

elements, which work to create an appearance of integrity and seamless purpose. Thus, political change and social progress are also like (and this is the crux of the allegory) art itself, and particularly music, which also builds harmony out of disparity.

Thus musical production plays a prominent role as both a complement and catalyst to the action, particularly in the form of a young woman (Sandy Horne of *The Spoons*) who writes and performs compositions for guitar and synthesizer. Her attempts to build harmony out of divergent aural elements and styles are interwoven with the various social factions' attempts to confront the impending economic apocalypse (in what is an ultimately unnecessary diegetic explanation for her presence, she is introduced as the union activist's daughter). It is, I think, telling in terms of the film's romantic but engaging political concerns that the actual climax and resolution of the narrative consists of an artistic rather than political reconciliation. The wandering poet-musician, who has been nurtured back to creative activity (he learns synthesizer) by the young woman, is seen in the final moments of the film — which follows the public exposure of Shadow's scheme — performing with her at the same tavern the workers frequent. The song is recognizable to us as the final mix of many congruent themes and melodies we've seen and heard being composed throughout *Listen to the City*. In itself a marvelously economic and effective crystallization of the film's harmony-through-disparity ideology, Mann pushes this perfect moment of narrative closure right through the other side back into the open: as the song is performed, the camera tracks back to reveal, well, **everything** — the director, the crew, sound equipment, camera and dolly — essentially all the disparate mechanical and human bric-a-brac that comprises the apparent formal "harmony" of film.

At once, it is both an evocative and profoundly modest moment: not only does it remind us that every finished work requires the efforts of many to get finished, it emphasizes the tentative and relative nature of political prescription itself. When that camera moves back to reveal its own means of illusion, its organs, so to speak, the film also admitting the subjective nature of its own politics, the specificity of its point of view. It's saying, with a frankness and humility uncommon in the realm of political proselytism, "Well, that's the way I see it, anyway."

Here's hoping more people see it any way. Period.

Geoff Pevere •

Charles Jarrott's
The Boy In Blue

At the time of his death in 1983, director John Trent had spent some time working on an idea for a feature film about Ned Hanlan (1855-1908), the greatest sculler of his day. Before the rise of team sports in the late nineteenth century, competitive rowing was the great event in most waterfront communities in Canada, America, Britain and Australia. Hanlan was a legend in his time, praised to the skies by the press for his prowess on the water. Whatever Trent may have planned to celebrate Hanlan, it can't have been *The Boy in Blue*, the John Kemeny production whose opening in Toronto in January had film reviewers Scott, Harkness, Kirkland and Base rushing to outdo each other in creating new synonyms for crap.

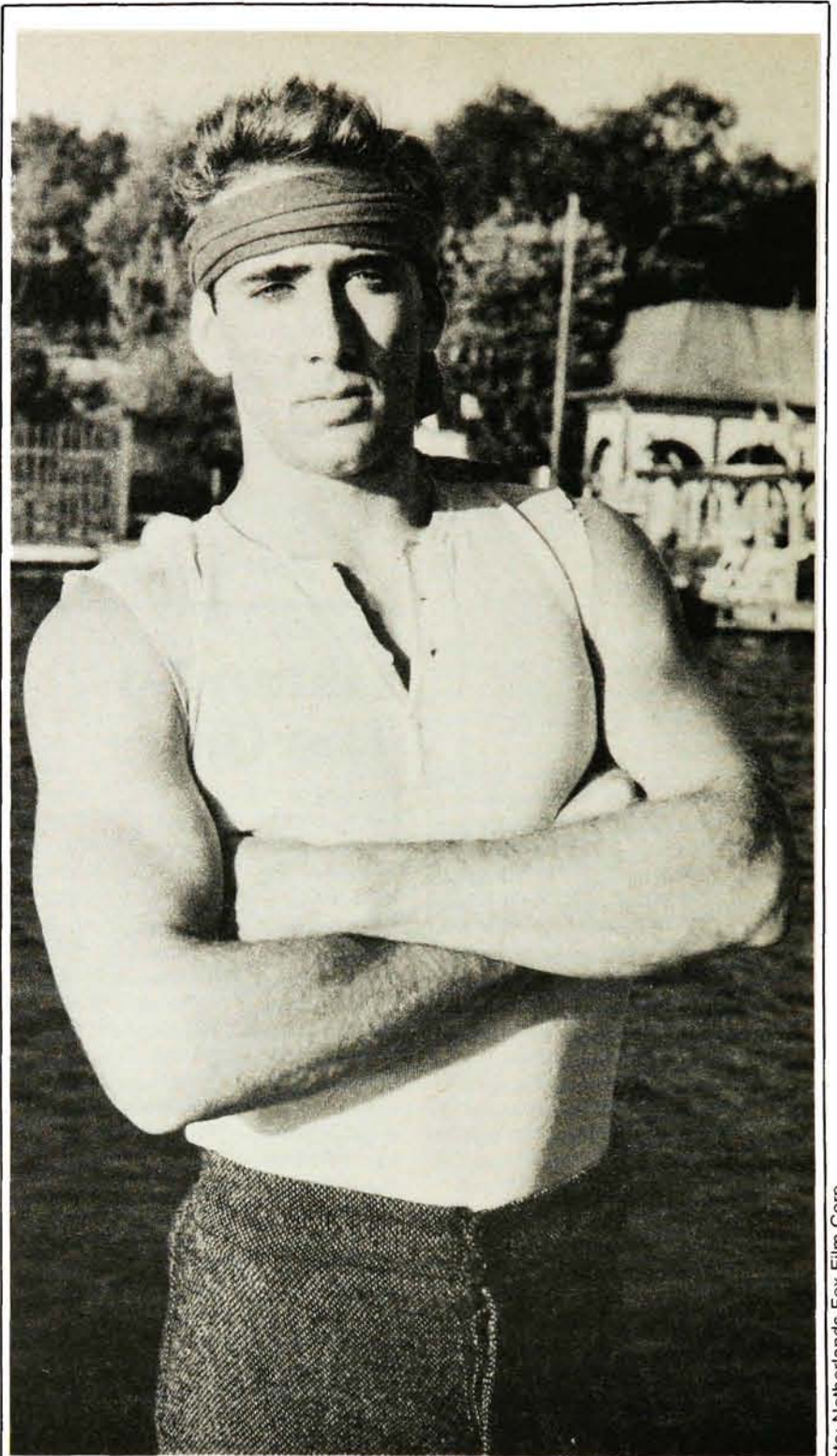
Ned Hanlan (Nicholas Cage) is first seen in 1876, living on the west end of Toronto Island (which was later named for him). After winning a race in the harbour against Bill McCoy (David Naughton), he sets off to deliver some of his moonshine, only to be surprised by the police. Anxious to get out of town quickly, he accepts Bill's offer to go to Philadelphia and compete in the Centennial Regatta. Hanlan defeats the American champion Fred Plaisted, and returns to Toronto a hero.

Seeing the potential and possibility of profit in the young oarsman, Colonel Alexander Knox (Christopher Plummer), a wealthy sportsman and gambler, offers to manage Ned's career. Ned is reluctant to dump Bill, but is smitten by Margaret Sutherland (Cynthia Dale), the colonel's niece. After many trials and tribulations, in which Knox and Hanlan fall out, and Margaret is forced to choose between Ned and the rich Harvard man her uncle prefers, Ned triumphs, marries Margaret, and defeats the Australian Edward Trickett to become world champion.

Strange to say, there are some elements of truth in the shopworn and gooey plot which Douglas Bowie (*Empire Inc.*) has constructed. Hanlan did indeed do some bootlegging, but it was to help his father's hotel, as the civic authorities would not extend his liquor permit. He did win his first international match in 1876 against Plaisted and the world championship against Trickett in 1880. And Hanlan's wife was named Margaret Sutherland.

That, however, is about it. In a central point in the plot of the film, Hanlan rams his opponent in Boston in 1878. This did happen, though against Plaisted instead of Trickett, but Hanlan was not barred from competition. (A race he had a year later in Washington saw more sculduggery than anything concocted for the film). Nor did Hanlan's financial backers desert him. In fact, they had backed him even before he first went to Philadelphia. The characters of Knox and McCoy are fictional.

Perhaps some originality of direction could have negated the melodramatic



• Typical American biopic hunk: Nicolas Cage as *The Boy In Blue's* Ned Hanlan

blarney of Bowie's script. But it would be too much to expect such from Charles Jarrott. Nothing in his previous work of stodgy history (*Anne of the Thousand Days*), blowsy trash (*The Other Side of Midnight*), failed musical (the 1973 version of *Lost Horizon*), overblown thriller (*The Amateur*) or limp spoof (*Condorman*), would suggest it.

Thus, we get the predictable borrowings. From the *Rocky* films comes the underdog getting his shot, the sweaty training, and the triumphant music. From *Chariots of Fire* comes the notion of the outsider who challenges the effete establishment. The nostalgic glow recalls the Australian film *Phar Lap*, and, as an added bonus, the Ned-Bill relationship has distinct echoes of *The Sting*.

There is not much to cheer about regarding the performances either. Although he is physically able to handle the part of Hanlan, Nicolas Cage remains too much the contemporary

American hunk to convincingly portray the nineteenth-century Irish-Canadian. For some reason, he never wears Hanlan's characteristic moustache. Christopher Plummer's Knox is in the same mode of the villains he played in *Some-where in Time* and *Highpoint*, cardboard stereotypes of the rich. David Naughton's Bill is forgettable. Only Sean Sullivan, in what was his last role, makes any real impression. He plays Walter Brown, whose invention of the sliding sculling seat contributed much to Hanlan's victories, with characteristic dignity.

Of the two female leads, Cynthia Dale deserves more respect than she has received. She attempts to give some depth and comic flair to Margaret, though she is thoroughly hampered by the anachronistic behaviour which Bowie gives to her and to Cage. Melody Anderson, who plays Ned's early girlfriend Dulcie, is not so lucky. The comic sex scene between Dulcie and Ned is the most jarring anachronism of all. It belongs in

LISTEN TO THE CITY d./p. Ron Mann sc. Ron Mann and Bill Schroeder orig. story Bill Schroeder ed. Elaine Foreman d.o.p. René Ohashi art d. Barbara Dunphy sd. David Joliat mus. Gordon Deppe perf. by Sandy Horne assoc. p./p.man. Colin Brunton a.d./p.coord. Peter Wintonick cast. Elliott Lefko lighting Jock Brandis asst to p./unit pub. Elliott Lefko stock footage National Film Board of Canada comp. grafix Alan Winters All Music Copyright Spoons Music Inc. 1984. Sphinx Productions gratefully acknowledge the importance of the ideas of Frithjof Bergmann to the production of this film. For further reading, see *On Being Free* (Notre-Dame University Press, 1977) and *The Future of Work*, Praxis Intern (1983). p.c. Sphinx Productions. Col. 90 minutes dist. International Spectrafilm Dist., Inc. l.p. P.J. Soles, Michael Glassbourg, Sandy Horne, Jim Carroll, Barry Callaghan, Sky Gilbert, Mary Hawkins, Real Andrews, Gary Augustynck, Peter Wintonick, Bill Lord, Gigi Guthrie, Peter Griffen, Geets Romo.

photo: Netherlands Fox Film Corp.

Porky's.

Pierre Mignot's photography is one of the few pluses of *The Boy in Blue*, but its effect is negated by the clumsy staging that Jarrott resorts to. The races were shot in Muskoka and on the Rideau Canal and were cut in such a way that the speed and grace of sculling is hardly evident (the resort to slow motion does not help). Hanlan inevitably outstroked the field, but the script, in its clumsy attempt to make him the underdog, show him winning by a hair.

It is not the habit of Canadians to unabashedly celebrate their heroes, in sports or any other endeavor. The adulatory sports biopic of the Americans is not to be found in this country. Rather, Canada has produced the more subdued *Terry Fox Story* and *The Hounds of Notre Dame*. In fictional films, the dark side of sports as seen in *Paperback Hero* and *Blood and Guts* was only reflected in the States in Michael Ritchie's early films, or Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*. By shamelessly apeing the retrogressive aspects of the sports movie, as embodied in Stallone's *Rocky* sequels, *The Boy in Blue* does a disservice to Ned Hanlan's remarkable talent, and, despite the dedication, the memory of John Trent.

J. Paul Costabile

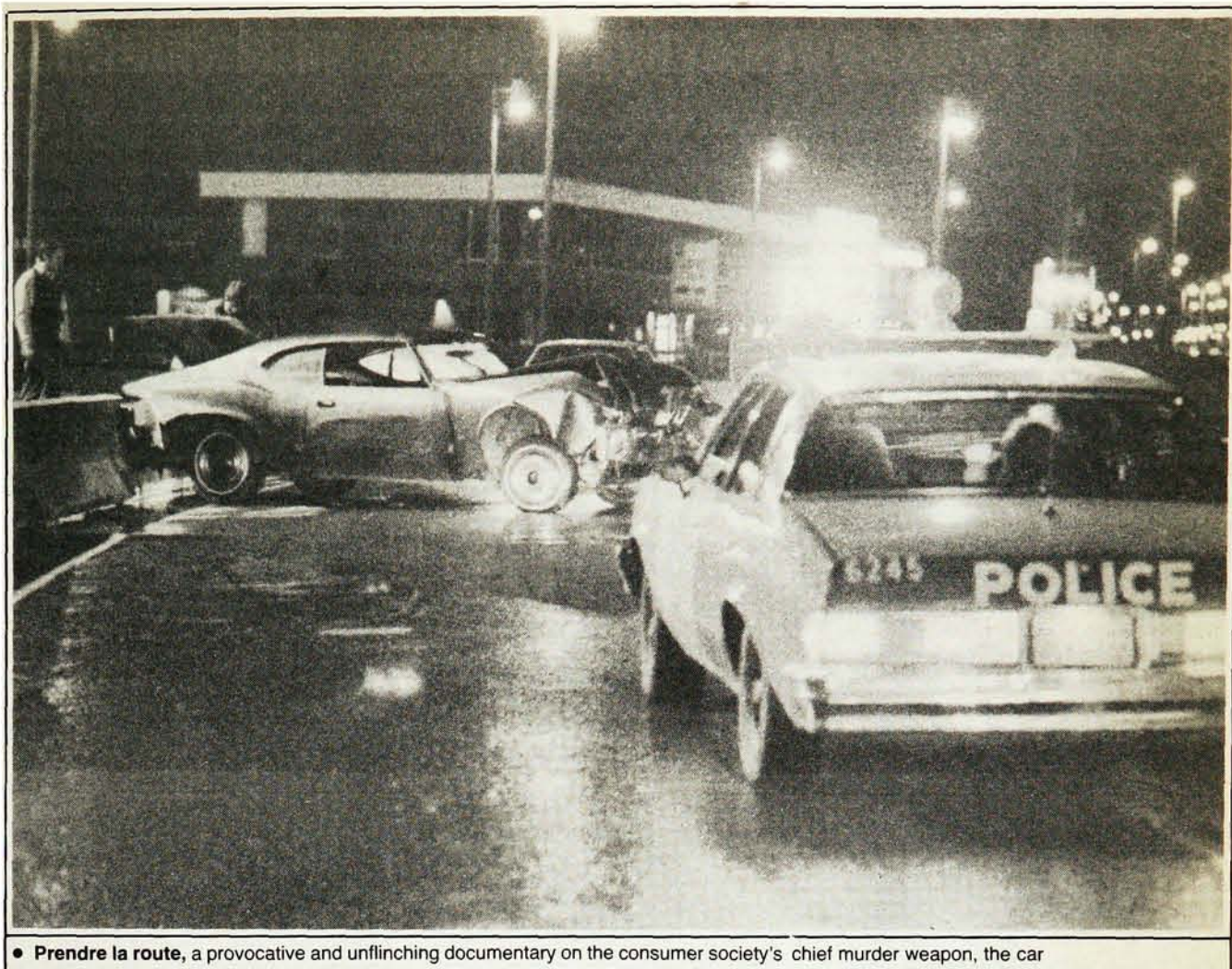


photo: Earl Harvey

• *Prendre la route*, a provocative and unflinching documentary on the consumer society's chief murder weapon, the car

THE BOY IN BLUE d. Charles Jarrott p. John Kemeny exec.p. Steven North CBC p.exec. David Peers sc. Douglas Bowie, from an original idea by John Trent d.o.p. Pierre Mignot cam.op. Andy Chmura asst.cam. Jean Lepine 1st asst.cam. 2nd unit Daniel Vinclette 2nd asst.cam. main unit Christiane Guernon 2nd asst.cam., 2nd unit Normand Belair stills Takashi Seida stills trainee Roger Dufresne p.des. William Beeton asst.art d. Dominique Ricard, Charles Dunlop art d.co.ord. Barbara Shrier set dec. Jean-Baptiste Tard asst. Michele Forest set dresser Norman Sarrazin asst. Paul Hotte ed. Rit Wallis cutters Mirielle Tremblay, Maggie Ewing sd.op. Daniel Latour boom Peter Kelly key grip Emmanuel Lepine grips Jean-Louis Daoust, Jean-Paul Auclair, Eloi Deraspe gaffer Jacques Fortier elect. Jean Trudeau swing Borek Sedivek best boy Gilles Fortier gen.op. Duane Gullison props Serge Bureau asst.props Denis Hamel props buyer Catherine Didelot cost.des. John Hay asst.cost.des. Renée April ward.co-ord. Blanche Boileau ward.master,extras Luc Le Flaguais dresser Christine Grenier ward.assts. Susan Hall, Luc Beland, Craig Grills, Mario Davignon, Francesca Chamberland, Caterina Chamberland, Debra Raffey hair Aldo Signoretti, Gaétan Noisieux assts. Claude Ménard, Nicole Pelletier, Kenneth Halliwell, Carol Doyon wigs Rachel Tremblay makeup artists Brigitte McCaughy, Maurizio Silvi makeup Mikie Hamilton, Diane Gautier, Charles Carter, Jocelyn Brunet, Corrine Joudiou; cont. France LaChapelle mus. Roger Webb mus.ed. Drew King Foley S & F Company re-rec. David Appleby, Don White sd.ed. John Kelly assts. Richard Kelly, Jane Tattersall; draughts. Michael Devine scenic artist Reet Puhm painters Barbara Jones, Sara Hugues const.coord. Rejean Brochu carp. Michel Brochu buyer Helene LaFrance swing gang Jacques Belair, Claude St-Onge, Claude Poirier; sculpting trainer Atalbio Magioni Key wrangler Fred Larsen transp.coord. John Scott p.man. Stephane Reichel asst. Victoria Barney p.office co-ord. Marie Beaulieu p.act. Wilma Palm bookkeeper Kathryn Potter cast. Mike Fenton, Jane Feinberg, Valerie Mas-salas; cast.loc.Mtl. Arden Ryshpan cast.Tor. Deirdre Bowen assoc.p. Paulo de Oliveira asst. to p. Betsy Manheimer asst. to d. Margot Webb a.d. Jacques Methe (1st), Madeleine Henric (2nd), Judi Kemeny, Jacques Laberge (3rd); p.e. I.C.C.-Regatta Productions in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. with the participation of Telefilm Canada. Col. Deluxe, 35mm running time: 93 minutes dist. 20th Century-Fox Lp. Nicolas Cage, Christopher Plummer, Cynthia Dale, David Naughton, Sean Sullivan, Melody Anderson, James B. Douglas, Walter Massey, Austin Willis, Philip Craig, Robert McCormick, Tim Weber, George E. Zecman, Geordie Johnson, Brian Thorne, Don MacQuarrie, James Edmond, Greg Swanson, Gerald Isles, J. Gordon Masten, Bruce McFee, Doris Malcolm, Ian D. Clark, Jeff Wincott, Aiden Devine, Lee Max Walton, Roger A. McKeen, Kim Coates, Ted Dykstra, Michel Perron, Bob Bainborough, John Dunn-Hill, Philip Nelson, Germain Beauchamp, Eric Pink, Patrick Sinclair, Elizabeth Rukavina, Ian Health, Jane Dickson, Claude Rae, Peter Peer, Doug Lennox, Dave De Sanctis, Ken Rogers, Barry Edward Blake, Anne Far-quar, Art Grosser, Paul Craig, Teddy Donville, Gorman Miller, Diane Hollingsworth, Graham MacReady, Graham Haley, John Cain.

Michel Poulette,
Paul Cowan, Raoul Fox &
Ken McCready's

Prendre la route

"Of all the consumer goods we purchase, including guns, the automobile is the most likely to kill or cause serious injury," states Pierre Nadeau, host of the four-part television series entitled *Prendre la route*, aired on Radio-Canada from Jan. 19-Feb. 9. Conceived by Idéacom inc., a Montreal production company, the \$2 million dollar budget series was assembled with the help of NFB, Téléfilm Canada and Société Radio-Canada funds. Using a documentary style, *Prendre la route* examines why preventative measures have failed to improve highway safety.

Since the mid-70s, television has repeatedly called attention to highway safety but the results have often been alarmist, unfocused and little able to change public opinion. Programs such as the questionnaire style of CTV's *Take The Test* were self-defeating, particularly in their use of humour. Families directly affected by highway accidents have had to wait nearly a decade to notice a change in public opinion.

Given their emotionally-charged situations, the events depicted in *Prendre la route* were tempered with restraint, distance and intelligence. In fact, the series was kindly lacking in the gratuitous shock value of roadside carnage and death.

The most effective and saddening program in *Prendre la route* was the series' second episode "Sous le coup du

choc." Shot over a six-month period at the University of Maryland's Trauma Centre in Baltimore, the program almost guaranteed shocking and disturbing footage because the Trauma Centre specializes in treating accident victims whose chances for survival are slim to none. Sequences shot in operating rooms were intercut with on-the-spot interviews of doctors and families.

With footage shot by cameraman Mike Mahoney, director Paul Cowan manipulated his material with care and control. Cowan is no stranger to strong and controversial subject matter. His filmography includes the Billy Bishop documentary *The Kid Who Couldn't Miss* (1982), a documentary on Middle East military strategies entitled "The Deadly Game Of Nations" (1982), (part of Gwynne Dyer's *War* series), and *Democracy On Trial: The Morgenthau Affair* (1984).

In "Sous le coup du choc," Cowan deploys a provocative and unflinching documentary style to depict the lives of individuals who represent only a fraction of the quarter-million accident victims reported each year in the United States. At times, the viewer is pushed well past the limits of mere observation.

Mike Swick, a 26-year-old motorcyclist, is rushed to the Trauma Centre, accompanied by his wife, Ginny. Swick is paralyzed from the waist down and has lost all bodily functions. At this point, Cowan shifts the narrative line to Swick's wife, Ginny, and begins to detail her unflagging optimism. Despite Ginny's patience and care, Mike Swick's single triumph is the ability to move his eyelids.

In this episode, the viewer's empathy extends equally to the victim, the family and the doctors of the Centre. During interviews, doctors admit to difficulty when they have to discuss death or in-

jury with a member of the family. Often, the future of a patient is beyond the doctor's (or filmmaker's) control. Take John and Debbie Boyd, a married couple who were severely injured in a motorcycle accident. Following a brief period of guilt over the accident, John Boyd quickly recovers from his injuries and returns to work. The future of the Boyd's marriage is evident in a reaction shot of Debbie early in the program. As her husband eagerly declares his intention to drive a motorcycle again, Debbie turns to the camera in horror. John eventually asks for a divorce.

The most difficult scenes to watch in "Sous le coup du choc," involve Mike Hall, a 19-year-old motorcyclist who suffers severe brain damage. With fear and disbelief, Hall often faces the camera and cries like a baby. Hall's bitterness and frustration have a palpable quality that is both disturbing and poignant. During an interview, Hall's mother recalls their first Christmas together after the accident. "I asked him what he wanted for Christmas," she says. "He told me he wanted a gun, so he could blow his brains out."

In "L'Inconduite," the first episode in *Prendre la route*, Pierre Goupil and Michel Brunet, two policemen from the Sûreté du Québec, discuss their role in maintaining safe highway conditions. Shot during a three-month period, director Michel Poulette and cameraman André Jean accompany the two cops on routine calls, often filming from the back seat of the police cruiser. In one sequence, a suspected drunk driver sits quietly in the back seat of the cruiser. After admitting that he had three beers, a bottle of wine with dinner and a digestive, he casually inquires about the presence of the film crew. Suddenly realizing his admission of guilt, he turns and scowls at the camera. One wonders if