

CAPSULES

by Natalie Edwards

1975

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time. Dir. John Trent. A funny, crude, ridiculous, sub-collegiate farce revelling in bawdy bowel humour and a zillion mistaken conceptions and plot convolutions. Local Ontario references to developers and politicians in David Main's script give a Canadian flavour to the antics of Anthony Newley (once *The Artful Dodger* in Lean's *Oliver Twist*), Stefanie Powers and Isaac Hayes in this carry-on anyhow styles kneeshlapper. D: Ambassador Films. P: Quadrant Films.

1974

Action. Dir. Robin Spry. Selectively edited newsreel footage following an historical introduction brings the October Crisis of 1970 back into focus for most Canadians, and introduces it to the young. Unless another documentary is made, Spry's carefully balanced effort has the power of the only visual summation and his subliminal plea for reasonable and non-violent solutions honoring Quebec, is the strongest voice around on the subject. CC: 16: 49-50; D & P: NFB.

The Apprenticeship Of Duddy Kravitz. Dir. Ted Kotcheff. Perhaps the first Canadian film to enjoy a comic take-off in an American hit (when Zvee Scooler cherishes a bit of land as the zeyda of Woody Allen in *Love and Death*), Duddy is certainly one of our most famous exports. Richard Dreyfuss is brilliant as the devious desperate Duddy, and period Montreal and a fine cast help create a simplified but honest interpretation of Richler's novel. CC: 13: 10-11; 15: 42-46, 50, 72-73; 20: 62-63; D: Astral; P: International Cinemedia Centre.

Bingo. Dir. Jean-Claude Lord. A commercially successful pop-politic movie which, under a layer of active melodrama and some sharp perceptions, basically is instructing the young revolutionary to be wary of being 'used'. Réjean Guenette, Jean Duceppe. CC: 16: 49-50; 17: 30-31; 18: 61; 20: 64; D: Les Films Mutuels; P: Les Productions Mutuelles Ltée.

Gina. Dir. Denys Arcand. Parallel story lines draw an exploited hotel stripper, a snowmobile gang, and a film crew attempting a political documentary on exploited textile workers (echoing Arcand's early unreleased 1969 NFB film *On est au coton*) into a potent mixture of action and observations, dealing with workers, women, violence, and the effectiveness of film as a political tool. CC: 19: 61; D: Cinepix; P: Les Productions Carle-Lamy.

The Mourning Suit. Dir. Leonard Yakir. Semi-autobiographical tale of the generational struggle between an old orthodox Jewish tailor and a young musician who live in the same abandoned warehouse factory in Winnipeg, and the importance of a suit of clothes to the growth of understanding and tolerance. This first feature by the director of the honest, revealing short *Main Street Soldier*, was invited to the 1975 Locarno Film Festival. CC: 21: 38-40. D: March Films. P: March Films Ltd.

125 Rooms of Comfort. Dir. Patrick Loubert. Freaky, voyeuristic and gimmicky, this jumbled and disruptive movie delivers a chaotic melange of emotions and events among some of the characters that turn up at the Grand Central Hotel in St. Tho-

mas, Ontario one day. There's too much here, but it is all-Canadian. Superlative performances by Jackie Burroughs, Tim Henry, Sean Sullivan and Les Barker, plus Henry Fiks' agile camera and some explosive editing keep this experimental and original film glittering. CC: 17: 48-50; 18: 58-59; D & P: Haig-King Film Arts.

Recommendation for Mercy. Dir. Murray Markowitz. An exploration of the story of a 14 year old boy sentenced to hang for rape and murder veers toward exploitation as it echoes the sensational Stephen Truscott case through it avoids paralleling it. Andrew Skidd is reminiscent of the early Jean-Pierre Leaud in a tight performance as the condemned youth, and Markowitz catches some of the simmering sexuality and sadism of the small town environment as he comments on the gross exploitation and cruelty of our society. CC: 19: 40-41; 20: 47-48. D: Astral. P: Paradise Films.

Why Rock the Boat? Dir. John Howe. William Weintraub's novel of the innocence of people and politics set in the forties' newspaper world in Montreal, has become a fine, funny movie, so Canadian in content that it almost feels foreign. Stuart Gillard won an Actra Award for his portrayal of the all-Canadian cub and Henry Beckman, Patricia Gage, Ken James, Budd Knapp and Sean Sullivan provide vivid characterizations, while Tiuu Leek looks perfect. CC: 15: 18-19; 16: 14; 17: 38-39, 74-75. D: Columbia. P: NFB

1973

Alien Thunder. Dir. Claude Fournier. A wonderful story of the RCMP as erring humans, of Indians as real people and of the prairies as a place of turmoil and drama, is dissipated and finally destroyed by inept production and writing at cross-purposes. W.O. Mitchell took his name off the script, originally conceived from a true incident, with Donald Sutherland, George Tootoosis and Chief Dan George. CC: 14: 73-74. D: Les Films Mutuels (F). P: Onyx Film.

Bar Salon. Dir. André Forcier. Grainy black and white exploration of a proletarian nightmare involving the failure of a mediocre Montreal bar salon and its one-time owner, a plump misfit in his fifties, brilliantly played by Guy L'Ecuyer. This bitter vaudevillian style offers the narrative in distinctively realistic episodes which penetrate the set-gag delivery. A promising feature that was well praised when shown at the Museum of Modern Art and the Sorrento Festival. CC: 19: 28-31. D: Les Ateliers du Cinéma Québécois Inc.. P: Les Ateliers du Cinéma Québécois Inc.

Child Under a Leaf. Dir. George Bloomfield. A glossy centre spread world backgrounds a triangle plus-baby-makes-four soapie in which American actress Dyan Cannon portrays the woman who has everything (to lose) rather more exuberantly than effectively. Donald Pilon is her plastic lover, and Micheline Lanctot, minus her French Canadian accent, appears as just a friend. CC: 17: 44-47; 78-79. D: Les Films Mutuels. P: Potterton Productions Inc.

The Hard Part Begins. Dir. Paul Lynch. Despite awkward directions and an uneven script by John Hunter which reads like a caricature of the Great Canadian Losers Theme, the film is often an honest portrait of a sordid world, and a fine frame for a

moving performance by Donnelly Rhodes as fading country singer Jim King. CC: 12: 31; 17: 76; D: Cinepix; P: Odyssey Films.

The Inbreaker. Dir. George McCowan. With virile, handsome Johnny Yesno in a lead, this melodrama about Indian-white relationships on the B.C. coast, small boat fishing, interracial love, exploitation of workers, and the role of women in Indian life, should have been a humdinger. Superficial, it succeeds only on a simple level, much aided by spectacular B.C. scenery, and somewhat less by the use of two American imports as the westcoast man and his Albertan younger brother whose breaking-in inspires the story. D: Bob Elliott (West), Bellevue (East). P: Bob Elliott Film Productions.

Il était une fois dans l'est. Dir. André Brassard. "The best of Michel Tremblay", Quebec's enfant terrible of the theatre, has been concocted into a mad and mordant movie. Here Hosannah's big scene with the drag Cleopatra, the singing Carmen from *A toi pour toujours*, ta Marie Lou, the stamp-licking ladies of *Les belles sœurs*, as well as other Tremblay characters and incidents merge in one despairing dramatic whole. Individual impact may be reduced, but at least the film offers all Canadians a chance to view Tremblay's imaginative world even though the English lose the powerful impact of his language. CC: 19: 38-39; 20: 65; D: Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie Inc. (F) (Eng. subtitled); P: Les Productions Carle-Lamy.

Kamouraska. Dir. Claude Jutra. A beautiful, popular adaptation of Anne Hébert's complicated and many-leveled novel which simplifies it to an elaborate Gothic tale of love, murder and retribution in a picturesque early Quebec. Geneviève Bujold stars, with Philippe Léotard. CC: 7: 42-50. D: Cinepix (E); France Film (F). P: Les Productions Carle-Lamy Ltée.

Monkeys In The Attic. Dir. Morley Markson. Inner and outer selves meet in a long night of surreality in Rosedale with Victor Garber and Jackie Burroughs costumed and capering like fantastical creatures, while Louis del Grande, Jess Walton and pizza delivery boy Jim Henshaw are stirred into the brew for a sizzling visual treat. Henry Fiks, images backed by a Nexus sound track and imaginative performances make a movie out of madness. CC: 16: 38-41, 68; D: Ambassador; P: Morley Markson & Assoc. Ltd.

Only God Knows. Dir. Peter Pearson. A priest, a minister and a rabbi decide to rob the Mafia to finance a drop-in centre for young drug victims of the syndicate. Gordon Pinsent, John Beck and Paul Hecht embellish an ordinary script with subtle touches. CC: 19: 69; D: Queensbury. P: Canart Films Ltd.

Sunday In The Country. Dir. John Trent. The plot is weakened considerably by the Americanization of this reactionary tale of a tough Presbyterian farmer in rural Ontario combatting the invasion of his land by three ruthless robbers. Ernest Borgnine is all wrong as the relentless authoritarian, and Michael J. Pollard is just silly as a loony hoodlum. However, the discovery of Hollis McLaren and the brief appearance of many a familiar actor from CBC stock as well as Champion's subtle photography are some compensation. CC: 14: 16-17; 19: 69. D: Ambassador; P: Quadrant.

Wolfpen Principle. Dir. Jack Darcus. An Indian boy trying to re-establish his roots

and a pudgy theatre manager (Vladimir Valenta) victimized by his own indecisiveness, commune with caged wolves in a slightly surreal west coast world that could be Canadian. CC: 13: 42-45. D: Faroun Films (East); Bob Elliott Distribution (West). P: Image Flow Centre Ltd.

1972

Between Friends. Dir. Don Shebib. Two American imports, Bonnie Bedelia and Michael Parks, combine with a good Canadian cast in a compassionate and funny tale of friendship and loss, involving an ex-con, his daughter and two friends, and their participation in a doomed heist in Sudbury country. CC: 10/11: 32-36, 68-69. D: New Cinema. P: Clearwater Films Ltd.

Paperback Hero. Dir. Peter Pearson. Keir Dullea and Elizabeth Ashley enjoy juicy roles in this story of a macho small-town hockey star in a dying Saskatchewan village who senses his time has come too. CC: 10/11: 42-47, 70; D: Cinepix; P: Agincourt Productions.

The Pyx. Dir. Harvey Hart. Christopher Plummer as a Bogart-Gabin mix of cool and savoir-faire, and Donald Pilon as his French Canadian sidekick create a memorable pair of detectives seeking the murderer of a beautiful hooker (Karen Black) in a realistically bilingual Montreal. CC: 10/11: 56-59, 71; D: Cinepix (E) and (French dubbed); P: Host Productions Que.

Slipstream. Dir. David Acoma. A great sound experience, well harmonized with superlative photography of Alberta (Marc Champion) in a diffuse and only partly successful theme which suggests that electronics connects our solitary experiences as the wind binds the world of nature, while telling the story of an individualistic DJ (Luke Askew). Best Feature, Canadian Film Awards, 1973. CC: 8: 64; 10/11: 28-31; 12: 65-66. D: Cinepix. P: Pacific Rim Films Ltd.

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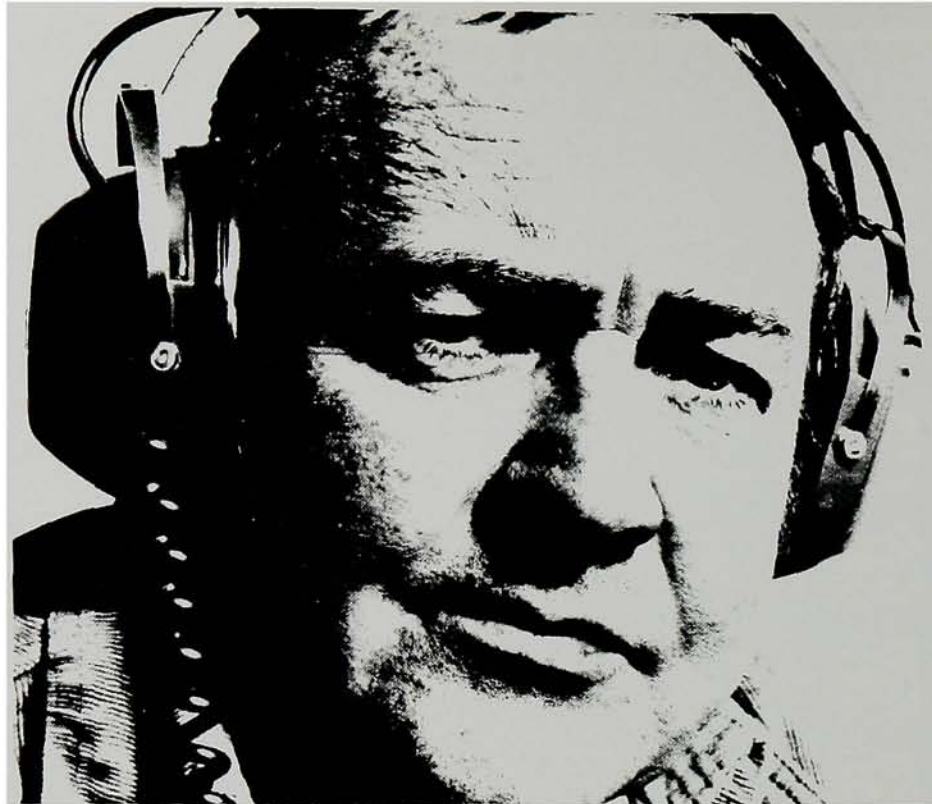
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