bowing each other for a better view of the action while in the foreground a sizable crescent-shaped group sit as if waiting for something to happen.

The gallery of cyclists, now greatly larger than before, scan the faces of the 35 or so who sit on a concrete wall, as if in search of someone they will recognize. They see one of them stand, dressed smartly in a pilot's jumpsuit and jaunty sports cap, stretching his legs and looking around. From his pocket he takes out a ping-pong ball and starts to bounce it on the pavement, absently, like a smoker trying to cut down or quit by keeping his hands busy. "Regarde, c'est Gaubert Plouffe!"

No, it is not Gaubert Plouffe, but the young Québécois actor who played the role. Serge Dupire (Le Matou, Les Plouffe, La Femme de l'hôtel) who here plays Daniel Hardy, a character loosely based on the namesake of the racetrack where he now stands, the Gilles Villeneuve Circuit. He holds the leading role in Formula 1, the latest television mega-series to come out of producer Claude Heroux's (He shoots, He Scores I, II and soon III) guiding hand.

A 13-episode, $15-million-budget series on the glamourized, high-energy life of the Formula 1 racing world, it is actually a co-production between Canada's Communications Claude Heroux and France's Vamp Productions. Already it is pre-sold to Quebec's Reseau Quebecois, the stations of France's Tele-Metropole and France's TFL network.

It is the story of the fictional Sainclair Racing Team, headed by the patriarchal Joseph Sainclair (played by French actor Daniel Gelin, perhaps best known to North American audiences for his role in Alfred Hitchcock's classic The Man Who Knew Too Much), his drivers Luc Sainclair (played by real-life son Samuel Gelin, of Les Uns et les autres by Claude Lelouch), Alan Sturgess (played by Steve Banner, of Les Fous de Bassan and Hardy (Dupire)).

The film is a successful story, co-written by two Quebecois and two French screenwriters, co-directed by at least three different directors of various nationalities and experienced people. It has them circling the world to the exotic settings of international races. These include actual Formula 1 racing footage shot in Monaco and Budapest, as well as filming in various regions of France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Mexico and Canada.

With its formulaic predecessor being He Shoots, He Scores, it is presumed that the story will carry just enough sexual innuendo to sizzle up the ratings. Indeed, when looking at the group of actors/actresses/extras, one is struck by just how young, and handsome a group they are. For example, in real-life, mechanics tend to be balding, beer-gutted, cigar-chomping middle-aged men. Here, however, they are young model-types, working in a small, tight-fitting mechanic's jumpsuits. The extras are uniformly well-set and pretty, though generally shorter: shorter, that is, than their male counterparts who for the most part are European and therefore smaller than the typical North American.

Now Dupire is called and he takes his place atop the winner's podium flanked by two other 'drivers'. He wears the winner's crown around his neck, and in his hand is a champagne bottle (actually a cheap imitation) which he holds in readiness to spray the 'crowd' of enthusiastic extras.

Chanting steps to the fore, directing the cameraman. He is Nardo Castillo (Claire... cette nuit et demain) who, with French director Paul Planchon, is responsible for directing the lion's share of episodes for this series. He has two cameras shooting this scene, the main one on a tripod taking the medium shot, another hand-held for 'atmosphere'. He stands on the concrete abutment, towering over the extras, as he instructs Dupire on what he wants for this scene. He then turns to the extras and explains what general movements he wants from them. Returning to the camera, he peers quickly into the viewfinder, then takes another quick look at where the microphone is positioned. Satisfied, he calls for a run-through.

The scene lasts barely 15- or so seconds, full of movements by extras, specific acts by the 'drivers', and the general hubbub of a 'crowd' in a white-hot state of excitement. Even though several things happen in so short a time, Castillo manages to pick out the little details that need correcting before he is ready to shoot the scene.

'I have great confidence in my actors,' says Castillo, a natural director of prizewinning commercials (he founded Les Films 24 Inc., today one of Montreal's largest commercial production houses) before moving into features. 'It's a pleasure to work with experienced people. They have a kind of actor's gyroscope that keeps the reality of their character consistent throughout the 13 episodes. And that's why I get along with two different main directors.'

Castillo has developed a reputation as a demanding but fair director. When a member of his cast or crew needs to be talked to in specific terms, it is typical that he will take him or her aside, in privacy. Only the sin of incompetence is not tolerated. 'You see, more the machine is complex, more it is necessary to work with precision. Like in watch-making; if one of the little wheels isn't turning right, all the other wheels will be off. So you have to prepare your choices carefully.'

(And that means having the right director for the job.)

(Later, one of the listeners to our conversation asked Castillo how he goes about directing his group, using the French word 'gerer' which translates as 'direct' but in its wider sense of 'organize' or 'control'. Castillo frowned.

"Yes, I hate that word," he answered. "Why?" she asked.

"Let me give you an example. Do you, um... 'direct' a baby?"

"Of course not. It directs you.""

"Precisely."

Now the scene is ready. At Castillo's signal, the 'crowd' bursts into cheers and excitement and a bottle of champagne (champagne) is knocked off Dupire, as he shakes the bottle and happily sprays them with a fine mist of sweet-smelling champagne. The extras cry out even more lustily as the champagne glitters against their numbered faces. Dupire waves to the crowd, standing on the very spot where Gilles Villeneuve stood not so long ago to the cheers of an adoring local crowd. Like him, Dupire finally walks away and into the sun.

Stanley White

Formula 1

It is a blazingly hot July morning here at the Gilles Villeneuve Circuit on Montreal's man-made Notre-Dame Island, and the bordering trees shimmer distractingly as cyclists roll over the hot, black pavement. Soon, they arrive near the massive Race Tower, where many Saturday-morning cyclists are already stopped, fascinated by the activity. Since Formula 1 racers thrash in anticipation, a 'pit crew' seems to be racing with time while working on another racer, 'press photographers' in a tight circle are el-