**Fernand Bélanger & Dagmar Gueszaz Teufel's**

**Passiflora**

Fernand Bélanger and Dagmar Gueszaz-Teufel's *Passiflora*, makes the official CBC record of the Pope's Montreal visit seem like a cup of warm milk. *Passiflora*’s name refers to the passion-flower, a tropical plant with tranquilizing and anaesthetic properties whose parts were believed to resemble instruments of Christ's death. A truly dazzling, kinetic work, *Passiflora* uses documentary footage, fiction, graffiti, song and animation, of both Michael Jackson and the Pope's simultaneous visits to Montreal to present a mordant critique of both the prevalence and selectivity of the media.

The film is structured chronologically, beginning with the Pope's arrival in Montreal and ending after his departure with a helicopter shot of a wrecking crew demolishing the altar where he's just finished giving mass. In between, the directors intercut media coverage of the Pope with fictional episodes in the lives of gays, women undergoing abortions, battered women, and other marginalized groups to exist for the duration of the visiting celebrities sojourn.

The Pope's visit and that of Michael Jackson actually took place several days apart. In *Passiflora*, however, in order to better compare the effect that their presence, and the way that presence was reported by the media, had on the city, the events are placed within 24 hours of each other.

For the time they were in Montreal, both stars monopolized the media: the film shows the hundreds of journalists who jammed both events trying to get coverage. *Passiflora* also depicts how the police, the military and various figures of authority (such as Jackson’s manager and his press relations people) directed the event, telling the press what they could cover, when and from what angle. Stars, press and public are all shown as manipulated into creating an event, playing a part, and helping to shape the way other people perceive it.


**José Arroyo •**

**PASSIFLORA**

A two-time winner of the million lottery in nine months, Pierre Cassault offers a different insight. After reverting from severe depression following his second win, he realized his dream of becoming a businessman. Unlike Mrs. Laxton, the housewife, he is modest with his winnings, and instead preferred to open a gourmet restaurant.

On the other hand, the third winner, Mr. Brault, became a victim of forces beyond his control. He was laid off from his job because his boss could no longer tolerate his bragging and shenanigans. We only see Brault in photos, as he preferred not to be interviewed. His parents, however, were willing to speak to the director. They let us know that although their life hasn’t changed at all, they now have many new friends and an endless list of consumer goods. One of the new acquisitions included a CB radio, with which the Brault parents can talk to each other all-day long.

In this film, Moreau ingeniously explores the psycho-social phenomena of Quebec lotteries. Intercut with the interviews are the characters of Jeremy, an imaginary lot-milionnaire, and his friend Paolo, a balloon vendor. The narrative of Jeremy and Paolo is a humorous, yet poignant discourse on the pros and cons of becoming an instant millionaire. In the midst of all this, Jean-Guy Moreau, Quebec’s renowned storyteller, gives a brilliant performance in a diversity of roles.

The film opens with Jean-Guy Moreau as a secret agent, a cross between James Bond and Inspector Clouseau, attired in matching red and white checked hat, gloves, tie and briefcase. His assignment? To investigate Quebec’s mammoth lotteries.

Casting Jean-Guy Moreau in the role of agent serves a dual purpose. First, it moves the film forward by means of a conventional narrative. Secondly, through the documentary technique of...
his Expo baseball tapes. Santa Banana is your average, only slightly exaggerated banana-phobic crawling with military observers. Upon his return, burnt to a crisp, Gratton serves up a truly Canadian Christmas party complete with German beer-garden, barbecue, and live band on a raft wearing Hawaiian shirts and grass skirts (Canada is, after all, a multicultural country.) Needless to say Gratton is a practicing Catholic and wants his garage decorated with a first-rate Christmas manger – (you know, Jesus, Mary, Joseph and some cows). Elvis Gratton is run-of-the-mill Québecois, and his Nativity pageant won’t be ordinary either: the Holy Family, including the infant Jesus and the Wise Men, all have Elvis Presley faces. The laughter from the audience was so loud at this revelation that the theatre-manager rushed in fearing a riot.

Most critics picked up on the flawed construction of the film. Farardeau makes no excuses for this, nor does he try to hide it. He simply took pieces of tape and spliced the two previously made 30-minute segments together for an instant feature. “What do you expect” asks Farardeau, “with less than half-a-million dollars and a shooting schedule of 22 days?”

The first segment of Elvis Gratton – Le King des kings entitled simply Le Million tout puissant concludes with a case-study of a Newfoundland man who won a million and then died within the year. By including this documentary footage, Moreau penetrates the difference between fact and daydreams.

Thoroughly amusing yet thoughtfully, Le Million leaves the viewer with the serious thought that people need myths as a means of living vicariously.

Nicolina Sindici