

When Claude Chabrol comes to town – and the town is Montreal – the filming milieu gets understandably excited. After a short introduction about the shoot, Lois Siegel gives us pictures and commentary about an incident which cost a bit of cash, and cast producer Melzack in the role of the hero.

# the man upstairs

## or... on the shoot of blood relatives

photos and text by Lois Siegel

Claude Chabrol, one of France's best known directors, came to Montreal last July to make his 31st film. And the irony of the situation, given the mood of the province and the state of the filming industry, was evident. Here, at last, is a French director of real importance, shooting in the second largest French city in the world, making his first film... in English.

**Blood Relatives** is a Franco-Canadian co-production, produced by Denis Héroux of Cinévidéo (Montreal) and Eugène Lépicié of Filmel (Paris). The two men had already worked together on **Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well** and **Living in Paris and Born for Hell**.

Julian Melzack of Classic Film Industries was the executive producer and the world sales of the film will be handled by Michael Klinger. Both were present during the shoot, and enthusiastic about the conditions of the production. Together with Chabrol, they made a point of congratulating the crew for its excellence, and Chabrol promised to return to Quebec to make another film soon.

photo: Jean-Yves Bruel



The murder of a young girl and the grief caused by her death is at the center of **Blood Relatives**

The film was made for \$1,400,000 from a screenplay written by Sydney Banks and based on a book by Ed MacBain. This psychological thriller stars Donald Sutherland as a detective, investigating the murder of a young girl. Stéphane Audran, Micheline Lanctôt, Jan Chamberlain, Aude Landry, Laurent Mallet, David Hemmings and Lisa Langlois make up the cast. Jean Rabier, who has worked on most of Chabrol's films, was the director of photography.

Chabrol is a practical filmmaker who believes in work. "The most important thing is to maintain a certain rhythm of production. Sometimes keeping up the rhythm, making a film or two each year, becomes more important than the inspiration. I'd rather make a film which is less good, or which is really mediocre, than not to make any film at all. If I only made the films that I really feel like making, I wouldn't have made one for a long time."

The shoot was long, lasting eight weeks. It almost went on longer, as Lois Siegel tells us on the following page.

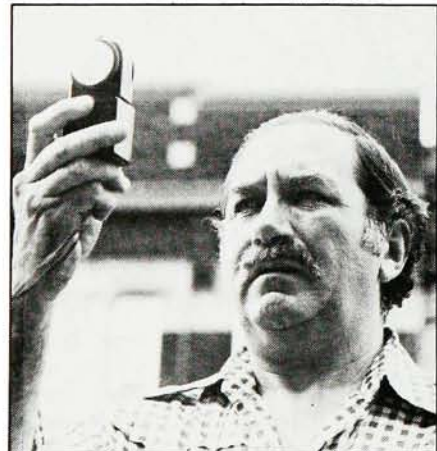


Donald Sutherland as detective

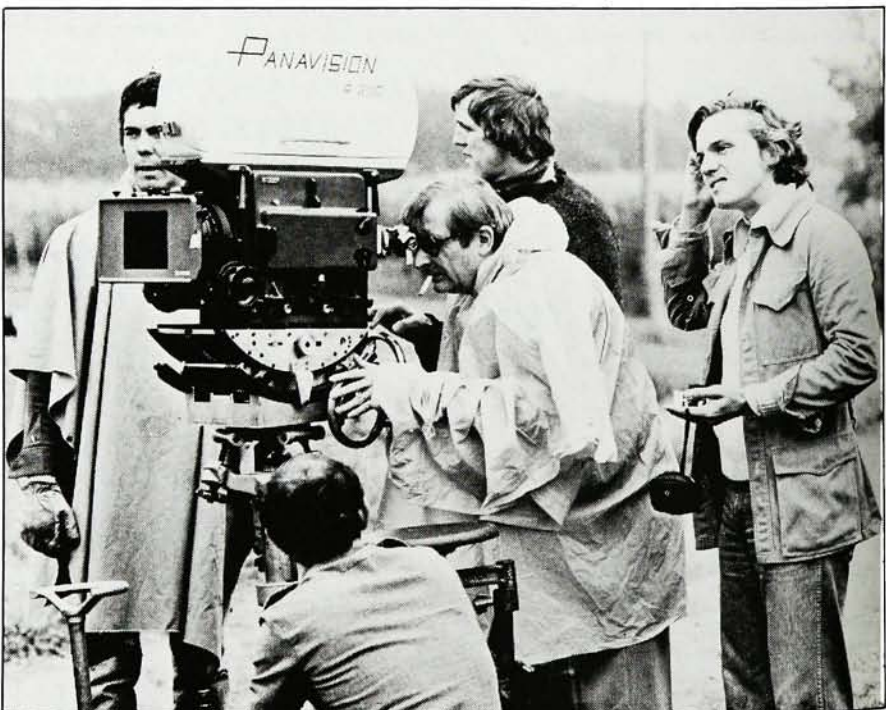


Denis Ménard, production assistant, counting his chickens

Jean Rabier, Director of Photography



Chabrol tripping through the rain at Oka and with the crew: François Dupéré, Didier Hoffman, Chabrol, Jean-Marie Buquet and Richard Ciupka



Even big name filmmakers have production problems.

Claude Chabrol, noted French filmmaker who has directed over 30 films, was recently shooting a new film, **Blood Relatives**, in Montreal.

The film was budgeted for \$1,400,000, and the production schedule was moving along fine, despite a few days of rain.

The last night of shooting arrived, and with it, one of those lovely production nightmares.

The location was Old Montreal, one block east of Bonsecours on St. Paul. The exact location was an archway under which cars could pass to deliver packages to the restaurant Les Filles du Roy. In this exact location, where filming was to take place, an irate tenant, who lived above, unfortunately decided to park his stationwagon – to prohibit shooting, to prohibit Chabrol, and to teach film companies that they are not the only people in the world.

The car



He wanted peace of mind, a quiet night's rest – or whatever.

What the car actually did earn him was a rumored \$2000 or something very close to that figure.

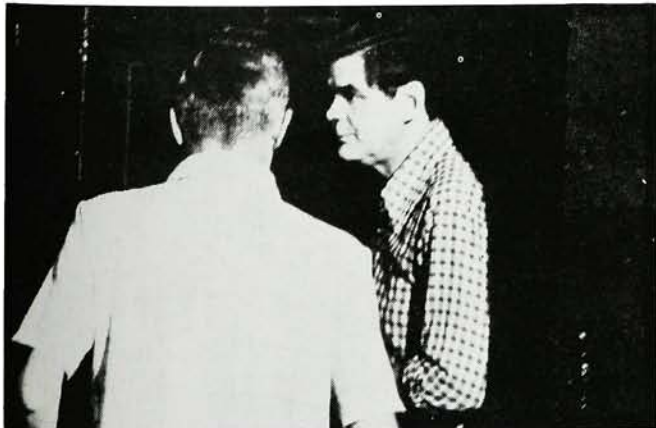
To recap: the previous night the man upstairs had complained to the film company that he was being disturbed, that the peace was being disturbed. The film people supposedly tried to negotiate with him – even offering a good night's rest at the Ritz Carlton

All offers were refused.

The man was not impressed with the idea that he could go home the next day and say "I had a good rest at the Ritz Carlton last night."

The next day's pre-shooting set-up was scheduled for 7 p.m.. At 11 p.m., production managers were still running around trying to figure out how to remove the obstacle (stationwagon) from the archway.

The man



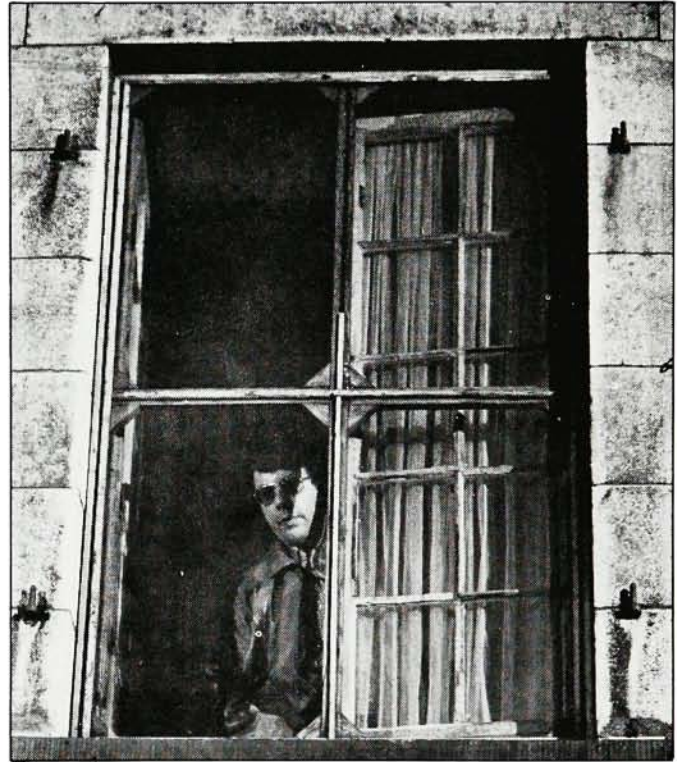
Lois Siegel is an independent experimental filmmaker and film professor who lives in Montreal.

They had tried everything. The police would not touch the car – "private property." The lawyers articulately considered the problem concerning the "right of passage" through archways, but no legal proof of land ownership was on hand at 7 p.m. The tow trucks would not touch the car for fear of lawsuit unless the police were there. The police would not be there if the tow trucks were there. It became a problem of which would come first, the chicken or the egg.

One tow truck did appear, and it's light flashed upon the scene from a distance. That's where it stayed.

Julian Melzack, producer, appeared, even though his dinner was getting cold on the table, and he became the hero on the set.

He climbed the stairs to the second floor apartment to negotiate.



The producer

Just after 11 p.m. he stuck his head out of the window and exclaimed in a subdued tone of excitement "give me a few more minutes". Then he stuck his head out again and said that he had one night confirmed for shooting, and asked how much time they needed to complete the film. At least five hours was the verdict.

A few minutes later after more deliberation, he stuck his head out again, "I have two nights" And everyone cheered, with a note of restraint because no one wanted to upset anyone – especially the man upstairs.

And Chabrol stopped grimacing and pacing back and forth and a grin appeared on his face.

And Donald Sutherland smiled and everyone else smiled and the car was moved and the empty space in the archway was filled with actors and cameras and directors and a few lights and a few camera crew and a bit of sprayed water for the rain effect.

The man upstairs was silent.

Perhaps he already had the check for 2000 or so dollars. Perhaps money does buy peace of mind and contentment and allows films to be made and moral questions to be solved.

Perhaps the man upstairs did donate the money to The Maison du Rosaire across the street.

Perhaps film productions are moral or anti-moral. □