

Montreal *Gazette*, and it's strange to see how little imaginative use he is able to make of that experience.

The story is set in the middle of the struggle to establish the newspaper guild, against the unscrupulous opposition of owners and editors. Harry Barnes, our goofy, virginal anti-hero, has no political ideas to rub together, but the Girl he Loves is a guild organizer, and in order to win her esteem he reads a little Lenin. With this intellectual equipment, plus a few shots of rye, he surprises himself and everyone else by delivering a passionate speech to his colleagues, snubbing the apoplectic editor, and inspiring a confident solidarity. A union is born.

Rather a good moment. Makes you want to cheer, like those scenes in schoolboy movies when the timidest boy in the class finally leads an attack on the sadistic headmaster. But the script pushes the moment over the brink into farce, and the scene collapses into a silly rough-house, with people spraying the fire hose all over the office.

Harry hasn't "acted himself into a new way of thinking"; the film sticks to its comic premise that courageous radical action is the accidental by-product of male courtship rituals. Maybe that is essentially what Weintraub believes, in which case the film's vacuous nihilism has at least the virtue of sincerity. But if he doesn't believe that, and has adopted the idea simply in an effort to be funny, then it betrays a pathetic failure of the imagination.

And I'm not saying that everyone has to be solemn and respectful about radicalism. The theory and practice of radical activists cries out to be satirized, if only to 'expose the contradictions' of people whose vocation is exposing those of everyone else. But to satirize something you have to be interested in it; you have to know its real strengths and weaknesses. The authors of *Why Rock the Boat?* might just as well satirize the Catholic Church by implying that all nuns are sexually frustrated — which is possible, unlikely, and as an idea *trivial*.

Well, they will say, but the point was not to satirize anything, but to make a fun film with some honest-to-goodness laughs. So we have yet another film about a goofy guy's stumblebum attempts to get laid. Why do Canadian film-makers find this so funny? (It's the theme of *Foxy Lady*, *Rip-Off*, and the genuinely funny *Chester Angus Ramsgood*, while the type makes another appearance in Markson's *Monkeys*.) I suppose more men than would care to admit it find themselves identifying with the humiliating pangs of despised lust. But a film has to do something

inventive with this material. *Why Rock the Boat?* takes us through the familiar frustrations and longueurs, and eventually propels the voyaging prick into the welcoming harbour of Patricia Gage (the city-editor's wife), who has the dubious pleasure of taking that long-preserved virginity. The nicest moment in the movie occurs when Harry gigglingly admits this conquest to his friend Ronnie, photographer and stick-man. Stuart Gillard's acting sometimes has an engaging authenticity.

Not so Julia, the girl of his dreams. As played by Tiiu Leek she is singularly lacking in warmth or genuineness. In an interview in *Cinema Canada No. 15*, Weintraub declares that his screenplay is "more generous" than his 1961 novel, in that he now allows the guy to get the girl. If Julia were sexually attractive, personally likeable, or credibly admirable as a radical consciousness, there might be some generosity in matching her with our young reporter. As it is, the conclusion of the film looks like throwing a cub to the Christians.

— Robert Fothergill

The Hard Part Begins

Directed by Paul Lynch, with Donnelly Rhodes, Nancy Belle Fuller and Paul Bradley.

If American hucksterism has accustomed us to the bloated claims of Hollywood, so Canadian hatred of hyperbole has encouraged the celebration of a tight-lipped quietism. We admire the small and true, praising those mirrors that reflect harmless angles of our society while forgetting that art is the things we do with gained reality not the capturing of its pale image. In many ways *The Hard Part Begins* is a fine directorial debut for Paul Lynch and a measure of its success is that the film makes one wish that it had risked more; aimed a little higher.

Set in southern Ontario the film follows a country singer, Jim King, back to his home town, now just another dismal stop in a career that lives on dreams of Nashville while facing indifferent beer-swilling faces in half-empty clubrooms. During a week of such outrageous fortune that John Hunter's script reads like a caricature of *The Great Canadian Losers* theme, King watches an old friend dying, has his dreams of a Toronto recording contract smashed, loses girlfriend and partner, becomes once more embroiled in the slings and arrows of old family responsibilities and, to round off the week, is beaten up. Jim King will go on, for pride and hopes leave no alternatives and the pleasures of the film particularly Donnelly Rhodes' fine and powerful

performance as King is that we come to care for this tired, battle-worn man. Surrounded but rarely supported by Nancy Belle Fuller as Jenny, the talented girlfriend, and Paul Bradley as the vulgar side-kick, Rhodes' performance shines with memorable truth. A truth gained despite a script that seldom allows the actor the luxury of creative invention, and a director who is clearly insecure with the more revealing moments of an actor's craft.

But Lynch has other skills to offer, especially a good understanding of action. All the musical sequences ring with quiet conviction. So also does a fight sequence that, leading from a fine exuberant solo by Paul Bradley, ends on a quiet note of reality that in a single shot rubs the excitement of the action with the taste of truth and place that is one of the small joys of the film. It is in the quieter scenes that Lynch seems unable to break from the banalities of the script and an obvious awareness of the material's triteness and his own limitations really doesn't help. In almost all the emotional scenes the direction fails to add that stamp of authority and intelligence that would take the viewer past the flat reality of the screen into the heady world of imagination and understanding. Occasionally this passiveness works, as in a harsh and bitter moment between King and his ex-wife where limited means and the viewers sympathy mesh, and the effort, like the words and gestures, lies helpless before the hurt of old wounds and rekindled pain. But by delivering so grudgingly in the scenes that work, false notes and small insecurities become all the more obvious in sections that don't, as in the next pivotal clash between King and his angry son. By couching the performances in the reticent language of master shots, conservative angles and taut editing Lynch draws undue attention to the structure and technique, which, spawned from television documentaries, too often mistakes tired generalities and hackneyed thinking for local colour. Away from the intelligence of Rhodes' face, parts break away from the fabric of the whole leaving "meaningful" pulled focus that arrive only to reveal other linking shots; overlapping scenes that add nothing to the story and cut-aways that prettify in order to look ugly.

Great film is the unity of thought and feeling through action and while one grows to respect the director's effort in this film he never manages to break away from the faulty looking-glass that is the camera lens. *The Hard Part Begins* is often an honest portrait of a sordid world and a fine frame for a moving performance by Donnelly

Rhodes. We can only hope that Paul Lynch's next film will come soon and stretch further.

—Alastair Brown

Les Ordres

The knock in the middle of the night

Written and directed by Michel Brault, Edited by Yves Dion, Camerawork by Michel Brault and François Protat, with: Helene Loiselle, Jean Lapointe, Guy Provost, Claude Gauthier and Louise Forestier.

At 5:17 a.m. on the morning of October 16, 1970, I was watching television. It was quite a funny program, a bit like Orson Welles radio program supposedly about the invasion of the Earth by Martians. This one was called "The War Measures Act," but unlike Welles' production of thirty years earlier, this one wasn't particularly believable — people en masse being arrested and held without trial; soldiers with sub-machine guns at the corner of Peel and St. Catherine. It was just a bit too far-fetched — this is Canada, after all, British system of justice, nice wide roads, street lamps, colour television, pizza parlors — I mean, I know it might sound a little trite, but surely "it can't happen here."

But for 450 other totally innocent people, the spectacle was a little more involving, because for them that famous knock in the middle of the night that's only supposed to happen in Russia and Nazi Germany, had already happened. One minute at home changing the baby's diapers, the next minute stripped

Scene from "Les Ordres"



naked, hands up against the wall of some anonymous garage, with someone looking up your ass with a flashlight.

Michel Brault's *Les Ordres* ("The Orders" as in "I was only following...") is a film that probably will not be shown commercially in Toronto or Edmonton or Vancouver. Maybe there will not even be an English version. Not that the film lacks drama and not that it is

not well made — it's easily one of the most subtle moving films that I have seen this year — but, you see, the story that this film relates could not really interest people in Toronto or Edmonton or Vancouver because, let's face it, it certainly couldn't happen there. Except for one small fact — it already did. For the law that (in gentle bureaucratise) "suspended" the rights of those 450 Quebecers also suspended the rights of all Canadians. The only difference was that it was they that were stripped, showered, shaven and fingerprinted and thrown into a cell without a word of explanation while you and I watched on television thinking, "well anyways, it has nothing to do with me."

Michel Brault's film, however, provides no such emotional loopholes, so perhaps it's lucky that you probably will never get to see it. The film isn't out to prove anything beyond what the events themselves proved. It is the story of five individuals culled from verbatim interviews with over forty people who, like the rest, had been imprisoned and held without being formally charged. At the beginning of the film the well known Quebec actors give their real names and describe who they are representing in the film — a social worker, union organizer, a doctor and a housewife. This is done not through any Godardian razz mataz, but simply because they are telling the truth. And the stories that follow are not souped up to be any sort of epic tragedy because the simple fact was, that for most of the people arrested, the experience was no more than a minor nuisance (especially when put beside what's happening to other people in other countries.)

Nobody was tortured particularly, and in general everything operated with exemplary efficiency — oh ya well there was this unemployed guy, married with two small children and the prison guards jokingly told him that he would be shot in three days (you know boys will be boys) and he believed them! Isn't that a scream! But maybe after five days locked up in a cell with no explanation, when the worst thing that you had ever done in your life was to drink a few too many beers — maybe even someone from Winnipeg might start to believe that anything is possible. And the fact that he had to enter a mental hospital after he was released — well who knows, maybe he would have gone a little looney anyways sitting at home watching television. You see, there are no real horror stories coming out of this particular reign of terror — a few husbands separated from pregnant wives, mothers separated from their children and people arrested through clerical error. Much worse things have happened.

Look at films like *Battle of Algiers* or *Burn*; now here are injustices that we can really get our political teeth into! But strangely enough, Michel Brault's was much more effective because there is something packaged about a drama, and something packaged about your response to it that makes the experience artificial. For in these dramatic films, with everything sewed up and nothing left dangling, we can all smugly retire to our coffee houses with a comfortable feeling of enagement. *Les Ordres* is different. It is haunting like no other political film partly because it's so close to home and partly because it's so understatedly real. When no one gets killed or tortured we are reduced to mild words like humiliation and injustice. But anyone who has read the history books knows that this is how it happens — Nazi Berlin wasn't built in a day. One of the big things in Canadian law is precedent, and because it could happen so effortlessly four years ago, ("Daddy, what were you doing during the War Measures Act?") it could happen again. Brault's subtle camera and his portrayal of these five ordinary John Smiths makes it bloody difficult to feel smug about anything.

—Ronald Blumer

The Lost Tribe

On his last day of work as early morning film reviewer with the CBC in Montreal, Associate Editor Ronald Blumer decided to try out a little test — to give a review of a phony film with an absurd plot and see if anyone would react. The thesis was that if the cadence of the voice is right, and the whole packaged in the right style, any imaginable absurdity could get by. The following review was broadcast Friday August 30, 1974 at 8:15 a.m. So far as we know the only question asked was, how can we see this movie? Mr. Blumer is currently on Baffin Island scouting locations.

The second film I saw this week, *The Lost Tribe*, is a first feature film by the young Vancouver director John Schouten. The film is worth seeing if only for its rather unusual script because the story presents the astounding thesis that the Eskimos of Northern Canada are in fact one of the lost tribes of Israel — presumably they strayed a little North on their way out of Egypt. The amazing thing is that *this* unlikely story comes across totally convincingly with Murry Westgate giving a powerfully moving performance as the village leader; a sort of Moses in seal skins, who has led his people out of the desert into the barren frozen tundra. But the real star of this film is the special effects man, who has turned this vast biblical metaphor into something very believable on the screen. There is, of course, no parting of the Red Sea in the Arctic Ocean,