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 amidst the scrutiny 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 to do a Ramboette,” 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 need for justice. “There’s no question of pride. Just 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, “so 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 due to production at work. If it were up to me, it would be a question of pride. Just as the film is made, we had made *Jacques et novembre*.”

Certainly, dynamism is no stranger to these filmmakers. 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.” 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

Maran McNear

Marquise Lepage’s & Jean Beaudry’s

Marie s’en va-t-en ville

The inside of the Casino amusement parlour 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 sound track. But this isn’t Miami Vice. Not by a long shot.

The 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 disinterested prostitute who takes the teenage girl under her wing. The film chronicles the road of enlightenment and inner realization traveled 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 1994 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 neighborhood 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 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, “so 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.”

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