

Jean-Claude Lauzon's

Un Zoo, la nuit

A bad case of critical *ejaculatio praecox* seems to have made *Un Zoo la nuit* into that long-sought-for chimera in Canadian film, namely a feature that's totally modern, with-it, contemporary — an authentic slice of the 'here and now'. That the repetition of lies still constitutes the first law of propaganda and that this is an effective technique can be attested to by the film's success, as confirmed by a Tuesday evening screening in a major Montreal theatre before a packed (and paying) house that warmly applauded at projection's end. But if it's all to the good that the folks keep turning out in fair numbers to see Canadian features, is that the only thing that matters? Should critics be satisfied with simply acting as barkers, doing their bit to get the people out, even under false pretenses?

I suppose the answer to that depends largely on the film itself. If *Un Zoo* were indeed an authentic slice of the Québécois here-and-now, then perhaps the film would be its own best defence. But it isn't. Thus it falls upon the critic to point to the deeply derivative nature of *Un Zoo la nuit* and suggest that it is precisely its derivativeness (i.e., complete unoriginality) that is at the source of the film's success. Like a number of recent

Quebec films (e.g., *Pouvoir intime*, *Equinoxe*) *Un Zoo* is an uneasy assemblage of two genres: the first, which could be termed *video noir*, is a rock-video *recyclage* of some of the stylistics of *film noir*: highly professionally-lit urban violence, moody and deviant, while the second is the traditional Canadian pastoral, a vision of reconciliation and harmonization with nature. In *Un Zoo*, neither 'film' is sufficiently developed: the *video noir* gets sidetracked by the Canadian film-within-the film, namely the father-son reconciliation that, at least at the level of Roger LeBel's outstanding performance as the father, is the dominant story. Except that as the dominant story, this slight and sentimental episode is little more than an Atlantis-type half-hour of *Canadiana* set within a pretty confused cops-and-robbers tale of revenge that consists mainly of tough talk, blank visages, empty visuals, heavy synthesizer (though in a splendid sound conception by Marcel Pothier) and lots of gratuitous and meaningless sexual violence.

In its essential confusion, *Un Zoo* becomes a reference list of recent filmwork that the director has liked: Beineix, Wenders, Greenaway, soft-drink and car commercials, Perrault, Carle, Arcand, Paul Tana, etc. In short, the jumble of contradictory influences that does constitute contemporary Quebec modernity, although it might be argued that, at a price-tag of over one million public dollars, it is the artist's (or filmmaker's) job to sort through these influences, not simply throw them *pêle-mêle* onto a screen.

That *Un Zoo la nuit*, Jean-Claude Lauzon's first feature, displays strong imitative abilities is undeniable, as is the fact

that this is potentially promising for his future. In other words, and as in Darwin's vision of the ape climbing down from the tree on his way to becoming a man, Lauzon shows promise in an evolutionary perspective. On the other hand, this is hardly surprising given the determined cultivation of imitativeness that is the basic training of the film student in this country. In this sense, it's not without importance that Quebec directors like Perrault, Carle or Arcand are present among the imitative pantheon. But this does make *Un Zoo* more derivative than creative: instead of being something in itself, it's a (skillful) collage of *déjà vu*. This may be reassuring both to the public and the public agencies of political and cultural control — it must be good because it looks just like everything else in the mediascape — but it's a problem. Marcel (Gilles Maheu), the 'hero' of the film who unfortunately plays the role with the expressiveness of a Glad bag, is your typically totally alienated character who wants out — to anywhere but here (which is, of course, nowhere). His only remaining connection to 'here' (after jail and ex-girlfriend-turned-hooker) is his father. On the level of the imaginary, Marcel daydreams of Australia (a country whose only reality consists in being very far from here) and, of course, "you always have an American friend" (sort of as in Wenders, but played here with earnest blankness by Jerry Snell). Why Marcel is suddenly drawn to his father is by no means made clear but drawn he is and by means of a variety of illusionistic symbolism (the American car, the gun and the film within-the-film within-the-film, though here the content is Canadian nature footage), the two are reconciled and

the father dies in peace, comforted by the illusion, stage-managed by his son, that he is an object of veneration. But once his father is dead, there is nothing to keep Marcel 'here' any longer. He is free to leave, and, you can bet your U.S. dollars, he will.

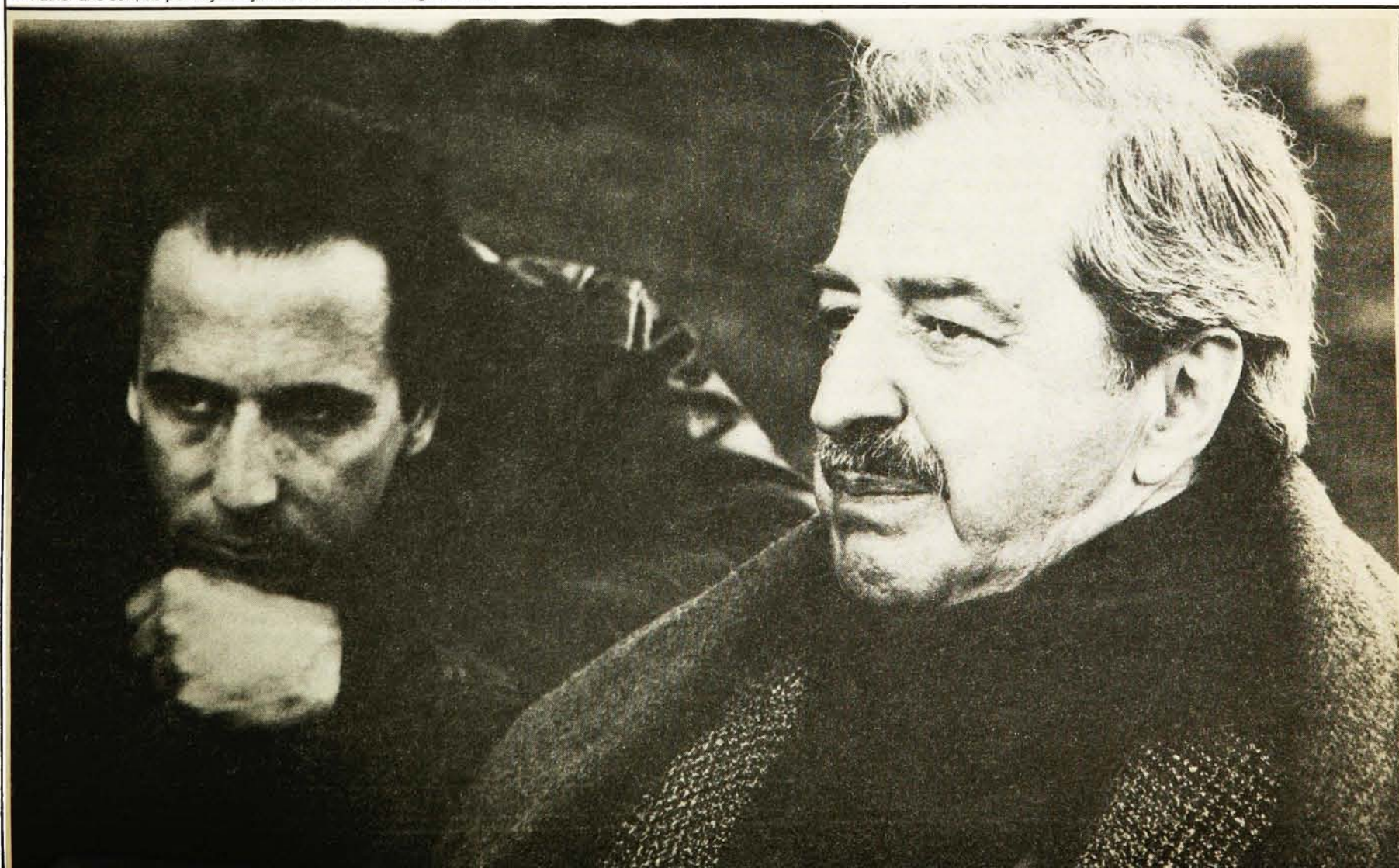
Perhaps like Lauzon himself, his 'Canadian' feature now under his belt, is free too to go and work elsewhere in the wider universe of filmmaking. He has paid homage to his spiritual fathers; he has been to the critical Mecca of Canadian cinema (Cannes) and there been proclaimed the reel thing. In short, he has, if he so desires, been already, promoted *beyond* Canadian film.

So it's perhaps appropriate, in the jargon of authenticity of the desperate celebration of the modern nowhere, that Telefilm, the NFB, the SGC and Radio-Canada yet again pick up the tab for the vocational training of the Canadian filmmaker whose vocation these days (as always?) still consists in making preparations for escape.

Michael Dorland •

UN ZOO, LA NUIT d./sc. Jean-Claude Lauzon d.o.p. Guy Dufaux art d. Jean-Baptiste Tard cost. des. Andrée Morin sets Michèle Forest sd. rec. Yvon Benoit ed. Michel Arcand sd. ed. Marcel Pothier m. Jean Corriveau (ed. Bleu Marine S.A.R.L.) re-rec. Hans-Peter Strobl, Adrian Croll 1st a.d. Alain Lino Chartrand prod. man. René Chénier line p. Suzanne Dusault assoc. p. Louise Gendron p. Roger Frapier, Pierre Gendron produced by Les Productions Oz Inc. in association with The National Film Board of Canada. Financial participation of Telefilm Canada and La Société générale du cinéma du Québec with the collaboration of La Société Radio-Canada. Distributed in Canada by Cinéma Plus/ Ciné Nove l.p. Roger Le Bel, Gilles Maheu, Lorne Brass, Germain Houde, Jerry Snell, Corrado Mastropsqua, Lynne Adams, Amulette Garneau, Anna-Maria Gianotti 35mm c. 1987 running time 115 min.

• Father and son, as portrayed by Gilles Maheu and Roger Le Bel



Christian Bruyère's
Shelley



• Shelley looks for warmth in kiddy hooker pic

Prostitution, especially juvenile prostitution, continues to be a hot topic. It is one of those social issues which is guaranteed to incite heated discussion — informed or otherwise.

The last three years have seen no shortage of films and television programs on the subject: **Street Wise**, an American production, springs to mind as does **Street Kids** and **Close to Home**, two local films produced by the National Film Board and Hy-Perspectives Media Group, respectively.

The latest entry into the kiddy hooker debate is **Shelley**, a low-budget feature from Vancouver filmmaker Chris Bruyère. Originally entitled **Turned Out**, Bruyère's film was produced by his own company, Face to Face Films, and Cineworks Independent Filmmakers Co-Operative for a minuscule \$200,000.

Shelley is not Bruyère's first work. He has made three previous films, all of which deal with controversial social issues. His first, **Rape: Face to Face**, documented the confrontation between four female rape victims and a group of convicted rapists who were participants in an experimental rehabilitation program for sexual offenders in Washington state. Co-produced by and broadcast on KCTS, an American PBS station, **Face to Face** was reportedly one of its most-watched programs.

Bruyère's next film, **Walls**, was a feature length docu-drama adapted from the stage play which he had written. **Walls** detailed the hostage-taking of social worker Mary Steinhäuser at B.C. Penitentiary, an event which resulted in her death when she was shot by a prison guard during the storming of the hostage area. Although written by Bruyère, the film version of **Walls** was directed by Tom Shandel in order to conform with Telefilm demands.

Bruyère had more success with his third project: a half-hour documentary about single fathers. **Dads and Kids** won awards at the American Film Festival and at Yorkton and this year won a Genie for best documentary.

In spite of the fact that not every production was both a critical and commercial success, Bruyère had already established an impressive track record before he tackled **Shelley**.

On the surface, he appears to be ideally suited for such a film. Bruyère is well respected as a writer, he has a background in social work and he is not a newcomer to the intricacies and capriciousness of filmmaking in this country.

It is difficult then to understand some of the inadequacies which undermine the credibility of this film, inadequacies which cannot be blamed solely on budget limitations.

Shelley is a puzzling combination of fiction with a strong documentary feel but somehow it does not fall within the genre of docu-drama. The film presents us with the dilemma of Shelley, a teenage girl who runs away from home after

being sexually abused by her mother's live-in boyfriend. Befriended by a soft-spoken hustler called Gord and Kim, one of his 'ladies', Shelley is inexorably drawn into the world of the street. Conflict arises when Shelley is forced to choose between returning home, where her mother does not believe her daughter's accusations, or remaining on the street with its illusion of familial closeness. Betrayed by her mother's boyfriend, Shelley is desperate for a father figure to replace her missing dad and the film strongly implies that she finds that substitute in Gord.

For the most part, the performances in the film hold firm. Robyn Stevan, who plays Shelley, is believable as the vulnerable, confused runaway. But the film really belongs to Ian Tracey as Gord and Ramona Klein who is cast as Rachel, another of Gord's ladies. Klein is chilling as the teenaged hooker who has been swallowed by the street and her unaffected hostility is a welcome relief to the doe-eyed passivity of Shelley. They are ably supported by Christianne Hirt who plays the more sympathetic character of Kim. The strongest moments in the film occur in the scenes between these actors. To his credit, Bruyère has allowed the flavor of the street to permeated their speech. His skill with dialogue is particularly evident in this instance since he is able to create language which is at once abrasive, colorful and believable without resorting to the use of 'fuck' as a noun, verb, adjective and adverb.

Unfortunately the adult characters in **Shelley** do not fare as well. Overall they tend to suffer from an extremely limited emotional range and complexity which probably has more to do with a lack of character development than with a lack of actual acting ability. Diana Stevan, who is Robyn's mother off-screen and plays Shelley's mom, bounces like a pinball between tears and outrage throughout the film. Elli Halcrow, as the social

worker, seems to have her face permanently fixed in an expression of solicitude. Everyone else is lost in the shuffle, including Allen Lysell who is cast as the boyfriend with a taste for young girls. It was probably intentional on Bruyère's part to make the boyfriend ordinary but he has missed the mark in this case. Lysell's character is so bland and unthreatening, one almost ends up feeling sorry for the poor guy.

Character development aside, there are also problems with the content of the film. Because Bruyère is a skilled writer he does a good job of showing how kids can be attracted by and then drawn into life on the street. Shelley is invited by Kim into the apartment she shares with Gord and Rachel. Kim turns Shelley onto drugs and she is seduced by Gord who seems to offer warmth and comfort. Before long, Shelley is pressured into turning her first trick and she reluctantly complies out of a misguided sense of loyalty to her new 'family'. What becomes problematic, however, is the fact that Shelley is continually rescued from herself and the situations she finds herself in.

When she is frightened by her first trick, Gord breaks in with a knife and scares off the man. When Shelley is wandering the streets, she is always found by the nice social worker and her cop partner. When Shelley is about to be assaulted by the nasty drug dealer and his partner, the social worker and the cop arrive in the nick of time. This device is carried right on through to the final few minutes of the film. In a melodramatic about-face, Shelley's mom produces the girl's diary which apparently details the abuse Shelley has suffered. Dissolving once more into tears, Shelley's mother claims that "girls don't lie to their diaries" and that the diary contains details that only the boyfriend could have known. She now knows that Shelley has been telling the truth all along. The diary

is immediately entered into evidence and, in the fastest decision ever rendered, the judge flips through a few pages of the incriminating document and finds the defendant guilty on the spot. Presto, Shelley and her mom are reunited and the credits roll.

What is disturbing about this kind of presentation is that it is essentially misleading. The film strongly implies that the system works for kids like Shelley when in fact there is daily evidence that the number of children in crisis is growing while social services for them are rapidly declining. One has to wonder, then, at the point the filmmaker is attempting to make. Dramatic license cannot be used to explain away the 'happily ever after' tone of this film since the circumstances surrounding the character of Shelley are presented in a style which infers factuality. For instance, we are asked to believe that social workers can arrange immediate court hearings for juveniles believed to be in jeopardy. This is what happens to Shelley in spite of the fact that she never actually tells the social worker that her mother's boyfriend has been molesting her. The social worker apparently construes Shelley's silence when she is asked the question, "What did he do to you?" as answer enough. Apparently on the basis of the expression on Shelley's face, a hearing with a family court judge is arranged for the next morning.

The upshot of these weaknesses is that although **Shelley** is a film which is technically adept, well-constructed in terms of plot and pacing and sometimes peopled by characters we can care about (a minor miracle given the final price tag), ultimately it does not add to either our insight or our knowledge about a pressing social issue. We are unfortunately left with the impression that the film is saying had Shelley's mom not ditched her husband for that slimy boyfriend, none of this would have happened — a point which will not endear **Shelley** to feminists.

Since Chris Bruyère is obviously a gifted writer and shows potential to become a competent filmmaker it is to be hoped that his next project will demonstrate more thoughtfulness in terms of his subject matter. In spite of its weaknesses, the apparent success of **Shelley** in the marketplace indicates Bruyère will be around for quite some time.

Julie Warren •

SHELLEY p./d./sc. Christian Bruyère 1st a.d. Bob Akester 2nd a.d. Tom Crowe prod. man. Jim Hamm prod. co-ord Sally Thompson d.o.p. Tom Turnbull cam. asst. Gary Viola lighting John Houtman asst. gaffer Noel Archambault grip Peter Reynolds sd. rec. Peg Campbell sound asst. Marianne Kaplan cont. Shelly Crawford art d. Pamela Hallis ward. Toni Rutter make-up Connie Parker catering Evonne Karie prod. asst. Rhona MacInnes, Mark Lane, Franco Ponte, Davey Longworth, Hill Morton eds Jane Morrison, Doris Dyck asst eds. Brad Hines, Debbie Rurak, Shannon Mitchell graphics Kim Steer neg. cutter Daniele Defoy. With assistance from, The Canada Council — Media Arts Program, Chris Spencer Foundation, The Hospital for Sick Children Foundation, National Film Board of Canada — Pacific Regional Studio, Panavision (Canada) Ltd., Rent-a-wreck, Tahoe Motor Home Rentals, United Church of Canada. l.p. Robyn Stevan, Diana Stevan, Ian Tracey, Christianne Hirt, Elli Halcrow, Allan Lysell, Ramona Klein, Richard Jackson, Lee Jameson, Tuck Reid, Everton Christian, Doug Newell, Andrew Snyder, David Menzies, Craig Delahunt, Phillip Childs, Evonne Karie, Toni Rutter, Becci James, Fraser Duke, Sally Thompson, Shelly Crawford, Yarrow Bruyère, Grant Bray, Paul Stafford, HESSICA Quail, Michael Tierman. A Cineworks Production. With the participation of Telefilm Canada. running time 80 min. 16mm color.

Georges Dufaux's
**10 jours...
48 heures**

Georges Dufaux's recent documentary **10 jours...48 heures** depicts the oppressiveness of East Coast fishing in the '80s – an entire community dominated and controlled by a single company whose main goal is the commercial exploitation of Newfoundland's codfish. The film is a contemporary reworking of John Grierson's 1929 film **Drifters**, a romantic and poetic treatment of Britain's deep-sea fishing industry. While Grierson's film focuses mainly on the men who go out to sea, Dufaux's goes several steps further by avoiding the excessive romanticization of the role of the fisherman. Instead, he tries to show how large-scale fishing affects the entire community of Marystown, a small fishing village in southeastern Newfoundland where 80 to 90 per cent of its inhabitants are employed by one company, Fisheries Products International. In Marystown, the fishing industry permeates practically every aspect of people's lives. Dufaux illustrates this by taking his camera into places like the church, the radio station, and the classroom where references to fishing are invariably present.

The title of the film refers to the pattern of 10 days at sea, 48 hours leave for the fishermen on the trawler 'Zamberg', one of the largest of the FPI fleet and the mainstay of the processing plant at Marystown. Through interviews with two of the fishermen's wives we learn of the personal hardships a life of offshore fishing imposes on the lives of the fishermen and their families. Brief interviews with people involved in the administrative side of the industry and factory workers' comments add to the sense of how profoundly this single industry and company affects the people of Marystown.

The fishermen in Dufaux's film catch fish destined primarily for an American market. The fish, caught and semi-processed in Newfoundland, is sent to an FPI finishing plant in Massachusetts where it is transformed into a highly processed 60% fish product. FPI's goal, a company spokesperson tells us, is to create a product that tastes like fish, but better. In doing so, it hopes to capture the lucrative children's market and eventually create a demand for fish McNuggets. Ironically, an employee of Waldman's fish market in Montreal explains that the store imports most of their fish from the United States because Canadian fish can't compete either in terms of price or quality. This contrast points to one of the disturbing facts about East Coast fisheries: the people of Newfoundland can't sell their fish at home but must send it to a foreign country where it is subsequently turned into junk food. The reference at the beginning of the film to John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland and the decision in 1497 to exploit its rich fishing grounds seems to suggest that very little has changed over the last 500 years, and Newfoundland's resources and people

continue to be exploited for the benefit of foreign powers.

Apart from the occasional interviews (conducted in English, but subtitled or dubbed into French) by Dufaux's assistant, Antonia McGrath, the film is mostly observational. Dufaux's camera surveys the various stages of production in the factory and on board the 'Zamberg', as well as the day-to-day interaction of some of the families. There is a noticeable absence of background music or narration – only the constant hum of the factory in operation, or the sound of the trawler as it breaks through the ice on its way to the fishing grounds. Dufaux avoids the typical lyrical presentation of small East Coast fishing villages – Marystown in winter is a far cry from the quaint, idyllic fishing villages we're used to seeing. The fluorescent lighting inside the factory and the harsh winter light enhances the cold detached feeling of this film.

Dufaux has been praised in the past for his "calm and discreet" style of filmmaking: In this film though, it decidedly works against him. Although the film occasionally is a moving portrayal of the young fisherman David and his family, it is mainly a detached overview of a large-scale fishing and processing industry in Newfoundland. The film often alludes to many of the ongoing economic and political problems that have plagued the Newfoundland fisheries for years. Dufaux doesn't, for instance, touch on the interaction between the company and workers even though the film begins with the workers returning to their jobs after a six-month strike. A radio program heard in the background mentions the pressing need for the modernization of many of Newfoundland's processing plants, and fishermen's chronic problems with the unemployment insurance system. However, these issues are never expanded upon and their relevance to the film in general remains at best tenuous.

Unfortunately, the overall strength of the film is lost in Dufaux's subtle and distanced treatment of the subject matter. This is further weakened by the unnecessary length of 85 minutes. In the end, the film fails to elicit a strong response from the viewer, and one is left feeling indifferent and apathetic to the issues raised by the film.

Mary Ledwell ●

10 JOURS ... 48 HEURES d. Georges Dufaux asst. d. Antonia McGrath sd. Jim Rillie asst. cam. Michelle Paulin ed. Georges Dufaux, Catherine Martin sd. ed. Les Halman asst. sd. ed. Antonia McGrath mix Hans Peter Strobl asst. sd. mix. Adrian Croll **French version** Claude Dionne voices Anne Caron, Mario Desmarais, Hubert Gagnon, Eric Gaudry, Jocelyne Goyette, Elizabeth Lesieur, Hubert Loiselle, Claude Préfontaine, Louise Rémy, Yvon Thiboutot, extracts from Menabem Golan's "Over the Brooklyn Bridge" used with the permission of Cannon films **Thanks to** The workers of the Catalina and Danvers factories and the crew of the Zandberg for their participation **admin.** Joanne Gallant **assoc. p.** Shelagh McKenzie **p.** Eric Michel c. 16mm **running time** 85 min 58 secs **1986 doc.** A National Film Board of Canada Production

**Capsule
reviews**

You would have to scratch to find some basis for comparison between **Prairie Women** and **The Road to Yorkton**. Both are short films that were presented at the Yorkton Film Festival this year, and both were produced by western Canadian filmmakers. That's about it.

THE ROAD TO YORKTON

The Road to Yorkton is a docu-parody, a lark that turned into a mocking look at a self-conscious business. Francis Damberger and Lars Lehman, partners in Young Alberta Filmmakers, took themselves and a short film to the Yorkton competition last winter. They also took a camera and a cameraman. They made **The Road to Yorkton** on the trip to Yorkton.

Damberger embellishes a version of himself: a back-country boy with big-city ambitions and one response to everything. On the lonely winter highway (going to the festival) he draws on a brew and quotes Steven Spielberg. "I know what he means." In a motel sauna (during the festival) he draws on a brew and listens to a European film editor describe bringing Bertolt Brecht to a film set: "I know just what you mean." In a motel-room bathroom (at the end of the festival) he throws up and listens to his producer quote George Lucas. "And I know just what he means."

This film is obviously an improvisation, technically competent as it is. But it bears a charm that comes from honesty. Damberger's fictional character, the conning "new mustang of western filmmaking" fits perfectly into a real background. Whether the dozen or so people

who made cameo appearances like it or not, there is only one way to distinguish truth from fiction in this film: the fiction is strange, the truth is very strange.

PRAIRIE WOMEN

Late in June, the downtown branch of the Edmonton Public Library hosted a screening of award-winners from this year's Yorkton Film Festival. The featured presentation was a half-hour documentary called **Prairie Women**, winner of the Golden Sheaf for best of the festival.

National Film Board of Canada documentaries are not generally considered box-office boffo – but **Prairie Women** surprised everyone. It packed audiences in the 200-seat theatre for two consecutive nights. The NFB scheduled extra screenings to accommodate the overflow.

Barbara Evans, a graduate of University of British Columbia and the National Film School in London, created a textbook example of what NFB documentaries do at their best: capture a piece of history that hadn't been contained. The topic of this film was the women's farm movement of the '20s and '30s. The heart of this film was the spirit of the women it documented.

The difficulties of farming forced prairie settlers to circumvent a lot of discriminatory traditions. As one woman pointed out, "It was very much a co-operative situation...a complete partnership. It brought people together. Until it got too difficult. Then it drove them apart."

It was those difficulties – incredible poverty and extreme isolation – that spurred farmers into forming the reform movements of the Great Depression. Their wives, who were worse off in some ways, joined forces in the Women's Grain Growers and United Farm Women's associations.

Women who might never have left their children and gardens and livestock felt compelled to campaign for educational, political, and legislative reform. Unassuming, but forceful "We farm women should know considerable about this patching business", they petitioned for health care, educational reform,



● A prairie woman, Nellie Peterson

world peace, and birth control.

Evan sketches this movement with deft strokes, drawing on letters, diaries, speeches and published articles. She intercuts them with interviews of seven women who were directly involved, and some well-crafted "reenactments" — all standard fare. Yet the story is unique and Evans doesn't simplify the situation. The women, anywhere between 65 and 93 years of age when they were interviewed, project energy and a contemporary wisdom. They present a logical and positive extension to history that, however recent, is sometimes incredible.

Stacey Berthes

PRAIRIE WOMEN w/d. Barbara Evans d.o.p. Doug Cole add. cinematog. Moira Simpson, Roger Vernon loc. sd. Daryl Powell, Garrell Clark, Tim Hiltz eds. Peter Svab, Barbara Evans m. Connie Kaldor narr. Elan Ross Gibson period scenes co-d. Wendy Hill-Tout p. Caryl Brandt assoc. p. Dale Phillips exec. p. Tom Radford, Graydon McCrea. Produced by the National Film Board, Northwest Centre colour, 1987, 45 minutes.

THE ROAD TO YORKTON d./sc. Francis Dabberger p. Lars Lehman d.o.p. Ken Hewlett m. Michael Becker ed. Eric Hill sd. mix Robert Decoste add. sd. Martin Mitchell post sd. mix. Rob Wurzer l.p. John Osler, Robert DeCoste, Mike Dobko, David Scorgie, Stephen Onda, Peter Campbell. colour 1987 30 min.

sion of a world that horrifies her. As Sue Coe tells us, this is her vision and for her "The showing of what is real is hope in itself." The film clearly shows us the beauty and strength of this artist whose politically committed works could be placed in the tradition of Goya and Dix.

d./sc. Helene Klodawski research Holly Metz p. Helene Klodawski, Liette Aubin exec. p. Jean-Roch Marcotte assist. p. Danny Leiner ed. Liette Aubin cam. Judy Irola assist. cam. Chris Diskin anim. cam. Robin Bain, Pierre Landry sd. Judt Karp orig. m. René Lussier, Jean Derome voice and narr. Karen Young graphics Claire Beaulieu mix Ciné Groupe neg. cut. Pierre Compte p. by Les Productions du Regard Inc. with financial participation of Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council's Explorations Programme, PAFFPS program at the National Film Board distib. by Cinéma Libre running time 26 min. colour 16 mm.

DU POTLATCH, L'ODEUR DE L'HUILE

Marie-Hélène Cousineau in the video, *Du Potlatch, l'odeur de l'huile* presents us with a somewhat unusual documentary on art. The subject matter is an event which took place in June of 1985, "la fête du Potlatch". Montreal artists, inspired by an Indian tradition, burned their works as a form of protest against the neglect of the artist by society. The

event itself is documented by a moving camera, *cinéma vérité* style, which communicates to the viewer the turmoil and passion of the participants. The technical possibilities of video are put to good use in creating a vivid contrast between the brightly burning orange fire and the stark white and black tonalities of the rest of the image. Often, the participants are shown being interviewed, while these scenes appear on a separate plane behind them. Intercut with this footage are people watching television, and various mass-media images, to emphasize the opposition of these artists to a commodified society. The strength of the film lies in its combination of several genres; that of video-art, *cinéma-vérité* documentary and the politically committed documentary.

d./sc./p. Marie-Hélène Cousineau ed. Christopher Flambard, Johanna Kotkowska m. Hani Habaschi sd. Pierre Ouellette running time 30 min. c. 1986 dist. Videographe, (514) 521-2116

OUT

Out is billed as an "opera video" with an original techno-pop score. Its style is close to that of an experimental film. It is comprised of four sections where the images are reworked through step-printing and colour saturation processes to enhance their expressive qualities.

The first section uses footage of the Amazon River, and the primitive tribes which inhabit its borders, juxtaposed with a text which muses on the relationship of modern man to the primitive. The whole opera seems to be a meditation on the relationship between our technological society and nature. The images and music are beautiful but it always seems strange to me that artists can use a technological medium to put down technology.

d./p. Miguel Raymond m. Alain Thibault running time 4 min. c. 1986 dist. Zone prods. (514) 842-1187

MONSIEUR LÉON

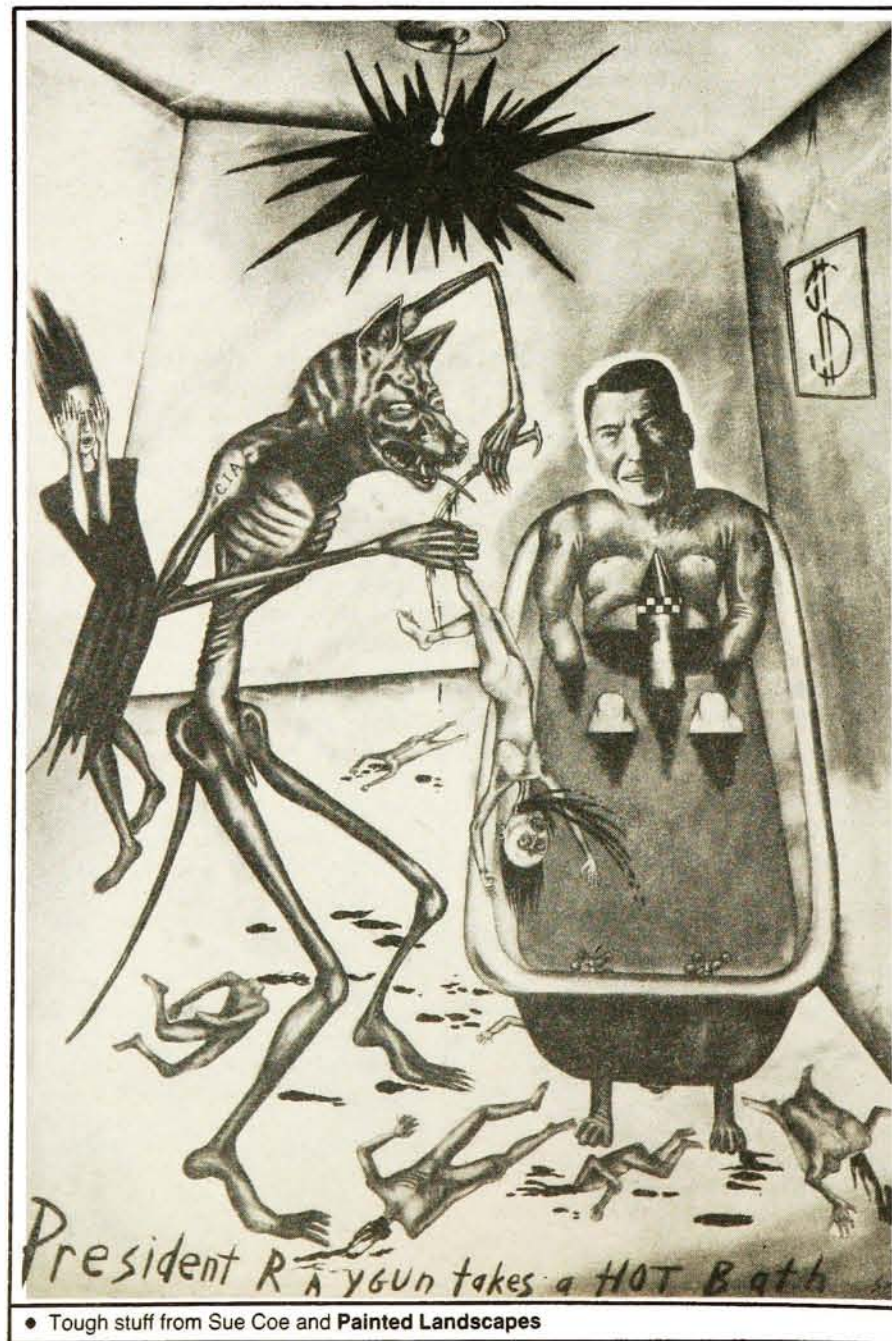
The video, *Monsieur Léon*, could be seen as a postmodernist, ambiguous narrative about miscommunication. It uses the form of the thriller genre in a fragmented story where a woman tries to deliver a mysterious package to a mysterious stranger. The visuals are very stylized, using an art-deco setting made up of pastel greens and blues. The artist makes an interesting use of the possibilities of video technology in his distortion of buildings thus turning the backgrounds into expressionistic sets.

d. François Girard p. Bruno Jobin, Zone Productions running time 13 min. 20 secs. c. 1986 dist. Videographe Inc.

Images from "Les Quinze Jours du Milieu", Montreal

PAINTED LANDSCAPES OF THE TIMES

In the tradition of using the film medium to record another art form, Helene Klodawski has made a film called *Painted Landscape of the Times: The Art of Sue Coe*. This skillful documentary was made by a Canadian about a British artist in New York. Sue Coe's paintings are highly expressionistic, black and blue, monochrome works with slashes of red to emphasize the violence that she is depicting. Many of her images are borrowed from newspaper photographs, or newspaper accounts of violent crimes. The camera follows Sue Coe, dressed in black and blue, around New York as she sketches the subjects of her paintings on the subway and in the streets. The internalized violence of this society is evident in the faces the camera shows as it pans, following her line of sight, and demonstrating how the artist's vision is based on a specific reality. At one point in the film, children from a nearby school ask questions of the artist as she sits in front of her paintings. The questions are perceptive and her answers are lucid and committed to this vi-



• Tough stuff from Sue Coe and Painted Landscapes

PUZZLE

Puzzle is a video that uses a fragmented narrative line to express the main character's puzzlement about her life. A woman sits working on a puzzle, and under the puzzle-pieces, parts of her life appear. Cut into these images is a dramatic fiction about a male-female relationship and the desire to have a baby. This narrative is moving in its portrayal of today's youth who find themselves with no place in society and therefore with no way to go on with their lives.

d. Paul Gauvin, Jean Gagnon p. G.R.A.A.V., running time 25 min. c. 1986 dist. Videographe Inc. (514) 521-2116

BYRON BLACK'N' BLUE-BLIND

Byron Black'N'Blue-Blind is a hilarious performance piece where the author himself spoofs the gender specific. The ambiguity of gender identity is doubled by the ambiguity of the visual codes possible in the video medium. A man and a woman (?) sing romantic duets on the screen, but soon it becomes obvious that they are both Byron Black. At one point they seem to stand in front of a field of high green grass. But Byron, by painting his hand blue, makes his hand transparent and then we notice that the green grass also shows through the polka dots on his tie. This video is an extremely amusing play on what we mistakenly think reality is.

d. Byron Black running time 17 min. c. 1985. dist. Videographe Inc. (514) 521-2116