**Film Reviews**

**Dennis Zahoruk's**

**Brethren**


Dennis Zahoruk's independently made first feature is a brave venture which, to a praiseworthy extent, delivers the dramatic goods. It was shot over a five-week period, on locations in the Toronto area and on a very strict budget. The result is not impoverished either in production values or ideas. If anything the film is a little too ambitious, so that both the acting and the dialogue become rather strained at times - but that may be accounted a "good fault".

The story - of three brothers called home to their father's funeral and the various stresses and resentments that mark their family relationships - is reminiscent (consciously or otherwise) of David Storey's play *In Celebration*, which Lindsay Anderson directed on screen for the American Film Theatre series. It is, in any case, a good, meaty situation and is here developed with considerable poignancy, wit and ironic observation. As suggested, the scenes (most often dialogues) sometimes play close to the style of TV soap opera but, to be fair, there are frequent stretches which rise way above that level and suggest instead a good, naturalistic Canadian play such as one might enjoy at the Tarragon or Centaur Theatres. The character of the "quiet" theology student brother is especially well drawn - and nicely acted by Richard Fitzpatrick. He is one of those unfortunate (?) in life to whom people turn, vampire-like, for one-way comfort. The other sons of this unhappy family are more conventional - a drop-out and a frenziedly "successful" executive; Tom Hauff and Kenneth Welsh flesh them out well but can't avoid uneasily melodramatic moments. Welsh, in particular, is an actor who should make more Canadian films. He has proved his worth on Canadian stages in roles all the way from Hamlet to Stanley Kowalski and could have handled half a dozen parts I can think of in recent pictures all perversely cast with Americans.

**William Fruet's**

**Death Weekend**


Death Weekend is an ugly, vicious, downright shitty movie which will leave you in need of a shower. Brenda Vaccaro is wasted, Don Stroud should be, Chuck Shamata deserves better. William Fruet, by putting his name and his once sympathetic talents to this mean-spirited garbage, has exiled himself from reasonable consideration for a long time to come.

End of review? That's tempting, but not quite.

Mr. Brian Ferry, a fairly new reviewer for The Toronto Star, inadvertently played into the enemy camp. He made clear that he disliked and disapproved of the film but provided a chunk which could be extracted for the ads, to the effect that the film had been brilliantly made and was a Canadian equivalent to Straw Dogs or Death Wish. Mr. Perry will quickly learn to be wary of the joke...
an idea. Shamata is really as evil as Stroud, it seems, for taking the girl out of town for you-know-what. (She doesn’t know, for a while, being the most naive heroine since Lillian Gish.) Unfortunately, this idea is planted early and undeveloped. It is the one idea in the film, which from then on is full only of germs.

Why, somebody might conceivably ask, do I so object to Death Weekend when years ago I enjoyed the likes of Joan Crawford being menaced by the likes of Jack Palance in the likes of Sudden Fear? Perhaps because Joan was provided with more character, more nerve and more resourcefulness to get out of her predicament - not just a handy bit of broken glass. Further, she was placed in a screenplay full of interesting detail, believable minor characters and clever plot twists, as opposed to one gross situation dwelt on, literally ad nauseam. And when Joan was bothered by the young Cliff Robertson in Robert Aldrich’s very humane Autumn Leaves, it transpired that he was mentally disturbed and she ended up more pitying than scared of him. But then, of course, these were only Hollywood program pictures, not the work of our national film millennium, supported by kind words and government funding, so that the mere fact of having a film ready for release is lauded as amazing in some circles.

Richard Ayres and Brenda Vaccaro share a terrifying moment.

Of course, it’s a discouraging world where Goldenrod is pulled from Toronto theatres after one week, while this and other schlock plays merrily on. It may be suggested that William Fruet has to earn a living. Couldn’t he drive a taxi or, as Mel Brooks suggested in The Critic, maybe make a shoe?

Clive Denton
Toronto
April 14, 1976

Mr. Fin Quinn,
Quinn Laboratories Limited,
380 Adelaide Street West,
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear Fin:

Thank you indeed for your reply to my letter of February 27, 1976 and for your cooperation in the various tests we conducted. It is with great pleasure that I can inform you that Quinn has been selected to handle all our laboratory work and Mirrophonic all our sound requirements on this production. I know you share my view that this whole decision-making process has been done in an open and professional way and I can assure you that Imperial Oil Limited, who shared with us in these deliberations are fully confident of the talents and skills that your organization will bring to this task.

I should like us to have an early meeting with Fern Aube to organize logistical details and I shall probably prepare a more formal document accepting your bid and attaching the terms and conditions to which you agreed as supplementary documentation.

I trust that we will see you at the announcement tomorrow.

Best personal regards,

Pat Ferffs
Director of Production

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