



PHOTO: BERTRAND CARRIÈRE

Des Amis' four friends for life.

bring us a forum for the viewers to discuss lifestyles of the elderly.

The actors bring a very charming and real aspect to the drama, and Michel Brault's photography enhances the changes in mood throughout the film. These elements, combined with the music of Django Reinhardt and Felix Leclerc, sweep us into a rich autumnal story. Yet, while the film maintains this sensuality and has intelligent intentions, it is plagued by a struggle that weighs its artistic merits down.

Lead trousers. The commercial television framework makes structural demands on drama that can kill intelligent and challenging works. Typically, writer guidelines for television stipulate stock plot-structures, often applying similar rules to tragedy, comedy, action/suspense, or documentary. *Des Amis*... smacks of these limitations. The plot is introduced rapidly in the first couple of minutes and character development is sacrificed completely. What passes as character development is stagey, and is especially obvious in the character of René, with whom we feel uncomfortable throughout.

We are further insulted by "what's-going-to-happen-next" shots which lead us into a commercial break. (For example, the camera follows René and Alex through a door and then tilts down to the mailbox. Is someone going to receive a letter?) This kind of format is acceptable for Bugs Bunny, but not for human interest drama. The story continues, we want more depth, and while the filmmakers are striving to give it to us through their craft, we are struck in the head with another lead-into-a-commercial shot. The film starts to wear the burden of the medium. One gets the feeling that the filmmakers have tried very hard to deal with these limitations, but that little box is not malleable. The lasting impression of *Des Amis pour la Vie* is that it is a good film for television, but that television is not good for it.

Kirk Finken •

DES AMIS POUR LA VIE p. Claude Bonin, (NFB) Monique Létourneau d. Alain Chartrand sc. Diane Cailhier d.o.p. Michel Brault art d. Louise Jobin ed. Yves Chaput orig. mus. Jean Corrivéau p. mgr. Muriel Lizé p. coord. Suzanne Comtois loc. sd. Dominique Chartrand 1st. a.d.

GINETTE GUILLARD cont. MARIE BEAULIEU cam. asst. René Daigle unit. mgr. Bernard Vincent gaffer Yves Charbonneau key grip Michel Périard 2nd. a.d. Nicole Bernier add. cam. Sylvain Brault, René Daigle set dec. Pierre Perreault props Charles Bernier art dept. d. Blanche-Danielle Boileau boom Claude Lahaye cost. Luc Bédard dresser Luc Le Flaguais elec. Marcel Breton grips Jean-Maurice De Ermed, Guy Ferland carp. François Gascon makeup Kathryn Casault hair André Morneau asst. ed. Aube Foglia admin. Ian Boyd p. acct. Hélène Aubin p. a. Catherine Faucher, Sylvain Arseneault, Anne-Marie Gill sec. Nicole Fauteux loc. scouts Guy Bouchard, Mona Medawar cast. Danyèle Patenaude stills Bertrand Carrière. pub. Christianne Ducasse l.p. Françoise Faucher, Paul Hebert, Roger Joubert, Jean Mathieu, Anais Goulet Robitaille, Gisele Schmidt, Olivette Thibault, Jean-Louis Roux, Johanne Fontaine, Carmen Ferland, Véronique Lemay, Kiki Nesbit. A coproduction of Films Vision 4, Producteurs TV-Films Associés, and the NFB. With financial participation from Telefilm, SOGIC and Radio Québec.

Anne-Claire Poirier's **Salut Victor**

One of a series of 10 television films produced for Radio-Québec, *Salut Victor* is an impressive work. Based on Montreal writer Edward O. Phillip's *Mathew and Chauncy*, the film is an effective document attesting to the collective fears and individual concerns of many of our aged. But more than that, it is a surprisingly moving account of the friendship that two male residents form in a private retirement home. That both of these men are gay underlines the absence of screen representations of the aged, both gay and straight.

The film chronicles the friendship that evolves between two men living in a home for the aged, presumably in Montreal. Philip, recently arrived, and demonstrating in no uncertain terms that his nature is an inherently reserved one, is introduced to the irreverent Victor, the residence's self-confessed *tapette* and title character of the film. Victor, played by popular Québécois actor Jacques Godin, embodies all of those qualities which the repressed Philip (Jean-Louis Roux) outwardly appears to be

opposed to - he's brash, candid about his sexuality, and more than just a little revealing in his discussions of other residents. In short, the men are classic examples of the personality contrast necessary to the unfolding of a narrative cinema which is concerned with the progressive moral enlightenment of its central character. Predictably, it is Victor who convinces Philip that life is too short to allow oneself to be dictated to by confining, oppressive notions of pride and, following their initial, strained introduction, the two men soon become dependent on each other's company.

Filmmaker Anne-Claire Poirier, the "conscience" of Québécois cinema, has solidified her position as one of the Quebec industry's chief talents in this film, her first, since the disappointing *La Quarantaine* six years ago.

With a mature, sensitive hand not afforded many directors, Poirier has created a significant work of popular Canadian cinema. Responsible for selecting the short story from which the film has been adapted, Poirier has been keenly involved with the production since its inception. This is clearly evident in her polished use of form. Several of the many outstanding formal elements to be found in this film include a stylized editing which serves the film's scenes well by allowing each to fade and "wash" into one another, and the consistently ochre-bronze toned tints that dominate the film's images further complementing its temporal "meshing." But it is perhaps Poirier's direction of the actors, and the accommodating manner in which they are photographed, that remains the film's essential strength.

Realizing the importance of performance to a project such as *Salut Victor*, Poirier has encouraged nothing less than noble performances from Godin and Roux, as well as supporting actors Murielle Dutil and Julie Vincent. She is acutely aware, no doubt, that the degree of success or failure of fiction film that examines previously unexplored terrain is determined by the actors' performances. The formidable talents of Godin and Roux, especially in their scenes of interaction, and Poirier's

insistence that each be photographed from the other's perspective throughout the film are *Salut Victor's* primary means of discourse and the most progressive of all of the production's ways of voicing its concerns for social reform. When Victor is reprimanded for touching one of the male employees of the residence, Godin's delivery as Victor is coolly restrained. But it is also highly communicative, suggesting that his touching of the worker was instinctual and that he could not ever be made to feel ashamed for something that gave him "le sens de la réalité."

While it is true that the film does not question issues of race, class, etc., issues that are pertinent to any discussion of the gay aged, it is difficult to be critical of the film. Poirier and the excellent cast she has assembled have confronted without apology what it means to be gay and aged in a society that does not especially value either group. This counts for a great deal. Unlike many films of the "social realist" tradition that tend to be overly sentimental at moments when *points* are being made, *Salut Victor* transcends this tendency simply by playing by the rules that govern this genre. That is, it remains faithful to its subject, and does not at any point trivialize or demean the lives of its characters.

Jonathan St. George •

SALUT VICTOR p. Monique Létourneau d. /sc. coll. Anne-Claire Poirier sc. Marthe Blackburn adapted from Matthew and Chauncy by Edward O. Phillips d.o.p. Michel Brault art d. Denis Boucher ed. Suzanne Allard mus. Joel Vincent Bienvenue p. mgr. Michelle Marcl tech. coord. Edouard Davidovici loc. sd. Richard Besse 1st. a.d. Mireille Goulet cont. Monique Champagne cost. Huguette Gagné makeup Brigitte McCaughy gaffer Pierre Provost key grip Jean-Louis Daoust cam. asst. Nathalie Moliavko-Visotzky unit mgr. André Dupuis set dec. André Chamberland props ext. Mario Hervieux boom Philippe Scully elec. Marc Charlebois grip Robert Auclair sd. ed. (diag.) Diane Boucher sd. ed. (fx) Marie-Claude Gagné sd. fx. Jérôme Décarie fx. rec. Christian Fortin mus. Hans Peter Stobl, Adrian Croll admin. Monique Lavoie p. scv. Johanne Messier p. a. Johanne Boudreau, Guy Ferland stills Bertrand Carrière pub. Christianne Ducasse/Novak and Associates l.p. Jean-Louis Roux, Jacques Godin, Julie Vincent, Murielle Dutil, Jean Besré, Huguette Oligny, Juliette Huot, Terrence La Brosse, Marthe Nadeau, Cédric Noël, Manon Vallee, J.A. Robert Paquette, Robert Favreau. A co-production of the NFB, les Producteurs TV-Films Associés., with financial participation from Telefilm, SOGIC and Radio Québec.

Jean-Louis Roux (Philippe) and Jacques Godin (Victor) toast their friendship.

