François Labonté’s Henri is about the reunification of a family after it has been split apart by tragedy. The story is a good one, filled with emotion, humour and a laudable sort of righteousness, i.e. the good guys win, but there are some uncomfortable incongruities between what Henri portends to be and what it is.

The central character, the hero, is undoubtedly Henri. The viewer is drawn into his life, his tenant-aged world. In its story-line and characterization, Henri is a teen movie. But there are certain production elements that do not uphold this orientation.

It is full of picturesquely long takes and is shot mostly with a slow-moving, at times even lyrical camera that will probably pass right over a teen audience which, generally speaking, has been raised on rock videos and space-invaders. For example, when Henri and Rock take to the dunes in an off-road vehicle, the camera keeps a leisurely pace and distance. Rather than a gritty, fast-paced active and exciting moment that would be more appreciated by a young audience, it induces a feeling of a moment out of time, with the emphasis falling on the sense of union between the two friends.

I had the same feeling about the musical score — while it is enjoyable, it feels all wrong for the film. At times it connotes a humour that is inappropriate and acts like the voice of an adult looking upon an adolescent situation that mustn’t really be taken seriously. These are serious flaws if the film was intended for a teen-aged audience, and with a 15-year-old protagonist, it’s difficult to imagine what else it was intended for. In other words, the style of Henri seems to contradict its content to its detriment.

Hopefully, Henri will prove me wrong and find its audience, because, despite some hokeyness and a tendency towards sentimentality, I like the characters, and the story, the visual style Labonté has produced.

**François Labonté**

**Henri**

**Film Reviews**

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