

up a CFTA award in 1980 and the others have received domestic and foreign awards and nominations at festival screenings.

Competence is maybe the single most important mainstream quality. We can ignore bad acting, mickeymouse effects and glaring technical flubs in the extreme movies — we're too busy being scared to care — but the mainstream audience, wired into Hollywood standards, demands the gloss of the well-made picture. *The Gate* has it. In terms of presentation there's nothing major-league awful here. At worst, it's flat and pointless. At best, though, there's nothing great, nothing to give any but the least experienced viewer a rush of real pleasure or thrill.

At best, *The Gate* is competent. Which is about as mainstream as you can get.

Andrew Dowler •

THE GATE A New Century Entertainment Corporation presentation in association with the Vista Organization Ltd An Alliance Entertainment/ John Kemeny Production d. Tibor Takacs sc Michael Nankin p. John Kemeny co-p. Andras Hamori d.o.p. Thomas Vamos prod. des. William Beeton ed. Rit Wallis spfx des. and sup. Randall William Cook sp. makeup Craig Reardon mus. Michael Hoenig, J. Peter Robinson cast. Mary Gail Artz. Clare Walker prod. man. Robert Wertheimer 1st a.d. Michael Zenon 2nd. a.d. Bill Bannerman 3rd a.d. Kathleen Meade sc. sup Nancy Eagles loc. man. Woody Sidarous 1st asst. cam. Daniel Vincelle 2nd. asst. cam. John Davidson add. cam. op. Malcolm Cross set photog. Takahi Seida loc. sd. Doug Ganton boom Reynald Trudel key grip Michael O'Connor grip Bert Gouweleuw. Scott Keares, Tom O'Reilly. Lee Wright gaffer Richard Allen best boy Craig Wright elec. Mark Woodley, Erk Tahysen, Paul Court, Robert Dichiera, Ross Edmunds, Ken Hillier, Dan Piva asst art d. Barry Birnberg, Julia Bourque set dec. Jeff Cutler, Marlene Graham asst set dec. Zana Ancerl prop. master Liz Calderhead prop man Adrian Hardy art dept. p.a. Stephen Levitt construct co-ord Helene LaFrance head carp Rejean Brochu carp. Andre Brochu, Michel Brochu, Serge Gagne, Jean Marie Valerland, Robert Sher, Sheldon Walters, William Armstrong, Joe Hampson landscaping Wm. J. White and Associates scenic artist Steve Willetts painters Shannon F. Griffiths, Frank Lefeuve, Terri Aikenhead prod. acc. Joanne Jackson asst. acc. Loretta Van Hart prod. co-ord Fran Solomon prod. sec. Gina Fowler asst. to Mr. Kemeny Vicki Ahrens asst. to Mr. Hamori Arlene D. Hay pub. Janice Kaye sp. cultpt. Reet Puhm, Film Arts Inc. Angus doll Lisa Smith spfx Frank Carere asst spfx Deborah Tiffen, Jordan Craig spfx p.a. John Bakker blue screen assembly Mutabilis Scenic Services Inc costum des. Trysha Bakker ward. Sylvie Bonniere make-up Linda Preston hairdresser Jenny Arbour tutors Mary Davie, Wendy Beck driver capt. Dan Dunlop drivers Gabe Fallus, Ted Fanyeck, Mark Moore, Barney Bayliss catering/craft service Zee's Catering moths supp. by Northern Animal Exchange trainer Gerry Therrien dog wrangler Jane Conway second unit d.o.p. Peter Benison asst. d. Judi Kemeny asst. cam. Dan Roy key grip Brian Potts gaffer Kenneth Salah elec. Bill Buttery prod. asst. Terry Gould, John B. Lind Visual effects prod. at Illusion Arts Inc. matte photog Bill Tayler Matte sup. Syd Dutton Illusion Arts Crew visual fx cam. Mark Freund sp. rigging Lynn Ledgerwood prod. co-ord Mark Sawicki anim. Catherine Sudolcan matte artist Mark Whitlock optical co-ord David Williams Randy Cook's Crew Fumi Mahimo, Jim Aupperle, Michael F. Hoover Craig Reardon's Crew Michael Mills, Kent Jones, Frank Carrisoa, Mark Wilson, Keith Edmier sd. ed. David Evans, Wayne Griffin, Steven Munro, Jane Tattersall, Robin Leigh, Rick Cadger post-prod. sup. H. Gordon Woodside assoc. pic. ed. H. Gordon Woodside assoc. pic. ed. Susan Schreiner music ed. Carl Zittler, Jim Weidman Foley Mike Liotta, Terry Burke re-rec. Joe Grimaldi, Dino Pigat 2nd. ass. ed. Charlene Olson asst. sd. eds. Susan Maggi, Sandra Moffat, Cherie MacNeill, David Giammarco No Pleasure song and video by Eva Everything (Great Shakes Productions) Everybody Running by Vince Carlucci and Sandy Macfayden Love Will Find a Way by Vince Carlucci (Secret Songs Publications Delusions of Grandeur by Carl Tafel, performed by Terraced Garden (Melody and Menace Records) Yes It's True and Modern Personality by Julia Bourque, performed by True Confessions (Bomb Records) colour Medallion Film Laboratories Ltd sd. facilities Soundmix Ltd. Pathe sound and post-production centre titles Film Optical Canada Ltd (Dolby Stereo, Nabet I.p.) Stephen Dorff, Christa Denton, Louis Tripp, Kelly Rowan, Jennifer Irwin, Deborah Grover, Scot Denton, Ingrid Beninger, Sean Fagan, Linda Goranson, Carl Kraines, Andrew Gunn. stunts Randy Kamula, Peter Cox, Leslie Munro

Lewis Furey's **Champagne for Two**

and Mort Ransen's **Sincerely, Violet**

As the continuing success of *Dallas*, *Dynasty* and the *Harlequin* novels prove, the public's appetite for love is unsatiated, maybe even insatiable. The words and images of Love are gobbled up by the reading and viewing audience as fast as they can be produced. To satisfy this voracious appetite, Astral Film Enterprises has brought us *Shades of Love*, a series of eight contemporary romance movies. *Shades of Love* is an attempt to transfer the immensely popular romance novel to film. The romance novel in question is not the early *Harlequin* variety that first comes to mind: insecure waif initiated into womanhood by worldweary man who falls in love with her intoxicating innocence and energy, marries her, and takes care of her — but one that has adapted to changing times.

The 'new' romance novel, on which *Shades of Love* is based, has incorporated into its formula certain inescapable truths of our society the older one avoided: work, gray hairs, sexual experience, stretch marks, failed marriages, etc. However, this is nothing more than a facelift. The skeletal plot remains intact — they meet, clash, fall in love, separate, return to each other, marry and, of course, live happily ever after. But it was never the plot that attracted readers except, perhaps, for its familiarity. The appeal has always been its language, its preoccupation with the heroine and her handling of the romantic situation and the access it gave to vicariously fall in love.

The language of the romance novel is purposefully vague and traditionally veiled in an idiom of sensation that allows

the reader to actively participate, filling in the precise detail according to personal preference. The final product is as much the creation of the reader as it is of the writer.

The most important element of the romance novel is the heroine. And it is in her depiction that the facelift is most obvious. She is now a fiercely independent and successful career woman who, having already been involved in a disastrous relationship, has become a bit of a cynic in regards to men and resists involvement with them unless she is in full control. The man she eventually falls in love with tears down her defences without, except superficially, threatening her independence or career.

The genre continues to favour the heroine. We are allowed access to her inner thoughts and frustrations. The man, on the other hand, remains a vague shadow except when he is with her. He develops into a character only through having had contact with the heroine. However, in spite of the attractively modern wrapper, the heroine essentially continues unchanged: she is and feels incomplete until the man enters her life; he redefines her existence and gives it real meaning; it is he who drives her to do her best and achieve excellence. This, however unpalatable, does not detract from the genre's appeal. Like the skeletal plot, its familiarity numbs the jar.

The success of *Shades of Love* in translating the romance novel to film is dependent on its ability to make available to the viewer the opportunity to participate in the creation of the romance and to be privy to the heroine's inner thoughts.

Shades of Love's attempt to capture the spirit of the romance novel is a wonderful success in *Champagne for Two* and a dismal failure in *Sincerely, Violet*. *Champagne for Two* is a light, intimate and humorous look at what happens to the life of Cody Prescott (Kirsten Bishop), a young architect-engineer, when she agrees to share her apartment with an unexpected house-guest (Nicholas Campbell). *Champagne for Two* discloses the romance that develops between Cody and her house-guest from the heroine's perspective. The man plays a secondary role to the woman's

vulnerabilities, fears and feelings which are made available to the viewer via her confidences to her friend Mollie (Carol Ann Francis). Having been allowed entry into the heroine's psyche and having been given the opportunity to fill in the 'falling-in-love' scenes, the viewer sympathises with the heroine when the relationship breaks down and is happy for her when she is reunited with the man she loves.

Lewis Furey succeeds in translating the veiled and vague quality of the genre's language to that of film. He appears to know that the romance novel's language is, first and foremost, a language of sensation that must be interpreted and not taken too literally. It is flesh to its familiar, skeletal plot. It foreshadows the plot and is suggestive of the sensations the reader should vicariously feel as the heroine falls in love. Lewis transmutes the foreshadowing language of the novel by using its film equivalent — the visual cliché. For example, at the beginning of the film, while Cody is taking a shower, Vince enters the apartment without her being aware of it. Shots of her in the shower are juxtaposed with shots of Vince's gloved hand opening the apartment door. She soaps herself and Vince (unidentified as yet) takes out several knives from the kitchen drawer. She rinses herself and he revs the electric knife. She dries herself and he throws a piece of meat to his dog.

Furey elicits certain audience expectations of the plot which he then humourously undercuts. At the same time, and in the tradition of the suspense/ horror film, he prompts the viewers to participate in the filling in of things only hinted at by the shots and allowing their imaginations to take over.

Sincerely, Violet fails to capture the spirit of the romance novel. It is difficult to believe that Elizabeth (Patricia Phillips) — a shy retiring history professor with a basso profundo, furniture-stroking second self, Violet — and the man we are told she is in love with (Simon MacCorkindale) are actually in love. There is a complete absence of intimacy between them. This may be because Elizabeth enters Mark's life fraudulently as Violet (an identity made up by her friend when Elizabeth is caught trying to steal a letter from Mark's study), disap-

• Nicholas Campbell and Kristen Bishop do it, romantically, in *Champagne for Two*



pears from it because she is afraid he's falling in love with her Violet alter-ego and not her 'true' self, and reenters his life as Elizabeth. They only sleep together because Elizabeth reminds Mark of Violet. This is romance?

Ignorant of the purpose of the genre's language, Mort Ranson makes the mistake of taking it too literally. In one scene the cliché of a couple dancing to their own song, oblivious to the world around them, is presented word for word, to the viewer as Elizabeth/ Violet and Mark dancing to a slow song while the other people on the dance floor move spastically to an inaudible disco tune.

Unlike *Champagne for Two*, which gives us access to the heroine's inner thoughts, *Sincerely, Violet* effectively locks us out. Elizabeth is too busy writing a book and would rather not share her thoughts if it means falling behind schedule. However, even if *Sincerely, Violet* had given us the opportunity to know the heroine's thoughts and feelings, it is doubtful that any identification with Elizabeth would have been possible. Elizabeth is depicted as the retiring and shy history professor in some scenes and a sensual, femme-fatale in others. The two aspects of Elizabeth/ Violet are never reconciled into a whole and complete individual. It is as though the film takes as truth the Madonna/whore myth that a woman can't be both intelligent and seductive. She must either be an Elizabeth or a Violet. This depiction of a dichotomized woman will be insulting to many of the female viewers who see themselves neither as pasteurized maidens nor as irresistible vamps.

If *Shades of Love* doesn't undermine the intelligence of its predominantly female viewer, as it does in *Sincerely, Violet*, it will be an incredibly successful series. Few can resist a warm invitation to fall in love, at regular intervals, in the privacy of one's home. And without having to worry if this time is for 'real'. As *Champagne for Two* proves, when the romance novel is interpreted correctly, it will be.

Ana Arroyo •

exec. p. Ken Atchity p. Stewart Harding d. Lewis Furey (*Champagne for Two*), Mort Ransen (*Sincerely, Violet*) d.o.p. René Verzier prod. design. Michael Joy prod. sup. Marilyn Majerczuk prod. man. Pierre Labege art d. Lynn Trout cost. design. Lyse Bédard sd. Henri Bilondeau post prod. sup. Peter Alves 1st a.d. *Champagne for Two* — François Leclerc. *Sincerely, Violet* — Frank Ross 2nd a.d. Tom Groszman 3rd a.d. Vicki Frodsham unit man. Ken Korrall loc. man. Carole Mondello, Marie Potvin prod. co-ord. Deborah Day asst. to Steart Harding Linda Nadler Asst. to Ken Atchity Tracy Lotwin asst. to Michael Joy Françoise St. Aubin asst. to John Meighan Skip Hobbs prod. acct. Peter Sowden. Tina Kontos typist/ reception Jean Sexton asst. cam. Denis Gingras 2nd. asst. cam. Jean-Jacques Gervais cont *Champagne for Two* Sandrine Fayos. *Sincerely, Violet* — Suzanne Chiasson set dec. *Champagne for Two* Guy Lalonde asst. by. Richard Tassé *Sincerely, Violet* André Chamberland asst. by Mario Hervieux prop. mast. Marc Corriveau props. Marc de Léry, Anne Grandbois asst. cost. des. Ellen Garvie set ward. Francesca Chamberland asst. set ward. Marie-Thérèse Brouillard asst. unit man. Karl Archambault pix vehicle co-ord Roman Martyn make-up Colleen Quinton hair *Champagne for Two* Serge Morache *Sincerely, Violet* Ben Robin swing gang Glendon Light, Denis Lemire, Eric Brunet, Stephane Connolly, Ross Schore gaffer Jean-Marc Hébert best boy René Guillard 1st elec. Sylvain Bernier 2nd. elec. Bernard Arseneau geni op. Michel Canuel key grip François Dupéré grip Robert Baylis boom Pierre Blain art. dept. driver Mary Lunn Beachman office driver Jimmy Kontos, Eddy Fisher driver Tim Parkinson craft serv. Jean Lalonde honeywagon Gerardo Monzi casting agent Nadia Rona, Elite post prod. Peter Alves pub. relations, Shona French, David Novek Associates l.p. *Champagne for Two*. Nicholas Campbell, Kirsten Bishop, Carol-Ann Francis, Terry Haig, Eve Napier, Russell Yuen. *Sincerely, Violet* Simon MacCarkindale, Patricia Phillips, Barbara Ann Jones.

Chris Gallagher's Undivided Attention

Undivided Attention is a feature-length experimental film by Chris Gallagher which could be seen as part of a trend in Canadian experimental film which has surfaced in the last few years. This trend can be defined as a move away from the purely structuralist inspections of time and space to include elements of character, narrative, emotion and text.

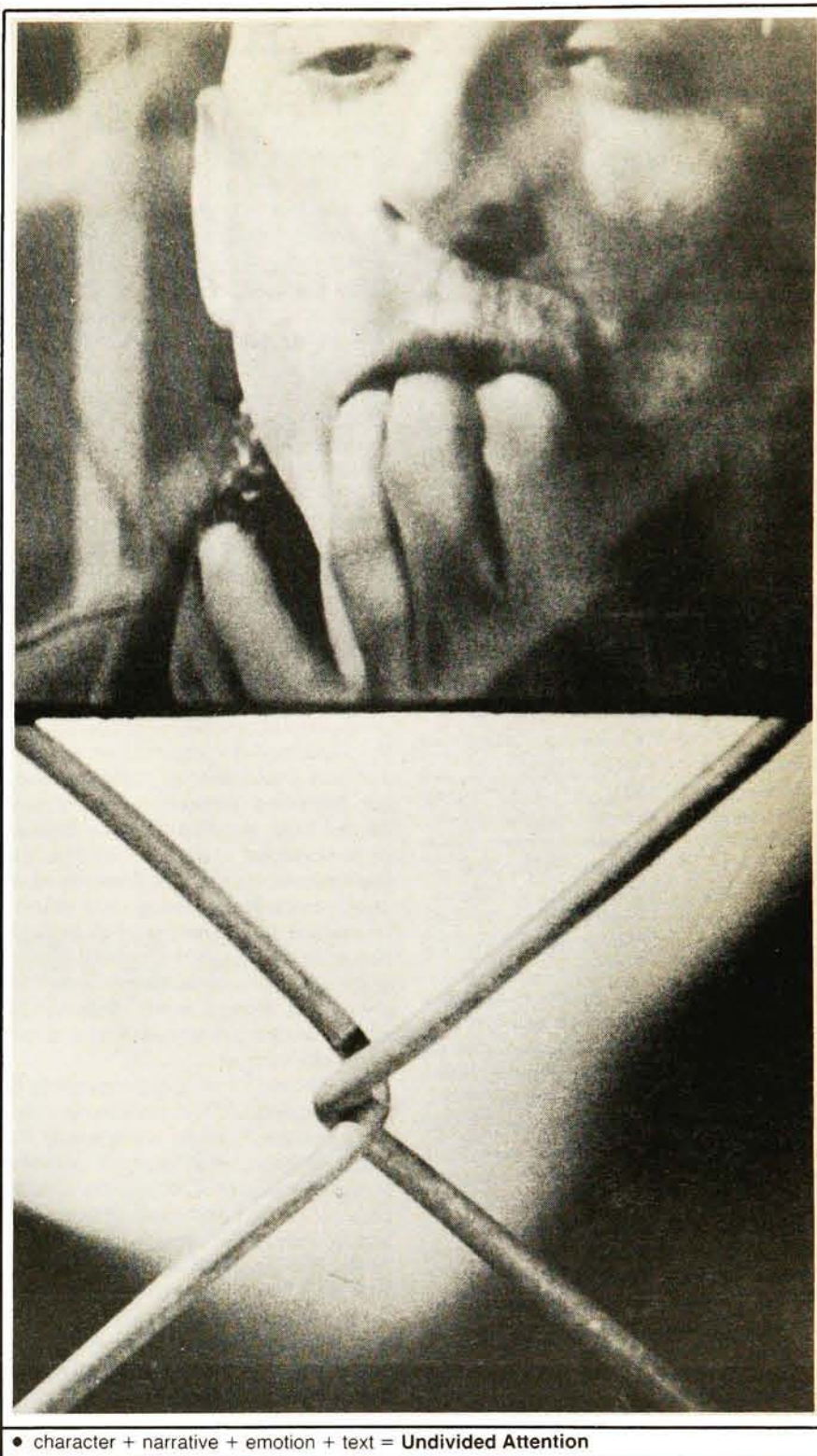
Other films by Gallagher have been fashioned primarily in the structuralist mode, for example, *Atmosphere* (1975) or *Seeing in the Rain* (1981). *Undivided Attention* is essentially a non-linear, narrative construct (with a voice-over text and an original musical score) which uses structuralist devices. Like Godard or Straub, Gallagher relies heavily on a collage technique which uses the film elements like puzzle pieces, that only come together as an emotional and narrative whole in the viewer's mind.

Gallagher's metaphor for narrativity, and construct of the film as journey, is a recurring shot of a man and woman in a small sports car travelling through various rural and urban landscapes. We always see the couple from the back of the car where the camera has been placed and travel with them, in what seems to be a cross-country journey, through a series of jumpcuts which destroy the illusion of a continuous time and space.

This emblematic couple is always crossing bridges just as Gallagher's film attempts to bridge the gap between the dichotomies that define his filmmaking and his self. This film seems to be dealing with the split in the postmodern world, between the natural and the civilized, the emotions and the intellect, woman and man, art and theory, sign and meaning, and what we see and what we know. These splits are imaged through a collage which becomes a three-way relationship between perceptual disorientation, an ambiguous conceptual relation to the world, and the problematics of male-female relationships.

The recurrence of perceptual, cinematic games is the most noticeable feature of the film. Besides from the numerous uses of rhythmically edited jumpcuts, we also get many shots which serve to disorient the viewer's relationship to the visual world of the film. One often-used device is that of isolating a part of the frame, usually some sort of symbol (such as a painting, a postcard, or a wheel) and holding it steady while the rest of the frame — a conventional, realistic shot — spins out of control. At the beginning of the film Gallagher does this with a strip which goes horizontally across the center of the frame, showing a picture of a toy boat, while in the background is a shot of a real boat. The real is set spinning but the sign remains in control.

Another type of shot which Gallagher uses to question and distort our sense of space and control of the view, is one



• character + narrative + emotion + text = Undivided Attention

where the camera is seemingly directly attached to some object in the frame. In the most spatially disorienting shot of this type, he mounts a camera on a shovel with the shovel blade in the center of the frame. This at first seems to give us a point of reference but as soon as the manipulator of the shovel (maybe the cameraman/filmmaker) starts to shovel, the background space becomes real and yet a virtually unreadable, swirling sea of matter. The central view orients to the shovel but disorients us in space. The background and foreground seem separate realities but become one as the shovel picks up snow. The soundtrack also disorients as the live synchronized sound is intentionally put out of sync, thereby creating a further feeling of a world out of kilter. Gallagher's perceptual games and intentional blurring and undermining of an easy viewing or reading of his work is implicitly a call to pay attention (*Undivided Attention?*) to his mode of construction of a work of art, his style of representation, and his version of a cinematic self.

The previously described shots could be seen as pure structuralist constructs,

questioning the relationships between viewer, film and reality. However, Gallagher, in this film, often uses these structuralist devices to put forth an emotional reality. As in a Brakhage film, we share the filmmaker's subjective point-of-view. The narrative line of this film, as disjunctive as it is, does seem to follow the progress of a sexual relationship. The emblematic couple in the recurring car scenes is replaced by other actors in different scenes, but these scenes when strung together do make a poetic and narrative whole. The feelings of disorientation, which the perceptual trickery conveys to the viewer, are not only feelings of disorientation towards the perceptual world, but only towards the conceptual and emotional world.

A scene central to the definition of the male/female relationships in the film is that of a man typing up a shot by shot description of *The Blue Angel* by Von Sternberg, while a part of the film plays on a television set in the background. The scene on the TV is that of Marlene Dietrich in the cabaret singing *Falling in Love Again* while the German professor,