

George Mihalka's
The Blue Man

George Mihalka's *The Blue Man* seems to be Canada's answer to such American films as Paul Schrader's remake of *Cat People* and Tony Scott's *The Hunger*. Instead of the vampires or menacing felines featured in the earlier films, this story deals with astral travellers who become spiritual vampires in order to continue their timeless existence.

At the center of the story is Paul Sharpe (Winston Rekert), a director of TV commercials who is fed up with both his work and his family, and only finds pleasure in his experiments with astral projection — the ability, we are told, to leave the confines of the body and enter the free world of the soul. Things, however, start going wrong when both Paul's doctor and father-in-law are killed in a most gruesome way as a result of Paul's flights of fancy. The worst part of it though, is that Paul isn't able to remember the dreams which caused the deaths and doesn't seem able to control the destination of his astral form during sleep.

Perplexed and confused, Paul goes to see Janus (Karen Black), a mysterious dancer and ex-junkie who had first introduced him to the wonderful world of astral projection. She tells him that he is just confused by his new-found powers, and that everything will turn out just fine.

Obviously, everything isn't "just fine" and Kauffman (John Novak), the police detective assigned to the case, knows it. Kauffman has a strong feeling that Paul is somehow connected to the mysterious deaths, and starts looking into his past. He discovers that seven years earlier, Paul had made a documentary called *Wandering Souls*, a film which told the story of two supposed astral travellers who, periodically, are in search of new host bodies.

At this point, Paul doesn't really know what's going on, Kauffman (although justifiably confused) has been able to put most of the clues into place, and the audience has the whole thing already figured out. If the real point of a thriller is to keep you on your toes until the closing credits, then one during which you can predict the ending two thirds of the way through cannot be considered entirely successful.

Certain sequences in *The Blue Man*, especially at the beginning, are quite effective and enshroud those sections of the film in a suitably chilling atmosphere. But as the plot thickens (or more accurately, coagulates), the stylish effects, which are too few and far between in the first place, do little to help thaw out the proceedings.

The premise of the film is of course a silly one, but a certain amount of tension and intelligence would have gone a long way to make the film more effective. Certainly, the stiff dialogue between many of the minor characters can largely be excused, but the lack of

urgency in every major character's portrayal points to the general ineptness at work here. After all, if none of these people have the appearance of caring in the least whether they live or die, there isn't much reason why we should either.

Greg Clarke •

THE BLUE MAN New Century Productions Ltd. Buck Houghton p. Pieter Kroonenburg exec. p. Nicolas Clermont, David J. Patterson special asst. to P. K. Julie Allan d. George Mihalka prod. man. Luc Campeau prod. co-ord Patricia Cahill unit man. Jeffrey S. Bessner 1st a.d. Mike Williams 2nd a.d. Nick Rose cont. Joanne Harwood prod asst. Jean-Pierre Fautoux, Ken Banks, Jean-Marin Basley acbe Manon Bougie-Boyer art d. John Meighen set dresser Skip Hobbs prop buyer Donna Noonan set props François Gascon art dept prod. asst. André Guimond store master Maurice Tremblay painter Ross MacKay cost. design Paul-André Guerin ward mist. Claire Garneau make-up Charles Carter hair Henri Khouzam d.o.p. Paul Van der Linden cam op. Christian Duguay 1st a.d. Paul Gravel 2nd a.d. Maarten Kroonenburg sd. mix. Gabor Vadnay boom Pierre Blain key grip André Ouellette grip Philippe Palu gaffer Jean-Paul Houle best boy Luc Marineau elec. Yvan Bénéard, Steven Hunt spfx Jacques Godbout spfx make-up Edward French spfx - rigging Matt Vogel ed. Nick Rotundo asst. ed. Peter Cooke casting Elite Casting storyboard artist Jean-François Kelahear stills photog Piroshka Mihalka books Lilian Partheniou, Nancy Partheniou Nathalie Laporte comp. op. Ronald Gilbert Jr. dog trainer Jane Conway asst. to Hane Conway George Martin colour 35mm running time 87 min.

Danièle J. Suissa's

The Morning Man

Danièle J. Suissa's *The Morning Man* is based on a true story. Paul Nadeau, a young criminal convicted on 22 charges of armed robbery,

escapes from jail to prove to himself that he can walk the straight and narrow path. He then becomes a successful morning man for a radio station in Lennoxville, Quebec, and on the first anniversary of his escape, turns himself in. Unfortunately, though the story is ripe with cinematic possibilities, they remain unrealized.

The major problem with *The Morning Man* lies in the way the title role is written. According to the film, Nadeau, a nice middle-class boy, turned to armed robbery for the thrill. Why he chose armed robbery instead of sex, drugs or aerobic exercise, more common middle-class stimulants, is never explained. The way Nadeau is depicted — strong, smart, motivated and oh-so-nice — they could all have been interchangeable choices.

His criminal past aside, Nadeau has no flaws of character. Obstacles are laid in his path only to be surmounted. The same discipline and sureness that made him an excellent bank robber now make him a model of self-rehabilitation. Nadeau's Achilles' heel is supposed to be his circle of friends, a sure lure back into a life of crime. But it is presented as helpful (they give him money, a new social insurance number, time) and no more than a minor nuisance (they are total failures in their attempts to seduce or pressure him). Since Nadeau has no weaknesses to confront, nothing can swerve him from the path to righteousness. Frankly, he's a bore.

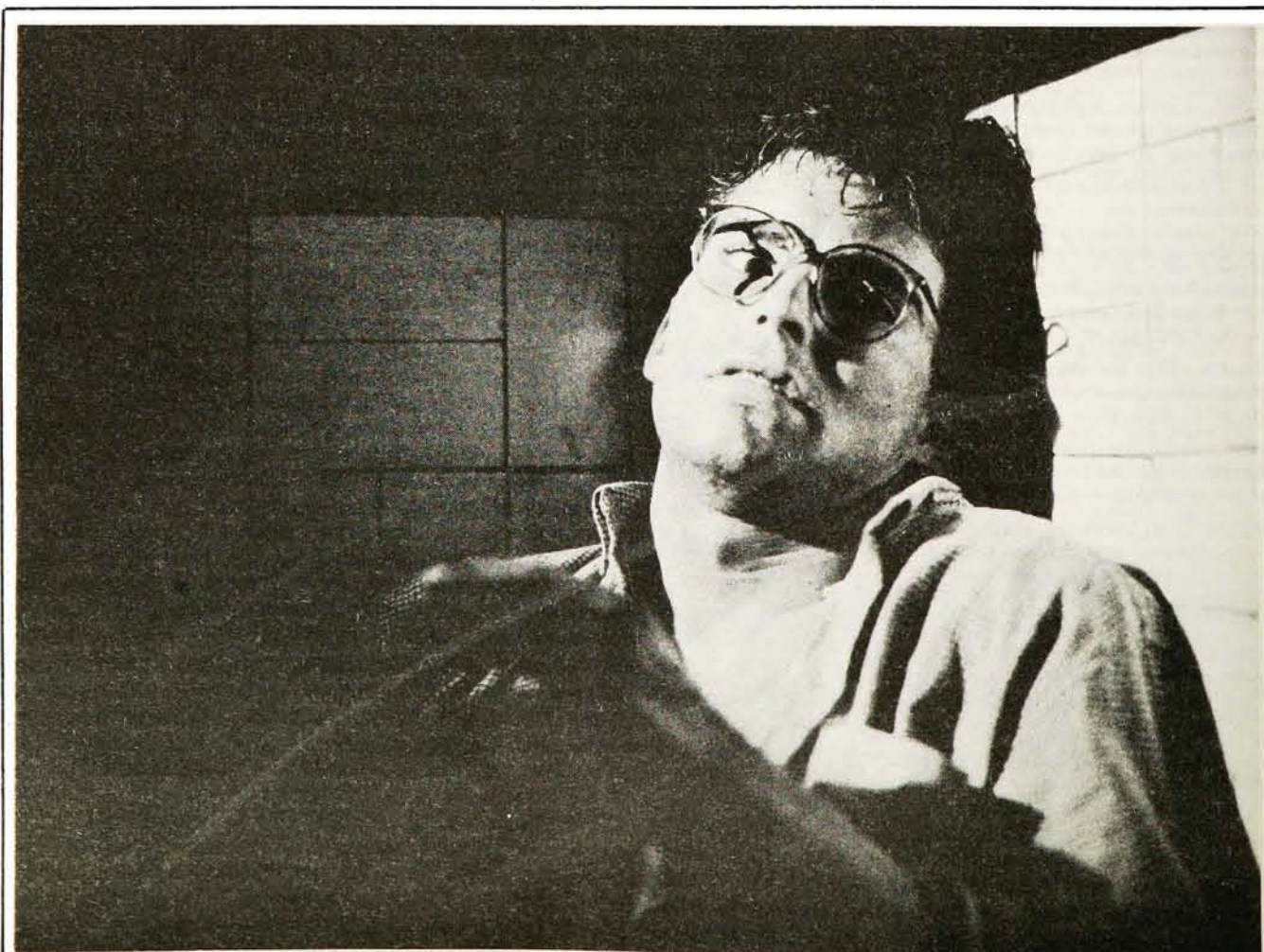
Danièle J. Suissa, the director, is widely experienced in theatre and television but *The Morning Man* is her first theatrical feature. And it shows. Shot mostly in close-ups and medium long shots, *The Morning Man* looks like a TV movie. One is also very conscious that everything in the film has been 'staged'. The action takes place

mostly in interiors, whether it be inside jails, apartments, or cars. Places are used as mere settings in which the actors can exchange dialogue.

The film really begs for a sense of milieu that is just not there. This may have something to do with the weird hybridization that occurs when one shoots a modern-day Quebecois folk story in English. The language, the turn of phrase, the distinctness of place, all these things that immediately create a background for characters in Québecois films are missing. Nothing is made of Nadeau (played by Bruno Doyon with a heavily accented English that doesn't help his line readings) falling in love with Kate Johnson, a WASP doctor played by Kerrie Keane. The film feels strangely dislocated.

Suissa uses no 'establishing shots'. Though a more experienced director could have turned this into an asset, she just leaves the audience disoriented. We get a very limited sense of where the characters are, where they want to go or where they are actually heading. A good example is the escape scene at the beginning of the film. Suissa does not give us a longshot of the jail the convicts are escaping. Thus we don't know if it's difficult, if they're heading in the right direction, or what their chances of making it are. The scene lacks tension. Though it's clear that Suissa is more interested in the psychology of her characters than in suspense, I don't see any reason for mucking up scenes like this one — not fully exploiting action scenes that are dictated by the story do not make us better understand the characters.

René Verzier, (who's justly been nominated for a Genie as best cinematographer for his work here), has shot *The Morning Man* in pastel blues, greys and dirty whites and it looks



•Bruno Doyon as Paul Nadeau, *The Morning Man*

photo: Piroshka Mihalka

great. But neither this, a very good score by Diane Juster, or the very charismatic acting of Kerrie Keane and Bruno Doyon can keep the film from being one long yawn.

If you're thinking of waking up to this morning man, don't bother. It will send you right back to sleep.

José Arroyo •



•Abducted – A picture substantiates 500 words

THE MORNING MAN An SDA Productions Limited Presentation in association with 3 thèmes **exec. p.** François Champagne **p.** Gaston Cousineau, Danièle J. Suissa **d.** Danièle J. Suissa **sc.** Clarke Wallace **d.o.p.** Rene Verzier **eds.** Yves Langlois, Jean Lepage **orig. mus. score** Diane Juster **arrangements** Normand Roger, Denis L. Chartrand **co-ord. T. J. Scott** **stunt team** Marco Bianco, John Goar, Ted Hanlan, Jamie Jones, John Normand, David Rigby, Ron Vanhart **line p.** Monique H. Messier **prod. man.** Daniel Louis **prod. acc.** Muriel Lize **asst. prod. acc.** Leon G. Arcand **prod. co-ord.** Micheline Cadieux **prod. sec.** Johanne St-Arnauld **director's personal asst.** Michel St-Pierre **1st a.d.** Mireille Goulet **2nd a.d.** Pierre Plante **cont.** Johanne Prgent, Monique Champagne **cont. trainee** Marie-Thérèse Brouillard **dialogue sup.** Alexander Ary **art d.** Charles Dunlop, François Seguin **asst. art d.** Lynn Trout **set dec.** Jean-Baptiste Tard, Gilles Aird **set dresser** Michele Forest, Philippe Chevalier **asst. set dresser** Jean Labrecque, Ghislaine Grenon **prop master** Denis Hamel **asst props** Anne Grandbois **spfx** Ryal Cosgrove, John Walsh **draftsman** Michael Devine **art dept. asst.** Mary Lynn Drachman **scenic painter** Tristan Tondino **labourer** Sidney Leger **vehicle co-ord.** Reg Massey, Maurice Charest **cost. design** Nicoletta Massone **ward** Francesca Chamberland, Caterina Chamberland **make-up** Marie-Angèle Breitner-Protat **asst. make-up** Christiane Fattori **hair** Gaetan Noiseux **1st asst. cam** Denis Gingras **2nd asst. cam.** Jean-Jacques Gervais **2nd. cam.** Louis de Ernsted, Daniel Jobin, Serge Ladouceur **2nd. cam. assts** Paul Gravel, Christiane Guernon, Pierre Duceppe, Jacques Bernier, Sylvie Rosenthal, **set photog** Piroška Mihalka **cam. trainee** Claude Beauchamp **sd.** Serge Beauchemin **boom** Thierry Hoffman **unit man.** Mario Nadeau **loc. man.** Richard Lalonde **asst. loc. man.** Josette Gauthier **prod. asst.** Lucie Bouliane, Norbert Dufour, Martin Dubois, Benoit Mathieu, François Fauteux **craft service** Janet Cavanagh **driver** Christian Fluet **prod. trainee** Marie-Louise Laurier **gaffer** Jacques Fortier **elec.** Gilles Fortier, Claude Fortier **key grip** Michel Periard **grips** Jean Trudeau, Pierre Charpentier, Sylvain Labrecque **gen op.** Michel Canuel, Yves Ouimet, Jean Paul Auclair **elec. trainee** Brigitte Dugas **casting** by Elite Productions **Unit pub.** Susan Chernoff **pub.** David Novek and Assoc. **asst. film eds.** Melanie Gillman, Martine Beauchemin **sd. ed.** Danuta Klijis **sd. eds.** Pierre Beland, Nicole Thuault **Foley Artist** Andy Malcolm **mixers** Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi **music mixer** Serge Lacroix **post synch** Hubert Fielden **post-prod co-ord** Lorraine du Hamel **post-prod tech co-ord** Robert Cote **Lenses and Panaflex Camera** Panavision Canada Limited **Prod and sd. labs** Bellevue Pathe Quebec (1972) Inc. Pathe Sound and Post Production Centre Warner Hollywood Studios **Titles and Opticals** Film Opticals Limited **Music recording** Studio Marko Limited **Music Publisher** Les Editions Diane Juster **Produced** with the participation of Canadian broadcasting Corporation, Telefilm Canada, Societe Generale du Cinema **Special Thanks** to La Galerie Michel Tétrault, Art Contemporain, La Brasserie O'Keefe Limitee, Dankoff Richer Furs, Herdt and Charton Inc. I.p. Bruno Doyon, Kerrie Keane, Alan Fawcett, Mark Strange, Rob Roy, Linda Smith, Mark Blutman, Walter Massey, Vlasta Vrana, Damir Andrei, Yvette Brind'Amour, Doris Petrie, Ralph Millman, Dorian Joe Clark, Antick Faris, Stephanie Morgenstern, Danette Mackay, Sandy Stahlbrand, Luis de Cespedes, Ruth Dahan, Sam Lemarquand, John Novak, Dean Hagopean, Joan Heney, Robert Heney, Robert Laval-Menard, Daniel Nalbach, Mark Burns, Guy Belanger, Jacqueline Blais, Hamish McEwan, Anthony Sherwood, Peter Colvey, Griffith Brewer, Roch Lafortune, Ken Roberts, Robert Parson, Pier Kohl Paquette, Gayle Garfinkle, Donald Lamoureux, Darry Edward Blake, Andrew Johnston, Babs Gadbois, Arthur Corber, Vincent Glorioso, John St-Denis, Ian McDonald, Brigitte Boucher, Anthony Ulc, Michel Therrien, Joe Singerman, Cassandre Fournier. **colour** 35mm **running time** 97 min

Boon Collins
Abducted

Rumour has it that Boon Collins raised funding for *Abducted* from private sources. This might be because Collins is a resourceful man. But it's also likely that any bureaucrats who took one look at the final product fell over themselves trying to disown it. *Abducted* is a cheap-looking, mean-spirited film with precious little to recommend it except some pretty scenery.

As the opening credits roll we see Rene, the heroine, jogging through virginal mountain wilderness. Film cuts to the point of view of someone in the bushes and a close-up of a booted foot. Moments later *be* darts out from a bush, grabs her by the pony-tail, and carries her off. That's the story: wild hillbilly abducts poor-little-rich-girl unaccountably leaping about the Rocky Mountains.

The plot is bizarre enough to be true, and strange enough to be funny, but Collins erodes interest and humour with a seemingly unending series of beat-up-the-girl scenes. Lucky Vern (the wild hillbilly) has found himself a pet. Good for him, not so great for Rene. She gets leashed like a dog and dragged through the wilderness. Vern makes her climb mountains and cross raging rivers. He fishes her out of the rapids once or twice, tries to rape her two or three times, and hits her an awful lot.

Even the worst filmmakers know that consistent brutality can get monotonous. Just in case the sexual overtones don't spice things up enough, Collins

throws in some characterization. Vern, we discover, isn't all that bad. He offers Rene some food a few times. And, as he explains to Rene, he gets lonely up there in the mountains.

Halfway through the movie, Vern's dad, Joe (played by Dan Haggerty) shows up to explain that life has been tough on Vern. He's been subjected to the horrors of reform school, jail, and, worst of all, a slutty mother. ("She saw men. She saw a lot of men," he tells Rene.)

Understandably guilt-ridden at having produced scum like Vern, Dad has hid him off to the mountains, where presumably the beautys of nature will purify Vern's heart and restore him to a semblance of humanity.

Dad may be a little weird – he's fixated with stone sheep but he knows that kidnapping and rape are bad things. He tells Vern they have to take the girl back. Vern doesn't like this much, and finally decides he's had enough. He bops Dad on the head real hard and drags poor Rene back into the wilderness. Vern is not without justification in insisting she go with him. After all, as he tells her, "I killed a man for you."

It takes more than a smack on the head to kill a mountain man. Joe wakes up and binds his wounds. Forgiving to the end, he knows better than to let a woman drive the fatal wedge between father and son. He sets off on his game leg (which he injured while rescuing a baby sheep) to save Rene and Vern from Vern.

Joe is such a sweet guy he'll forgive his son abduction, attempted rape, and even murder – but when he sees what Vern does to a sheep, tears stream down his face. He realizes that Vern is *Really Bad* and he'll have to hunt him down to kill him. He does this just in time to save Rene, who by this point doesn't care much anyway.

Neither do we. Vern and Joe aren't exactly what you'd call believable characters, and poor Rene is too busy

getting her sweatsuit all ripped up to portray much thought or emotion. Or maybe she's just stunned by the scenery.

After all, it certainly is beautiful. Collins alleviates some of the audience's misery with some shots of milky-eyed deer nosing through the rain-forest. And there's a hint that he was attempting to make some sort of ecological point about the evils of man versus the beauty of nature.

Unfortunately, though, he juxtaposes them with too many shots of Rene getting tied up or clubbed across the face. Violence does not substitute for action, and it certainly doesn't round out a character. Collins might as well have put in some nudity. He could have made a tidy sum of cash in the soft-core market. It certainly wouldn't have been any great artistic compromise. *Abducted* is just a nasty little fantasy ineptly disguised as a movie anyway.

Stacey Bertles •

ABDUCTED A Modern Cinema Marketing Inc., Interpictures Releasing Corporation and Erin Film Limited presentation. **d.** Boon Collins **p.** Harold J. Cole **exec. p.** Alex Massis **sd. ed.** Steven Cole **film ed.** Bruce Lange **music** Michel Rubini **art d.** Kim Steer **d.o.p.** Robert McLachlan **sc.** Boon Collins **story** by Boon Collins, Lindsay Bourne **stunts** Dawn Stofer, Jacob Rupp J.J. Makaro **prod. co-ord** Eileen Szabo **1st a.d.** Judy Kemeny **2nd a.d.** Mike Henry **cont.** Shelley Crawford **asst. cam.** Tom Turnbull **gaffer** John Houtmann **grip** Peter Reynolds **sd. rec.** Peter Clements **boom** Skip Borland **cost.** Rae Ford **make-up** Kathy Kuzyk **spfx** makeup Todd McIntosh **casting** richard Conkie **set design** Alan Wilson **set construct** Lee Rome **spfx** J.J. Makaro **asst. film ed.** Michael Werth **sd. ed.** Michele Cook, Richard Kelly **stills** Daniel Collins **catering** Sandy Steer **prod. asst.** John Gaytmann, Shane Shemko, David Small **helicopter pilot** Bob Ingram **animal props** Steve Kulash **wildlife footage** Tommy Tompkins **re-rec. mix** David Appleby, Don Whitesd, **lab.** Pathe Sd **film labs** Medallion Labs **opticals** Film Opticals, Toronto **prod. consult.** Stan Cole **legal counsel** Gabor Zinner **music** Rubini **Music - BMI financial part.** by Film Fund Financial Group. I.p. Dan Haggerty, Roberta Weiss, Lawrence King-Phillips, John Welsh, Jim Brown, Rae Ford, Jarold J. McCullough, Skip Borland, Rob Morton, Nelson Camire, Earl Jergens, Roy Waggoner, William Nunn, Steven E. Miller **Mr. Haggerty's double** Norm Mackie **stunts** Dawn Stofer, Jacob Rupp, J.J. Makaro **colour** 35mm **running time** 91 min