QUEBEC CAPSULES

L'ÉTAU-BUS

Based on well-known play, Manon, by Louiseette Dussault, this film is director Alain Chartrand's microcosmic view of Quebec society through the metaphor of a bus trip from Montreal to Nicolet.

Manon 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 oversimplified such that the film's climax, Manon's soliloquy, is slightly over-simplified so that the film's climax, Manon's soliloquy, is slightly

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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

MÉLODIE MA GRAND-MÈRE

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

Méloodie is the grandmother who would 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, too little 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.

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 these 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 coming from a parent involved in 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 this issue we dwell 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 Manon—the ability to see the humor in itself, in herself, in all of us and our situation.

L'ÉTAU-BUS is the 1983 winner of the CBC/Radio-Canada Anik Award for best original drama.

LES GARDERIES QU'ON VEUT


QUEBEC 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 the love and the movies accompanied by a montage of dialogue culled from the straws beloved by many. The camera roams around with him—from his face to his talking lips enlarged in mirrors, from the mechanical 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 Podewa has been accepted in the Director's Program of the American Film Institute.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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

He's one of the few 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)

Kevin Tierney

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

Camera Canada


LES GARDERIES QU'ON VEUT
Tierney On Television

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

The season was kicked off in June with the Liberal Party’s leadership convention, a spectacle indeed, if not quite spectacular. When it comes to writing 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 fuzzy 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.

On this point, René Simard taunting their way through a thank you to Pierre for doing such a great job; Norman Jewison, Rich Little, and Paul Anka who probably figured that even an Ottawa arena could take on the hyped ambiance 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 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, of course, the climax of the evening and for a man who will not be remembered for his oratorial powers, it wasn’t half bad. He obviously gave this one the most thought; watching and, like a trooper, he went out with a flourish.

For the confessed convention addict this summer, it must be an act of watching the reaction shots of the leadership candidates: John Turner eying the monitor in his box and fixing his words only to be cut off in response to A M I on?; John Roberts trying valiantly to squelch the odd yawn; Jean Chretien 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’ coverage doesn’t predict 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. As someone once said: More often than not it doesn’t matter how meaning less the much-awaited slip might be, it’s just the act of having appeared to make one. The media is run by the numbers 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 sighs wriggling 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, too much of this talk was over.

It was only a couple of years ago that some of these events would have been covered on television that same evening. Now, these things are expected. Tune in.

The Liberal convention was one of the few occasions this summer when the candidates actually made some sort of impression. Trudeau wins largely because he’s a charmer and there are some who are going to liken this sort of thing to a media event. However, there is 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.

Serra Pelada was once a small moutain in the Amazon jungle of Brazil. Today it is a vast open-pit where Jonathan attends kindergarten and is usually: My Mind’s Eye. Availability: Northwood Communications Inc., 180 Bloor St. W., Ste. 401, Toronto M5S 2V6, Ont. (416) 955-1573

Pat Thompson