL REGION
155 Gordon Baker Road
Willowdale, Ontario M2H 3N5
(416) 499-5111

WESTERN REGION
6951 Elmbridge Way
Richmond, B.C. V7C 5B8
(604) 273-1921

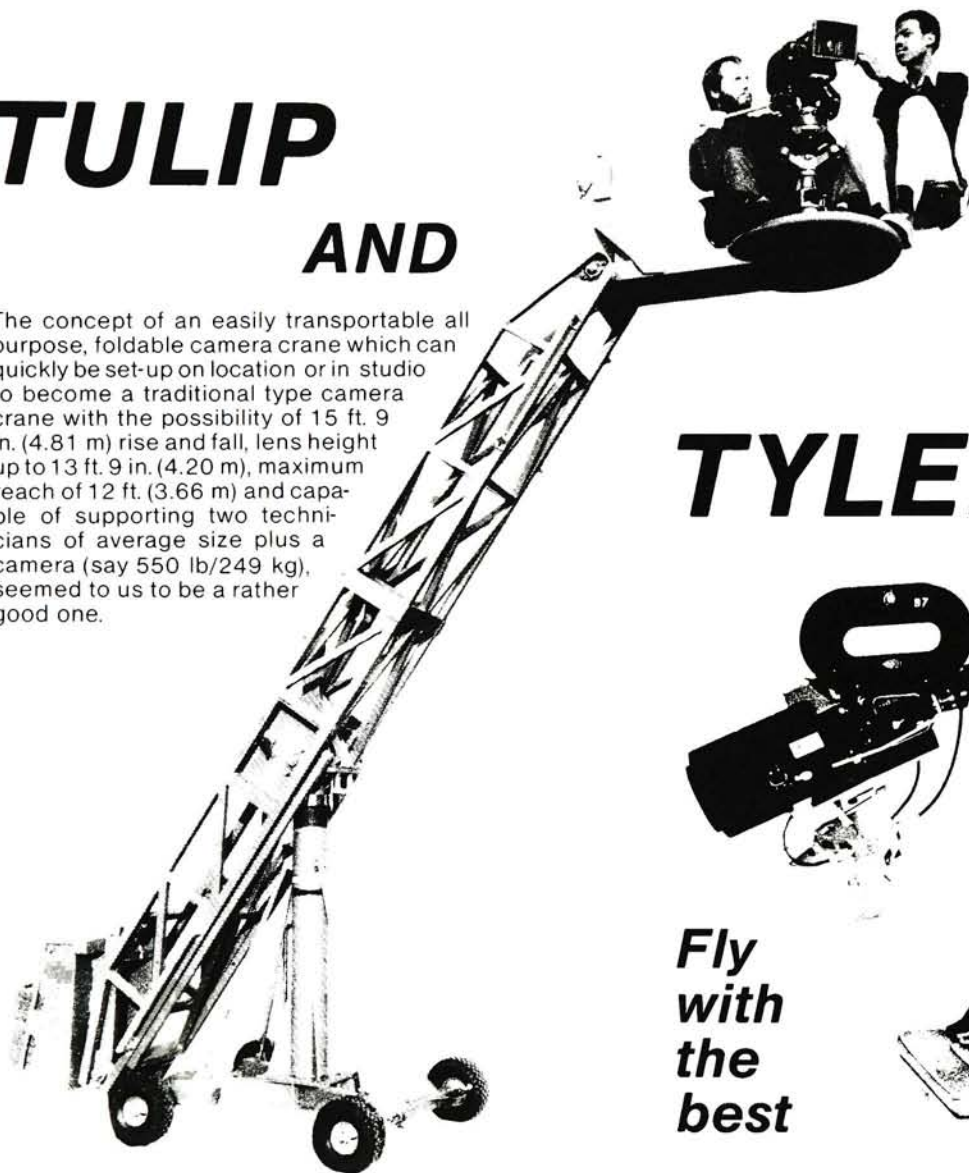
EASTERN REGION
6465 Route Trans-Canadienne
Ville St. Laurent, Quebec H4T 1V9
(514) 748-9331

NEW

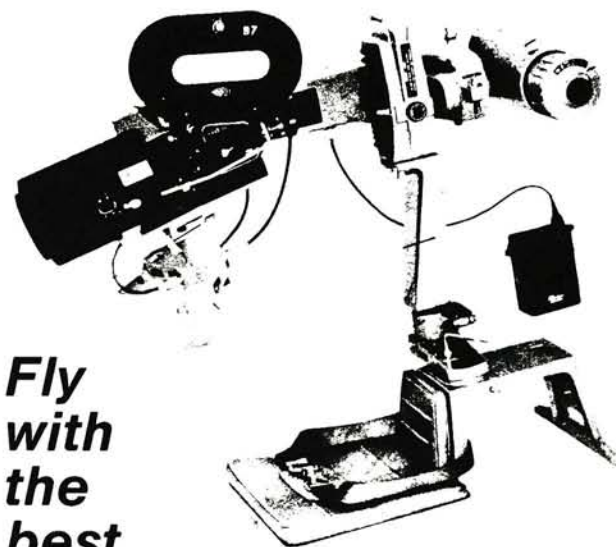
PANAVISION
CANADA

TULIP **AND**

The concept of an easily transportable all purpose, foldable camera crane which can quickly be set-up on location or in studio to become a traditional type camera crane with the possibility of 15 ft. 9 in. (4.81 m) rise and fall, lens height up to 13 ft. 9 in. (4.20 m), maximum reach of 12 ft. (3.66 m) and capable of supporting two technicians of average size plus a camera (say 550 lb/249 kg), seemed to us to be a rather good one.



TYLER



**Fly
with
the
best**

Complete Film Equipment Rental

16mm and 35mm Cameras
Sound and Lighting Equipment
Generators, Sound Studios

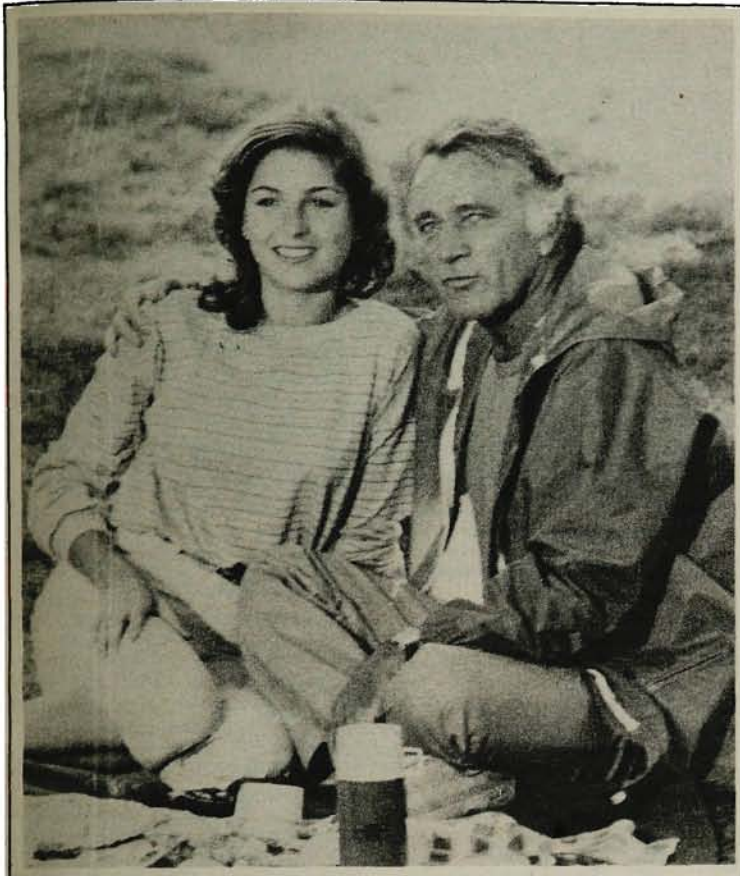
Sales

Distributors of Tiffen, Rosco, Lowel and Osram

Montreal:
Administration and equipment (514) 487-5010
2120 Decarie Blvd., H4A 3J3
Studio and Lighting
2020 Northcliffe Avenue, H4A 3K5

Toronto:
793 Pharmacy Avenue, M1L 3K3 (416) 752-7670

Vancouver:
43 West. 6th Avenue, V5Y 1K2 (604) 873-3901



● **Circle of Two's** Tatum O'Neal and Richard Burton: a prime example of what went wrong

Although Burton is known to think little of his film roles in general, he gives this his best effort, hampered admittedly by the myriad defects in the film's execution. The same cannot be said of the minor characters - Michael Wincott as the boorish boyfriend, Robin Gammell and Patricia Hamilton as Sarah's dense parents, Nuala Fitzgerald as Ashley's old flame - with the exception of Kate Reid as Sarah's doctor, whose brief appearance cuts through the intellectual mire of the script with typical briskness.

Perhaps, however, the greatest folly in *Circle of Two* lies in the pretentiousness of Jules Dassin's direction. This script needed a light touch if it was to work at all. Instead, Dassin, perhaps embittered by years of exile from North America, the failure of his later projects, most notably *A Dream Of Passion*, to gain any positive recognition, and a sense of having been passed by, attempts to moralize. Thus Ashley speaks gravely of the artistic vision, and is seen to be betrayed by a gallery owner he once considered a friend. But Dassin omits to show any real indication of Ashley's talent, in spite of contributions of the distinguished Canadian artist Harold Town, whose work is used for the paintings.

A mention of Fima Noveck's contribution to *Circle of Two* is in order. In 1981, he was brought in, following the film's negative response in Europe, to re-edit the picture. His main intent, he later said, was to rid the film of its staginess. Thus much extraneous material about Sarah and her school life appears to have been excised, though at the cost of making the already thin character thinner still. In one area Noveck did considerable damage. Paul Hoffert's original score, which included performances by the Paul Brodie Quartet, Moe Koffman, Erica Goodman and the Bishop Strachan School Choir (see

Cinema Canada, No. 60), was almost totally removed in favor of a standardized romantic background music. Thus, perhaps the most exciting and interesting aspect of the film vanished, and in the last analysis it could be seen that *Circle of Two* failed for reasons that were obvious from the outset. It was dull, dull, dull.

J. Paul Costabile ●

CIRCLE OF TWO d. Jules Dassin a.d. Timothy Rowse, Frank Simpson, Sarah Miller Hayward, Jerome McCann **CFDC** trainee Rex Bromfield ac. Thomas Hedley, from the novel "A Lesson of Love" by Marie-Terese Baird d.o.p. Laszlo George C.S.C. cam. op. Harold Ortenburger **2nd unit photog.** Jean Badel edit. David Nicholson creative cons. Fima Noveck ad. rec. Owen Langevin, Jim Franck sd. asst. Randy Milligan sd. ed. Wayne Griffon, Dennis Drummond p. man. Danny Rossner **unit man.** D. Robert McCart **loc. man.** Gail Singer, Fran Soloman p. des. Claude Bonnière, François De Lucy p. des. Anne Pepper, Barbara Tranter **asst. art. d.** Joyce Liggett, Don McQueen **paintings, art adviser** Harold Barling Town **asst. art adviser** Brian Nowell **easels** W.H. Town **scenic artist** James Williams **sketch artist** Phillip Moody **graphics** David Johnston, Bruno Gywinski **cost. des.** Theoni V. Aldredge, Donna Thomas **ward.** Brian Sands, Muriel Sampson, Sarah Miller Hayward **ward. co-ord.** Gayle McLeod **makeup** Barbara Palmer, Ron Berkeley (for Richard Burton) **music** Paul Hoffert, Antonio Vivaldi, J.S. Bach **stunt co-ord.** Dwayne McLean **stand-ins** Roslyn Forsyth, George Cunningham p. asst. Robert Imeson, Andrew Adach, Ray Harris **pub.** Stephenson, Ramsay, O'Donnell **p.c.** Circle of Two Productions (Film Consortium of Canada, in association with Jerome Simon and Milton Zysman Productions) p. Henk Van Der Kolk **exec. p.** William Marshall **assoc. p.** Bob Rodgers **colour** 35mm

running time 105 min. **lp.** Tatum O'Neal, Richard Burton, Nuala Fitzgerald, Robin Gammell, Patricia Hamilton, Kate Reid, Dohann Cavin, Norma Dell'Agnes, Michael Wincott, George Bourne Sr., Leo Leyden, Elan Ross Gibson, Gordon Jocelyn, Bob Aarons, Pat Patterson, Brendan McKane, A. Frank Ruffo, Morison Bock, Bibi Casparly, Les Carlson, Linda Antonnacci, Eileen Kim, Judy Noble, Annette Stevens, Wendy Turman, Yanka Van Der Kolk, Elias Zarou, Larry Ewashen, Lee Majors, Ryan O'Neal (in original version only), Maggie Morris, Doug Smith, Pamela Hyatt, Jimmy Leone, Grace Stephens, Daisy White, Ann Butler, Bill Yack, The Bishop Strachan School Choir.

Jack Darcus' Deserters

War, to judge by its monuments and celebrations, is something to be remembered. Not so the Vietnam war. Forgotten too is that the war in Vietnam was in an important sense also Canada's war, that some Canadians fought in it, that Canada's high-tech industries profited immensely from it. Now Vancouver filmmaker Jack Darcus has made a film that attempts to remember.

Deserters, Darcus' fourth feature film (after *Great Coups of History*, 1970; *Proxyhawks*, 1972; *The Wolfpen Principle*, 1974) was one of the gems among an otherwise meagre offering of Canadian films at Montreal's 7th World Film Festival. With all the clarity of a suddenly recollected nightmare, *Deserters* propels one back, for a relentless 110 minutes, to "American 1969" with its trains and railway stations full of soldiery, the travelling salesmen of a nation at war.

Alongside such a train, two young grunts, duffel bags packed and Vietnam-bound after boot camp, are fleeing from a shadow. Aboard the train the shadow materializes into their drill instructor, Sgt. Ulysses Hawley, United States Army, marvelously portrayed by Alan Scarfe. Gum-chewing, boorish, with a slight southern accent, Hawley, a three-tour Vietnam veteran, is headed for a five-day drunk between shifts of new draftees. During the train-ride he terrifies the two grunts with macabre Vietnam jokes, and sasses a staff captain who can't help overhear Hawley's criticism of the conduct of the war.

Disembarking at an unspecified station, Hawley attempts to coerce the two to go drinking with him. They reply they first have to say goodbye to their waiting parents outside. The captain suddenly appears, telling Hawley his two men have just gotten into a car, and headed straight for Canada which is just up the road. "But they're my best men," Hawley says, flabbergast. "If those are your best men, this country's in trouble," the captain answers.

Just up the road, Canada is the office

of immigration officer Noel Manufort (Dermot Hennesly) for whom the war is a Heaven-sent opportunity to put the principles of liberalism into practice: to bend the immigration rules, and to offer shelter to deserving war-resisters. One such young hero is Peter (Jon Bryden), who somewhat hesitantly accepts Manufort's invitation home.

But Manufort's home is also that of his wife, Val (Barbara March), who if she does not share her husband's zeal for the cause, does on the other hand desire the 'friendship' of the young men her husband brings home, as she intimates to Peter when Manufort is called away on an emergency.

When Noel returns he has brought back with him yet another 'deserter', still in his sergeant's uniform: it is Ulysses Hawley searching for his runaway men. And so the scene is set for the ensuing confrontation between the Soldier, the Youth, the Liberal, and the Woman.

What transpires between the walls of the Manufort home is a domestic version of guerrilla war in the sense that, as in Vietnam, nothing is what it seems.

Peter is a deserter only because his college grades were bad and he got his girl-friend pregnant. Noel's liberalism is only this year's fashion in a desperate search for personal meaning: the year before it was Zen and pottery. Val's marital discontent is only sexual. Only Hawley's sham desertion turns out to be genuine after all.

In a Nietzschean transvaluation of values, Peter decides to go home and fight for his country; Noel's and Val's marriage irreparably collapses; and Hawley bitterly accepts the defeat of his militaristic ideals. But if the others can and will survive at the price of some self-understanding, Peter, one realizes at the film's end, will die, sacrificed to the remains of moribund national ideals.

But *Deserters* is also about *our* war within, the conflict between Canadian and American identities. If the Americans do have national ideals to fall back upon (Peter) or to rebel against (Hawley), Canada - which at one point Hawley calls "This tin-pot country that can't even get in on the action" - has only a weak liberalism as the semblance of a national ideal, one that threatens to collapse under the slightest pressure, exposing the cavernous nihilism beyond. And yet even this feeble facade offers



● Guerrilla warfare in a Canadian living-room: Alan Scarfe, left, and John Bryden in *Deserters*