types most likely to applaud its ambitious, homely modernism. And frankly, it's long. Given the slightly and ultimately vague nature of Savannah Electric's political campaign (the assertion of individual will making for pretty thin marbling), one can see even Strachey's formidable formal talents justify the film's 80-odd minute running time. It would have made one amazing short.

At this moment, Savannah Electric is most richly regarded as a fascinating footnote to the search for cultural specificity that has faced English-Canadian filmmakers since foreign films first found a home on our domestic screens. Principally and most successfully, it is a generic exercise which rather audaciously borrows a more or less alien cultural form - and scales it to suit the domestic sensibility. For now, that is, it is of primary interest in terms of its position within the ongoing project of developing indigenously Canadian forms of popular culture. In the future, I hope it will be that and something more. I hope it will be remembered as the first feature made by an extraordinary group of talented and innovative Canadian film-maker.

**Geoff Pevere**


**Stavros C. Stravides' God Rides a Harley**

Stavros C. Stravides's excellent independent documentary, God Rides a Harley (launched at Montreal's World Film Festival), rolls us into a world of ex-cyborg motorcycle outlaws who, by some miracle, met with God on the highway of the damned - and were transformed by the encounter. The bikers in the film believe they have been saved, and they embrace their salvation.

However the people who appear in God Rides a Harley don't cross this into intolerably smug, self-congratulatory convertoids. These people are not country singers whose careers went on the skids, or failed fast-food entrepreneurs, taken to hitting the bottle. The bikers have around. They have seen much dirt - in the world, in other people, in themselves. They have lived. These people have the right to talk about their salvation, because they lived for years on the edge of hell.

For instance, one of the bikers described a flaming night when an enemy pulled a knife, lurched toward him, and stabbed him in the groin. The biker didn't feel anything. He stood up, and like a super-maniac in a slasher movie, he kept going, loaded with energy, ready to kill his assailant. His 24-hour-a-day "bloodlust," the biker told us, could render him oblivious to terror and pain.

Another motorcyclist jokes that wanting another round of violence was like wanting "another cookie." Drugged and drunken barks were commonplace. Venetians were frequent. We hear one biker confess that if he had been with his pretty, blonde wife in the days when she had sex, as she tells the camera, "with a lot of men," he would have castrated some of them. Another guy admits that he once actually hired someone to murder his wife - although he cancelled the contract before it was fulfilled. The outlaw level of morality was exemplified by one biker's favorite way of grossing-out his buddies. He would sit this face into a toilet and drink all the water.

Then something came riding toward each of the motorcyclists. One biker saw God as the biker "persona angel" about to kill him. All of them experienced themselves as loathsome creatures wallowing in the devil's pit. They hungered to drag themselves out, and they felt the lightening bolts of a new life. These people have experienced roused drugs, rumbles, bestial sex, and all other ultra-cheap thrills, they ride their motorcycles to spread the "beauty of the Word" to others like them.
is an evangelical movement for bikers. The characters in the movie are a subculture within a subculture.

Stavrides, who once made a film about Inuit teenagers, approaches his subject like an ethnographic documentarian. He records a tribe – the Christian Riders Motorcycle Club – as the band members go about their daily business, attend their rituals, and talk about their lives. Stavrides keeps a certain distance, framing his subjects (the cinematographer was James Crowe) in cool, uncluttered shots that allow us to observe and evaluate – or simply observe out of interest, and not even bother with judgments. The movie has no narrator, and most of it is not cut in a way that makes editorial points, or turns your head with biting ironies.

However, the picture often induces you to sympathize with the Christian Riders. Not only does their thirst for salvation seem genuine and reasonably unselfish, they display eccentric individuality and a sense of irony. At a revival meeting, one of them grins and describes the way he sees Jesus’s face. The Lord’s long hair is crowned by a motorcycle helmet, and he’s wearing shades. God is motorcyclist. And naturally, he rides a Harley.

The ex-outlaws in the film have cast aside their big choppers. They are enjoying the feel of their big choppers in the cool, uncluttered shots that allow us to observe and evaluate – or simply observe out of interest, and not even bother with judgments. The movie has no narrator, and most of it is not cut in a way that makes editorial points, or turns your head with biting ironies.

However, the picture often induces you to sympathize with the Christian Riders. Not only does their thirst for salvation seem genuine and reasonably unselfish, they display eccentric individuality and a sense of irony. At a revival meeting, one of them grins and describes the way he sees Jesus’s face. The Lord’s long hair is crowned by a motorcycle helmet, and he’s wearing shades. God is motorcyclist. And naturally, he rides a Harley.

The ex-outlaws in the film have cast off all their former ways, except for one: they haven’t stopped being bikers. Images you expect to see in any motorcycle movie, whether it is called The Wild One, The Wild Angels, Easy Rider, or Satan’s Choice (the first Canadian biker picture, which was, not surprisingly, also a documentary), appear in God Rides a Harley. Stavrides gives us the close-ups of boots, buckle, and chains, the pans across icons stitched into jean jackets and leather vests. The images are familiar, even though crosses and ‘Jesus is Lord’ have replaced skulls and ‘Born To Lose’.

The Riders are still bikers, not self-righteous prudes who have renounced all their pleasures. Stavrides cuts regularly to liquidly edited shots of the club, enjoying the feel of their big choppers on the roads of southern Ontario. However, they don’t swear aggressively. Accompanied by gospel rock on the soundtrack, they ride peacefully past autumnal trees, through dark tunnels, and back into the light. A run is both a sensual and a religious experience. When the Riders approach us, a filter on the cameraman’s lens turns the beams of their headlights into rows of spectral yellow crosses.

The Christian Riders Motorcycle Club is compelling because its members convince you they have gone through real turmoil and because they are a striking cross-breed of born-again and biker. However, near the end of the film, you might worry a little about them. A preacher who only borrows bikes now, and who would not be out of place on a TV evangelist’s show, delivers a real fire-and-brimstone sermon. It is the first time in the picture that we hear so much disturbingly violent religious rhetoric. And some of the Riders – dressed straight, no colors – don’t look like bikers anymore.

The fact that God Rides a Harley rolls toward this scene suggests that Stavrides is implying the film’s characters could become something other than what they are now. But then he cuts away from the revival meeting and back to the highway, to the Riders on their bikes. He repeats a travelling close-up of a female biker in a black leather jacket. In profile, she smiles serenely, taking pleasure in the sensation of being up there on that motorcycle which is carrying her toward Heaven’s gate.

Maurie Alioff •

Jacques Godbout’s
En Dernier Recours

When Quebec labour minister Pierre Laporte was kidnapped and murdered in 1970, newspapers quickly across the country. Overnight, the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) and the issue of Quebec’s independence were thrust to the forefront. Newspapers labeled FLQ members terrorists and the public branded them murderers.

But was it really murder and terrorism? Was the FLQ not fighting, perhaps, for a legitimate cause? Quebec filmmaker Jacques Godbout grapples with these questions in his latest documentary En Dernier recours. In it, he explores terrorism in Canadian society, analyzing events like the FLQ years, the Denis Lortie assault on Quebec’s National Assembly and the actions of the ‘Vancouver Five.

In choosing Canadian terrorism as a subject, Godbout opens the door on a complex issue. He rises to the challenge by presenting views from a wide range of personalities: former FLQ activist François Schirm, Quebec writer Pierre Vallières, ex-Red Brigade militant and Montreal police officer. Throughout the 70-minute documentary, Godbout deftly juxtaposes their views to present the film’s main themes.

The on-camera interviews from the structure of En Dernier recours to complement them, Godbout relies on archival footage of the 1970 October crisis, the Denis Lortie affair, the Brigham bomb aimed at Pope John Paul II and the Cruise missile tests in Northern Alberta. In fact, there are very few scenes in the film shot by Godbout (the opening and closing scenes in which a bomb explodes on a barren airstrip are probably the best examples).

In the interviews Vallières and Schirm draw distinctions about terrorism. Schirm claims violence is justifiable if used for a popular cause. "Terrorism," he says, "becomes more than just an attack on innocent victims." Vallières adds to this view, asserting that armed struggles in South Africa, Northern Ireland or Central America are not terrorism, although opposing governments and the media label them as such.

In defining terrorism, Godbout fails to distinguish between democratic and...