



• Anthony Nahuliak sells his farm to pay *The Price of Daily Bread*

John Paskievich and Michael Mirus'

The Price of Daily Bread

Winnipeg filmmakers John Paskievich and Michael Mirus started out to make a film about an auction sale and emerged with *The Price of Daily Bread*, an understated, disarming eulogy to a dying institution — the family farm.

The timing of the film's release last May, coinciding with the disastrous fall in world wheat prices, could not have been more appropriate. When the film begins, the bank already has Anthony Nahuliak by the throat — there is no way he can repay the big loans he was encouraged to make some years before. Events proceed with deliberate inevitability: Nahuliak, a farmer in Manitoba's stark Interlake region, can't pay; he has to auction off all his equipment but is still in debt; finally even the house and land must be sold and Nahuliak, stubbornly insisting that he still wants to farm, heads out to Alberta in search of work.

As in their first film, *Ted Baryluk's Grocery*, Paskievich and Mirus tell the story of an uncomplicated man whom events have passed by. Once again the narrative is conveyed through black and white still photographs, recorded voices, and a voice-over.

The art in these films is firstly in Paskievich's arrestingly human photos, then in their arrangement, and in the complementary relationship between the photos and the sound track. When Nahuliak receives a call from the auctioneer asking when he can come and look at the machinery, his hand half-

covers his face in an unconscious gesture of restrained despair. When Nahuliak's daughter is shown gathering eggs he says, "Dixie used to complain about doing chores but not any more. She cried when we told her we might have to move away from here." Just then, from above, we see the eggs in the pail — perfectly white and oval and fragile, symbols of the life the Nahuliaks are losing.

Almost from the film's first frame, Nahuliak's father is a disapproving presence. He has had the farm passed on to him from his father, has passed it on to his son, and now he becomes increasingly withdrawn as he realizes that this inter-generational continuity is going to be broken. The auction sale is presented with energy (the auctioneer trading jibes with the crowd) and humour (one farmer comments: "My boy's a school teacher. He doesn't need machinery — they even buy him his own pencils") and pathos (Nahuliak sitting in his combine as it's being auctioned, as though he is himself on the block). Then, after the sale, there is a white expanse of the fields in winter and the matter of fact observation: "Dad died a few months after the auction."

If there is a fault in this piece it is that, in its unqualified approval of family life, ethnic roots and good neighbours, it pulls a little too hard at the viewer's heart strings. But it is so well put together that you hardly notice. In the background there is the shadow of a Darwinian social system, indifferent to its victims. Against that background the Nahuliak family stands with dignity.

Ralph Friesen •

THE PRICE OF DAILY BREAD d./sc./ed.p. John Paskievich, MMichael Mirus cam. John Paskievich addt. cam. Peter Tittenberger narr. Anthony Nahuliak sd. rec. Mick Mirus, Leon Johnson sd. ed. Michael Mirus anim. cam. Svend-Eric Erikson, Jill Haras re-rec. Clive Perry music Kelly Senkiw prod. co. Galicia Films Colour., running time: 16 mins.

Jean-Claude Lord's

He Shoots, He Scores

Some say nothing exemplifies Canadian culture better than hockey. Others say the best vehicle for conveying a sense of nationhood to all Canadians is the CBC, and that it is drama which most clearly reveals us to ourselves, imparting a sense of unique identity. What then could be more essentially Canadian than a CBC-TV drama about a hockey player, broadcast coast-to-coast in both official languages?

Was it thoughts like these that led CBC/Radio-Canada to get involved in Claude Héroux's production of *He Shoots, He Scores*, 13 one-hour episodes broadcast Tuesday nights at nine? If so, some vital elements got lost in the translation of the idea to the screen, because the series is derivative, superficial and uninspired, a *Dallas* of the hockey rink. The most ambitious television project ever produced in Quebec is a blatant betrayal of the principles of excellence, distinction and relevance espoused by CBC/Radio-Canada.

Pierre Lambert, a 20-year-old junior hockey player from Trois-Rivières, makes it to the NHL with the Quebec "Nationals" In the process he deliberately injures his best friend, and, forgetting the girl he left at home, guilelessly and guiltlessly slides into bed with man-hungry Marie-Lou. But not to worry, he's scoring goals and the fans love him. Sure, his teammates give him a hard

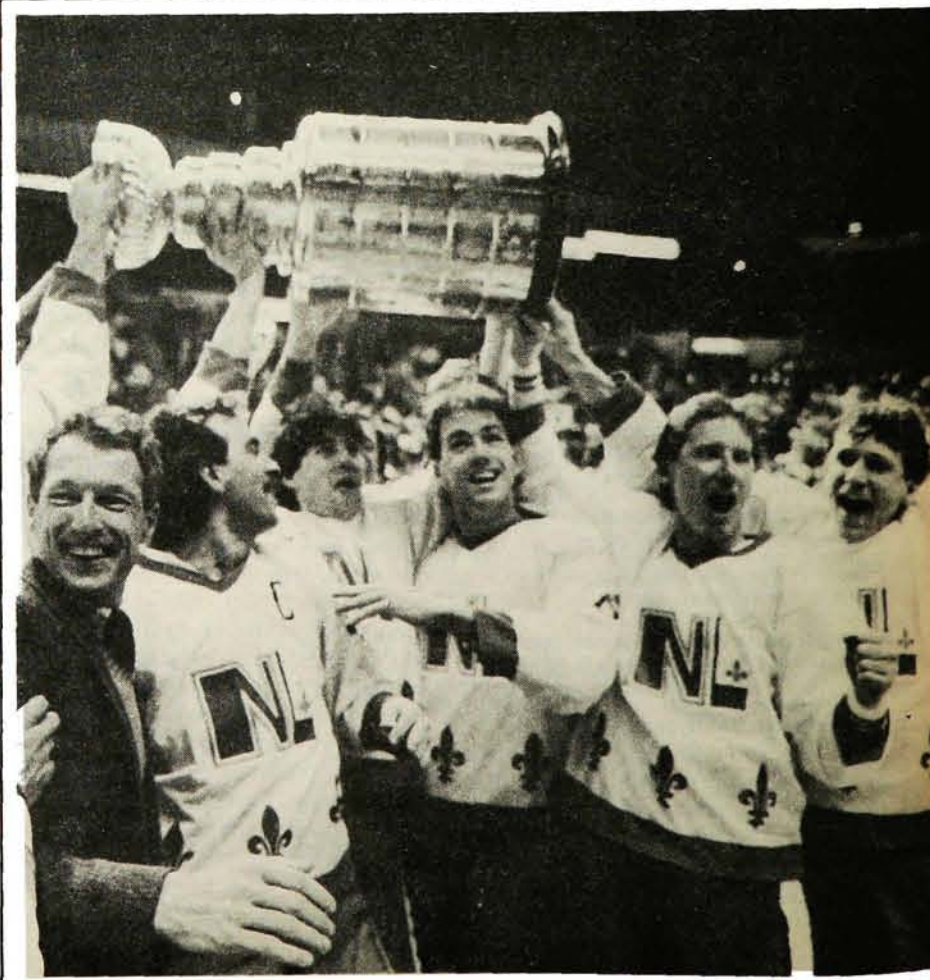
time at first for getting bigheaded, and sure, the coach is extra hard on him in practice. It doesn't matter: the fans adore him, his mother and girlfriends adore him, and he adores himself. The producers' expectation seems to be that the national TV audience will happily join in. Pierre is cute, charmingly naive and talented, a winner. What more could we ask?

The whole project smells of soap opera. Nearly all the shots are interiors. The characters are absorbed in scheming, betrayal, sex, success. Some have drinking problems, others have dying fathers with tubes up their nostrils. Everybody who's anybody is beautiful. People say things like "hockey drives a man mad" or "love is the only thing that makes any sense in life." It better, because the way people in *He Shoots, He Scores* talk doesn't.

When Pierre's sister dallies with his teammate Marc Gagnon over drinks in an expensive restaurant, she mentions that her late father was a fine businessman and that her mother didn't finish university, then interrupts herself: "But I don't know why I'm telling you all this." Neither do we. There is simply not enough substance in her life for any revelation to be interesting or truly personal. The same holds true for everybody else.

As if dead dialogue weren't enough, the series also suffers from technical problems. In each of the first three episodes the sync is off at certain moments. Why should this happen in a big-budget production, even if it was shot in two languages simultaneously?

He Shoots, He Scores misses the opportunity to show Canada to Canadians. Apart from kitchens, living rooms and boardrooms, there are interiors of hockey arenas. None of this is at all distinctive. The Nationals travel to Winnipeg, but all we see is an anonymous



• No more guessing — The Nationals win in *He Shoots, He Scores*

hotel room (where Marc Gagnon has an encounter with an equally anonymous smiling blonde) and the front page of *The Winnipeg Free Press*. Quite possibly the producers, who include the Société-Nationale de Télévision Française (TF-1), wanted to avoid a too specifically Canadian look, in the hope of being more attractive to international markets. It is precisely the mistake made by the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) in supporting numbers of faceless failures in the past. The CFDC's successor, Telefilm Canada, is also participating in **He Shoots, He Scores**. Canadian, you say? Pity.

Nor do we get much of a feeling for what Quebec is like, or what it's like being a Quebecer, unless certain xenophobic Freudian slips count. After a win the team trainer, a zany fellow, wraps a towel around his head and salaams, praising Allah. In another episode the coach, angry with the team owner (whose name is Goldman), tells the general manager: "And if that's not clear enough, you can translate it into Yiddish for me." This is awkward, if not painful.

He Shoots, He Scores skates along the surface, its protagonist too shallow to command anything more than adolescent interest. Pierre Lambert, like Duddy Kravitz, is an intense, ambitious young man willing to use people and betray his friends to get to the top. But Duddy could at least be funny (there are no laughs in **He Shoots, He Scores**), and is somewhat pathetic in contrast to his grandfather, who retains some sense of tradition, some values.

No such perspective, no suggestion of any limit on self-indulgence or self-expression, exists in **He Shoots, He Scores**. "You think you're going to explode, you feel so good," is Pierre's description of the sensation of scoring a goal. No ironies here; feeling good is what it's all about.

It may be that the series will attract mass audiences. If it does, it will be for all the wrong reasons. Not everything has to be **The Tin Flute** or **Maria Chapdelaine** but, even in the hedonistic '80s, it is possible to create characters and situations that viewers can care about. In this, **He Shoots, He Scores** fails completely, and the failure is the more significant when the project has so much money, and such important cultural issues, riding on it.

Ralph Friesen •

HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES A dramatic new 13-part series about a young hockey player's rise to stardom. On CBC Television. The series was produced by Claude Héroux Productions in association with the CBC, Société Radio Canada, O'Keefe Breweries, Ltd., and the Société-Nationale de Télévision Française (TF-1), with the participation of Telefilm Canada. p. Claude Héroux d. Jean-Claude Lord s.c. Louis Caron, Réjean Tremblay trans. Tim Reed prod. sec. Nicole Forget d.o.p. Bill Wiggins unit. man. Pierre Laberge assist. unit. man. Paul Bujold prod. sec. Louise David acc. Yvette Duguet prod. assist. Claude Lacoursière, Gilbert Lucu d. Jean-Claude Lord 1st a.d. Frank Ruszczyński 2nd a.d. Ginette Paré 3rd a.d. Kim Berlin casting Hélène Robitaille cont. Marie Daoust d.o.p. Bernard Chentrier assist. cam. Jean-Marc Casavant sd. Henri Blondeau boom Pierre Blain art d. Dominique Ricard set dec. Jean Bourret props/buyer Michèle Nolet props Michel Comte assist. props Réal Baril make-up Louise Mignault hair Richard Hansen cost. design Sylvie Krasker assist. cost. design Mary Jane Wallace ward. Marianne Carter gaffer Yves Charbonneau best boy Marcel Breton key grip Marc De Ernsted grip Stéphane De Ernsted l.p. Carl Marotte, Jean Harvey, Chantale Labelle, Marina Orsini, Macha Meril, Benoit Girard, Marc Messier, Michel Forget, Yvan Ponton, Sylvie Bourque, Lise Thoun.

Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol's Contes des mille et un jours ou Jean Desprez

The attempt to honour a figure from the past can end in romanticizing, creating nostalgia, in effect, separating us further from the one we wish to remember. Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol's most recent documentary, **Contes des mille et un jours ou Jean Desprez**, works against such tendencies. This video portrait recalls with clarity, energy and a real sensuousness the life of important Quebec media personality, Laurette Laroque, better known by her practical pen name, Jean Desprez.

After three years of research, interviews and script writing, Cadrin-Rossignol emerges with a careful compilation, a work which embraces the many facets of Desprez's life. The video traces Desprez's history using different sources; archival photographs and sound recordings, drawings and sketches, dramatization (in which actor Jacqueline Auger-Laurent portrays her mother in the role of Jean Desprez, adding an interesting dimension to the structure of the work: Auger-Laurent appears both as herself, discussing her childhood, and in fictive sequences as a young Desprez), interviews with colleagues, friends and admirers, are woven together. The various techniques are well integrated. The resulting multiform structure provides the space necessary to tell the tale of a woman who regretted only having one life when it would take at least 10 to satisfy her own dreams and aspirations.

Such regret worked to spur the artist on. Desprez's contribution to various media in Quebec is enormous: she wrote extensively for radio and television, was a journalist, critic, columnist, worked both in film and theatre. A cataloguing of Desprez's diverse efforts alone would provide material for a documentary. Yet, **Contes des mille et un jours** moves far beyond any such objective account. Instead, an impressionistic collage is achieved; we approach Jean Desprez through the video, we have a sense of being near her. Two organizing principles of the video set up such a sensory depiction of Desprez: the radio tapes of Desprez herself commenting on her métier, her life and the society she lived in, and the candid testimonies of her daughter, Jacqueline Auger-Laurent. In both instances it is the voice that transports us to an epoch very different than the one we live in now: the pre-television era.

During the '40s and '50s, radio held a primary place in peoples' homes and hearts. **Contes des mille et un jours** is an evocation of that time. It is fitting, then, that such attention has been paid to sound quality in this production. The rich tones and clear inflections are heard with pleasure, the dramatization of broadcasting in the radio station is viewed with interest, and Desprez's response to television at the time of its birth is understood with humor and delight. "Oui, c'est beau", she said, "when one closes one's eyes it's almost as nice



• Writing a thousand and one tales, Jacqueline Auger-Laurent as her mom, Jean Desprez

as radio."

The most popular radio show Desprez wrote was *Jeunesse dorée*, which continued on the air until the time of her death in 1965. As one listener recalls, this 'radio-roman' was so well-liked that you could walk down the street on a summer day when the windows were open and still follow the program. Michelle Rossignol, director of the National Theatre School, speaks of the importance of radio for actors at that time. Radio was used as a tool for voice training; actors would listen to Desprez's programs from week to week, identify the various characters and imitate their styles.

The adventure series for children **Yvan l'intrepide** is remembered by listeners for its fantastic voyages where one's imagination was brought into other cultures by a young flying doctor.

Desprez's interest in other cultures is only one indication of the searching, open mind behind her creations. Considered an avant-gardiste by many who knew and worked with her; Desprez challenged her world and times consistently by voicing her concerns in her writing. *La Cathédrale*, her first play dealt with homosexuality, class issues and sexism. She was an advocate of Quebec talent and fought hard to dispel the mistrust of its own worth found within Quebecois theatre. She spoke out against American cultural imperialism and how it affected Quebec in particular; she convinced the public of their heritage and constantly defended Quebec actors and writers.

Jean Desprez identified with strong, accomplished women; she wrote programs on Marie Curie and Lucy Stone. She spoke directly to the women of Quebec, reminding them of how they

had been neglected for three centuries, how they were involved in their own neglect. She fought for practical causes, lobbying for the family allowance cheques to be issued in the mother's name as opposed to the father's.

An awareness to all forms of oppression informed Desprez's work on many levels. This keen sensitivity was probably honed by the marginality she felt in her own life. Although Jean Desprez did not stop producing since the beginning of her career in radio, she experienced that daily insecurity felt by so many artists. She never knew what the next day would bring; she wondered always, as a single parent, if she would manage to raise and support her daughter.

Contes des mille et un jours raises the question, if indirectly, of art's insecure place in society; at the same time it celebrates an artist who placed herself proudly in the world for all to hear and see.

Patricia Kearns •

CONTES DES MILLE ET UN JOURS OU JEAN DESPREZ d. Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol based on an original idea by Louise Carré exec. p. Louise Carré assoc. p./admin. Claire Stevens assoc. p. p. man. Suzanne Laverdière p. sec. Danielle Charlebois 1st assist. d. Thérèse Bérubé unit man. Lucie Bouliane d.o.p. Jean-Charles Tremblay 1st assist. cam Pierre Duceppe sd. Serge Beauchemin assist. sd. Yvon Benoit art. d. Carole Paré assist dec. Vincent Gaucher gaffer Claude Fortier 2nd elec. Sylvain Bergévin key grip Pierre Charpentier make-up Mikie Hamilton ward. Anne Beauchamp hair Nicole Pelletier loc. photog. Romeo Garaicyp l.p. Jacqueline Auger-Laurent, Lucie Guilbault, Andrée Pelletier, Roland Chénail, Anie Pierard, Richard Duhaime and interviews with Philippe Laframboise, Pierre Dagenais, Roger Garceau, Colette Dorsay, Michelle Rossignol, Jacques Normand, Huguette Proulx, Yvette Brind'amour and others Produced by La Maison de Quatre Inc. with financial participation from Telefilm Canada, La Société générale du cinéma du Québec and with the collaboration of La Société Radio-Canada and the Dept. of communications at UQUAM. Colour Video running time 75 min. 51 sec.