



Though from vastly different backgrounds, Will Sampson and Charlie Fields find a common ground in **Fish Hawk** (photo: John Williamson)

discomforted audiences, but frequently indicated unusual talent. Shebib freely admits that **Fish Hawk** is an assignment film, and that he appreciates the opportunity to work on, rather than promote his own project *ad frustrating infinitum*. Perhaps he made **Fish Hawk** to prove to the industry that he no longer wanted to be considered an outsider. One can't condemn a filmmaker for wanting to make a living, but if a **Fish Hawk** is the price for coming in out of the cold.....it's a hell of a price.

If **Fish Hawk** is not a director's picture, it is a producer's picture. Producer Jon Slan has aimed for a family audience — and with Indian actor Will Sampson (**One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**), for a U.S. television sale. Slan starts with a good central idea, but the Blanche Hanalis script is terrible. (The script is based on a novel by Mitchell Jayne.) The screenwriter has set out to write a simple, warm-hearted story but has fallen into the usual traps. Simple-mindedness, instead of simplicity surrounds the characters. They speak too much, the message conveyed in dialogue instead of action. The dialogue itself is cute, easy: you know, the sort of lingo that supposedly makes Andy Hardy sophisticated. The drama produces stereotyped opposites pitted against one another. A well-intentioned script be-

comes simplicity run amok. Unfortunately the other elements of the film don't rise above the level set by the script. I've read numerous comments about the stylish photography in **Fish Hawk**, its beauty, its evocation of rural Ontario eighty years ago. Bunk! The film has no period feel about it. It looks like the Caledon Hills in the fall of 1979. There isn't even seasonal variation, reminding us that this film was shot on a tight production schedule. Whether this is the result of cost-cutting production priorities, or simply a lack of creative art

direction, the film exhibits the producer's hand. There *have* been other evocative period films made in Canada: **Mon Oncle Antoine**, **Kamouraska**, **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz**, all considerably cheaper to produce than **Fish Hawk**. There's a problem when a period film has no period. But back to the direction for a moment: it's no more than competent. The film has a professional veneer. The action sequences are reasonably well-staged, the actors performing their tasks adequately, but only Geoffrey Bowes as the town half-wit moves us. None of the other actors are pushed to project that sub-text of life going on behind their words and actions. In this, the director has failed to animate interaction between the characters. What you see is what you get. Except that Will Sampson, as Fish Hawk, *does* have a sense of presence. He projects an elusive larger-than-life quality, and his charisma helps the film. But what has happened to Don Shebib? **Fish Hawk** is a mediocre representation from the new wave of big-budget, Canadian filmmaking. The film won a Peace Prize at the Moscow Film Festival this year, a decision as adventurous as the experience of the film.

Ken Dancyger

## George Mendeluk's Stone Cold Dead

d. George Mendeluk sc. George Mendeluk ph. Dennis Miller ed. Martin Pepler sd. Donald Cohen m. Paul Zaza l.p. Richard Crenna, Paul Williams, Linda Sorensen, Belinda J. Mont-

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gomery, Monique Mercure *exec. p.* Peter Wilson *p.* John Ryan, George Mendeluk *assoc. p.* Larry Frolick *p.c.* Ko-Zak Productions Inc. (1978) col. 35mm **running time** 110 min. **dist.** Astral Films.

Years ago, I saw a movie called **Astro Zombies**, a real cheapie with John Caradine making monsters in the basement while spies chased after the secret formula. It was truly awful, but it had one peculiar, memorable quality: every so often, it would instantly and without warning, stop being one kind of fantasy -- cliched science fiction for nine-year-olds, and become another -- cliched soft-core pornography for the raincoat-in-the-lap brigade. This wondrous transformation was wrought single-handedly by the woman who played the chief spy. Though she did nothing out of keeping with the rest of the movie, she was so charged with sleaze that the instant she appeared **Astro Zombies** became a whole different movie, with no connection but the plot, to what it had been before.

Similar shifts occur in **Stone Cold Dead**.

The main fantasy revolves around Boyd (Richard Crenna), a plain-clothes cop with a hangdog face and a trench-coat. He's assigned to stop the sniper who's killing Yonge St. hookers, and he's obsessed with busting Kurtz, a big-time

pimp and pusher. He enlists Monica, an uptown call girl, and McGuire, an undercover cop posing as a hooker, in his crusade. After the usual killings, clues, suspects and fights, he finally uncovers the secret identity of the mad killer.

If you think you've seen this one before, You're right! **Kojak** with overtones of David Janssen in **Harry O**: picturesque trash and neon lights. It's "Down these mean streets a man must go, who is not himself mean..."

The second fantasy centres on Kurtz, played by Paul Williams, with that sort of low-key menace associated with Orson Welles -- whom Williams begins to resemble a weird parody of. We first meet Kurtz in a low-angle two-shot. He sits on a sofa, bored, while a blonde kneels before him to do his fingernails. When she's finished, she raises his hand to her lips, puckers, and we cut to a high-angle close-up, a classic voyeur shot into her use-me use-me eyes -- a vicarious little taste of what Kurtz experiences while she gently, gently exhales steamy breath onto his fingertips. Kurtz is such a super-pimp that he has underlings to do the actual work, and a giant shaveheaded black man to do the killings that he orders with oblique, arch-Socratic dialogue.

Sound familiar? How about **The Man from U.N.C.L.E.**, or Victor Buono as the heavy in some Matt Helm epic, or Orson

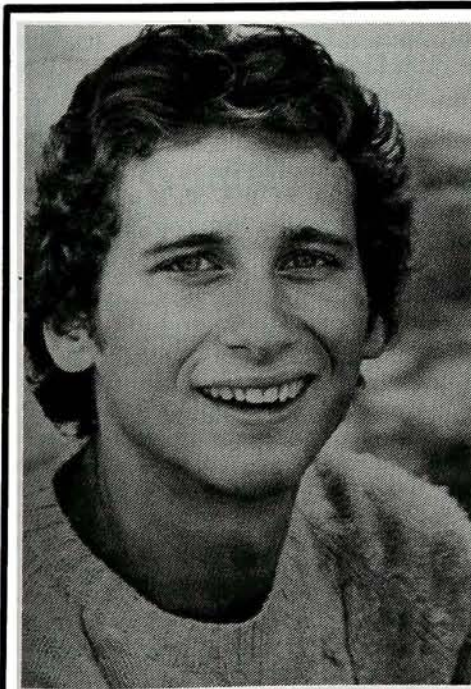
Welles in **Casino Royale**, or a thousand other tacky James Bond imitations.

Scenes with Kurtz and Boyd together underline the incompatibility of these two fantasies. Boyd treats Kurtz to a mild form of routine police harassment, the kind of harassment that if Boyd's world were fully dominant, would just never happen. Kurtz would be too sensible to ever go near Yonge St. and too well-insulated for Boyd to ever get near him. On the other hand, if it were all happening in Kurtz' world, as soon as Boyd became a big enough nuisance, he'd be snuffed out as casually as Kurtz snuffs two other cops.

The Boyd/Kurtz axis is far from being the only nonsense in **Stone Cold Dead**. Consider the sniper who, with Boyd in hot pursuit, stops to change coats. Why? Who knows. All it does is weaken the effect of the chase. Or, there's the hooker who picks up a trick, charges him for a straight lay and then agrees to whip him, for no extra fee. Hookers just don't do that. Extra services, especially kinky ones, always cost. Then there's the hooker, talking tough to a pimp, who says she's "into heroin". They don't call it heroin, George, like grass smokers don't call it 'marijuana'. If you love your drug, you have a pet name for it. Or there's the sniper's rifle -- a beautiful, sexy, evil piece of custom-built death that would never, never come into the hands of the killer: another killer, maybe, but not this one. There's Boyd, making a speech about whores, pimps and pushers that ends with him wondering what he's doing there. Obsessed people, and that's what the script insists Boyd is, don't wonder. They *know* what they're doing there. They also don't appear anywhere near as valium'd out as Richard Crenna; their obsessions give them energy --lots of it.

I could go on, and on, and on... The absurdity of Boyd giving Monica her full night's fee to keep her off the street, when it's already well-established that she doesn't work the street. The greater absurdity of Monica, who has no reason to like Boyd, returning it next morning. The point I'm trying to make is that **Stone Cold Dead** is mostly a mess, because George Mendeluk, who produced, directed and did the screenplay got his ideas from old T.V. shows, and didn't know enough, or care enough, to put in the simple research and thought that would have made his ideas hang together.

On the other hand. Belinda J. Montgomery cares. She




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plays the woman who -- for what must be fascinatingly twisted, personal reasons -- lives, not imitates, the life of a street-walker. Ms. Montgomery, Andrea Cousineau, Maria Clark and the others who enact hookers, strippers and butch pimps have their roles down cold. They have the expression and the stance that clearly reads "Available: Reasonable Rates." They have the explosive speech and the cracked voices, the jumpy, stabbing mannerisms of aggression masking other feelings. They are the unsentimentalized, unglamorized embodiment of the downtown Toronto streetwalker. Utterly believable. Try to remember the last true-to-life hooker you saw in a fictional film.

Despite their merits, Belinda J. Montgomery and company aren't enough to save *Stone Cold Dead*. They simply aren't on screen enough. And, by the time the film is in general release, they may be on screen even less. The version, I'm reviewing here, was the director's cut, shown at the Festival of Festivals. There's a chance that, by the time various producers, distributors and censors finish with it, *Stone Cold Dead* will have lost some of those very scenes that prevent it from being a stone, cold, dead waste of time.

Andrew Dowler

## Julius Kohanyi's *Summer's Children*

d. Julius Kohanyi asst. d. Steve Wright, Bryan Gliserman sc. Jim Osborne cont. Lisa Wilder gaf. Jock Brandis cam. Richard Wincenty, Carl Harvey ed. Fred Brennan sup. ed. Michal C. Manne sd. Ingrid Cusiel elec. Scotty Allan props. Christophe Bonniere grip. David Hynes a.d. Terry Crack boom. Andrew Dowler m. Chris Stone Audio cast. Elinor Galbraith make-up Sandra Duncan l.p. Thomas Hauff, Paulty Jardine, Don Francks, Kate Lynch, Patricia Collins, Ken James, Wayne Best, Kay Hawtrey, Brian Miller, Marilyn Harris. p. Don Haig assoc. p. Nelson A Smith p. man. Sally Dundas p.c. Haha Productions, Haig-King Film Arts (1978) col. 35 mm. running time 90 min. dist. New Cinema Entreprises

It was evident after the screening of *Summer's Children* at this year's Festival of Festivals, that Julius Kohanyi's apprehensions about opening his first feature in Canada were, to an extent justified. No



Ready for the second round in *Summer's Children* (photo: Jack Rowand)

doubt members of the audience were aware that the central focus of the film was an incestuous relationship between a brother and sister. Perhaps they had also read *Variety's* description of it as an example of "new screen liberalism," always a tantalizing subject in Ontario with its censorial vigilance.

But, if they were expecting a story on the lines of *Mumur of the Heart* or *Luna*, one can understand their disappointment. For this film is solidly set in the Canadian, rather than the European, context of repression and guilt.

From the beginning, the film shows its links to this tradition in its dark visual style. A young man packs his bags in a dimly lit room. He walks out of a typical, southern Ontario farmhouse, gets into his blue Mustang and drives off into the night. Standing on the porch, bathed in light, a young woman in a white nightgown stares after him. The man drives erratically along the highway and crashes. He is seen slumped against the wheel, with blood seeping from a wound in his neck.

After these striking images, a rather mysterious sequence is shown under the titles. It is still night, and a Mustang is being towed along the streets of Toronto. After the scene has ended one discovers that it is, in fact, *another* car, and that the man from the previous scene is now working for the garage that owns the tow

truck. Here, the story proper begins, and the man is Steve Linton (Thomas Hauff) who now lives in the city, unaware that the woman in the first scene, his sister Jennie (Paulty Jardine), has followed him. When he finds out, he determines to seek her out. As Steve goes through the seedy downtown environments, his guide is a strange character he meets in a beer parlor. Albert, Don Francks, who calls himself The Professor, is a small-time bookie in a shabby white suit, with a fair share of street cynicism.

In his treatment of the search, Kohanyi has made a significant visual decision which clearly sets the tone of the film. This description of the city's underside diverges from the "film noir" style of those directors influenced by Samuel Fuller: a style which has become a sort of visual orthodoxy through its application by Martin Scorsese in *Mean Streets* and *Taxi Driver*, Paul Schrader in *Blue Collar* and *Hardcore*, James Torback in *Fingers*, and Philip Kaufman in *The Wanderers*. Canadian applications of what might be called 'Michael Chapman sleaze' can be seen in *Drying Up The Streets* and *Stone Cold Dead*. *Summer's Children*, however, with Josef Seckeresh's understated photography of the street scenes creates a quieter, more naturalistic atmosphere. The corruption and decay of the Toronto strip area are suggested without the exaggeration to which Robin Spry and George Mendeluk