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Donald Pilon radiates casual confidence. And why shouldn't he? One of Québec's biggest stars, he may well become the first male star in Canada as well. Pilon's history is straight out of Hollywood fan magazines — he was "discovered" while working at Expo by Gilles Carle. Since then, he has appeared in Le Viol d'Une Jeune Fille Douce, Deux Femmes en Or, Léopold Z, Les Males, La Vraie Nature de Bernadette, Bulldozer, The Pyx, Les Corps Célestes, Child Under A Leaf, and most recently the CBC's Collaborators series. An excellent actor, he has won the Meritas Award for Best Actor in 1971 for Les Males as well as the Etrog for Best Supporting Actor in 1972 for Bernadette.

Pilon started this interview with a smile, followed by "I have nothing to tell you people . . ."

(Interviewed by Stephen Chesley and A Ibrányi-Kiss.)
"Child Under a Leaf" must have been an enormous challenge for you as an actor — you had an extremely demanding role

Yeah... That was a toughie. I'm very happy with what I did in that movie — for me, personally, it's a success. A lot of credit goes to George Bloomfield. I had full confidence in George and I really leaned right back on him. That script is a very personal thing with him. There's not that much of me in that picture — there's a lot of George. We became very close

friends. He was there all the way and directed me as a director should direct a male character.

Everything would be ready and he would put me in the situation. He would talk about Joseph and his life and build it up - and that would bring back memories of things in my life which had hurt me very much. I was so close to him that I lived his hurt and misery. I could make myself very much like Joseph but never completely lose myself . . . It was more like Donald Pilon understanding very, very much the hurt of that fellow. That was the type of feeling. That's what I discovered in this movie. It was another step, like Les Males was another step. That's one of my favourites because that's when I discovered I could start being somebody else. A little bit. I could see that happening. That's what I mean by discovering, because I've never been to theatre school. I started making movies in 1967 when I was twenty-eight years old. Before, I was doing many things, but they were jobs to make money. To survive. Making films opened new horizons for me, a world I didn't know anything about. I discovered I could do something I really enjoyed that I couldn't even call "work". I' ve been relatively happy since I've been making films.

And you've been working very regularly since then . . .

Well, I started with Gilles Carle on his first film outside the

National Film Board, Léopold Z. Then the CFDC came in and then Denys Héroux made a couple of films that proved you could make money making films in Quebec. So there was a bit of a crest and I rode it. But these guys were in the same situation I was in — everybody was learning. They had done a lot of shooting — mainly slow zooms on quiet seagulls for the National Film Board — but now they were working in the private sector. The director would come on the set and you'd sense he was groping . . . He hadn't slept the night before worrying about how the hell he'd shoot this next scene. Everybody was learning!

Which directors do you like working with most?

I like to work with Gilles Carle. I personally enjoy working with that man and I really like him very much... Pierre Harel, who made Bulldozer — which was released two years after it was shot — he has great potential and I like working with him. Denys Arcand is a guy I've worked with just a little bit, but I'd like to work with him. I like Don Owen very much — as a man and the way he operates. I've worked in Canada and I've worked in Québec, so there are quite a few directors . . . I'd like to make a cowboy movie. A Leone or something like that. That would be different.

Do you have any other unfulfilled ambitions?

I'm not really ambitious. I'm not a very hard worker, and I try to live day by day. If I'm happy today and tomorrow looks alright — that's okay with me. It's really not more complicated than that. If I'd tell you something else, I'd have to make it up. That's how it is. I'm doing something I like and what's important is if I'm satisfied. I've done films I was very unhappy with and they've become great successes. Take a film like Deux Femmes en Or which has made about three million dollars for an investment of \$240,000. In Québec, that film went on and on, it was still playing all summer. This year! For that amount of money, in Québec, everyone has seen it three times! But I'm not happpy — it's not one of my favourite films. There are scenes in there that I don't even want to think about!

Jutra once said that coming to Toronto was like going to a foreign country — did you feel that way while you were here for the "Collaborators" series?

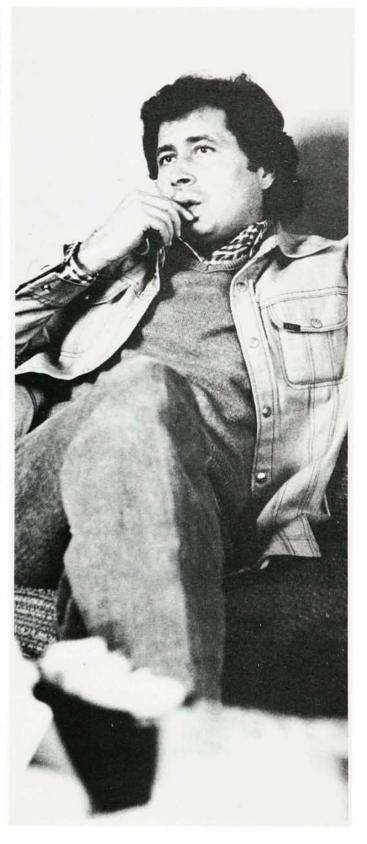
Not at all. I enjoyed Toronto. I've met some fantastic people and the food is fine and it's a beautiful town. I even refused a film in France because I wanted to do this Collaborators series. It was just an instinct, a feeling in my guts that I wanted to come and work here. That's the way I think, I knew of Don Shebib, Don Owen, Stan Olsen and Peter Carter but I had never worked with them. This gave me a chance to work with these people and get to know them, and learn about the CBC - that's an experience! If I were offered a fantastic chance to work in France or the States or England or whatever, I would take it. I really don't have that thing that it's got to happen here. It might continue and I could continue working here - fine. That would be a lot of fun. So I enjoyed all this. But I'm very happy to go back home. I love Québec very much. I bought a house there and I have a little bit of land and I will always go back to that. I need the contact with other Québécois, that's something very special. But that will not stop me from going out and discovering the world.

Do you get reproached for that attitude and for working in English?

Probably, in some circles, but that's not my problem. It doesn't bother me. There are a lot of people who are café intellectuals and they sit and write their little papers and they're going to change the world... But you offer them a position with the Los Angeles Times and the guy's gonna move, my friend, so fast! Not all of them, but some circles... Some people don't work in film — they work in politics.

Maybe that's necessary too . . .

It is necessary, but I respect them and they should respect me



and what I'm doing.

What has happened is that instead of us being one circle, it's gotten to be a few circles. We all have our problems and differences but we're working at it. But there is one thing I am sure of — if the moment comes when we all have to rally — I'd be on the next plane to Québec. It's still there...

-A. Ibránvi-Kiss





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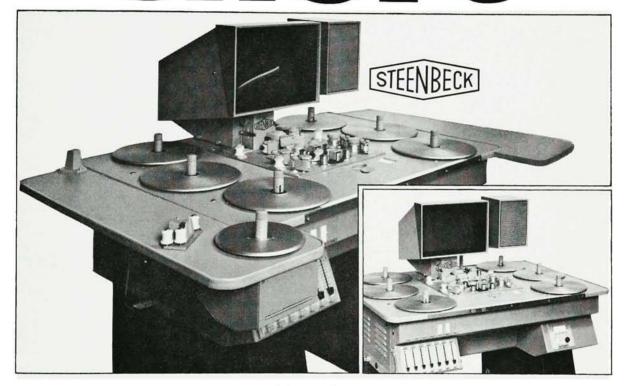
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