



• R.H. Thompson and Kenneth Welsh parry in *And Then You Die*

desires to extend and what others desire to co-opt or eliminate – the audience must intuit the extent of Griffin's dealings in order to appreciate his plight. Otherwise, one is forced to ask: what empire? and so what?

*And Then You Die* is a classical narrative film. A clearer delineation, or a few examples thereof, of the day-to-day workings of Griffin's business practices would have provided an essential level of causality and character motivation. Instead, in the absence of this layer of 'realism' the screenwriters are forced to resort to a number of overused contrivances in order to generate audience sympathy. Moreover, these are never successfully integrated into the narrative. For example, Griffin's wife frequently complains that he does not spend enough time at home (an issue which the film fails to pursue), and the first attempt upon Griffin's life also places his son in danger (a pointless gimmick, but worth three hankies at least).

The failure to generate audience interest is traceable, as well, to the filmmakers' inability to properly define the characters in terms of a given locale, or to suggest how a given environment contributes to the definition of a character. It might be, as one Montreal critic has remarked, that the film's location photography provides a pleasant change from the CBC's Toronto soundstages. But the location shooting never rises above providing the audience with a chance to engage in an I-know-that-place practice. As well, the location shooting contributes nothing to the feeling or atmosphere of the film. The location photography, and whatever 'realism' that may accompany it, is purely pragmatic: the film is shot in working-class Montreal districts because that is where the story takes place.

It might be contended that the combination of Richard Leiterman's relatively high-key, dingy lighting and the working-class, nighttime locations makes obvious contributions to the feeling of the film as a gangster film. This is only partially true. Firstly, there is little *raison d'être*, and certainly nothing stylistically purposeful, in Leiterman's interior, nighttime cinematography that could contribute to the feeling of any scene. Again, the issue appears to be simple pragmatism: the scenes are lit to conform to the locations and times of day. Secondly, this is exactly the kind of sloppy, alternately dingy and indiscriminately lit cinematography that one finds in most of the films that Leiterman has photographed.

*And Then You Die* marks the English-language feature film debut for director Francis Mankiewicz, and one might have expected a more auspicious beginning. But it is difficult to lay blame in this case. Granted that Mankiewicz might not have

felt at ease with the type of story he was telling, or the environment in which it is set. The problems with the script, and there are several, could not have made his task any easier. In addition, following a test screening in April 1987, the film underwent a major re-edit. Thus, it is impossible to speculate about Mankiewicz's original intentions. To the director's credit, the acting, at least, is often inspired. In particular, Dobson's performance as a consummate capitalist/gangster whose ego prevents him from seeing the impending chaos that has suddenly surrounded him, are memorable.

The overriding impression of *And Then You Die* is one of wasted effort. Consider the following. The initial problematic in the film, the animosity that McGrath feels towards Griffin and, as a result of this, McGrath's efforts to apprehend Griffin, creates a series of enigmas which the audience assumes that the film will eventually answer. For example, will Griffin be arrested? What mistakes will he make that will allow him to be arrested? Why is McGrath so obsessed with Griffin? It is questions such as these that the first half of the film sets-up and then dangles as a series of lures. And it is around these questions that the most intriguing relationship in the film, McGrath and Griffin, is predicated, and upon which McGrath's whole psychology is based.

These enigmas however, are not incorporated into the latter half of the film, the half in which Griffin's 'empire' unravels, the half in which these questions would appear to be closest to being answered. In the end, instead of an interesting psychological interplay between two antagonistic characters, one is left with a relationship whose exploration has been evaded, whose set-up has been wasted, and whose problematic, in retrospect, appears to have been nothing but forced. Had this occurred in *Edwin Alonzo Boyd*, such a set of circumstances might have accorded well with the open-ended nature of the film, but in a classical film such as *And Then You Die* the payoff for the audience is at a different level. And the result is nothing but disappointment.

### Jeffrey Weigensberg •

**AND THEN YOU DIE** d. Francis Mankiewicz p. Brian McKenna sc. Wayne Grigsby. Alun Hibbert d.o.p. Richard Leiterman, c.s.c. assoc. p. Harris Verge exec. p. Bernard Zukerman film eds. Gordon McClellan, Alfonso Peccia sd. ed. Kevin Townshend casting Gail Carr art d. Miriam Wihak cost. des. Chris Drake cam. op. Andrew Binnington program consultants det sgt. Kevin McGarr, Dan Burke asst d. Howard Barish story ed. John Buell orig. m. Marty Simon unit man. Ginette Bertrand loc. man. Patty Lavoie cont. Wilma Alexander cam assists Kemp Archibald, Bill Stunden gaffer Eric Harris, Tom McMonigle, David Dool sd. rec. Gerry King boom Brian Newby asst. film. ed. Chantal Bowen effects ed. Steve Gorman re-rec Austin Grimaldi, Dino Pigat casting asst. Jon Comerford des. co-ord Peter Razmofsky

## The 1987 Gemini Awards

We all desire congratulation. To be called up in front of an assembly of your peers and told that you have done a good job is surely the emotional pinnacle of success. Money is mere consolation by comparison.

Knowing this, one must respect the growing popularity of those industry-wide festivals of self-congratulation known as awards ceremonies. When the industry in question is entertainment, however, and the awards are broadcast, something peculiar happens. The awards ceremony becomes multi-purpose. It must, of course, congratulate the entertainers. It must also be entertainment. Combining these two functions is no problem. It's the third purpose that causes trouble. This is the unspoken – if not the unspeakable – reason for the ceremony: it must be a marketing tool.

Put these three together and you have a functional *ménage à trois*. The uneasiness of the combo was amply demonstrated on December 9, when Canada's TV industry aired **The 1987 Gemini Awards**.

Outwardly the program was slick: fast-paced, strongly framed and tightly scripted. Eugene Levy and Andrea Martin, the emcees, were given some very discerning commentary nicely couched in skit formats. Levy played the role of a hockey commentator before, during and after the awards/game. He talks of low-sticking at the outset, and of the blistering pace at the "end of the first period." At the conclusion of the show, an announcer tells us it has gone eight minutes overtime. Cute. Very cute.

Martin has a memorable skit as a broadcaster covering the Reagan/Gorbachev summit, 'Live from Washington'. Waiting in front of a camera she doesn't know is rolling, she yoohoos to Barbara Frum across the street, chats with the camera-man and flosses her teeth. Just at the moment she discovers she's on the air, the floss gets stuck. Like a true CBC professional, she proceeds in the face of adversity: delivering her report with a long string of dental floss hanging out of her mouth. As gross-outs go, this is delicious.

I take my hat off to the writers of this material.

My hat stays firmly on when it comes to the awards themselves.

Although the broadcast was live from the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, this was the second evening of awards. The Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television presents awards in so many categories that only about a third of this two-hour live broadcast was really live. Clips of the acceptance speeches from the evening before (framed by appallingly tacky graphics) filled in any slow moments which might have inadver-

tently created rhythm.

This was doubly jarring. The previous night's winners had all been shot in front of the same dull curtain with the camera in the same position. They were cut in the second they started speaking and cut out as they turned away from the podium. This left the impression of a vast queue of award-winners ducking in and out of a Woolworths' photomat. Very weird.

If these clips seemed rushed, airing them ensured that the live recipients' speeches were even more rushed. There was also something contrived about them: they lacked spontaneity, and I kept wondering if the acceptances had been scripted as well as the skits. As more and more speakers made reference to the shortage of time, I began to realize that the nominees had been allotted very little, and warned to prepare. Dinah Christie, accepting her award for Best Performance by a Lead Actress in a Continuing Comedy Series, gave it away: "I have between 20 and 30 seconds so I won't waste any time."

Between 20 and 30 seconds in which to be surprised, humbled, gracious, modest, thankful and as star-like as possible!

This is joke. These people have not been well and truly congratulated. They have been made to jump through hoops for the sake of the industry.

The exception, an ironic one, was Leslie Nielsen's eloquent and very moving tribute to Lorne Greene who was given the Earl Grey Award for distinguished achievement. Posthumously.

You will gather that I think the creators of this ceremony have erred in trying to make it too much of a marketing tool. I do. Yet it *was* a successful, marketing tool. Having seen the incandescent Kate Nelligan eclipsed by the astonishing Victoria Snow, I will not risk missing *Daughters of the Country* for which she won Best Actress in a Drama or Mini-Series. Apart from any other consideration, the woman has a jawline to inspire symphonies.

Similarly, I've been alerted to **Heaven on Earth**. Its lead, R.H. Thompson, lost out as Best Actor in a Drama or Mini-Series to the preposterous Booth Savage. Its writers, Margaret Atwood and Peter Pearson, were beaten for Best Writing for a Dramatic Program of Mini-Series by Sharon Riis (*Daughters of the Country*). No matter, I'll be glued to my set.

**Night Heat** received the award for Best Dramatic Series and, very deservedly, the TV Guide Award for Most Popular Program. One does not argue with arithmetic.

What can I tell you? I'm sold. We have superb actors in this country. We are making some great TV.

Now if only we could master the delicate art of congratulation...

Merv Walker •

p. David Acomba d. Ron Maraska m. dir. Dominic Troiano lighting dir. Ross Viner tech. p. Ray Beley.