

on-line cut took 20 hours.

The music came together smoothly. John Mills-Cockell, at the time doing a show at Toronto Free Theatre, wrote the original score in two days. "It was like a Christmas gift," said Griffiths. Two Rolling Stones songs were used in the show, "Paint It Black" and "Wild Horses", but those aren't the Stones on the soundtrack. Producer Butler put together a sound-alike band and recorded the tunes at Comfort Sound in Toronto — and he says he hasn't met anyone yet who can tell the difference.

Pickford, a Canadian who spent eight years working in Los Angeles for the U.S. television industry, says *Maggie & Pierre* changed his outlook on Canadian production. "It really illustrates what can

be done in TV, and what can be done by film personnel in TV." When he was in Hollywood in 1982, says Pickford, "Film people were just starting to realize they'd better learn video if they wanted to continue editing. In the late seventies, video was considered a toy. Only recently has there been recognition (from film people) of its real potential for artistic expression."

First Choice has licenced the show essentially for five years. The pay network has it exclusively the first two years, except for eight playdates on TVOntario in year two. It's available to broadcast TV the third year, and Global has bought one playdate for Ontario. First Choice re-acquires it in years four and five. Video cassette right are avail-

able at the end of the first year.

No TV sale has been made to the United States or Europe, though a British distributor, London Films, is handling European sales and Butler travelled to MIP-TV in Cannes this spring to promote the show. Though he says it's "reasonably possible to get all its costs back in Canada," Butler is hopeful *Maggie & Pierre* can also be successful in foreign markets. "It's as handsome as anything produced by BBC or the U.S. networks. I've seen nothing that makes it look pale. The only thing standing in its way on the international market is its subject matter. Some people might feel it's too Canadian for a foreign audience."

If anything disappoints Griffiths, it's public misconceptions of her play.

"People who don't know the show think it's tied to current events and assume it's no longer relevant today. I feel the show can surface in five years and be able to stand on its own." And please, says the actress, don't call it satire. "I hate that word and its connotation that the play is spiteful." Director Lavut agrees: the show, subtitled "A fantasy of love, politics, and the media," is not really satire, preferring instead the term romance. "Some of it is funny, but it's not an anti-Trudeau diatribe. It's a feminist look at Canadian history." Whatever you choose to call it, if time proves that the only good thing produced by Canadian pay-TV's first year is *Maggie & Pierre*, it's a legacy the whole country can be proud of.

Martin Lavut's *Maggie & Pierre*

It often seems Canadian television dramas have existed exclusively in the realistic mode, the country's most influential genre being docudrama, those issue-oriented hybrids of fiction and fact which frequently achieve neither. Perhaps that's why the pay-TV adaptation of Linda Griffiths and Paul Thompson's hit play *Maggie & Pierre* feels so refreshingly different: though its subject is undisputedly factual, its approach is decidedly *not* realistic. Expressionistic, poetic, even surreal might better describe this magnificent one-person show starring Griffiths and directed by Martin Lavut.

This TV production has risen impressively to the original material: not since *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* has the English Canadian production industry so skillfully transformed such a hard piece of cultural currency to the screen. In both cases, not surprisingly, the original authors contributed greatly to the success. Linda Griffiths' tremendous resourcefulness as an actress shows fully here as she accomplishes three roles, two of them men, one the Prime Minister of Canada. If that's not enough, as co-author (with Paul Thompson) she has pared down the screenplay to a lean and efficient 75 minutes. Not padded to meet network time requirements, the shortened stage script achieves a taut TV rhythm of its own.

For director Lavut, whose film *Bruce Cockburn: Rumours of Glory* was that cinematic rarity, the compelling rock concert documentary, *Maggie & Pierre* represents another triumph in a perilous genre. Plays can start slowly: the audience has paid good money for their seats and no one's going to walk out after 15 minutes. On television, though, especially cable TV where converters have spawned a corps of "zappers" ready to change channels at the slightest provocation, programs must grab the audience immediately and hold them. How? It can "jolt" them with titillating bits — some sitcom analysts prescribe a success formula of one jolt every seven seconds — or do it the old-fashioned way, mixing quality writing and performance with compelling cinematic technique.

Lavut has taken the hard road. An avid photographer, he has placed great emphasis on the production's visual approach, designing fluid camera moves and striking lighting contrasts more sophisticated than those seen in the

average Canadian feature. He has relied only minimally on realism. The characters evoke the *real* Maggie & Pierre, but verisimilitude is not the intent: when Griffiths delivers Pierre's convention speech, the campaign posters are of her, not the real Pierre Trudeau. Careful attention to detail has been taken in the art direction and set design, as with Maggie's little-girl-perfect pink bedroom or the interiors of 24 Sussex Drive, with the furniture slightly larger than life-size, where the clutter of books, statues, and an inordinate number of portraits smother the scene with historical fixity, evoking the oppressive-ness of power.

The stage show's appealing character transformations have been stunningly accomplished for TV. With the camera on her bare feet as she rolls out of bed, Maggie steps into black oxfords, then into men's trousers, and as the camera pans to her face she has become Henry, trenchcoat on, microphone in hand, pursuing Pierre. In the press club scene, the characters of Maggie and Pierre change back and forth in the same perfectly credible shot through the magic of lighting and Griffiths' performance. For these marvellous transitions alone the show is worth seeing: they indicate a creative refusal not to fall back on the full conventions of realism.

It's ironic the production revives the story's original events on television, the medium which more than any shaped the national consciousness of Pierre and Margaret's public images. Television, which borrows dramatic techniques for its tidy little 90-second newsclips, is plundered by drama for source material: the confrontation on the steps between Henry and Pierre over the War Measures Act is lifted right off the six o'clock news. But the news media's pat assumptions clearly aren't enough to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of Griffiths and Thompson, who move the text a step further — into an imaginary world whose hypotheses nevertheless bear a sharp resemblance to the viewer's own personal experiences.

Though it makes the points that sex is political and politics sexy, the show ultimately succeeds through its hard, unflinching look at the discrepancy between how Canadian society exists and how it perceives itself. It stabs the country's complacency, narcissism, and guilt. Experimenting with "lifestyle", Maggie wonders what to do with her life: "Maybe I'll open a school for retarded children. Maybe I'll join the revolution and the Black Panthers. Maybe I'll drop out and do lots of really good drugs." Whatever her choice, her conscience will torment her: "Margaret, you still sound like a phony." Her insecurity and self-absorption, typically Canadian,

leaves her more worried of what others think than how she feels about herself.

Pierre does not share her insecurities. As an angry young man in Paris, he rises at six each morning to splash his body cold water. "Why? To be strong. What for? To fight. Who? Myself, and whoever else dares me." His determination and individuality bring him to power, but the play asks, What kind of person wants to be Prime Minister? One who envisions a Just Society which will "cast down the totems, break the taboos", or one, intoxicated by the job's uninhibited adulation, shrugs at the camera and says "It's hard to resist."

Maggie and Pierre's May-December marriage ideally could achieve a synthesis of complementary opposites, yet the play offers no grand vision of love. The real terms of their marriage are embodied in Pierre's motto, "Reason Over Passion", and the emotional chasm between them is manifested in Maggie's speech in the garden. "It looks like wings beating underneath the water," she says of raindrops falling on a pond. "Pierre would say, 'No, Margaret, it's just the intersection of the wind and the rain causing that configuration on the surface. But I know it's wings.'"

If Maggie is Passion and Pierre Reason, the third party, Henry the journalist, is Judgment. A passive recorder but active moralizer, Henry fills many functions. On one level, the story can be said to be played out in Henry's imagination, neatly taking the pressure off the show's use of real people and real events. With Henry, the play can explore the parasitic/symbiotic relationship between politicians and journalists, as when Pierre solicits marital advice from Henry. "Don't you have someone else you can talk to, like a friend?" asks the uncomfortable journalist. "No," responds Pierre, surprised at the question.

Canada's mythmakers and pop heroes have more often been journalists than writers and actors (who's *really* the bigger star, Barbara Frum or Gordon Pinsent?) so it's apt that Henry explains the country's attraction to Pierre: he wasn't what Canadians were like, he was what they wished they were like. "Pierre Trudeau? Oh yeah, just another typical Canadian. French? Sure, most of us are *bilingue parfait*. Sexy? It's the long winters." But after the October Crisis, Henry supplies the ammunition to turn this adulation into hatred. "We believed that this was one country that wasn't backed up by guns. He rubbed our noses into the fact that it was." But what exactly was betrayed, freedom or illusion?

After their marriage collapses, Maggie runs off to (where else?) the United States to "have fun" while Pierre shrouds himself in solitude and prayer. In these

final scenes, as Pierre bares his soul to Henry and Maggie delivers a searing indictment on hypocrisy from the Studio 54 dance floor, Griffiths makes the viewer confront her characters' humanity, forcing the audience to suspend moral judgment. She turns the tables, and suddenly it's clear that Pierre and Maggie have been standing in for a vast segment of Canadian society, affluent, complacent, bored, who live in a world of twice-a-year tropical vacations and of running off to Europe with "Five thousand dollars of Daddy's money", a world "run by Mums and Dads in their rented tuxedos and one long dress" where the kids sneak off to the bathroom to smoke a joint.

"Oh, we're so together, aren't we, ladies? We're so on top of it all," says Maggie to her legion of accusers, her voice wicked with sarcasm (her indictment no doubt influences Henry's decision to abandon journalism.) As Maggie dances at Studio 54, oblivious to her detractors, she has finally achieved freedom from the guilt that so tortured her youth. But she has paid her price, and her journey has led only to that den of narcissism, the disco. "Which do you think is my best feature: my legs... or my bum?" asks kinky Maggie, and the audience is allowed the illusion they're off the hook.

The play ends where it began, at a pawn shop under the bridge where Henry now makes his home, the TV set in the window playing the national anthem (the NFB's *Oh Canada* film, no less). The camera pulls back to reveal the crew, sets, and lights: a post-modern admission of the artifice. On the soundtrack, mad Henry's voice rambles: "An amnesia is spreading over the land... But I'll remember." Given the quality, strength, and imagination of this remarkable TV production, audiences will remember, too.

Bruce Malloch

MAGGIE & PIERRE d. Martin Lavut p. Rick Butler sc. Linda Griffiths with Paul Thompson orig. mus. & comp. John Mills-Cockell a.d. Gery Wilkinson creative cons. Paul Thompson orig. prod. Theatre Passe Muraille art. d. Charles Dunlop cost. des. Mary Jane McCarty make-up Shonagh Jabour hair Judy Cooper-Sealy, Ivan Lynch props. Enrico Campana asst. props. Gerry Wilkinson dance choreo. Norrey Drummond p. man. Jane Reid p. sup. Greg Copeland staging sup. Don Mortimer light. cons. Adrian Stewart light d. Adrian Goldberg light. ops. Bruce Whiteford, Tom Fennessey tech. d. Ed Yen audio sup. John McEwen boom Gord Chakra sd. efx. Ralph Cole, Roger Harris, Morgan Earl cam. Simon Dalrymple, Les Medon video Eric Posner, Richard Gundersen VTR Peter Light post-p. cons. Linda Pickford p. assts. Tim Sabourin, Bob Sorger, Ron French TV assts. Pat McEleney, Derwyn Barker grip Michael O'Connor sup. ed. Terry Pickford post audio Greg Zekkou sp. tnx. John Ryan studio rec. Comfort Sound p.c. Tapestry Productions, produced with the participation of the Canadian Film Development Corporation dist. First Choice Canadian Communications Corp. running time 75 min. lp. Linda Griffiths.

Yves Simoneau's

Pourquoi l'étrange Monsieur Zolock s'intéressait-il tant à la bande dessinée ?

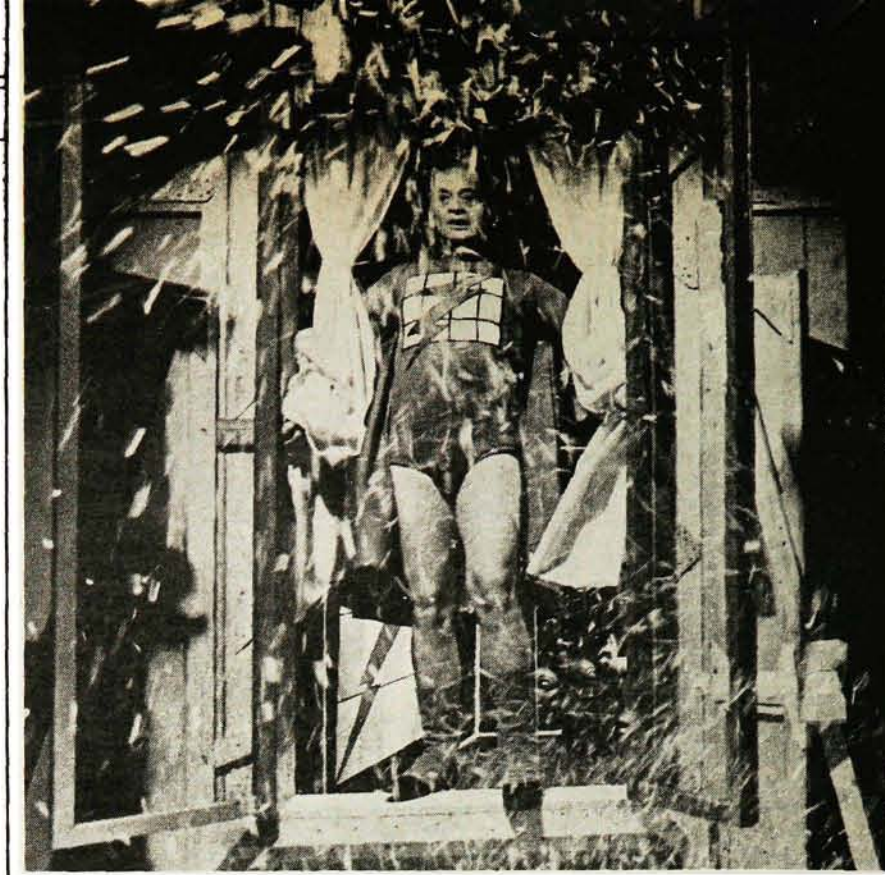
Pourquoi l'étrange Monsieur Zolock s'intéressait-il tant à la bande dessinée ? ... the title intrigues... Mr. WHO, you think, the bande WHAT, you wonder... but there really is no time to wonder. From the moment it bursts onto the screen, this film grabs you by the hand and sends you crashing through the frames of a giant comic strip, introducing you, at reckless speed, to its heroes and villains... and, leaving you, in the end, either baffled or seduced ... if not entirely informed.

Winner of a Special Jury Award at the Banff Television Festival in 1983, as well as a Genie in 1984, *Pourquoi l'étrange Monsieur Zolock...* is directed by Yves Simoneau. And if, nothing else, it pro-

vides proof again that documentaries can be, in form, both dynamic and refreshing.

Like Gilles Carle in *Jouer sa vie*, Simoneau constructs his documentary as a fiction, through the combined use of film footage, animation and dramatization. But, whereas Carle managed to bring out the drama both inherent to the game of chess and surrounding international chess matches, Simoneau's film avoids all controversy and, to my mind, brings out only the blandest facts about the *bande dessinée*.

WHAT, you may ask, IS this "*bande dessinée*" which so intrigues Monsieur Zolock?" This is where the problem starts. Although nowhere in the film is the American comic book mentioned or even alluded to, the *bande dessinée* is essentially a by-product of American comics. The film attributes the origins of the *bande dessinée* to Bécassine (1910), a very linear, frame-illustrated account of the trials and tribulations of a Breton nanny. This may truly be the origins of Tintin, but much more significantly, *bande dessinée* is both inspired by and a reaction against its American counterpart. While the comic book is an integral part of U.S. culture, reflecting its values and its social structure, as well as providing it with heroes, European *bande dessinée* is often a comment on Ame-



● Jean-Louis Millette's Monsieur Zolock in an excess of enthusiasm

rican comic books; highly polished in form and structure, it denounces the American culture portrayed in comics and usually features an anti-hero. In any event, it has become a veritable industry, and can now be found translated and published in American comic books, such as *Heavy Metal*.

However, the fact that Yves Simoneau opts to treat the *bande dessinée* as an isolated phenomenon, although a serious omission, does not detract from the film's other qualities.

So, back to *Pourquoi l'étrange Monsieur Zolock s'intéressait-il tant à la bande dessinée ?*

A fan of both detective stories and comics, Simoneau has cleverly mixed both genres to create a documentary-wrapped-up-in-fiction. Thus, while introducing us to some twenty French, Belgian and Québec *bande dessinée* creators, *Pourquoi* weaves its own comic-strip style storyline complete with villain, sci-fi settings and moralistic dénouement. The interviews therefore become only one of the elements of a fiction.

As the film opens, the villainous Monsieur Zolock (Jean-Louis Millette) is found asking the naive Dieudonné (Michel Rivard) to report on what he has found since being hired to penetrate the mysteries of the *bandes dessinées*. This sets the stage for a series of interviews, seen as flashbacks, where some of the great names in the field—Greg, Moebius, Bilal, Gaboury, Fred, Reiser and others—talk about their work, their methods and their objectives. Moving swiftly, the camera catches them at different angles in a succession of zooms, close-ups, pans, side and overhead shots. And, as it closes in on Claire Brétécher's face, travels alongside Christin and Goetzinger, plunges down on Druillet at work in his studio and pans over the printed page, it recreates the quick-paced plane and perspective changes of the comic strip.

Simoneau travels playfully through the dimensions of reality, bringing the heroes to life while reducing their creators to comic strip characters, all the while maintaining unity through imaginative editing and subtle music and sound effects.

There's no need to be an ardent fan to enjoy all this... still, it may help. If you are totally immune to the visual style and the pop cultural appeal of the comic

strip, you might be a hard candidate to win over, especially where the dramatization is concerned. Mixing different art forms is no mean trick in itself, but transposing the comic strip into the three-dimensional is virtually impossible. It certainly demands a great act of faith on the part of the viewer, and I, for one, had to pause and reflect before agreeing to play the game... to cast my vote for Mr. Zolock. Even then, I would have liked to see more of the work and heard less of the explanations.

As the film sheds light on the *bande dessinée*, Monsieur Zolock's intentions become clearer; the documentary serves to unfold the narrative, and vice-versa. But at the end, the artifice becomes too apparent. One wonders which of the rather banal observations has impelled Monsieur Zolock to jump through the window proclaiming "J'ai réussi à traverser la page... à moi, le monde." Was it because Bilal creates atmosphere with colour, or perhaps because Brétécher hates routine, or maybe because Astérix has grossed 100 million dollars in one year (that's reason enough)... No, I think the dice was loaded from the beginning. Our Monsieur Zolock knew from the start that, as the villain, he would try and conquer all... and this is what really pushed him to try and fly like Superman. Or maybe it was just an excess of enthusiasm for *bande dessinée*, brought on by a film that tries a little too hard, and says a little too little.

Josée Miville-Dechêne ●

POURQUOI L'ÉTRANGE MONSIEUR ZOLOCK S'INTÉRESSAIT-IL TANT À LA BANDE DESSINÉE?

d. Yves Simoneau p. Nicole M. Boisvert res. & sc. Marie-Loup Simon cam. Jean-Louis Chevrefils. Abel Kane cam. asst. Pierre Pelletier sd. Jean-Guy Bergeron ed. François Dupuis a.d. & p.man. Lucie Paquet mus. Michel Descombes stills Claudel Huot cost. Georges Lévesque masks and mural Paul Colpron add. sd. Michel Charron logo concept Geoffroi de Bontemps set des. Vianney Gauthier make-up Jasmine Desjardins hair Alain Thiboutot props Pierre Masse key grip Eloi Deraspe gaffer Jean-Paul Houle p. asst. Stéphane Wells graphics Real Godbout titles Josée Perreault, Réal Godbout puppets Micheline Legendre image cons. Yves Millet mus. ed. Jules Le Noir animation Groupe Film Opticals lab. Bellevue-Pathé running time: 90 mins. colour 16 mm dist. Filmoption Internationale Inc. (514) 931-6180 lp. Jean-Louis Millette, Michel Rivard, Yves Desgagnés, Paul Colpron, Jasmine Desjardins.

BETACAM is Production!

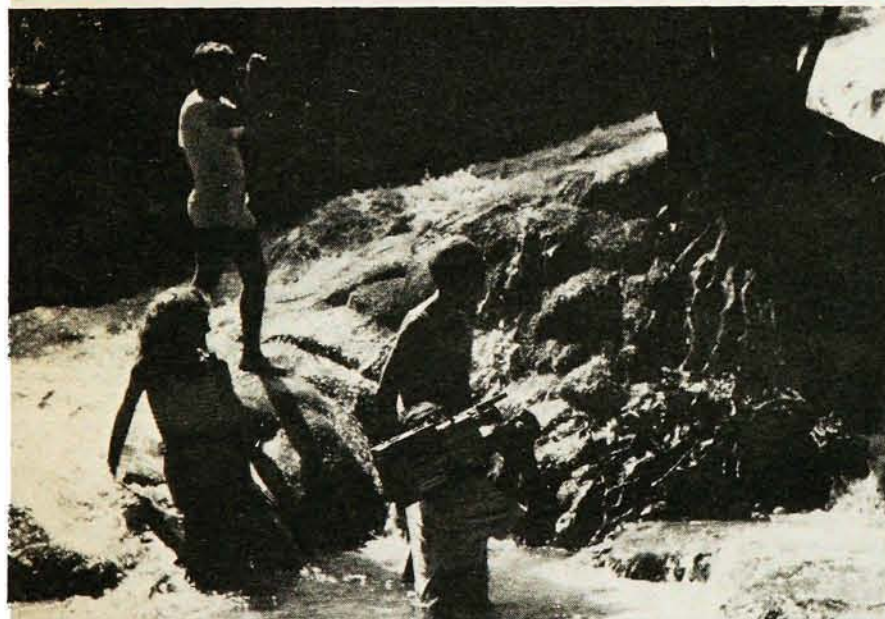


Photo courtesy of
Visual Productions 80 Ltd.

For further information, contact:

SONY

Broadcast

Marketing Headquarters
411 Gordon Baker Road
Willowdale, Ontario
M2H 2S6

Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver

NEW

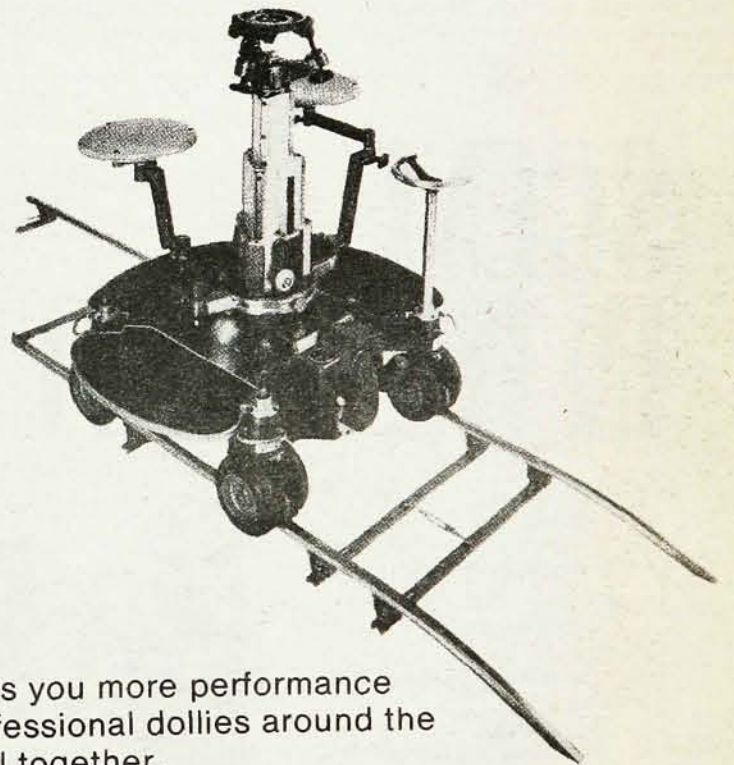


6K HMI LAMPS



The new 6K HMI LAMPS are the latest addition to our comprehensive range of these super efficient "daylight" lamps, yet draw only 25 amps of 220/240 V. a.c. power.

CRICKET



Cricket gives you more performance than all professional dollies around the world put all together.

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
5252 De Maisonneuve West, H4A 1Y6

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