Arthur Lamothe's Equinox

Four weeks after its release, Arthur Lamothe's Equinoxe, his first fiction film in 20 years, can no longer be seen first run in Montreal. It's too bad that we haven't discovered how to market films that aren't immediately critical hits or that don't capitalize on recent scandals. A bit slow and structurally weak, Equinoxe will nevertheless return a large reward to the patient viewer.

Lamothe has cast Jacques Godin as Guillaume, an innocent man who, because of his best friend's lies, is arrested by the police and sentenced to a jail term. After many years in prison, and many more years of self-imposed exile in Venezuela, Guillaume, accompanied by his granddaughter (Ariane Frédérique) returns to his old village to find out why he was betrayed and to come to terms with himself and his life.

The film is structured as a mystery/suspense film. We are told that Guillaume is an ex-convict but we are made to wait for the plot. Lamothe's universe allows for the creation of suspense. We're never really afraid for Guillaume; his character, dilute the tension. As Guillaume mingles with the ghosts of his past, unforgetable. A film whose climax is a letdown. When the goons find him and his granddaughter and harass them, the situation is quickly brought under control by the native woman. When he finds the ex-friend whose lies sent him to jail, all he does is punch him. Nevertheless, I think that within the context of the film these resolutions make sense. We would have been irrationally for Guillaume, after unjustly spending a great deal of his life in jail and in exile, to come to his old town only to do something that would either make him flee again or justly land him in prison.

Equinoxe could have used a tighter structure. But it is very well acted and beautifully shot. I find the image of a leonine Godin, paddling a canoe through marshes to come to a rendezvous with his past, unforgettable. A film that has this much going for it deserves to be seen by many people.

José Arroyo

FESTIVALS

• Perfect counterpoint in Equinoxe between Godin and Frédérique

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