

# REVIEWS

## Jean-Claude Labrecque's **Les années de rêve**

The remembrance of things past, wrote Proust, incarnates itself in hidden objects. The secret is to discover the right object. In his fourth feature, *Les années de rêve*, Quebec director Jean-Claude Labrecque does discover that object, but at the sacrifice of most of the film itself.

For the object in question is neither the dreams of the title (the first two-thirds of the film), nor the revolt of the original working title (*Années de rêve et de révolte*), nor even the documentary (visual and musical) reconstruction of the years between 1964-1970 that embody much of the film. Rather it is something much, much more intangible – and far more important – namely, the dawn of modern filmic fiction itself (as the nightmare of memory's inability to remember) which Labrecque discovers almost in desperation during the film's final minutes in a sequence of cinematic breakthrough of the utmost moment for the future of Quebec filmmaking.

In a rare, marvelous flash of filmic illumination, *Les années de rêve* liberates itself from the bonds of its crippling realism and discovers the surrealism of the modern imagination. Here at last is the October Crisis on film in an authentic moment of the historical imagination, not as mere actuality footage, not as reconstruction limping on the crutches of drama, but as nightmare. In a blue haze of night and fog, of civilians entrapped by lumbering army trucks, of city streets through which stalk a repressive infinity of soldiery, of haunting ancestral voices of reproach and recrimination, and at the centre of it, imprisoned in his car, the feverish Louis Pelletier (Gilbert Sicotte) finally grasps the spectacle of (his own) history in all its naked brutality. Yet while he is completely overcome by events, reduced to a terrorized creature surpassed in his understanding, he remains in his very bewilderment a human being nonetheless. In this all-too brief, but extraordinary moment of breakdown in which the disarray of the protagonist is entirely captured within the cinematic imagination, Quebec film transcends itself – only to fall back from that summit utterly exhausted.

*Années de rêve's* unexpected, fortuitous discovery of its own epic project has two immediate consequences. Forward-looking, it unveils an entire cinematic continent, the limitless possibilities for an authentic Québécois cinema that has broken through to the imaginative possession of its own fear. Backward-looking, this discovery annuls that dependence on the documentary that has subtended so much Québécois feature filmmaking, not the least being the bulk of Labrecque's own features, with the qualified exception of *Les Vautours* (which fictionally internalizes the documentary).

Unfortunately *Années de rêve's* own conclusion devastates the film itself.

Only in a rather loose sense is *Années de rêve* a sequel to *Les Vautours*, which

terminates in 1959. Chronologically, the story of Louis Pelletier resumes from 1964-70, with cameo appearance throughout by the aunts of *Les Vautours* (Monique Mercure, Carmen Tremblay and Amulette Garneau). During one hilarious family get-together veteran actor Roger Lebel delivers a comic performance that is simply staggering. But the real focus of *Années de rêve* has broadened from the stifling intimacy of Quebec City to metropolitan life in Montreal and from the family to the marriage between Louis and Claudette (Anne-Marie Provencher).

Much of *Années de rêve* is a kind of medley of overlapping dreams, each one as vague as the next. There's the dream of personal happiness of Louis and Claudette, little developed outside of sex. There's Louis' indistinct dream of no longer having bosses to work for, a dream which leads him into syndicalist dabblings. There are the dreams of the '60s, articulated musically by the soundtrack (The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Robert Charlebois), and the peace & love dreams mouthed by Louis' pot-smoking American cousin John-John (John Wildman). And finally there are the various Quebec dreams of social justice and national independence as signified by the letters FLQ on a wall; RIN posters, and above all by De Gaulle's 1967 "Vive le Québec libre" visit to Montreal as recorded in documentary form by Labrecque himself.

But one by one the dreams go bad.

Claudette discovers child-rearing, housekeeping and feminism; the Yippies are bludgeoned by the Chicago pigs; De Gaulle is just an old man reliving the 1944 Liberation of France in a private delirium of memory; and Louis himself spirals downward into violent agitation in the taxi business and dynamite thefts for the kiddies of the FLQ. After the Cross kidnapping, Louis on the run telephones Claudette that he has hidden blasting caps in the house; as she is about to get rid of the package she is interrupted by a phone call and their son opens the package instead. The film literally explodes as Louis and Claudette rush their mangled boy to the hospital only to drive right into the Canadian army's October 1970 invasion of Quebec.

Yet it is only in that final sequence that *Années de rêve* truly achieves anything of the epic scope that the film calls for. And if that scene works so successfully, it is because Labrecque has made October '70 the purely imaginative décor for his characters. Otherwise the documentary inserts – De Gaulle, Chicago '68, the Murray Hill garage riot – simply push the characters out of the film. This is strikingly evident in one scene where John-John and Louis are still drinking and smoking hours after De Gaulle's speech from the balcony of Montreal City Hall. They are utterly alone, surrounded by the detritus of RIN placards; mere bit players on History's empty stage. Contrary to their intention, the

documentary passages reduce the characters instead of enhancing them or their story. They are merely dissolved into the purely anonymous, a dissolution which, while it may be central to the documentary, is anathema to fiction. If Labrecque's documentary eye reduces a De Gaulle to an almost senile old man or a lesser historical personnage like Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau to a bewildered figure rolling his eyes in utter bafflement before France's great man, the fate of minor, non-historical folk like Louis and Claudette is simply to be repressed into utter insignificance beneath the documentary's crushing claim to represent reality.

If *Années de rêve* is then an uneasy tapestry of clashing modes of representation, there are nonetheless glimmers of possible stories that would be worth pursuing separately. For instance, Labrecque could make a fascinating contemporary documentary out of all his De Gaulle material. Or a feature film that would solely concentrate on the theme of the would-be revolutionary in the Montreal of the '60s and '70s, with its informers, its corrupt political police, all of which are glimpsed in *Années de rêve* but too scattered to achieve a powerful whole.

And yet both *Années de rêve's* one outstanding scene and at the same time the cause of the film's overall undoing can be attributed to the film's ambition. If the film simply tries to do too much, it does nevertheless manage to point a way out of the dilemma. *Années de rêve*, somewhat like Quebec's own discovery of its modernity in the early '60s, breaks through its own heavy, filmic traditions, to the bright light of the contemporary fictional imagination. And surely a glimpse of that is sufficient cause for triumph.

Michael Dorland ●

● Gilbert Sicotte and John Wildman share a joint on history's empty stage in *Années de rêve*



**LES ANNÉES DE RÊVE** d. Jean-Claude Labrecque p. Claude Bonin, François Labonté admin. Cine II 82 Itée, Charles Ohayon p. man. Daniel Louis unit man. Mario Nadeau p. sec. Micheline Cadieux p. acct. Muriel Lize-Pothier 1st a.d. René Pothier 2nd a.d. Luce Richard cont. Claudette Messier sc. Robert Gurik, with Marie Laberge art d. Vianney Gauthier props. Daniel Huysmans props. buyer Jean Kazemirchuk cost. des. François Laplante cost. Suzanne Harel asst. cost. Jacqueline Rousseau dresser Mario Davignon makeup Kathryn Casault asst. make-up Nicole Lapiere hair Thomas Booth asst. hair Bob Pritchett, Rosalind Laveman period vehicles Retro-mobile inc. d.o.p. Alain Dostie 1st asst. cam. Daniel Jobin 2nd asst. cam. Nathalie Moliavko-Visotzky stills Warren Lipton gaffer Daniel Chretien best boy Claude Fortier key grip Marc De Ernsted crane Robert Lapiere grips Michel Périard, Pierre Guevremont, Marjolaine Page sd. Serge Beauchemin boom Yvon Benoit, Marcel Fraser p. assts. Luc Martineau, Geoff Bowie, Bruno Bazin (Québec) trainee Jérôme Labrecque ed. François Labonté asst. ed. Louise Blais sd. concept. Marcel Pothier sd. ed. Viateur Paiement, Louise Blais asst. sd. ed. Jocelyn Caron sd. efx. Marcel Pothier, Viateur Paiement mixer Michel Descombes asst. mixer André Gagnon titles Gérard Paquin l.p. Anne-Marie Provencher, Gilbert Sicotte, Alexandre Guertin-Aird, Guillaume Lemay-Thivierge, Monique Mercure, Amulette Garneau, Jean Mathieu, John Wildman, Carmen Tremblay, Roger Lebel, Claude Laroche, Yves Desgagnés, Septimiu Sever, Monique Joly, Marie Laberge, Josée Labossière, Philippe Robert, Yves Allaire, Jean-Guy Bouchard, Lothaire Bluteau, Vallier Dumont, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Jean-Pierre Matte, Jose Rettino, Mathieu Léger, Judith Gruber-Stitzer, Julien Poulin, André Vezina, Ronald France, Rejean Gauvin, Claude-Jean Devirieux, Robert Desbiens unit pub. Danielle Papineau-Couture (514) 842-3851 colour 35mm running time 90 min. p.c. Les Films Vision 4 inc.



Brigitte Sauriol's

## Rien qu'un jeu

Brigitte Sauriol could not have chosen a more difficult subject to tackle than incest. Neither could she have treated the topic with more insight or sensitivity.

*Rien qu'un jeu* is a fiction film supported with research which would almost qualify it as a documentary. The original concept was based on an actual account of incest. Sauriol was searching for a subject related directly to female roles in society, when a woman she knew well, came to her to tell her tale of personal agony. After that, she talked to many victims who told the same story. She says "I kept hearing the same thing!"

The story is this: a middle to upper-middle-class family where the mother is financially dependent on the father; the communication between the parents has broken down, although the facade of a secure marriage remains intact. The parent's sexual relationship has degenerated: the father turns to the daughter who does not know how to refuse the only man in her life. The daughter has been taught to believe in, and obey her parents. She succumbs, bearing the burden in silence. When the mother finds out, she reacts in horror, but eventually blames the daughter for being a seductress. The daughter is completely alone; totally accused. She is sent away to a private girl's school, emotionally shattered.

This provides the basic storyline in *Rien qu'un jeu*. And even though the film begins on a light note, winding ever-so-delicately into the heart of the matter, Sauriol offers no solution. The film ends with a freeze frame close-up of the daughter, Catherine, broken into pieces. And thus it is only through the careful depiction of characters and their interaction, that one gains a sense of enlightenment, and possible hope for such a situation.

Sauriol pays attention to visual details which make the emotional state of all the characters quite obvious. There is very little dialogue, which exemplifies the lack of communication in the family, and points to the resulting silence of the victim. The story is told through the eyes of that victim, the eldest daughter, Catherine (which means Sauriol avoids a voyeuristic perspective). The opening shot depicts the typical summer holiday, complete with windsurfers and flirtatious sexual energy between teenagers. Catherine is one of the gang, at least until "Dad" arrives to pick her up and drive her back to the cottage. She falls silent and gloomy upon sighting him. She makes a stab at being independent, claiming she can find another way home. She argues with him, which informs us that there is something very wrong in their relationship. On the way home, he offers her a present which she rejects. He pulls off the road, stops the car, loosens his pants, and insists that she masturbate him. She explodes and runs from the car, down the beach with him in pursuit. Once caught, she threatens to tell her mother. He claims it's "only a game" (*rien qu'un jeu*). She runs away, frightened and confused.



● Struggling with the problem of incest: Marie Tifo and Raymond Clouthier as the parents in *Rien qu'un jeu*

Everywhere she goes, she is confronted with sex: at the disco her girlfriend is loosening up for a night of dancing with the guys, and encourages Catherine to do the same. Catherine, unable to talk, goes through the motions (puts on make-up; goes braless) all to be accepted as one of the crowd. Unconvinced that she is having fun, she wanders home to face a silent father, and an enraged mother.

The only physical contact between the mother and daughter is aggressive, alternating, and sometimes violent. When the daughter arrives home late, the mother explodes, demanding an explanation, slapping her, grabbing her sweater where there is usually a bra. Catherine makes a meagre defense for herself, and is obviously unable to explain to the mother where the source of the problem lies. And thus it is established early in the film that Catherine has no ally, no-one to turn to for understanding or support.

The mother is so preoccupied with her own problems, that she hasn't the ability to reach out to Catherine who is silently bearing the burden of a crumbling family. She is often seen preening herself, slathering on suntan lotion, and checking her image in a mirror. She is a middle-aged woman who doubts her sexual stature. It is no surprise when she has a brief affair with a complete stranger. All factors point to a person who is filled with fear and insecurity.

And the mother/father relationship is wavering: they argue and fight without reconciliation. And once the mother has recovered from her initial explosion (after discovering the incest situation), she resorts to mothering her husband,

physically, to secure their marriage.

Sauriol claims that the mother usually does side with the father, accusing the daughter directly or indirectly. The women she spoke to told her plainly that they felt they had no alternative but to forgive their husbands, because they plan to live out their lives with them. The daughter will grow up and leave home, so it is easier to blame her and send her away like an unwanted disease than it is to accuse the father. Essentially, they ignore the problem because they are dependent on their husbands, and they believe they cannot afford to lose them.

It was due to the characterization of the mother that Sauriol had disagreements with her feminist colleagues. They felt she should depict the mother as a stronger, more independent character, who would either leave the husband or deal directly with the problem (thus providing the daughter with a future). But Sauriol insisted that the mother character, as well as the father, be realistic representations of the average family struggling with the problem of incest. So the mother is not portrayed as either a villain or a saint: she is a problematic element of the situation, as any other character.

The complete picture is clear by the end of the film, with the marriage situation left to the imagination of the viewer. The perspective has been Catherine's throughout, and remains so to the end of the film, to the end of Catherine. She has avoided suicide, but she has not escaped all the emotional reverberations.

One is left with a much better understanding of the situation, and a great

deal of sympathy for the victim. Sauriol has had positive feedback from social workers who believe such a realistic portrait will serve as a presentative tool for all who see it. It is a film that would certainly make one think twice.

Suzan Ayscough ●

**Rien qu'un jeu** d. Brigitte Sauriol sc. Sauriol. Monique Messier, based on an idea by Messier res. Monique Maranda. Muriel Lize-Pothier d.o.p. Paul Van Der Linden ed. Marcel Pothier art.d. Gaudeline Sauriol mus. Yves Laferriere. Robert Lachapelle line p. Claude Bonin p. Monique Messier. Yves Michon, Jacques Pettigrew exec. p. Jacques Pettigrew p.c. Cine-Groupe Inc. with financial part. from l'Institut Quebecois du Cinema. Cine II (1982) Ltee. la Societe de Developpement de l'Industrie Cinematographique Canadienne Famous Players Ltd p.man. Daniel Louis mixer Andre-Gilles Gagne a.d. Rene Pothier cont. Therese Berube p. coord. Mario Nadeau cast. (children) Francine Langlois tutor Yolaine Bouleau asst. cam. Christopher Raucamp sd. Alain Corneau boom Yvon Benoit stills Warren Lipton gaffer Jean-Marc Hebert best boy Gilles Fortier. Jean-Paul Houle key grip Francois Dupere grip Michel Periard set des. Serge Bureau props Patrice Bengle asst. props. Ian Lavoie cost. des. Gaudeline Sauriol cost. Marianne Carter make-up Diane Simard p. assts. Michel Veillette. Marcellyne Charpentier. Vincent Methot. Denise Lemieux. asst. ed. Dominique Parent asst. sd. ed. Jocelyn Caron post. sync. Diane Boucher p. acct. Muriel Lize-Pothier. Daniel Demers p. sec. Suzanne Comtois asst. p. sec. Louise Dupre musicians Richard Perrotte. Robert Stanley. Mario Collin. Julie Laferriere mus. rec. Serge Gaudet re-rec. Paul Gagnon titles Paul Harris. Wayne Kimble promo. Francine Allaire. Jan Rofekamp. Paul Harris post. p. dir. Yves Michon p. coord. Suzanne Comtois blow-up Les Films Docteur du Quebec lab. Sonolab, Bellevue-Pathe int'l. dist. Films Transit Inc. (514) 527-9781 colour 35 mm running time: 101 mins. lp. Marie Tifo, Raymond Cloutier, Jennifer Grenier, Julie Mongeau, Julie Desjardins, Jimmy Bond, Madeleine Arsenault, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Lothaire Bluteau, Marisol Sarrazin, Toenke Berkelbach.



# Quebec capsules

## L'ÉTAU-BUS

Based on well-known play, *Moman*, by Louise Dussault, this film is director Alain Chartrand's micro-cosmic look at Quebec society through the metaphor of a bus trip from Montreal to Nicolet.

*Moman* and her twin daughters are the focal points during the ride, and we see the difficulties of a single, working-class mother who feels compelled to apologize for the fact that her young children are not adults, and therefore, act differently.

While the script's analysis of a difficult problem tends to be grossly over-simplified such that the film's climax, *Moman's* soliloquy, is slightly embarrassing, there is no denying the warmth, the humor and the humanity of the characters and cast, particularly Dussault in the lead role. Director Chartrand keeps the action moving through his camera set-ups and nothing is dwelt on too laboriously.

To accuse the film of being sentimental would not be to accuse it of dishonesty. What saves it from itself is what saves *Moman* - the ability to see the humor in itself, in herself, in all of us and our situations.

*L'Étau-Bus* is the 1983 winner of the CBC/Radio-Canada Anik Award for best original drama.

**L'ÉTAU-BUS** d. Alain Chartrand sc. Louise Dussault. Alain Chartrand, with Diane Cailhier cam. Michel Brault mus. Yves Lafontaine ed. François Gill sd. Dominique Chartrand props. Patrice Bengle gaffer Kevin O'Connell key grip Claude Fortier cost. Gaudeline Sauriol make-up Diane Simard hair Bob Pritchett stills Bertrand Carrière p. asst. Andre Ouellette p. sec. Mireille Gagnon p. acct. Berangere Maltais asst. cam. Sylvain Brault a.d. Marianne Feaver trainee Helene Dufresne mixer Henri Blondeau p. Francine Forest, Michel Gauthier p.c. ACPAV l.p. Louise Dussault, Julie Vadeboncoeur, Sophie Vadeboncoeur, Anne-Marie Ducharme, Amulette Garneau, Pierre Harel, Johanne Fontaine, Serge Chapleau, Lucie Lema, Claude Gauthier, Jean-Pierre Saulnier, Alain Chartrand colour 16mm running time 27 min., 1983

## LES GARDERIES QU'ON VEUT

A documentary on various cooperatively run Montreal day-care centres is, as its title implies, a film that shows us what we can have if we want it. It also tells us that it isn't easy, that problems do exist, and that a well-run day care is hard work for all except the children who attend.

However, the negatives of the issues tend to be downplayed here, as this film is more a celebration of what is and an inspiration in the sense of what can be.

The filmmakers take on a great deal - education, women's rights, the evolution of working women, the idea of moving from personal involvement to political practice, as well as the issue of government involvement

or more precisely, the embarrassing lack of same. If the film doesn't satisfy all the issues it raises, it nevertheless demonstrates to us in a gentle way what parents can do when they put themselves into it, and that the rewards for doing so are for both parents and their kids.

In one sequence some wonderful archival footage reminds us that this generation did not invent day care, the state did during the Second World War.

## LES GARDERIES QU'ON VEUT

d. Carole Poliquin, Ishak Isitan cam. Marc Tardif, Ishak Isitan, Serge Giguere, Michel Lamothe sd. Noël Almey, Pierre Blain ed. Ishak Isitan, Liette Aubin, Carole Poliquin, Jean Saulnier sd. ed. Jean Saulnier orig. mus. Christian Gauthier mixer Jean-Pierre Joutel p. Jean-Roch Marcotte p.c. Les Productions du Regard inc.

## MÉLODIE MA GRAND-MÈRE

The story of a young boy who is sent to spend the summer with his grandmother, while his mother is off spending time with someone we presume will become the boy's new father.

Mélo die is the grandmother we would all love to have: warm, generous, understanding, fun, entertaining, and even a great picnic-maker. She lives in a village where we'd all like to spend the summer, in a house we would all like to spend the summer in, and...

This film is too nice, with a little boy who is a little too wise, a little too knowing. To make matters worse, he is the narrator. Using a visual style that begins to approach the greeting card look, director Stella Goulet is in search of a poetic form that will reflect her sensitive story, but the whole effect is self-conscious to the point of being precious.

The closing credits run over the sounds of water rippling in a brook, I suppose just in case anyone was still wondering about the meaning of life.

## MÉLODIE MA GRAND-MÈRE

d./sc. Stella Goulet a.d. Pierre-Alain Dostie p. Jean Tessier p. man. Jacques Turgeon loc. man. Sylvie Gagne unit man. Michel Vezina p. sec. Huguette Thibault legal advisor Dominique Jobin cam. Richard Lavoie, assisted by Hughes Lavoie lighting Pierre Pelletier cont. Nicole Pomerleau, Régine Tremblay sd. Yves St-Jean boom François Vidal grip Laurier Guy stills Daniel Guy art d. Stella Goulet, Suzanne Labrecque ed. Louise Filion asst. ed. Daniel Guy sd. ed. Yves St-Jean mus. Michel Poulin mus. rec. Les productions Euterpe neg. cut. Marielle Frenette mixer Henri Blondeau pub. Suzanne Laverdière titles, sp. efx. Caractera. Film Optical labs. Kineco. Pathe-Bellevue l.p. Olivette Thibault, André Cailloux, Jérôme Fortin, Isabelle Dionne, Valérie Fortin, Rodolphe Goulet, Buffy narr. by Nicolas Marier.

Kevin Tierney ●

This month's Quebec shorts available from Parlimage 526-4423.

# Camera Canada

Three short films this month - all 16mm - available from independent sources, as noted below.

## DAVID ROCHE TALKS TO YOU ABOUT LOVE

David Roche looks out from the screen and starts to talk about love as he rises in the freight elevator to his lofty abode. From the first few sentences, it's clear that here's a literate, witty script executed by an actor/writer who, in conjunction with an intelligent filmmaker, knows how to convey his autobiographical *déjà vu* views.

As Roche wanders about his flat crammed with knick-knacks, he questions: "So, what is love?" and gives the answer too, "Love is (1) knowledge and (2) acceptance." And, "What about its distribution and availability?" Then it's off into the exposition of a particular view of life and *amour*.

Roche has a slide show of his life to date (it saves time when meeting people...), he talks of falling in love with Kent; and of life and the movies accompanied by a *mélange* of dialogue culled from trashies beloved by many. The camera roams around with him - from his face to his talking lips enlarged in mirrors, from the mechanical bank with the grabbing hand to the draped mannikin.

In the end, Roche muses on survival, and he's very sure he'll make it. "I will be around," he says, "I will be around."

This monologue by a knowing

actor has a cinematic style full of quirks, flash-backs, subtle use of camera and above all, a fine understanding of movie magic.

*David Roche Talks To You About Love* won the Norman Jewison Award for Best Overall Film at the 1983 Canadian National Exhibition Student Film Festival, and a coveted Blue Ribbon from the 1984 American Film Festival. Director Jeremy Podeswa has been accepted in the Directing Program of the American Film Institute.

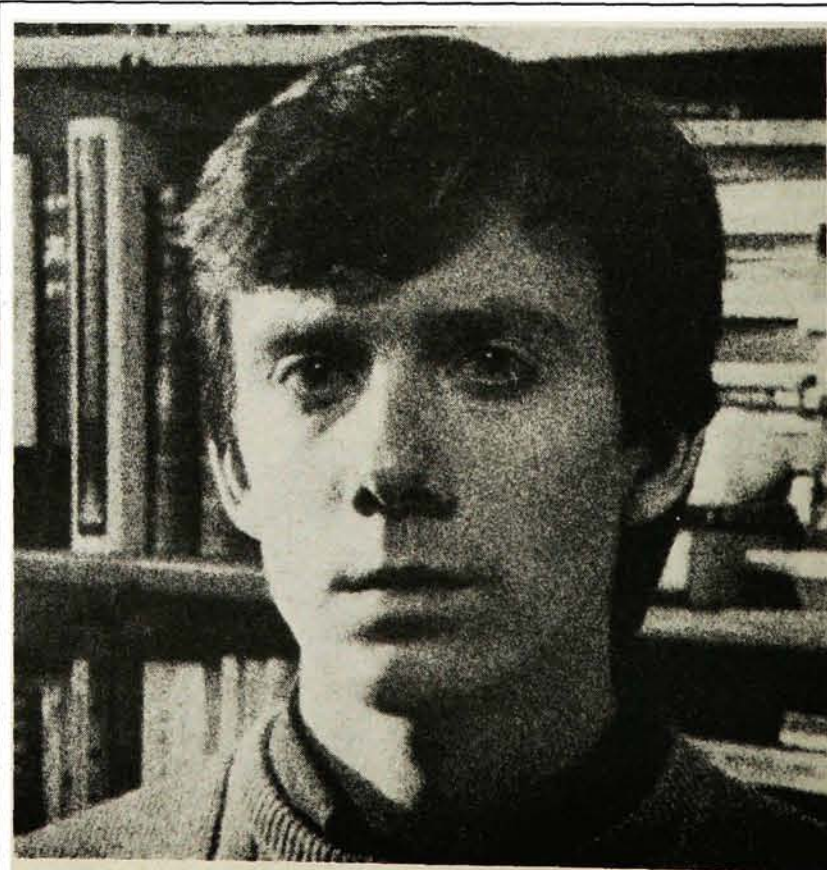
p./d./ed. Jeremy Podeswa, cam. Peter Mettler, mus. Douglas Robertson. Based on play by David Roche, adapted by Jeremy Podeswa & David Roche. 1983. 22 mins., colour Rental/purchase availability: (416) 654-6758/466-6692.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Jonathan is six and, at a preview, was bubbling with enthusiasm as he introduced "his" film.

He's one of the youngest people to be fitted with a state-of-the-art pacemaker and is completely *au fait* with his heart and its condition. Jonathan draws the chambers of his heart, explains how the pacemaker eases the strain on this organ, and then gazes at the camera - "Pretty neat, eh?"

Jonathan's mother is the filmmaker and she talks warmly and sensibly about his difficulties, which may last into the teens. The family unit comes across strongly and includes the father and a second child born when Jonathan was five.



● David Roche Talks To You About Love (frame enlargement)



## Tierney On Television

Summer TV is usually the season for re-runs and fillers, a time when we all get to see what we missed intentionally or otherwise, or just plain get stuck with. This summer, however, has been slightly different – one might even think of it as political – and not without its own share of re-runs, as low a political pun as that might be.

The season was kicked off in June with the Liberal Party's leadership convention, a spectacle indeed, if not quite spectacular. When it comes time to write the book, *A Thousand And One Nights of Great Television*, who among us will not want to include the Liberal Party's farewell tribute to Pierre Trudeau? The show featured every trick in the book, from songs and dances to speeches to film clips to interviews to handkerchiefs wiping the corners of puffy eyes. Live TV at its absolutely kitschy best, and all done to the tune of *I'll Be Watching You*, one of the all-time great paranoia tunes.

Nathalie and René Simard tapdancing their way through a thank you to Pierre for doing such a great job; Norman Jewison, Rich Little, and Paul Anka who proved to everyone that even an Ottawa arena could take on the hyped ambience of a Vegas floorshow given the right combination of lights and a tan that just won't quit. But a revised version of *My Way* read off the back of an envelope?

In a way it seemed only fitting that the Prime Minister who had made the most use of television during his years in office be sent off in television style, and Trudeau rose to the occasion. His speech was, of course, the climax of the evening and for a man who will not be remembered for his oratorical powers, it wasn't half bad. He obviously gave this one knowing history was out there watching and, like a trooper, he went out with a flourish.

For the confessed convention addict there was as much pleasure to be had from watching the reaction shots of the leadership candidates: John Turner eyeing the monitor in his box and fixing his tie as though in response to 'Am I on?'; John Roberts trying valiantly to squelch the odd yawn; Jean Chrétien wishing Pierre would tip his hand at the last minute and come out for him; and the comic relief candidate, Eugene Whelan, with tears in his eyes but without his hat – one can only hope the heat permeating the Ottawa Civic Centre isn't as strong as the African sun.

There is something wonderfully attractive and repulsive about TV coverage of things like political conventions. It begins with the fact that the outcome is rarely 100% certain and unlike actual elections, the TV networks' computers don't start accurately predicting the final outcome before the last ballots are cast let alone counted. At a convention the media, while in evidence everywhere (at times looking vaguely like *My Favorite Martian* with little things coming out of their heads) appear to lie in wait for a mistake to be made, for someone to trip. More often than not it doesn't matter how meaningless the much-awaited slip might be, it's just the act of having appeared to make one, magnified by the number of people supposed to be watching on their sets. The candidates know this better than most, and like good scouts they must always be prepared for the onslaught of questions that are sure to follow. The

candidates sit with their stonewall faces, little enigmas wrapped in their own little mysteries, and we watch them watch it.

But the Liberal convention was just a preliminary even in a summer filled with political heats of one sort or another. The U.S. Democrats then had their turn, soon the Republicans will have theirs. As things have evolved in both countries, and particularly as a result of television interests, conventions lead inevitably to debates, and here, too, Canada outdid itself. Well used to having two of everything, this year we'll have three.

Round one was called *Face à Face* and was another television first: the first time Canadian politicians have debated entirely in French on national television. Yes, even Ed Broadbent. The next night they went at it in English. While neither could be called a re-run given that two of the three players are new to their jobs, the national press' morning – after autopsy sounded remarkably similar to the one following the last election debate in 1979. Five years ago almost everyone, including Joe Clark's parents, declared Ed Broadbent the best man for the job. The problem was his party. The 1984 reaction was similar, most ironic in light of how the New Democratic Party and its leader are supposed to be fighting for their political futures.

As a television experience both debates were in a word, boring. The respective party leaders looked suitably blanched, though if Richard Nixon gave the political world anything, he gave it the sense of importance of make-up. Nobody seemed too concerned, on the other hand, that the same Ed Broadbent glowed a little, thanks to a suntan one doesn't usually associate with backyard bar b-q's in Oshawa.

John Turner continues to look like a silent screen star anxiously awaiting his debut in the talkies, sounding almost as if he were being dubbed by a distant relative.

Brian Mulroney appears to have lost some of the glib smile he held on to when he won the Conservative Party nomination, you know the one that seemed to say: You think I'm hot now, wait till you see me after I move into Sussex Drive.

Last summer on TV it was Mulroney versus Clark or all-chin versus no-chin. You had to feel better about Turner's odds when the camera angle changed to split screen profiles.

During the English-language debate the three party leaders were questioned by journalists from the three networks, including Global. No adversary these, they refused to bite the hands that feed their typewriters. In fact, the most telling moment was not even vocalized: CTV's Bruce Phillips' bemused smile, perhaps indicative of his own sense of fun being involved in what might well be thought of as a national hoax perpetrated by federal politicians who know only too well that Canadian networks are most anxious to fill their waves with this kind of certifiable Canadian content.

In this case the medium was definitely the message: the marriage of television and politics most often results in boredom when the predictable and safe are the only matters of concern.

It was once believed by some that television would be good for democracy, but sometimes it seems as though democracy has become good for television. Will that be any less true after more than 200 hours of CBC coverage of another major summertime political event, the XXIII Olympiad?

Kevin Tierney ●

Functioning in a normal manner, Jonathan attends kindergarten and is vastly interested in the space program. He plays for hours in his room and, at one point, announces he is "making some music for my movie!"

An intriguing look into modern medical technology, focussing successfully on the human aspect of an engaging, understandably precocious child who appears to handle his condition with aplomb.

*Making A Difference* has been purchased by CBC/Toronto for showing in its summer weekday afternoon program "Canadian Reflections" It will be screened at the Montreal World Film Festival this month.

p./d. Louise Quirion Shekter, with assistance from NFB Ontario Regional Production Office. 1984. 30 mins. (approx), colour. Availability: (416) 469-3104.

### GOLD LUST

Serra Pelada was once a small mountain in the Amazon jungle of Brazil. Today it is a vast open-pit where amazingly rich gold finds ranging from nuggets to dust frequently occur.

This incredible pit is divided into over 1,000 claims of 2 x 3 meters each, and some 60,000 people are now engaged in this bizarre mining operation. The pay dirt is laboriously shovelled into sacks, picked up and carried by the *garimpeiros* (labourers) who make 40 trips a day under the meticulous eye of a checker recording each load. This mucky muck is carefully sifted for gold and, as narrator Orson Welles trumpets, "Stealing pay dirt is an act of war!"

As the Serra Pelada gold slaves feverishly work their tiny claims, tiered one above the other from the bottom of the pit, the fabulous cinematography conjures up Dante's Inferno as well as the Klondike gold rush of 1898.

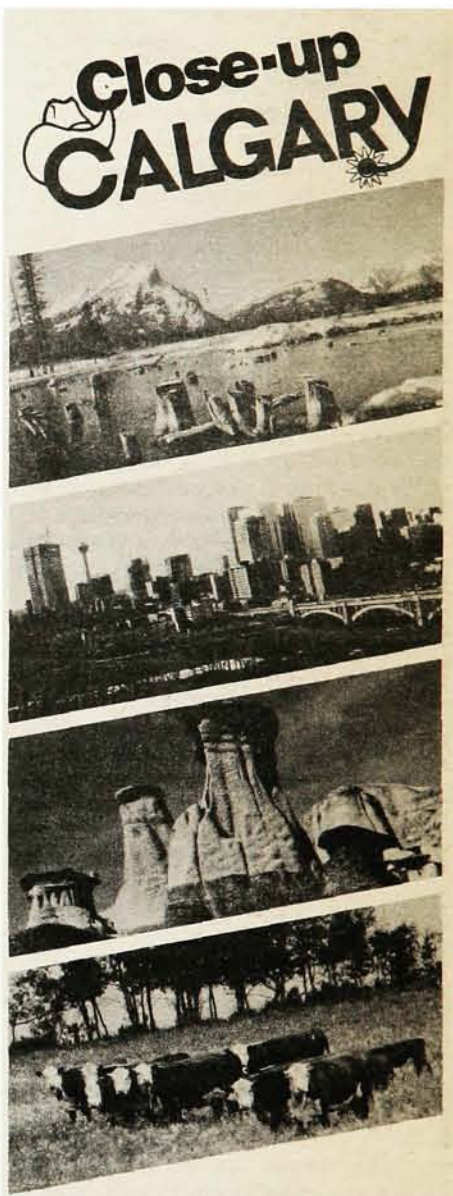
The film gives sketchy background information via brief interviews with prospectors voicing their dreams of wealth (which often come true), and some narrated details of the workers' shelters/hovels, feeding, and the ban on liquor and women.

However, *Gold Lust* dissipates its energy by side-trips into other areas – the suction mining of the Amazon River bed, building the railway through the jungle and discovering iron ore, tin and bauxite in the process. The film takes on a meandering, repetitious air, and sorely needs further editing.

There's no denying the fabulous visuals of the toiling human ants in the Serra Pelada open-pit mine, but the film should have been shorter and stuck to this one subject.

p./d. Robert K. Maclean, sc. Robert K. Maclean/Neil Hollander, mus. Drew King, narr. Orson Welles. Availability: Northwood Communications Inc., 180 Bloor St. W., Ste. 601, Toronto M5S 2V6, Ont. (416) 926-1575.

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