

Gilles Carle's  
**Vive Québec**

There was reason for the trepidation which filled the room. The curtains parted and the lights went down at the screening for Gilles Carle's latest, *Vive Québec*, a film about the history of Quebec City.

Over the past year cinephiles have been biting their lips in anticipation of Carle's follow-up to *La Guêpe*, a very disappointing film which featured a lacklustre Cloé Sainte-Marie. *Vive Québec* was well covered by the French media while it was in production. Pictures of, again, Sainte-Marie dressed as an Iroquois-priestess-punk were splashed across the newspaper pages. What was this duo going to do with the history of Quebec City? Dressed like that?

One-third into the film, and we still haven't seen the Indian Punkarella. And, though she is anticipated, the trepidation seems to have eased away. The film is charming, strong, witty, and rich, though not necessarily in the images one would expect from a film about one of this country's most beautiful cities. It is rich in information and rich in humour, with ebullient people telling us more about the modern Québécois by their manner, than about their ancestors through their stories.

This is not to say that the images are poorly done. The photography is clean and appropriate for the film that Carle has made. It is a film full of laughter and smiles – a gift to the people of Québec.

There is a woman who talks about "les filles du roi", and the prospects for these 777 women sent to the New World to even out the number of men and women. Lots of unattached men in a foreign land. She smiles. The nun from the Couvent des Ursulines, her severe face breaking into a smile, explains that "it's easier to turn a Frenchman into a 'sauvage', than a 'sauvage' into a Frenchman."

A group of Indian children giggle in a vignette where a nun encourages them to sit up straight while they eat their pea-soup.

Le Directeur of Snow Removal for the city, from behind his desk, has a hard time stopping himself from laughing. He tells us his crews have a traditional *esprit de corps*, just as the city has a traditional 10 feet of snow annually.

These are the Québécois of today, and the style of Carle's film reflects this charm. It is something of a documentary-cum-variety-show that doesn't waste time with what it wants to say. The pacing is rapid. It is a cacophony of ideas, stories, and songs. And, if this combination of formal documentary style, with songs, and skits may sound a little tacky, it is. *C'est québécois*. It's a part of the Québécois make-up that is not overlooked.

Chloé Sainte-Marie flashes her heavily mascaraed eyes from under her wildly punkish



**Chloé Sainte-Marie in a role that suits her talents**

hair, and she suggestively sings about the beginnings of Canada with a style that would make Patsy Kline roll in her grave. The club where she sings is empty except for one man, smoking his cigarette. Finally a role for her talents! She is very good at being bad, being *québécois*.

Though Sainte-Marie is billed as the lead actress in this film, she is relegated to something of a punctuation mark in the sentences and stanzas that are the interviewees, the real people. Amidst documentary sequences where the French / English struggle is put into perspective, our actress – wearing a peasant dress now – belts out "*Chamaille, chamaille! La maudite chamaille!*" (the goddammed squabble). We begin to see a detailed picture of the arrivals of Champlain, Cartier, and the battle between Montcalm and Wolfe.

We learn those old schoolbook stories, but, refreshingly, through the oral tradition it becomes alive. There is a historian, a nun, a specialist in marine navigation, a novelist, cineaste, and musicologist. We see how deep both the bitterness and the pride run. The Québécois are proud of their language. Normand Clermont, historian, overflows with excitement as he explains how the Québécois have something that the French don't. It is their ability to be imaginative with their language. A Québécois can be speaking to a Frenchman and not be understood at all. He laughs like a little boy.

Carle uses quick, witty subtitles and title cards to make quips, and to convey information that might otherwise be lost due to the frenetic editing. This is often amusing and suitable, but the film does become a little too frenetic at

moments. We have the sensation that the film is about to lose its footing, and we feel the need for a rest. Carle does provide this needed moment of pause after the first third of the film with a shot of three people on an icy sidewalk. They fight their way with determination against the powerful blowing snow and wind. This comic bit may only last for all of 30 seconds but it is a good break.

There should have been a little more of this, because as the film bolts towards the end, where Carle presents the Quebec-born opera tenors, our optic nerves begin to feel a little worn.

And, speaking of worn. It was a little surprising when the film started to roll out onto the screen. The sound was crackling, and the image was all scratched for about two minutes into the film. I thought that we were about to see the work print, or some old footage from an NFB

film that had been run through every high-school projector from Hull to Bonaventure. The distributors and screening houses should be a little more careful. One doesn't market a record with a scratch in it, nor display a painting with a tear in the canvas.

Gilles Carle has come back to the screens with flying colors – mostly blue and white. *Vive Québec* is something for the people of Quebec, something for all of Canada, and for the world. And, as the film comes to an end, one has to agree with the men's choir that proudly sings, "*Québec est merveilleux!*" It is.

Kirk Finken •

**VIVE QUÉBEC** d./sc. Gilles Carle p. Claude Sylvestre composer François Guy d.o.p. François Brault light Maurice de Ernsted art. d. Jocelyn Joly, sound Serge Beauchemin ed. Christian Marcotte, Dominique Sicotte p.m. Louis Ricard asst. d. Louis Ricard, Carle Delaroche-Vernet cont. Stella Goulet docu. Danielle Pigeon cost. Nicole Pelletier Michèle Pelletier dresser Catherine Célinas myth-makeup Mikie Hamilton makeup Suzan Poisson hair Constant Natale, Martine Baron, wigs Gaëtan Noiseux props Ronald Fauteux scenic painter Gilles Desmarais asst. cam. Daniel Guy, René Daigle, Luc Lussier, Philippe Martel, Jacques Bernier, Jocelyn Simard, Séraphin Bouchard light tech. Raymond Lamy 2nd sound crew Jean-Guy Bergeron, Esther Auger, Joseph Champagne, Dominique Chartrand, Pierre Bouchard, Claude Beauchemin grip Mart de Ernsted, Aurèle Dion, Louis Rouillard, Danis Fréchette, Stéphane de Ernsted prod. sec. Nicole Des Rosiers, admin. Gilles Lenoir sound ed. Roger Boire mixing Alain Rivard props. Louise Bilodeau, Lyne Charlebois p. understudy Francine Borsanyn man. under. Lise Laflamme chauffeur Jean Chouinard del. of Québec Michèle Allard asst. dir. gen. of city hall, Québec Jacques Alméras comm. of intern. rel. Claude Bédard cam. in Paris Sepp Thoma, J.B. Duliscouet, Marcel Neu makeup Elen Loubeyre tenors Guy Bélanger, Léonard Bilodeau, Roland Blouin, Benoit Boutet, Pierre Boutet, René Boutet, Yves Cantin, Réginal Côté, Claude Duguay, Richard Duguay, Claude Gosselin, Michel Laflamme, Claude Robin Pelletier, piano Rachel Martel music cons. Renée Maheu music arrang. Gaëtan Essiambre musicians François Guy, Gaëtan Essiambre, Gérard Masse, Denis Létourneau, Yvon Sarrazin funds TFC, SGCQ, La Société d'Édition des Programmes de Télévision(France), La RadioTélévision Suisse Romande in assoc. Société Radio-Canada. p.c. Les Productions dix-huit/Les Film François Brault l.p. Chloé Ste-Marie, Marie-Thérèse Fortin, Pierre Labrie, Joanne Doucet, Anne Laurence, Claude Talbot, Frank Fontaine, Gill Champagne, Orania Gros-Louis, Ozalick Stouit, James Rock, Lucien Jourdain. Colour 16mm, running time 89 min. dist. Cinema Plus.

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>Gauge</b>                                     |                                    |
| T A L E N T   A G E N C Y                        |                                    |
| Actors, Models<br>Special Talents and Characters |                                    |
| 509 • 63 ALBERT ST. WINNIPEG • MB<br>R3B 1G4     | (204) 943 • 0082<br>FAX 943 • 5711 |