

Mount Royal

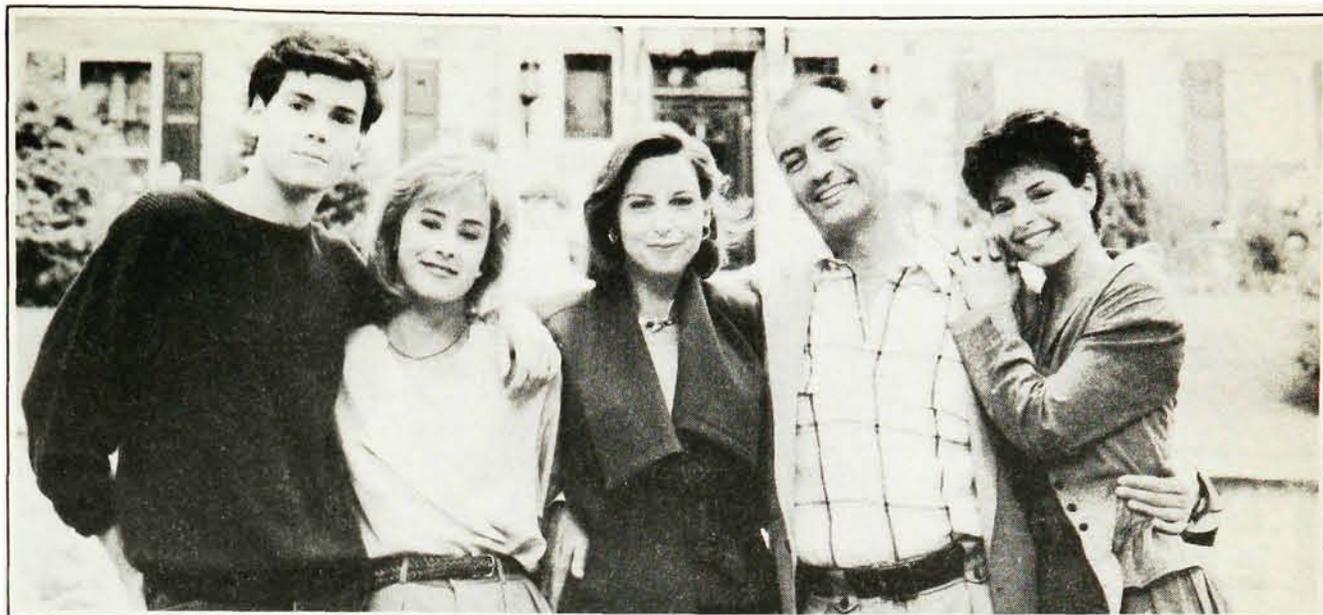
Mon dieu! The Valeur family of Westmount, Quebec, has been having a rough time since that cold January night it sprang to life on the CTV television network. Life should be kinder to them. After all, the family business is not some *schmotta* factory, it is a multinational corporation that grants the Valeurs all the joys of unlimited wealth and power.

The family consists of Father André (Patrick Bauchau), Mother Katherine (Domini Blythe) and their grown-up offspring, Daniëlle (Catherine Colvey), Stephanie (Guylaine St. Onge), and Rob (Jonathan Crombie). The Valeurs live high on a hill in a charming mansion that appears in establishing shots accompanied by the chirping of birds. Inside the big house, our eyes are dazzled by vast and spotless spaces, gleaming furniture, and an indoor swimming pool (where M. and Mme. Valeur occasionally slither into each other's arms, reviving youthful passions).

Even more important than the house, the pool, and the white-gloved butler, (who looks like a bewildered refugee from a '50s MGM musical), is the free, soaring spirit that only corporation ownership can bring to the soul. The various Valeurs do whatever the hell they feel like doing - from pursuing a career as a Brilliant TV Reporter to taking off for Paris at the drop of a sub-plot. (Since *Mount Royal* is a Canada-France coproduction, the Tour Eiffel, Place de la Concorde, the Champs Elysée, etc., click onto your screen with the insistent regularity of a slide show.)

Unfortunately, despite all the perks that come with being the main characters in a \$17 million mini-series, the Valeurs have not been invulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. As *Mount Royal's* theme song reminds us every week, "Beyond the power and the glory/That's where the heart is/It's still the same old story."

Not long into the premiere episode, André Valeur's brother, Gilbert, is struck down by a heart attack at the very moment André is being named "Montrealer of the Year." Various other disasters follow, including the problematic relationships these people get into: Stephanie and her father's best friend, an insipid French politician who she finds "fascinating" because he puts on a leather jacket and takes her to a cute Parisian cafe; Daniëlle and a psychotic artist, whose idea of wedding gift is a painting of two screaming ghouls; Stephanie again and an animal rights activist, who breaks into veal



Virtueless Valeurs - Jonathan Crombie, Catherine Colvey, Domini Blythe, Patrick Bauchau and Guylaine St. Onge

factories and wants to pretend to kidnap her; Brother Rob and a girl who turns out to be more than just a pretty face and a whining voice.

Over cafe cremes in the Cafe Deux Magots, Stephanie tries to warn her brother about his lover.

"Isabelle's a terrorist!"

"Stephanie, I love her," Rob protests.

"She plants bombs!" announces Stephanie, wide-eyed and open mouthed in a manner signalling distress, and sounding as if she were talking about peculiar personal habits. When you think about those relationships, you begin to wonder why André isn't urgently shopping around for a good therapist.

The Valeurs suffer from yet another problem: a strange vagueness of character. For example, at the beginning of the series, André is sort of a ruthless entrepreneur, but an hour later, he sort of wants, as he put it, to "change things." Meanwhile, Katherine is sort of a matriarch, Rob is sort of a playboy, Daniëlle is sort of an idealist, and Stephanie is sort of stupid.

Perhaps most confusing is the fact that André is sort of French-Canadian while his brother Gilbert is most definitely Québécois. In fact, whenever the immediate family is together, one notices that Daniëlle and Rob speak unaccented English while Stephanie sort of sounds French. Is there some allegorical intention here? Are we discovering something about ourselves? As the theme song asserts, "There's got to be more somehow/A deeper shade of meaning."

In most mini-series and TV movies, the characters - and the actors who portray them - tend toward simplification and stereotypes. You don't expect all kinds of subtle shading unless you're watching something like the TV version of Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander*. However, you do expect a semblance of humanity: people who seem lived-in, and, as a result, vividly alive on the screen. Although *He Shoots He Scores* is as formulaic as *Mount Royal*, this mini-series feels more rooted, more focused, so the audience becomes addicted to its shticks. The Plouffes, even at their most cartoonish, had screen life, as do many of the characters in Francis Mankiewicz's recent TV movie, *And Then You Die*

(co-scripted by one of the two head writers on *Mount Royal*).

Sometimes, *Mount Royal* looks like a commercial for a Sherbrooke Street boutique. You see a lot of power-posing, strutting, and traipsing. The over-wrought clothes ("I'm chic!" they shriek) seem to wear the characters, rather than accent their personalities. The relentlessly high-key lighting sterilizes everything, banishing shadows, allowing no shifts in visual mood. At the same time, story set-ups (for example, a character's breakdown; Rob's disco and his apparent involvement with a Mafia family) either don't go anywhere, or don't pay off in an exciting way.

In one plot development that could be seen as *Return to In Praise of Older Woman*, Mother Katherine must gently ward off the advances of a Sensitive and Brilliant Young Piano Student from Budapest. "I listen to what you say," says the S. B. Y. P. S. B., "and I look into your eyes. And they speak more better than your words." The acting is such on *Mount Royal* that whatever it is he sees in her face, we don't. We do see a lot of great-looking lips and limbs, breasts and behinds, but the flesh is neutralized by the bland expressions and synthetic emotions.

Patrick Bauchau was compelling as a burnt-out movie director in Wim Wenders's movie, *The State of Things*, and amusingly sinister in Alan Rudolph's *Choose Me*, but he's wasted here. And given the deep pool of acting talent in Quebec, it is understandable why Québécois film people and journalists were outraged by the choice of a Belgian actor to play a French-Canadian in a production shot in English. Of the other leads, Guylaine St. Onge, a real fashion model playing a fictional one, is lithe and exciting whenever we see her modelling.

Robert Lantos and Alliance Entertainment have taken risks and created work with this expensive mini-series. But of all the problems the Valeur family has been valorously facing, none are as wrenching as the show's early low ratings (680,000 viewers for episode 2, according to BBM) and some of the nastier critical reactions. There are people who argue that *Mount Royal* is not only trash, it is trash-passé, a

Canadian attempt to do *Dynasty* in the era of new kinds of shows like *Moonlighting*, *The Singing Detective*, and *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. After all, isn't Canada the country that produced the funniest and most daring North American TV series of the decade: SCTV? Why, we can even follow Barbara Frum's interviews and respond to David Suzuki's enthusiasm for plankton.

In truth, we can also enjoy *Mount Royal*, (which could also be called *The Rich Do Good*), because it does yield its peculiar pleasures and magic moments.

In one scene, André Valeur comes home toting a white paper bag containing two baguettes and a lobster. The uncovered shellfish sprawls against the bread and hangs out of the bag - green, unboiled, but motionless. Has it been strangled? Or is it merely frozen with fear? Is this the way French-Canadian billionaires, who live in Westmount, transport their lobsters into their mansions?

As André chats with Stephanie, Katherine strides into the room. "What have you got there?" she calls to her husband, unable to see the bag because his back is turned, but knowing he's holding it because she has read the script. Then again, Katherine is an unusual woman. One romantic night at a lookout point over the twinkling city, André tells his wife that power is a muscle that he likes to flex. "Imagination is another muscle," says Katherine, "use it!"

"How come you're so smart?" André grins affectionately.

"Porridge," replies Katherine. "Every day of my life."

André Valeur laughs and laughs, his wife's keen wit distracting him momentarily from the problems he endures on *Mount Royal*.

Maurice Alioff •

MOUNT ROYAL An official Canada-France co-production produced by Alliance Entertainment Corporation in association with CTV, la Société Radio-Canada and SFP (France) and with the participation of Telefilm Canada and Rogers Cablesystems Inc. concept. Robert Lantos exec. p. Robert Lantos, Denis Héroux p. Lawrence S. Mirkin sc. Wayne Grigsby, Guy Fournier l. p. Emile Genest, Patrick Bauchau, Domini Blythe, Catherine Colvey, Jonathan Crombie, Guylaine St-Onge, Monique Mercure, Pierre Paquette, Marcel Sabourin.

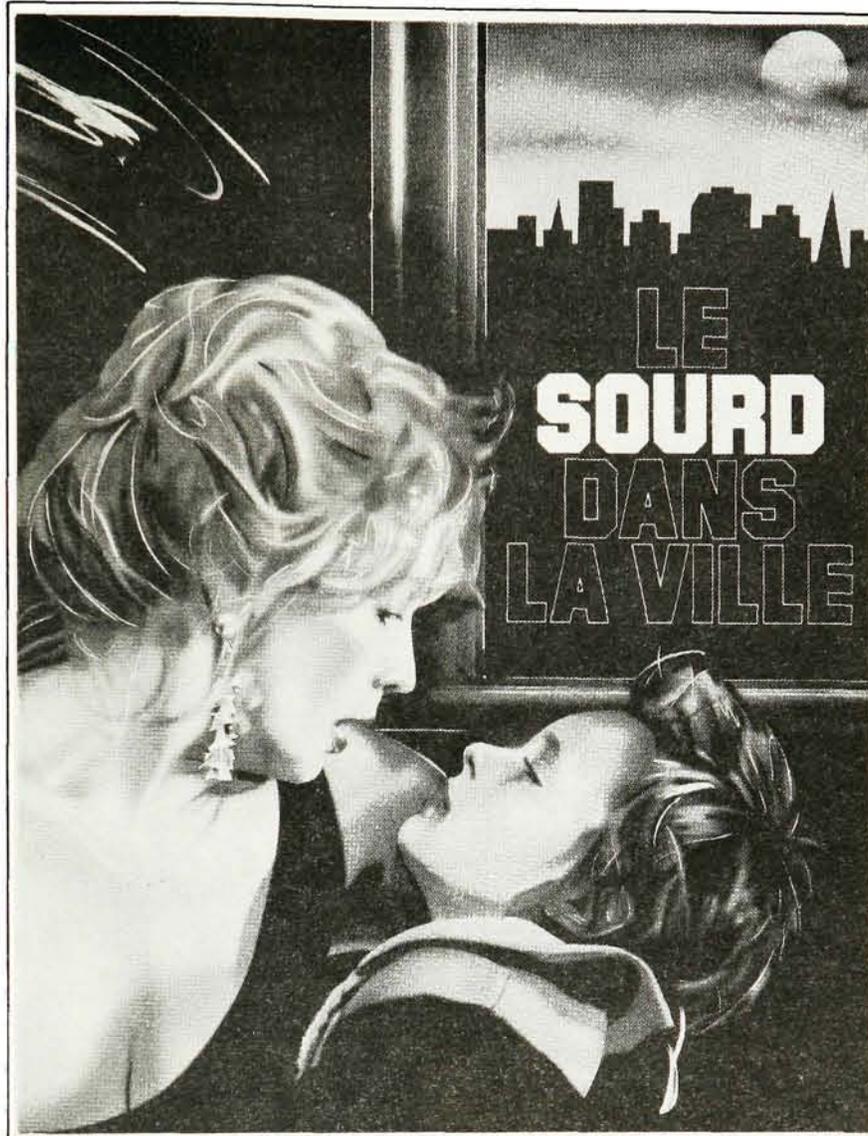
Mireille Dansereau's
**Le Sourd
dans la ville**

Mireille Dansereau's new movie, *Le Sourd dans la ville* (*Deaf to the City*), is a film that has both substance and style. It is tough, it is uncompromisingly serious, and Dansereau's meticulously constructed images, her resonant moods, her sometimes hypnotic rhythms, draw you in and stay with you. *Le Sourd*, although easy for some critics to brush off as too slow, too 'European' is the kind of movie that goes on living in your memory.

Based on a 1979 novel by Marie-Claire Blais, the film's narrative line is minimal. An ambiguous sound, a color, or the movement of feathery shadows on a child's face are more important than a twist in the plot. There are no big actions or big dramatic confrontations, but when the film is working at its best, there is a strong sense of being in the minds of the principal characters, and under their skin. Emotions, perceptions, physical sensations, dreams, and memories fuse in tightly and elliptically in edited sequences that portray human consciousness, connections, and destiny as mysterious and contradictory – beyond the grasp of theories or ideologies.

Florence (Beatrice Picard), is a woman in her '50s, whose husband has abandoned her. Right from the beginning of *Le Sourd dans la Ville*, she is frozen, disembodied, robotic. A stiff figure in a tailored grey suit, she stands at a big picture window, watching heavy white clouds moving silently across a deep blue sky. In a kind of trance, Florence picks up a suitcase and leaves her coldly luxurious apartment. Then, as she is about to get into her luxury sedan, her car keys drop out of her hand, and in an intercut, fall to the street in slow motion. Florence has disconnected. She walks away slowly and expressionlessly, wanders through Montreal streets that have an eerie calm.

It was daring for Dansereau to begin the film this way. Florence is not a character you can empathize with easily, and you've seen terminally alienated creatures like her before – in Antonioni's films and elsewhere. Dansereau increases the risks by joining the early images of Florence to spatially unrelated, and unexplained, shots of a spider creeping in the strands of its web, a small boy having a nightmare, a cactus plant, a poster of the California desert. It isn't until later in the film that the threads between these images tighten, and we perceive a bond between the boy, Mike (Guillaume Lemay-Thivierge), and Florence. Mike is sick, suffering, terrified of death. Behind her glacial mask,



Florence is also suffering, and she too has death on her mind.

Florence and Mike meet in the cheap hotel run by his mother Gloria (Angèle Coutu). One of the most startling scenes in *Le Sourd*, coming just after Florence has moved into a drab room at the hotel, shifts away from everything in the film up to that point. We see Gloria through an open doorway, fucking. Gloria is blonde, naked, full of energy – in one instant humping away with her thighs raised high, in another, chastising her boyfriend Charlie, (Claude Renart), because he's a lousy lay.

Gloria, as played by Angèle Coutu, is a voluptuous, wholehearted woman with a fleshy, imperfect, but beautiful body. She is the opposite of Florence, and at the heart of everything warm, sensual and seductive in Mireille Dansereau's film. The picture's carefully framed and lit shots induce us to look at the warm textures of skin, at veins threading just below its surface, at deeply saturated colors, at the repeated image of Gloria cradling her haunted little boy.

In *Le Sourd*, there is a tension between beauty and pain, as there is in the paintings (by Munch, Klimt, Modigliani, and others) that appear among the images in Florence's memories. Even the most painful of these memories has a

sensuality and delicacy of gesture. In a recurring flashback, the camera dollies toward Florence and her husband, lying back on deck chairs in the splash of colors of a sunny resort, as the husband absentmindedly strokes Florence's leg with his foot. Her face smiling, but silently pained, her body rigid, she impassively accepts this shadow of a caress. *Le Sourd's* images move in spirals that echo each other. In the shabby room she rents in Gloria's hotel, Florence lies rigidly on her bed, dressed in the prim grey suit, as Charlie, high on coke, pulls up her skirt and screws her.

Florence is disembodied; Gloria is full-bodied. Florence has visions of snowy mountain peaks under a cold blue sky; Gloria dreams about the golden California desert. When Mike is racked by the seizures that almost knock the life out of him, she holds him in her arms and promises him that they will escape to "San Francisco," the magic words that ward off death.

Gloria nourishes all the people who live in her hotel and the ones who hang around it. She serves them whiskey or spaghetti; she consoles them with the touch of her hand and with her body. But she is not a bland idealization – the goldenhearted Mother/Whore – nor is she a feminist role model. Dansereau makes sure that we see Gloria's narcissism, her restlessness, and

her selfishness. She delights in dancing topless; she collects porno magazines; she expects Mike to cook the spaghetti she feeds everybody; and she allows her daughter, Lucia, to sell herself. Gloria is part of the mean, tough world she inhabits. The tension between the contradictory aspects of her nature, like the movie's tension between beauty and pain, gives *Le Sourd dans la Ville* much of its power.

Near the end of the film, Florence sits on the staircase that leads to the hotel bar, watching the people in it like a child observing and learning about adults. Mike coaxes her into eating a plate of Gloria's spaghetti. She is moved by his tenderness, and by his premature knowledge of suffering. The ice cracks; emotions begin to quiver on Florence's face.

But when Mike and Florence's fingers reach out and touch, the little boy, tormented by nightmares of death, is touching death's hand in the flesh. He can't save Florence from her fate. She has come to Gloria's "Hotel des Voyageurs" to rediscover life in the moments before she leaves it. Florence turns away from the overheated bar and walks back up the staircase. The shots of the pure, white-capped peaks and the clear blue sky reappear. We hear a gunshot, and Mike screams soundlessly. Florence's heavenly mountains are his hell.

Mireille Dansereau's *Le Sourd dans la Ville* has its flaws. For example, Ginette Bellavance's minimalist music tends toward your classic heavy art-film score, and some of Dansereau's images and symbols recur too often, too insistently. However, none of this can explain why the picture hasn't received, in this country, the attention it deserves. *Le Sourd* did not get a single Genie nomination, while at the Venice Film Festival, it shared an award with Louis Malle's *Au Revoir les enfants*. Maybe the members of the Academy would have been more sympathetic if Florence had shot an elephant.

Maurice Alioff •

LE SOURD DANS LA VILLE exec. p. Louise Carré line p. Claire Stevens, Suzanne Laverdière assoc. p. Danielle Charlebois production man. Muriel Lize prod. acc. Hélène Aubin prod. co-ord. Suzanne Comtois loc. man. Mario Nadeau prod. assts Sylvain Arseneault, Bernard Rodrigue d. Mireille Dansereau 1st a. d. René Pothier 2nd a. d. Catherine Didelot cont. Thérèse Bérubé d. o. p. Michel Caron 1st asst. cam. Christiane Guernon 2nd asst. cam. Martin Dubois art d. Gaudeline Sauriol asst. art d. Pierre Gélinas props Charles Bernier gaffer Brian Baker asst. elec. Denis Ménard key grip Robert Lapierre grip Jean-Marc Lapointe asst. gaffer/grip Raynald Lavoie cost. des. Denis Sperdouklis ward Nicole Pelletier make-up Pierre Saindon hair Réjean Forget stills Attila Dory l. p. Béatrice Picard, Guillaume Lemay-Thivierge, Angèle Coutu, Pierre Thériault, Han Masson, Claude Renart, Sophie Léger. A Maison des Quatre Inc. Production produced with the participation of Telefilm Canada and Société générale du cinéma du Québec and the collaboration of Société de Radio-Télévision du Québec. Distributed in Canada by J. A. Lapointe Films Inc. (514) 522-7694. Foreign Sales Films Transit, (514) 844-3358. colour 35mm running time 97 min. 12 secs.

Clarke Mackey's
Taking Care



Kate Lynch as Nurse O'Donnell – a work of Genie?

Taking Care is something special for the Canadian film industry. It marks a return to feature filmmaking from one of its near-forgotten sons. His first feature, *The Only Thing You Know*, was critically acclaimed for its innovative production and performance style. He won an Etrog (pre-Genie) at the Canadian Film Awards for 'Best First Feature', and his star, Anne Knox, received the 'Best Actress' award. The year was 1971.

Now Clarke Mackey is back. 16 years between features is a long time by any standards, and at one point Mackey was determined not to return to filmmaking. However, documentaries and recent short dramas for TVOntario pulled him inexorably back to producing and directing his own material.

Mackey developed the script for *Taking Care* with Rebecca Schechter, the sound recordist and assistant editor on *The Only Thing You Know*, over a period of two years. TVO, in its first venture into feature-length drama, backed the project, as did Don Haig, guardian angel to so many independent producers. Other financing was provided by Telefilm, the Ontario Film Development Corp., the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, making *Taking Care* a truly co-operative effort. Obviously, it is a labour of love for executive-producer-and-director Mackey.

The story follows the events on the maternity ward of a big-city hospital. Three seemingly healthy mothers have died shortly after childbirth, all within a two-week period. We are told that the odds of this happening are next to impossible. Something, or someone, appears to be killing the women deliberately. Suspicion immediately falls on the nursing team, one of whom (Janet Amos) is formally charged with murder. The hospital administration covers up vital evidence that would clear her, and she becomes the victim of police harassment and public humiliation by the media. The charges against her are "stayed" in court, due to a lack of evidence, and a coroner's inquest is held. She is eventually cleared by the diligent detective work of a second nurse on the team (Kate Lynch), who discovers that the three women died of different causes, and concludes, correctly, that their deaths are unrelated.

If the story sounds familiar, it is supposed to be. The baby deaths at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children are the direct source material for the film. However, for Mackey, the true events only provide a springboard for his fictionaliza-

tion. His stated intent is to explore the notion of "loss of innocence" in an institutionalized setting and the role the nurses have in the hospital hierarchy.

Mackey's approach to his subject is sympathetic and sincere, but, unfortunately, *Taking Care* is something of a disappointment. The film is very ordinary TV fare and even a bit dreary at times. By contrast, the "real" Nelles case had many elements of great tragedy and immense personal loss.

The major problem is an uneven and clichéd script that defines a very complex situation in simplistic, "good guy vs. bad guy" terms: the innocent, crusading nurse (Lynch) vs. the corporate system, represented by a two-dimensional hospital administrator (Barry Flatman); the caring, overworked nursing team vs. arrogant, career-obsessed doctors. The chief obstetrician (Allan Royal) is given the film's most condescending dialogue, when, at the coroner's inquest, he announces smugly that he "allowed a vaginal birth." His character is only believable at the level of *General Hospital*.

Lynch, together with her husband, played by her real husband, Saul Rubinek, have the best scenes, and it is in these moments that *Taking Care* shines. Sean McCann plays a close friend caught up in the web of deceit, and Janet Amos does an excellent job as the falsely accused nurse. Her pain, loneliness, and shock are deeply felt.

Taking Care is rough around the edges, revealing its low-budget origins. Mackey is very cautious here, and there are no visual fireworks or innovative pretensions. Indeed, some of the scenes lose their focus and, at times, the dialogue is halting. It is, however, on the whole a taut, well-acted docudrama that deserves a measure of success.

Clarke Mackey should be welcomed back into the business of making features. His compassion and commitment to filmmaking are refreshing. With a continuation of the favourable climate for independents, it is hoped that he doesn't have to wait another 16 years for his next one.

Wyndham Paul Wise •

TAKING CARE exec. p./d. Clarke Mackey p. Pasia Schonberg sc. Rebecca Schechter d.o.p. Keith Hlady assoc. p. Don Haig, Doug Dales consult. p. for TVO Babs Church prod. man. Peter Roberts film ed. Teresa Hannigan sd. rec. Brian Avery prod. des. Carol Holland m. Jane Fair asst. d. Shelly Romalis sc. sup. Roushell Goldstein light. tech. David McNicoll cam asst. Joel Guthro grip Mark Hoffmann make-up and hair Stephen Lynch ward. asst. Carmen Jeffery ward. asst. (extras) Sheila Yeoman prod. assts Ron Krueger, Michele Milner asst prod. man. Lenka Holubec swing person Michael Iwan sd. asst. Jonathon Freedman cast. consult Patricia Moore catering Claire Stancer sfx Walter Klassen asst ed. Anita St. Denis ed. consult. Tom Berner sd. ed. Teresa Hannigan, Anita St. Denis, Clarke Mackey sd. mix. Mike Hoogenboom, Marvin Berns Foley artist Peter McBurnie neg cut. Erika Wolff titles Metamedia timer Chris Severn edge coding Numbers musicians Jane Fair, Frank Falco, Kieran Overs, Memo Acevedo m. rec. John MacLeod unit pub.

Donald Martin stills Elisabeth Feryn comp. guarantor Film Arts prod. lawyers Alexandra Hoy, Elise Orenstein, Heather Mitchell prod. acc. David Weinberg insurance broker Jane Mason cam. and light equip PS Prod. Services post prod. Film Arts lab and sd. facilities The Film House Group l.p. Kate Lynch, Janet Amos, Saul Rubinek, Allan Royal, Sean McCann, Bernard Behrens, Jackie Richardson, Beverley Cooper, Maja Ardal, Peter Jobin, Stuart Clow, John Friesen, Wendy Thatcher, Barry Flatman, Wendy Springate, Ron White, Sharon Rochelle, Ted Simonett, Arnie Achtman, Marc Gomes, Silvia Bonet, Carl Ritchie, Brian Stollery, Wayne Law, Irene Pauzer, John Lefebvre, Gordon Jocelyn, Simon Rakoff, Ann Pappert, Peter Oliver, Barry Stevens, Ted Woloshyn, Richard Mills, Pauline Lee, Rose Cullis, Laura Lyford-Wakefield, Vince Metcalfe, Alan Rosenthal, Martin Donlevy. A Telltales Ltd. presentation produced with the financial participation of Telefilm Canada, Ontario Film Development Corporation, TV Ontario, Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council. Distributed by Norstar Entertainment Inc. colour 35 mm. running time 98 min.

**GENIE
NOMINEE**

**SKY WORKS
Congratulates
the crew of**

TO HURT AND TO HEAL

Cinematographer
Sound Recordist
Editor
Original Score by

Jim Aquila
Ross Redfern
Cathy Gulkin
Patrick Godfrey
Gail Bradshaw

Performed by
Members of the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus,
John Tuttle, Music Director

**with thanks for their enormous
effort, care and support.**

Produced and Directed by
Laura Sky
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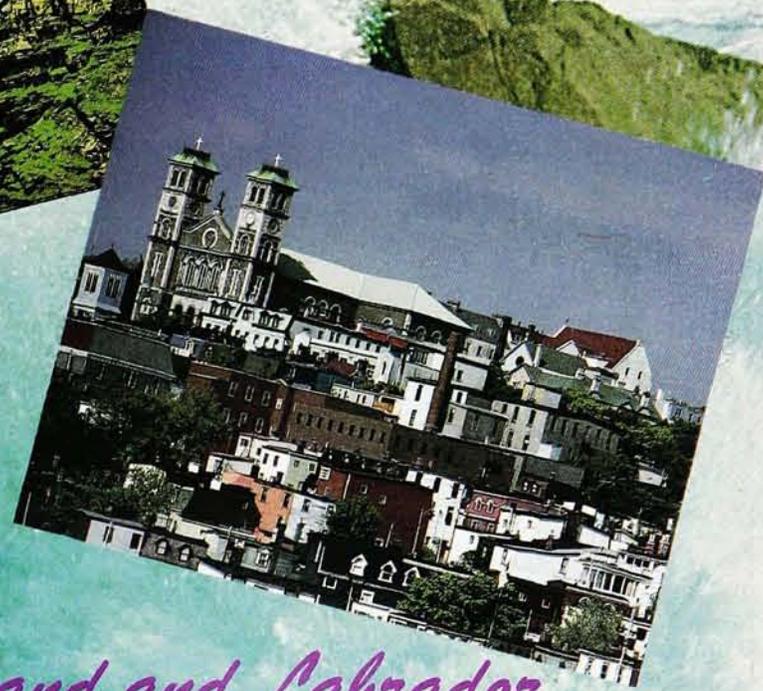
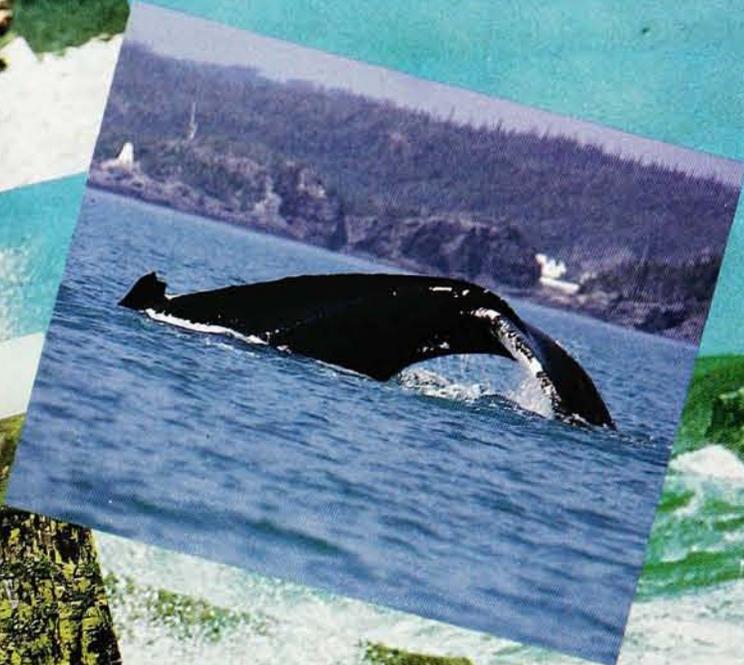
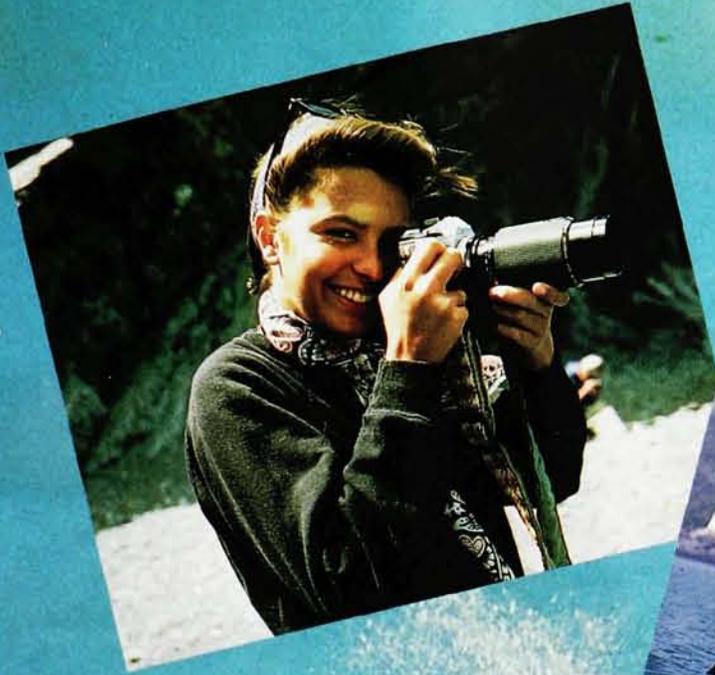


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Richard Boutet's

La Guerre oubliée

With *La Guerre oubliée*, a film which shows us how Quebecers lived through the First World War, Richard Boutet succeeds in combining classical documentary, TV-style drama and live theatre in an entertaining and instructive manner. Québécois filmmakers have rarely shown us our history in a more contemporary fashion. Even if the means sometimes seem to distract us from the message, *La Guerre* nevertheless proves its worth in the new genre it promotes.

La Guerre's style finds its roots in Boutet's 1984 film on The Great Depression, *La Turlutte des années dures*. Boutet and his co-director, Pascal Gélinas, combined archival footage, newspaper headlines and old popular songs with interviews in which middle-aged men and women recount how they lived through those difficult years. For example, one of them shows us around a log cabin in Abitibi, and, as he talks, we imagine the long rows of beds, the loss of privacy and the harsh weather he and his companions had to endure. *La Turlutte* remains interesting, especially for its historical value, but is not very engaging: the viewer has a hard time feeling the misery of these men for their testimony is not supported by visual evidence.

Archival film and newspaper headlines are also used in *La Guerre*, but Boutet combines them with fictional scenes that recreate particular moments of the years 1870 to 1918. Easier to "read" by the spectator, they provide visual background to the verbal and written information, and make a link with other non-fictional scenes.

Joe Bocan, a well-known Québécois singer and actor contributes to the film's cohesiveness. She personifies the "Madelon", a popular figure from a French drinking song, which recurs throughout the film. Before a reconstructed stage where film archives are rear-projected, Bocan sings of the wounded and the dead, of the aviation and the cavalry. She also plays different roles in the dramatic scenes, and comments directly to the viewer on the historical and political events surrounding the war. Because of her constant presence on the screen, she becomes the living embodiment of Truth. She replaces the Godlike off-screen narrator, thus gaining the same omniscient authority.

The official facts are not of prime importance for Boutet. The men he interviews lived through a hellish war and few ever listened to what they had to say about conscription or the "spotters" who would betray the deserting soldiers for a



Photo: Alain Chagnon

Film, theatre, Bocan and booze – who could ask for anything more?

few dollars. He wanted to document their memories before it was too late.

After having carefully chosen interesting – and often funny – subjects, Boutet has them dress in their army clothes and lets them speak of those difficult times: when they volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, nobody told them that the Germans were so organized and so well-trained; many of them enrolled because of severe unemployment at home ("When you're hungry, you eat anywhere"); some were drafted. And what did their wives do during that time? They prayed. In any case, this war was supposed to end after a few months, so...

The viewer also gets a hint of the true role of the United States in Canada's participation in the war. On a *New York Times* front-page, one read: "Shoot every anti-draft French-Canadian!". In a fictional scene, we then see what happens to a deserter given away to the Mounted Police by a well-paid spotter.

All these "bits of memory" are carefully integrated with fictional scenes and film archives to give us a feeling of what it really was like back then. All of this makes *La Guerre oubliée* more successful than *La Turlutte*... but it is not completely without faults of its own.

The press-kit says that Richard Boutet adapted the songs because he wanted them more uniform, more to today's taste. This explains why he chose a single singer to perform all of them. However, in so doing, he has taken away their uniqueness. These songs tell us different stories, but, in the end, they all sound the same, and the lyrics make no more sense.

Another problem lies in the editing. Until the "conscriptio" sequence, there is an equilibrium between the archives, the dramatized scenes and the stories of the old men, especially because of the music. The intensity and pace of the drama are even and well-articulated. Then it becomes totally different: not only do we often change locations (indoors as well as outdoors),

but the rhythm quickens. Because there are no film archives of the Easter riots in Lower Quebec or of the Spanish Fever epidemic brought back by sick soldiers, the editing now relies solely on fictionalized scenes and stories. The scenes are shorter and shorter, more powerful visually yet less understandable intellectually.

The different aspects of the film are then busily superimposed. They culminate in a reddish apotheosis where the earth explodes and a 40-year-old woman gives birth while the Madelon sings her last song. I must confess that these last five minutes lost me completely – what was after all a peaceable account of hard times, far too suddenly becomes vitriolic.

Richard Boutet claims that *La Guerre oubliée* was born out of a feeling of urgency created by today's nuclear menace. He felt a need to express this angst through a film on World War I, the first modern war in which the link between technology and mass destruction became appallingly evident. Maybe this urgency is responsible for that fast-driven conclusion full of uncertainty.

I personally have mixed feelings towards this film. In many respects, *La Guerre oubliée* is a reasonable success: the warm lightning of the storytellers is delicate yet strong, the sets are realistically designed, and the vivid fictional scenes are cohesive and convincing. Yet the Brechtian distanciation was too effective, there is too much distraction. For example, the early scenes show us different men telling us their stories, and at one time I hoped it would go on like this because they were so lively and "natural", as opposed to the contrived characters of *La Turlutte*, that I had immediate sympathy for them. But this link between me and those characters was broken every time Joe Bocan appeared.

I do appreciate Boutet's interest for intertextuality but he pushes this hybrid genre to its extremes. He has realized a baroque film, a blown-up performance, in which the spectator

could choose what to look at, depending on his interests, but in the end, this way of showing us history becomes merely that, a show.

Marie-Luce Côté •

LA GUERRE OUBLIÉE (*Fragments de mémoire*) d./sc./res. Richard Boutet p. Lucille Veilleux asst d. Michèle Pérusse d.o.p. Robert Vanherweghem art d. Karine Lepp m. Tom Rivest sd. Yves Saint-Jean, Diane Carrière, Claude Beaugrand asst. cam. Claude Brasseur, Daniel Fitzgerald cont. Lyne Guimond regie Guylaine Roy, Sylvie Roy Francis Van den Heuvel res. Pierre Anderson, Yves Alix, Maryse Dufresne, John Keyes, Gilles Raymond l.p. Joe Bocan, Eudore Belzile, Jacques Godin, Jean Louis Paris testimony Antonio Bourgault, Charles-Emile Dionne, Jean Duguay, Octave Jobin, Lionel Paquet, Ernest Deschenes, Marie-Louise Dorion, Annette Filiatrault, Edmond Langlais, Léa Roback, MarieLouise Deschenes, Cyrice Dufour, Adèle Goudreault, Georges Marcoux, Jean Thibault. Produced by Vent d'Est with the financial participation of the Société Générale du cinéma, Téléfilm Canada, Société Radio-Canada, Canada Council and the collaboration of the National Film Board. Distributed by Les films du Crepuscule. coul. 35mm running time 97 min.

Ivan Chouinard's

À l'automne de la vie

There are two *À l'Automne de la vie*'s. The first one – the project – is as honorable as the second one – the resulting movie – is, to put it plainly, *bad*. Ivan Chouinard's film has the making of a *cause célèbre*, one that might stir up fiery conversations in cafés and be shown in cinema courses under the heading "Brave Little Oddity in the Canadian Film Industry."

À l'Automne shows us the doomed journey of a motorcycle boy who gets stranded in Sept-Iles and is eventually gunned down by the village idiot. It doesn't break new ground in subject matter or *mise-en-scène* – Chouinard's movie often goes for *Easy Rider* effects. When *À l'Automne* juxtaposes this small-scale human drama to the more ominous news of an impending nuclear attack on North America (the feature ends with an unidentified voice asking us, the viewer, to calmly get out of the screening room and go to the nearest shelter), the movie tumbles into a moral(ist) tale of cosmic proportion, one on *intolerance* (Chouinard dedicates his film to his daughter, "pour que cesse l'intolerance: so that intolerance may cease".) This theme has been articulated before and in much more eloquent and artistic ways – ask D.W. Griffith. But the way the feature was

conceived and brought to the screen is worth talking about, even in a review of the film and not one set around it.

À l'Automne de la vie is an independant production, a very independent one: the 109-minute fiction film was shot in 35 mm/colour with a budget of \$70,000 (an incredibly low figure), none of which came from federal or provincial governments or bigtime private enterprises. At a time when even major Canadian production houses won't give the green light to film projects unless they are approved by Telefilm Canada and/or a television network, the very existence of *À l'Automne de la vie* is somewhat miraculous.

Yvan Chouinard's producers are the simple folk of Sept-Îles, the local *entrepreneurs* and the City itself. They raised the money and all their names appear in the opening credits, sharing equal billing with the actors. The Bergerons, the Vigneaults, Gagnon Electric Ltée, Moto Côte-Nord Inc. and the other contributors, are the real stars of the film. The viewer cannot help being impressed by the sense of pride and belonging that radiates from this incredible list of names. *À l'Automne de la vie* is their movie, their act of bravado in the face of the Industry.

It is all the more frustrating then to see how the director they supported has let them down. Not so much because Chouinard delivered an amateurish film: with little experience behind him (he's worked mainly on commercials) and with a cast and crew composed of local talents, mostly non-professionals, the reverse would have been surprising. Most of us, I believe, can accept the awkward set-ups, the mike and boom showing inside the frame, the unsteady blue gels on door windows, the diffusing gauzes on the overhead lamp shades, the sound of the camera running or the footsteps of the camera person, the leaden acting, etc. (Though to be honest, these technical errors would have been less conspicuous in a *vérité*-like fiction, to which genre *À l'Automne...* doesn't belong.) But the viewer still expects the film to be intelligent, have a good screenplay and get the feeling that the formal aspects of the movie worked on

paper, at least. It's not the case with *À l'Automne de la vie* and there is no one to blame but Chouinard.

As a classical, dramatic piece, *À l'Automne* fails miserably. Scenes range from the grotesquely absurd to the embarrassingly pretentious, not a good combination in a naturalistic work. At one point, a woman reveals to a priest she distrusts, that she hopes her husband is dead (he's been lost in the forest for a few days), but later announces, in a soliloquy, that she plans not to reveal her secret feelings to anyone. Has she forgotten the earlier scene? Has Chouinard?

A few hours before being shot to death, the motorcycle boy - who's been looking for the lost man - tells his girlfriend, "Don't you get the feeling that life is like a movie? With a beginning and an end." (We can also hear this philosophical theory in the song of the film). It is just very difficult to sit through this nonsensical rhetoric. At the end of the film, the last thing we hear before cutting to a telecast announcing a nuclear alert, is "You'll pay for your sins." Though the warning is addressed to a character in the film, its being juxtaposed to the doomsday message addressed to a wider audience, gives it a symbolic importance.

The message is clear: we, the viewers, will pay for our sins if we don't become better human beings. One expects this kind of sermonizing from the intolerant bad guys of the film, the ones Chouinard wants to denounce, and not from Chouinard.

They say that "good intentions don't make good movies"; *À l'Automne de la vie* blatantly proves it.

Johanne Larue •

A L'AUTOMNE DE LA VIE d. /sc. Ivan Chouinard p. Pierre Lessard d. o. p. Guy Deschenes set des. Clément Lévesque ed. Ivan Chouinard sd. Denis Pelletier, G erald Filion, Bernard Huard, Germain Beriau, Sylvain Lamarre m. R ejean Garneau, Pierre Fontaine l. p. Sylvie Potvin, Roger Boudreau, Blaise Gagnon, Michael Turnbull. A Les Films Chouinard Production Inc. (418) 962-5660. colour 35mm running time 109 min. distrib. Cinema Libre.



Sylvie Potvin and Roger Beaudreau get existential

Alanis Obomsawin's Poundmaker's Lodge - A Healing Place

Chief Poundmaker lived for 44 years in the mid-1800s. Like all native peoples in this country's history, very little is known or remembered of him. But he did say this: "There is strength in us that we ourselves have not yet recognized, and

one day we will find a place in the world for our people."

Poundmaker's Lodge in St. Albert, north of Edmonton - a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for native people - has discovered that fighting white man's diseases with white man's remedies will, as it always has, backfire. Secluded and comfortable, the lodge finds remedies through rituals and self-love, aimed at renewing a spiritual, ancestral connection. Instead of university-educated social workers and pop slogans, elders and medicine men work with the 'patients' to arm themselves spiritually and psychically against alcohol and drug addiction and other "horrifying results of a long

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chapter of racism, oppression, rejection, betrayal and great loss."

In the six films Alanis Obomsawin has directed since 1971 (including *Incident at Restigouche* ('84) and *Richard Cardinal: A Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child* ('86), she has been unwaveringly committed to portraying the rich and raw realities of what it means to be a Native Indian in Canada. Her inspiration has little to do with film as Hollywood defines it, nor with art as critics label it, but comes from her "own people, from their urgent need to have a place to speak".

Poundmaker's Lodge: A Healing Place articulates clearly what has been too long garbled and denied. Canada's policy of "de-Indianizing" the country used alcohol as the great persuader. Not only did it do the diplomatic dirty work, but it practically created a *raison d'être* for genocide by forever branding the Native Indians as savage, uncivilized and drunken. Says one man to Obomsawin, "What did I learn from my dad and grandfather? To get drunk and pass out. And what did the Indians learn from the first white men? Here have more booze so we can get you drunk. Here, have more booze so we can take your land. Here, have more booze so we can take your women, so we can get your furs."

Founded in 1973 by Eric Shirt, the Lodge has been directed since 1982 by his brother Pat. Now 35, Pat has been through six different high schools, many jails, and 13 years of sobriety. Most of the people that pass through the centre are referred by prison doctors, social workers and community organizations. The stay is 30 days and the only stipulation is that guests have been sober for 48 hours prior to arriving at the centre. In the last 10 years the average age of the participants has dropped from 35 to 25. There is a lot to fight against. "We're more than just bows and arrows," says Pat to a group, "we've

got a lot of things to be proud of; caring, sharing, being good to one another."

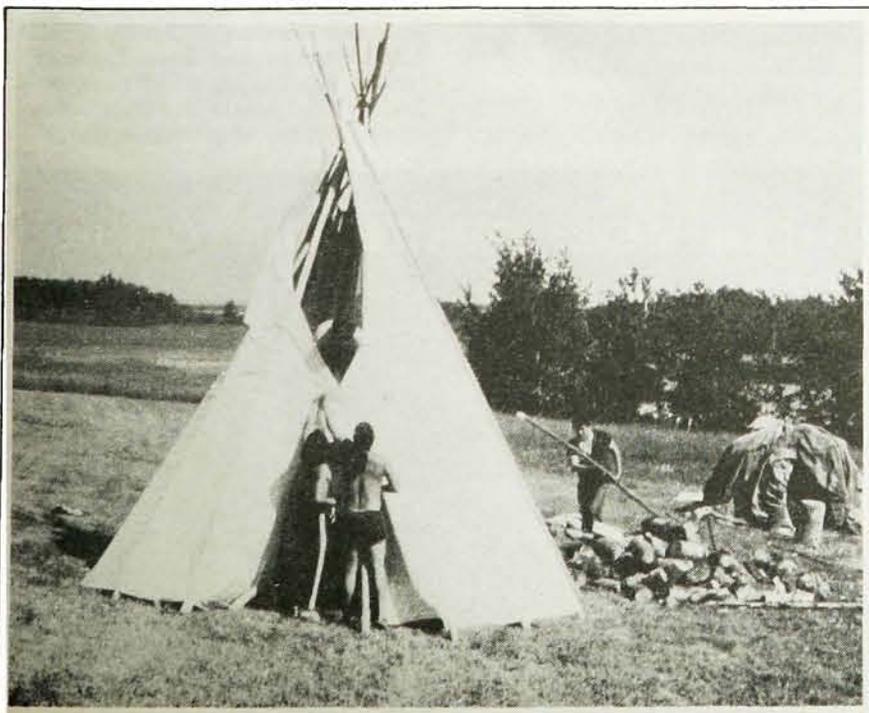
Obomsawin speaks to many of the participants, joins their group encounters, witnesses the ritual of the sweat lodge. More importantly, she has made a film of subdued and serious poetry: light breaks through rocks and trees, a young man runs along a hillside, close-ups on struggling faces are held tight and long.

The resounding sense of purpose that seems to echo both in the Lodge and throughout the film is testament to Obomsawin's courage to embrace a painful and difficult reality. The film is a portrait of a people, one where intimacy replaces voyeurism and pity yields to understanding and fury. Says Obomsawin, "It doesn't matter where I'm going, when I'm going to a native person, I'm always going home."

Poundmaker's Lodge attempts to house the spirit and the future of the people that pass through it. Living the compromise of the white man's world has left them destitute. Says one, "Ambition to me means to lead a good useful life, to be useful to my people, to find peace and contentment by sharing. That's the value of ambition to my people."

Leila Marshy •

POUNDMAKER'S LODGE - A HEALING PLACE *sc./d.* Alanis Obomsawin *ed.* Rita Roy *voice of Chief Poundmaker* Brian Eyahpaize *cam.* Roger Rochat *add. photog.* Doug Cole *assist. cam.* Michel Bissonette *loc. sd.* Raymond Marcoux *song written and performed by* Shannon Two Feathers *principal flute* Dario Domingues *add music violin* Luc Dominique Tremblay *harmonica* William Butler *flute* Sarain Stump *traditional chant* Gordon Tootoosis *sd. ed.* Paul Demers *assist. sd. ed.* Jean-Pierre Viau *voice rec.* Christian Fortin *mus. ed.* Julian Olson *re-rec.* Jean Joutel *anim cam.* Pierre Landry *title des.* Louise Overy *optical layout* Susan Gourley *studio administrator* Marie Tonto-Donati *post-prod. co-ord* Grace Avrieth *prod. co-ord.* Andrée Lachapelle *exec. p.* Andy Thomson *research* Alanis Obomsawin *p.* Alanis Obomsawin, Marrin Canell, Robert Verrall.



Building a place to heal



What's the Secret?

Leuten Rojas The Secret

Leuten Rojas' half-hour dramatic film, *The Secret* marks a departure for the Chilean-born director. Always concerned with the Latin-American 'situation', always committed to presenting the reality of the political struggles there and their repercussions here, Rojas has now turned to narrative fiction as a means of communicating the political in the personal.

The personal, we've been told many times, is political. Nowhere is that made more explicit, more literal than in the plot of *The Secret*. Two brothers, Carlos and Marcos, one still living in Chile, the other a longtime exile in Canada, are reunited by their father's death. Marcos and his father had barely escaped being murdered by the death squads that are Chile's secret police before fleeing to Canada. When Carlos arrives for his father's funeral and wake, we learn that he may have been a member of those same death squads: this is the family's secret, and the film's narrative hook.

The Secret locates the conflict between the two brothers at the intersection of family loyalty and political treachery. Carlos' shame, his family secret, is not just the usual social transgression that has informed so many drawing-room melodramas, but a secret with a real-world edge, a stench of cold-fisted, repressive violence.

Though the plot of the film might promise potboiler tension, *The Secret* is really a lament. It is a lyrical, personal film that gets inside of a family torn apart - by politics, by geography, by the conflicts that tear any family apart - and examines the pieces as they fall. And so the drama is not particularly gripping: the story progresses in a slow, contemplative manner that may or may not have been the director's intention, but certainly has the effect of personalizing the drama. This is not a slick action movie, it's not a TV spy series, it's the

tragedy of a family badly damaged by a corrosive political climate.

Rojas has tapped a significant root here. The power of the family often conflicts with the power of the state, but the forces of family loyalty and nationalism are similar enough to be, well, brothers. At its best, *The Secret* sensitively traces the dynamics of loyalty and betrayal in two of their three most potent guises - family and state. (The sexual aspect is missing.) At its worst, and this is not often, it is an awkwardly paced political drama. At any rate Rojas deserves credit for producing such an earnest, honest film, one that incorporates the contemporary political situation in Chile with more universal questions.

Though the family in *The Secret* is from Chile, it could have been from the Philippines under Marcos, or from Northern Ireland, or from Quebec in 1970. The magnitude of the atrocities may change, the stakes in human life may vary, but the conflict remains. Civil wars are always the messiest, and nobody fights like families. These are the truisms we use to help us mask unpleasant things like self-hatred and the will to treachery. The relationship of family to nation isn't that of microcosm to macrocosm; they are never two separate worlds. No, they inform one another; they writhe in and out and sometimes strangle each other.

The political is also, always, personal.

Cameron Bailey •

THE SECRET *d.* Leuten Rojas *asst. d.* Owen Coughlan *cont.* Sheila Reesor *p.* Roger Casselman *prod. co-ord* Sheila Reesor *prod. asst.* John Holmes, Susan Atkinson, Harry Fercerber *sc.* Leuten Rojas *Spanish Dialogues* Ramon Sepulveda *texts* Jorge Etcheverry *trans from Spanish* Zuzana Pick *d. o. p.* Antonin Lhotsky *asst cam/ grip* Richard Garner *add cam/ grip* Oscar Amaya *loc. sd.* Mark Freedman *loc. sd. asst.* Caroline Glouce *make-up sup.* Jacqueline Lamberts *make-up/ ward.* Maria Heffernan *props* John Cameron, Milprop, Capt. Michael T. Calnan, Calnan Military Vehicle Collection *transport* Tim McGaney *Productions ed.* Leuten Rojas *ed. consult* Marilu Mallet *asst ed.* Sheila Reesor, Owen Coughlan, Marilyn Nazar *m.* Chris Mayo, Good Egg *Productions graphics* David Berman, Typographics, Millennium Arts Inc. *exec. p.* Zuzana Pick *l. p.* Manuel Aranguiz, Jorge Etcheverry, Douglas Campbell, Leonor Leon, Gabriela Miralles, Glen Richard, Alejandro Sepulveda, Cristina Sepulveda, Norman Boucher, John Holmes, Brian Graham, Ellen Manchie and members of the Chilean community in Ottawa. Produced by Luz Films, Ottawa with the financial assistance to the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. *col* 30 minutes.

Beverly Shaffer's
To a Safer Place

In Toronto this year, a woman lost custody of her son and daughter to her ex-husband, even though it has been proven that he was sexually abusing both children. She was judged an unfit mother because of her lesbianism. Obviously, a parent's sexual orientation raises more indignant eyebrows than a parent's sexual abuse.

Linda Turcotte was raped by her father. Her fingers trace the air, outlining the deformities of the child she gave birth to as a teenager. Charges were brought against her father but the court ruled in his favour. Shirley Turcotte recalls being unsupportive of her sister and calling her a sleazy bitch. Neither women can remember a time when they were not being sexually abused by their father.

Shirley is the focus of *To a Safer Place*, produced by the National Film Board's Studio D and directed by Beverly Shaffer. The hour-long film is a series of confrontations and confessions as she visits her mother, her siblings and her past, trying to find some sense in the shock and pain.

Her parents separated after the court case. Linda was allowed to live with her mother, but Shirley (then age 8) and her brothers Wilfred and Larry were forced to live with Dad and his new wife on a farm near Winnipeg. The basement was their territory and their prison; they were not allowed upstairs. The children do not remember ever being loved or cared for. Even today, they have no idea what their father did for a living. They think he may have been an entertainer. Says Larry, "He never talked to us about anything, he just simply used us."

The film does not fall into the trap of overlooking incest on the whole just because



Shirley Turcotte and her mother

Shirley's experiences are supposedly 'extreme'. Abuse is abuse is abuse, neither the courts nor the neighbours thought it was much to worry about.

From the comfort of their living room, 20 years later, the couple who used to live next door to the Turcottes tell Shirley what she was like as a child: "Grubby, nondescript, you would just disappear... you had no sparkle to you at all." Shirley wonders if they would react differently today, if they would intervene. The woman thinks she would at least be there to listen. Her husband is not so sure: "You can't just walk in and say, 'What's going on here?' You'd have to

ask the father. He's at the top of the hierarchy... I would want to hear what he would have to say about it." It is the only scene where Shirley hints at her anger. Her voice cracks, "But about the children - why not ask what they have to say?"

Shirley visits with her mother, now 56 years old and living with her son Wilfred. They talk about this man who was her husband. She couldn't leave him, "There was nobody to turn to, nobody... not even the police. They'd tell me to go home and solve it." Her daughter asks her what she did with her anger. "Bury it."

To a Safer Place explores the debilitating effects on the family of sexual and physical abuse: a

warped violence that, while killing the family, paradoxically, is protected by it. "We were so isolated," says Shirley, "But what children aren't? What family isn't? Incest destroys the bonds children have with each other, and with their parents. In the center of these conflicting negative forces is the father. Says Shirley, "He took so much away from her (mother), even her children. She didn't protect me but she couldn't even take care of herself. She was afraid of him too."

Gerry Rogers, co-producer of *To a Safer Place*, says that the filmmakers wanted to create a film for adult women incest survivors, women who may never join a support group, who may never see a therapist, or even speak about it. It is a film just to say, "You're okay."

In her search for herself, Shirley discovered she was not alone, there are "millions of us, made to feel ashamed and guilty, especially if our bodies responded." When she visits the basement of the old farmhouse she remembers when "he took me until there was no me left."

To a Safer Place is a documentary without experts, without 'data'. It is a film about the world from the point of view of one person, about a war as told by a woman; about being torn to pieces. "I always felt a part of me had been missing" says Shirley Turcotte, "But in that basement I recovered the child that had been hiding in the wall. She was the survivor in me. She makes me strong."

Leila Marshy •

TO A SAFER PLACE d. Beverly Shaffer with the collab. of Shirley Turcotte ed. Sidonie Kerr Narr. Shirley Turcotte, Gloria Demers d.o.p. Joan Hutton cam. assist. Gillian Stokvis loc. sd. Lorna Rasmussen add. loc. sd. Aerlyn Weissman sd. ed. André Galbrand, Danuta Klis orig. Loreena McKennitt m. ed. Julian Olson re-rec. Jean-Pierre Joutel p. Gerry Rogers, Beverly Shaffer exec. p. Kathleen Shannon, Barbara Janes, Ginny Stikeman, Rina Fraticelli. Produced by Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada. Distributed by the National Film Board of Canada. colour 16mm, 3/4", VHS, Beta. running time 58 min. 13 sec.

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