Demetrios Estdelacropolis’
Mother’s Meat
And Freud’s Flesh

Repetition, clichés and visual sexual imagery ad nauseam have become the mainstay of contemporary synthetic culture. Add a catchy rock score to weave the shibboleths into harmony and voila: there are all our icons, from television commercials to rock video.

To make an original film statement about this, start with an outrageous title, Mother’s Meat and Freud’s Flesh, then create Demira as a homosexual, porn-star hero, in a losing battle with his one-and-a-half dimensional domineering mother, Esther, who is straight out of the Inferno Dante might have written had he lived in New York City. Add to this struggle a wacky psychiatrist, whose main scientific interest is to undertake a psychological sex-change operation on the mother in order to turn the hero into a heterosexual, while fighting his own passionate homosexual attraction for the young man and you have a vague outline of the Dada story of Mama by Montreal director/ writer Demetrios Estdelacropolis.

The resolution of the plot is obviously irrelevant, even if the son (Estdelacropolis) is reconciled to life with mother Esther (Esther Vargas) on her own terms. (Are there ever any others?) The fun and art are in the ingestion of countless lines of pap and burlesque, most of which came from 48 hours of Esther monologues which he taped while visiting her in New York City. She butchered the English language horribly and sincerely, using numerous past-tense phrases like "hanged up" or Americanisms like "I just love a man in a uniform." "I tan like a roast chicken." "He loves my sexy clothes." "I chew Trident gum." "How romantic!" and "In the States we don’t mix alcohol and pills." Language in each scene leaves the viewer reeling from its banality and mal-appropriateness. A few quirky camera angles confirm the surrealistic perspective.

Esther’s rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner," sung to an 89-year-old catatonic ex-country and western singer named Speed, above the din of a 10-land highway, is the most original treatment of that icon since Jimmy Hendrix’s 1968 Woodstock appearance. One suspects that Esther is only playing herself to a meandering story line and that the whole piece is documentary in drag. Yet somehow it all leads to a finale — Demira, bilked by his erstwhile porn film director who insists "We are all artists, Sweetheart," accepts a role in a blood and intestine film. The ‘straight’ role becomes hopelessly bent as he is dismembered, castrated and imove over George Romerento eaten by his siblings, as mother Esther sits at the head of the table giving lessons in table manners. It is a supremely gratifying comment on film gore in general, the kind of thing which adolescents and hollow-eyed film freaks adore, since its shock value and gruesomeness are matched only by its total meaninglessness. But then a contemporary mainstream film like Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom does much the same thing in its heart extraction scene. Where Spielberg spent millions for his stunts, Estdelacropolis spent $120 for his.

The appealing music by the German rock group Trio at times gives the film the feel of a rock video in mime. There’s a better than average chance that Mother’s Meat may become an underground favourite, but it is too far out for commercial viability. By Fall the film will have been screened at the Berlin, Montreal, Toronto and Turin film festivals. One suspects that if Estdelacropolis can smooth out the rough edges in his next film, a comedic, Dadaist view will remain his cinematographic hallmark. If some aspects of the film are reminiscent of an early ‘70s Canadian feature Sweet Movie, directed by Dusan Makaveyev and played with a background ensemble of inmates from an asylum Estdelacropolis, asked if he thought his film was Canadian, preferred to view Mother’s Meat as an art film and comedy, with the emphasis more on aesthetic than texture.

Perhaps he is right to distance himself from the Canadian mainstream. After all, his direction is one demonstrable way for Canadian film art to break into world film consciousness.

REVIEWS

MOTHER’S MEAT & FREUD’S FLESH


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October 1984 - Cinema Canada/37