



• Claudette Messier, Robin Spry, Ron Stannett, Luc Lussier and Kerrie Keane

## Robin Spry's Hit and Run

Canada has a conscience. Or at least its film industry does. And he looks like a cross between an absent-minded professor and a giant panda.

Director Robin Spry is a centre of calm amid the scurry of shooting his latest feature film, *Hit and Run*.

The film concerns the conflict between Dinah Middleton (Kerrie Keane), a Montreal mother, and Owen Hughes (Saul Rubinek), an American driver. Dinah witnesses Hughes run down her son. Teaming up with Max (Daniel Pilon), her lawyer ex-husband, Dinah tries to get Hughes to take responsibility for his actions.

The film is less of a vengeance hunt than a study of character development. "We didn't want do a *Rambette*," says Spry.

No Rambo-ish pretensions are present during the shooting of the courtroom scene. Dinah and Max are trying to get an extradition order from a U.S. court so Hughes can be tried in Canada. According to production manager Peter Bray, the mood on set is "intense, but friendly." The emotional involvement required of the three main characters during filming results in amusing exchanges away from the camera. Kerrie Keane laughingly snarls at Saul Rubinek, who off-set wears a sheepish, I'm-not-really-such-a-bad-guy grin.

All three actors spoke from the perspective of their character. Kerrie Keane expressed Dinah's absolute frustration with Hughes' refusal to take responsibility for his actions. But Saul Rubinek spoke of the complexity of his character. Hughes is a regular guy who is being asked to sacrifice the rest of his life for a moment of panic which could have happened to anyone. Rubinek didn't condone Hughes' actions but said, "It would be too convenient if he was a villain. He's human. There'd be no fight otherwise." Keane also expressed the complexity of

characterization which the film develops; "The audience will sympathize with Dinah's situation but she becomes maniacal in her actions towards Hughes."

Keane and Pilon expressed the differences that resulted in their characters' divorce. She sees Max as the lawyer who has shed his ideals in the process of becoming successful. Pilon disagrees. Max hasn't lost his ideals, but Dinah has immersed herself completely into the sterile world of the intellectual. The character development which each of them experience forms the core of the film.

Robin Spry and the central characters all expressed their personal interest in the injustice which the film explores. According to Pilon, "I feel responsible for people getting the wrong end of the deal."

This sensitivity was in evidence on the set. From crew to director all agreed that "there are no stars here, cast and crew are like a family." Spry spoke well of the crew, contrasting it to those in other parts of the world, where "there is a factory atmosphere, no interest in the film beyond their job."

*Camaraderie* does run high as the set stops for a "jazz break" — locations manager Barbara Shrier chuckles as she hurries to placate the queries of the organizers and audience of a jazz concert being held in the same building — "Watch the wires please."

"The crew are interested in this film, not just in doing their jobs," says Peter Bray. "Canadian crews are famous around the world for their good humour and good work. They're good at their jobs, but they're crazy." Both these aspects of the crew are apparent on-set as their day, which began at 5:00 a.m. drags into night.

It is Spry's concern for character and the subject of his films that trickles down into every level of production. A former NFB-er, Spry is now co-partner in his own production company. *Hit and Run* is Spry and Producer Jamie Brown's collaboration. As Daniel Pilon says, "There are men who make movies who could be making sausages... But Robin is *engagé*, he's involved and not in it for the money."

Marian McNair •

Marquise Lepage's  
& Jean Beaudry's

## Marie s'en va-t-en ville

The inside of the Casino amusement parlor on *boulevard St-Laurent* is painted bright shades of blue and pink. Photos of semi-nude pin-up girls, vintage American cars and rock stars such as David Bowie and David Lee Roth adorn its stucco walls. In one corner of the arcade, a young macho type is playing pinball as a throng of adoring admirers looks on. The Hollywood Heat pinball game blares out its mechanical pseudo *Miami Vice* soundtrack. But this isn't *Miami Vice*. Not by a long shot.

The Casino pinball and video arcade is the location of a one-day shoot for Marquise Lepage's *Marie s'en va-t-en ville*, the latest film from Les Productions du Lundi Matin. The film tells the story of Marie (Geneviève Lenoir), a 13-year-old girl who flees from her troubled home in rural Quebec and heads to the seedy underworld of Montreal, where she befriends Sarah (Frédérique Collin), a disillusioned prostitute who takes the teenage girl under her wing. The film chronicles the road of enlightenment and inner realization travelled by the two protagonists, but it is also a voyage of discovery for those responsible for the making of the film.

*Marie s'en va-t-en ville* is produced by François Bouvier and co-directed by Jean Beaudry, the pair responsible for the low-budget and highly acclaimed 1984 film *Jacques et novembre*. This time round, with first-time director Marquise Lepage at the helm, the duo's role is somewhat less obvious. Yet the film, despite the more distant presence of the two filmmakers, still strives to achieve, in the words of Jean Beaudry in a 1984 interview, "a new aesthetic in Québécois film." Everyone involved in the film is adamant about the need to retain control over the final product. "We could have made the film for \$1.2 or \$1.4 million," admits Bouvier. "Certainly, there was no lack of interested backers; but it was important for us to make a lower budget film (in the neighbourhood of \$800,000) in order to make our film as it was originally planned. We don't want to lose control over our own film."

The filmmakers' desire for control

over the film, however, is more than just a question of pride. Just as the film itself is somewhat unorthodox by industry standards, so is the method by which the film is made. "Les Productions du Lundi Matin is a co-operative of sorts," explains Bouvier, "and because we had made *Jacques et novembre*, it was now Marquise's turn to make a film. And although it's her film, both Jean and I are completely involved." Jean Beaudry, in his role as co-director is always present on the set and is instrumental in the preparation of each day's shoot. Although he is credited as being "co-director", his position, according to Bouvier, would be better described as "privileged collaborator."

Regardless of what function you want to assign to various people on the production, it is clear that there is a fluidity at work on *Marie s'en va-t-en ville* that is nonexistent in most films. "There's a definite cohesion among the crew," says Bouvier, "and it really shows up when you see the rushes. I don't think you'd get the same results with a bigger budget and a larger crew." Not surprisingly, Marquise Lepage agrees. "There's a real weight during production. If it were up to me, in completely ideal circumstances, the crew would be even smaller. But given the film we want to make, it really wouldn't be possible."

Lepage, Beaudry and Bouvier in many ways represent a new generation of Québécois filmmakers. Their aim is not to present an individualistic *auteur* point of view, but to integrate common ideas for the sake of the film. "Making a small film with others collaborating on it really gives me a sense of freedom and input," says Lepage. "It really makes the film dynamic."

Certainly, dynamism is no stranger to these filmmakers. Beaudry and Bouvier's *Jacques et novembre* (on which Lepage assisted in various functions), with its blend of bold *cinéma vérité* sequences, stagnant conversations (à la *Stranger Than Paradise*) and low-tech video introspection, could probably not have been made by an individual director. Yet its eclecticism resulted in a surprisingly unified and strongly evocative film. Given its more structured narrative, *Marie s'en va-t-en ville* is unlikely to be as eclectic as its predecessor. But the collaboration between Lepage, Bouvier and Beaudry, rooted in a shared vision of "a new aesthetic", will undoubtedly result in a film more dynamic and less traditional than the norm.

Greg Clarke •

• Frederique Collin and Geneviève Lenoir-Boulanger in *Marie...*

