**REVIEWS**

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's

**Le Jour S**

Le Jour S is a title which made me suspect that Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's latest film might be tense and apocalyptic, perhaps political, like Z or The Day of the Jackal. But film titles can be deceiving and, luckily, Le Jour S follows in Lefebvre's own tradition of low-key, highly personal film-making; this film is as far removed from a thriller or blockbuster as it is possible to be. Instead, Le Jour S is a subtle and fluid work, full of cheerful romanticism. Lefebvre prefers to sooth rather than to shock, and he has the special talent of making us see the small changes that occur as relationships evolve.

In the opening scene of Le Jour S, Jean-Baptiste (played by Pierre Curzi), an amiable TV producer approaching 40, is lying in bed and, speaking to whoever is on the next pillow, he recounts several contradictory versions of his first sexual experience. As the camera angle widens, it turns out that Jean-Baptiste is actually holding forth to his tape recorder. Lefebvre is not just fishing for laughs, however; today, le Jour S, will be a day for reflection and recollection. It will be a day, as Jean-Baptiste self-consciously writes in his journal, for "accenting sexualit... sensuality... sentiments..."

From there, the story takes a depressingly aimless turn: Jean-Baptiste has nothing in particular to do, nowhere really to go, no urgent needs or desires. He gets up, reads the morning mail, takes a bus out to a shopping mall to buy some underwear, and sails through a bachelor's Saturday with no particular interest. The saga of Virginia and her struggles, the grandeur of big-screen spectacle, is gone from that relation: it is now just trying to get through the day. He really wants to go, no urgent needs or desires. Nothing in particular to do, nowhere to go.

During an afternoon encounter in rue St-Denis tourist room with his ex-wife, Louise, that he need no longer be uneasy about what might have been; the spark is gone from that relation: it is now over.

This frees Jean-Baptiste from the subtle pressures of the past, and he can now whole-heartedly embrace his perky girlfriend, Carole, played, of course, by Marie Tifo.

Le Jour S recalls many French romantic comedies, stories in which a brief time somehow becomes the focus for a welling-up of feelings, a quiet coming-to-terms with the changes in one's sentimental life. Tavernier's Une Semaine de vacances comes to mind, but in that film, a sense of crisis underlies the protagonist's week of reflection and change. Le Jour S, on the other hand, gains its charm through being wholly unfocused, never proposing to teach lessons or correct one's behaviour. The viewer, too, finds that a space is somehow cleared among the shower of contingent details in everyday life, and the essential relations which sustain and justify life are brought clearly into view. This is the poetry of Lefebvre's vision, a cinema of clarity, subtlety and fine touches.

Le Jour S is one of the most (quintessentially) accomplished films in his repertory.

David Winch

**Philippe de Broca's Louisiana**

Louisiana, a Canada-France co-production funded partly by Telefilm Canada's Broadcast Fund and destined for eventual release as a television mini-series, opened Aug. 2 in both French and English in various Montreal theatres. Quite the cultural event, truly bilingual. It was, in fact, a sell-out in the cine-ma, to the extent that a scene of the opening night was taking place in the street, across the street, at the back of the theatre, was certainly one of the social events of the month: Denis Heroux (producer), Pierre Trudeau (ex-prime minister, in other guise, acting as leering actress) spiced up the audience with their presence. This gathering, at 15$, a ticket, also had a specific charitable mission since the proceeds went to the Canadian Association of Mental Health - a premiere for the Canadian film industry.

If the organizers of the benefit were extremely pleased with this venture of a new kind and expressed their gratitude to the generosity of the film industry, how we ignore that Louisiana, the film, simply reinforces the same old patterns of international co-production.

The moment for the release of this film was well chosen. Summer, vacation time, a period of the year when we are thirsty for stories, when we are just trying to round the corner, when the largest, thickest-best-selling novel on the market, searching out new characters, landscapes, and passions. In the windows of many bookstores, Maurice Denuziere's three novels Louisiana, Fausse Rivière and Bagatelle stand ready to reveal, one by one, their worlds.

Louisiana the movie, based on the first two volumes of Denuziere's imaginary world, promised much for lovers of cinema and romances, not only characters, landscapes and passions, but the grandeur of big-screen spectacle. The saga of Virginia and her struggles to find Bagatelle, her childhood home, in the explosive years of the mid-19th Century, offered to seduce us with its settings, costumes and lavish images, like a cardboard back-drop, sketched out byateurs, with the heightened photographic expertise of Michel Braut. Hélas - big, yes, and visually beautiful - but this by no means a seductive film.

"New Orleans, 1855" is super-learning, a history lesson imposed over the first images of the film. Thus time and space simply declare themselves, as, unfortunately, will all of the other characters, plot, emotion, etc., are simply presented on the screen without ever really being developed. Arriving from France, Virginia Margot, kind of like her maid Mignette, that she is determined to get Bagatelle back at all costs. So much for plot-line! As soon as the two women are on shore romantic sub-plots are out-lined: Virginia and Clarence Dandrige (Ian Charleson) exchange looks. How is Virginia going to get Bagatelle and the title of Clarence Dandrige? Against a background of all this history of course: the same first scene stereotypically portrays the "hardship of slavery" in a few long shots which, just like a cardboard back-drop, sketched out by auteurs, was certainly one of the social events of the month: Denis Heroux (producer), Pierre Trudeau (ex-prime minister, in other guise, acting as leering actress) spiced up the audience with their presence. This gathering, at 15$, a ticket, also had a specific charitable mission since the proceeds went to the Canadian Association of Mental Health - a premiere for the Canadian film industry.

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