the form of a smooth entertainment lawyer (Yves Jacques).

Worst of all, Daniel is betrayed by Father Leclerc, who like a movie producer hurling chicken, backs off from his director's original, truthful, and dangerously provocative production ("I have to answer to the board of governors"), and tries to impose his stilted, artificial 35-year-old stilted, artificial script on the actors.

In Josse de Manville's finale, Daniel falls and rises twice in a chain of ludicrous, ironic, and deeply disturbing episodes. Arrand's movie—beautifully acted, designed, and filmed (by Guy Dufaux and Jacques Leclerc)—leaves you at the end with no clear resolution to the mystery of its enigmatic hero, played with an uncanny vulnerability and strength by Lothaire Britulo.

Is Daniel an actor who crossed over into his role, or has Jesus returned in Daniel's body? It doesn't make any difference when we are watching quietly for death. "We're waiting quietly for death," says Tony, trying to convince Gerald that they should be shot and both were released in Toronto during the same week. As far as this reviewer can remember, this has never happened before.

Palais Royale is a more stylish of the two, but also the weaker. Billed as a 'comedic romance noir', it is neither very funny nor is there a real small-town roots and big-time ambitions. He's a hustler who dreams of running his own ad agency, and of the blonde on the billboards for Royal cigarettes. Sooner then then you can say Charles Dickens (for plot convenience) he meets the blonde, Odessa Muldoon, (played by Kim Cattrall) by way of Marilyn Monroe on a street corner and immediately makes at pass a her.

Getting nowhere, he nonetheless manages to track her down at the Palais Royale, an art deco dance hall on Lake Ontario, where it seems all the best of the Toronto underworld meet for a bit of R & R.

Before long, there is a senseless killing and Gerald literally finds himself lying on top of his dream, having saved her life. She lure him into her world of cheap things and even cheaper hotel rooms. She poaches, she angers, she gets slapped around by her bullying boyfriend Tony (Kim Coates) who is working for the local mob boss, Michel Dattalico (played by Stockwell). He too is tired of Tony's boorish ways. He wants to run a legitimate carpet business through which he can funnel his hard-earned cash.

Tony screws up once too often and Gerald is given the carpet business. Dattalico figures him to be the perfect front man because he looks like "fresher air and corn flakes." Meanwhile, Tony plots his revenge, and after some not very interesting plot twists, they all end up at the Royale for the final shootout, after Tony has killed Dattalico.

There is humour in Palais Royale. If you don't mind Toronto in jokes ("This whole town is small-time''), says Tony, trying to convince Odessa to run away with him. "We're going to Buffleau,' and both Gerald and Tony have to with Odessa. But the laughs are slight and the sex surprisingly seedy. The audience is expected to go with Gerald's naive enthusiasm and big dreams, but the script doesn't allow us to really know him or care about his dreams. Odessa never rises above the level of a cheap tart despite Cattrall's limited efforts to give her character some class. Her Monroe mannerisms and shahin nature deflect any sort of sympathy the audience might be expected to have for a small-town girl trying to survive in the big bad city. The rest of the things and girls are one-dimensional, except for Stockwell who ignores a few sparks in his role as a distinctly respectable crime lord. Unfortunately, he is only given a couple of key scenes.

Palais Royale was premiered at last year's Festival of Festivals, but was subsequently re-edited and recut. It remains clumsy and almost completely without suspense. A nicely appointed period piece, full of slyly governors and big-finned cars, it's all dressed up with no place to go. Martin Lavut's direction is uninspired and only occasionally do his images rise above the ordinary. He ends up dwelling on Cattrall's face, but unlike Monroe, she can't carry the film on the sheer force of her personality. She has none.

The idea of a mob film in Toronto set in the '50s is certainly an appealing idea, but the end result snaps of too many fingers in the creative pie. Hugh Graham is a talented and funny writer whose material used to be heard on a regular basis on CBC Radio's Morningside. Apparently he worked two years on the script, but somewhere along the way the focus got lost. The producers went for an expensive look and the easy clichés, and Palais Royale ends up being victim of a lot of wrong choices.

Buying Time is a lot in common with Palais Royale, apart from Deon Stockwell. Both are about young men who get involved with
gangsters and chase the elusive blonde plaything who, in reality, is just a country girl yearning for the simple life; both men get the blonde and a lot of trouble from the bad guys; plaything some tight, effective directing.

for a bit of clean country living.

of gangsters and the young couple settling down

big shiney cars.

deal, while Jabber and Reno get in trouble with

worker is gunned down in Shebib’s

Cmtis

figures they can find out and promptly

(Stockwell, in a throw-away role, is probably the

(looking dynamic and very threatening) by a

tries to kill them both. In steps Detective Novak

(Jabber and Reno blend into their milieu effortlessly and Buying Time settles into an inner-city action film with plenty of mystery and suspense. Then, suddenly, the whole story switches gears and the sharp focus is lost. The blonde (Laura Crudshank) appears as if out of a vision (or a commercial for bathroom tissue) on the back of a horse and the “rehabilitation home” has the appearance of an up-scale resort. Jabber is assigned to work in the stables and Reno is essentially dropped from the story. The relationship between Jabber and the blonde wanders back and forth (she is also involved with Curtis) as he discovers Curtis is running illegal races at night, improving the odds by drugging the horses. His assistant to the sinister killer, Cody (played with a nice menace by Michael Rudder). It turns out that Curtis has been not only

rigging the races but also killing the dope dealers for no other reason than he is a nasty person. None of this makes much sense and the inevitable shoot out comes complete with a pro forma false ending. Curtis appears to die in a car accident only to return to trouble Jabber and the blonde one more time, just when they think they are free of him.

Director Mitchell Gabourie, son of producer

director

taking the loose ends of the story. The relationship between Jabber and the blonde wanders back and forth (she is also involved with Curtis) as he discovers Curtis is running illegal races at night, improving the odds by drugging the horses. His assistant to the sinister killer, Cody (played with a nice menace by Michael Rudder). It turns out that Curtis has been not only

obvious marketing hooks, this is a rare achievement indeed.

However, it is apparent that Buying Time proved too big a marketing problem for MGMUA and it was dumped in the Toronto market for only a week’s run with three prints and zero advertising. The film deserved a better fate. Whereas the eminently forgettable Palais Royale benefited from a televised launch and reviews in all the major Toronto dailies, Buying Time was ignored, a minor gem of a film in search of an audience.

Paul Townsend

PALAIS ROYALE


Jeff Schultz and Dean Stockwell in Buying Time

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