

## FILM REVIEWS

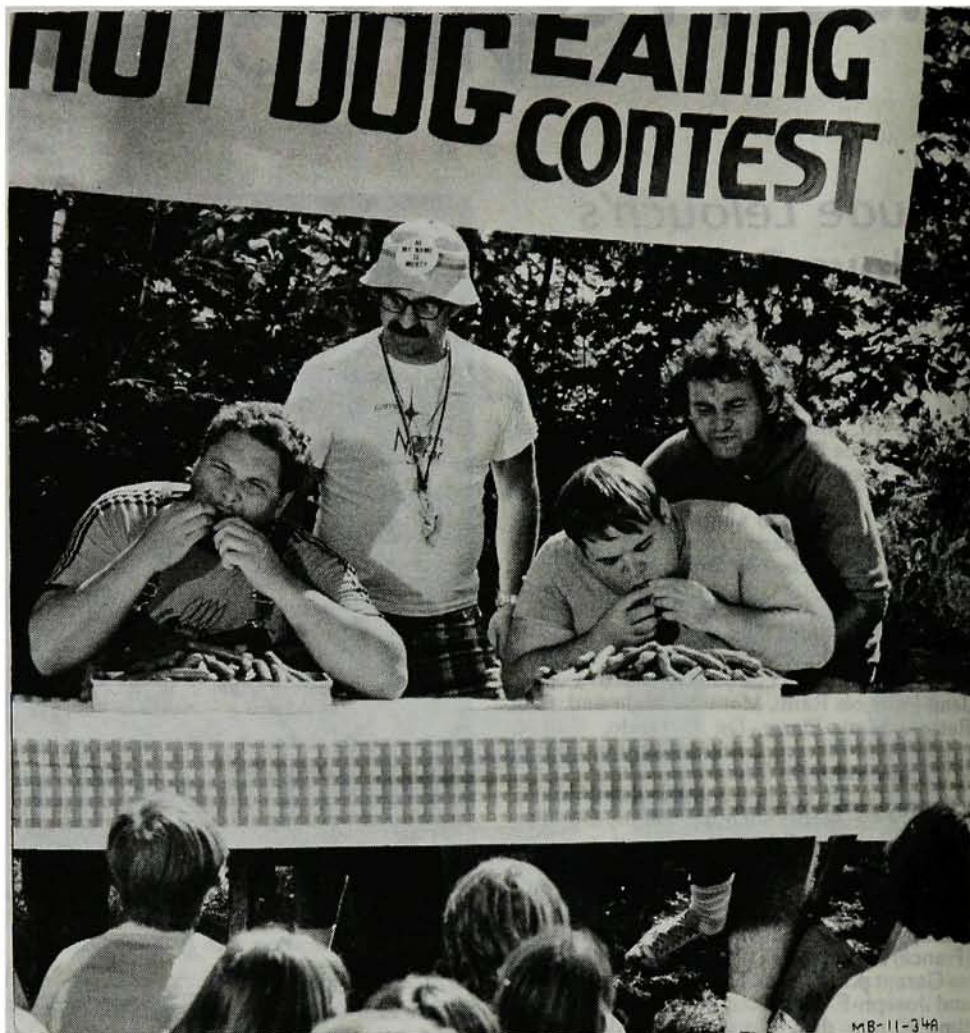
### Ivan Reitman's Meatballs

d. Ivan Reitman asst. d. Gord Robinson sc. Dan Goldberg, Len Blum, Janis Allen ph. Don Wilder sd. Richard Lightstone p. designer Judy Gellman l.p. Bill Murray, Kate Lynch, Russ Banham, Margot Pinvidic, Todd Hoffman, Norma Dell'Agnesse, Jack Blum, Sarah Torgov, Keith Knight, Kristine DeBelle, Matt Craven, Cindy Girling exec. p. John Dunning, André Link p. Dan Goldberg p. manager Bob Bayliss p.c. Haliburton Films Production, 1978 col. 35 mm Can. dist. Cinepix

All the ingredients are there: the pompous camp director, the over-sexed head counsellor, the not-too-good looking female staff, dozens of screaming kids, and of course, the ritzy rival encampment across the lake. **Meatballs** depicts the typical summer camp. From ingenious pranks to romantic flings, the spirit of many a summer month in the Haliburton wilderness is recaptured for those lucky enough to have attended one of these camps. For those who lack the experience, the film offers ninety minutes of good fun, laughter and release.

Canadian successor to Ivan Reitman's **Animal House** (a film about a fraternity of rejects situated somewhere in the mid-U.S.), **Meatballs** employs the same basic style of slapstick humour.

Bill Murray, as head Meatball at Camp North Star, is much like the Belushi character in **Animal House**. In fact, both Belushi and Murray owe their exposure to **Saturday Night Live**. Murray also toured with the original troupe of Second City, so he comes to the Canadian setting well-seasoned for his role as Tripper, the quick-witted camp clown. At times he tends to be as obnoxious as Belushi and yet holds a kind of fascination for the



Two beefy contestants in **Meatballs**, with judges Harvey Atkin and Bill Murray presiding

viewer. Tripper is the counsellor who might be voted Most Likely To Succeed — be it through consoling a homesick camper or 'making it' with one of his female associates when the campfire is over.

From the word 'go' we see the side of

camp life that is most remembered — not the petty arguments or too much of the homesickness, but mostly the fun and comradeship that evolves after two weeks at a summer retreat.

The opening scene introduces the film's two rival camps. Larry Solway, as part of the news crew covering the beginning of the summer camp season, interviews Murray to find out about camp life. Murray, however, pretending to be the director of the rival camp, Mohawk, across the lake, advertises its loose lifestyle and degenerate game-playing. All this is said with a dead pan expression belying Murray's dry wit.

The annual Olympiad provides the focus for the good-spirited rivalry between the two camps. Predictably, the good guys seem to lose at everything. Mohawk has the better players, better uniforms, and even the better looks. How could they lose? Then there's North Star — they've got Tripper, and... well, you don't even wonder why they lose, 'cause after

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all they're a bunch of meatballs. But they do have spirit and they do know how to play dirty! With Tripper's cheer of "It just doesn't matter," the Meatballs go nuts. They turn Globetrotters with their antics on the basketball court and win, buns down, in the hotdog-eating contest.

This year North Star is determined to win. After much contestation about who is to replace the injured Cindy in the big finale, the cross-country race, the task is entrusted to Rudy, the camp runt. In a magnificent sequence following Rudy and his Mohawk opponent through the surrounding woods, Rudy's runt-turned-star performance earns North Star the gold medal for the first time in the history of the two camps.

No camp life would be complete without at least a hint of illicit sex. **Meatballs** abounds in inoffensive innuendoes — and the occasional offensive one as well! The CITs (counsellors-in-training), provide the entertainment as they conduct their own sex education course. The initiation

of Nerd, one of the junior staff, takes the male half of the crew on a mission to the girls' cabin, where a typical hen session, complete with 'true romance' magazine readings, is underway. Safely tucked under the cabin, the guys settle in for some cheap thrills — a perfect setting for the slapstick humour to follow. The girls, discovering their peeping toms, succeed in partially disrobing them and scattering them helter-skelter back to their own cabin — the battle lost, but the war just begun!

Although the critics haven't been overly kind, **Meatballs** has proved to be a great Canadian box office success. With its more-or-less universal theme, the film appeals to all ages and all persuasions. The difficulties encountered in shooting the film with so many amateurs — including the actual campers of a session at White Pines — seem to have been worth it in the end. Ivan Reitman, I sympathize.

Michèle Maheux

## André Blanchard's **L'Hiver Bleu**

d. André Blanchard **asst. d.** Camille Belle-humeur **sc.** André Blanchard, Jeanne-Mance Déglise **ph.** Alain Dupras, Madeleine Ste-Marie, Jacques Marcotte **ed.** Francis Van Den Heuvel, Ginette Leduc **sd.** Robert Girard **set dir.** Luc Quesnel, Andrée Barrette, Louise Laferté (script) **l.p.** Christiane Lévesque, Nicole Scant, Michel Chénier, Roland Pelletier, Claire Nault, Père Léo Cantin **p.** Marguerite Duparc, Cinak **p. sec.** Claudine Fauque **p. manager** Louis Dal-laire **col.** 16 mm **running time** 84 min. **dist.** Les Films du Crépuscule.

Now that Canada and Quebec have entered an era of big-budget productions — for better, for worse, and for however long — some old questions have been raised. Is marketability incompatible with artistic vision? Do investment returns rate higher than didacticism and the altering of our sensibilities? What about national cinema? Are big production values inseparable from political bias (most often capitalist)?

Answers to these questions may be offered by considering two recent, would-be, anti-establishment, Hollywood films: **Apocalypse Now** and **China Syndrome**. Both are less successful in shaking the status quo than in glorifying the big-buck technology and power-hungry mentality they decry. Both are slick products which inspire awe and stupefy. (**Apocalypse** is a

great recruiting film, **China Syndrome** a star vehicle for U.S. back-up systems that work.) Considering this, and the Canadian social and political problems which won't disappear in a cloud of Clark's consensus, **L'Hiver Bleu** (Blue Winter) can be neither sunk because it's out of synch, nor obliterated for its blizzard of graininess.

Moreover, this one-hour and 20-minute film, written and directed by unknown Andre Blanchard, appears to have been hand-crafted with his friends, and com-

pleted with the help of most of Rouyn Noranda's population, businesses and community organizations — which also star.

As a decidedly low-budget Quebecois film, **L'Hiver Bleu** is interesting for several reasons.

First, it may be an anachronistic post-script to the wave of films made independently by Quebecois for Quebecois. This 'movement' peaked in the early 70's and faded with the P.Q.'s election — for which it may in part be thanked or blamed, depending on one's political persuasion and belief in the extent to which films actually sensitize populations, culturally and politically. Certainly these films provided training for many now working on the big-budget — mostly English — films.

Second, **L'Hiver Bleu** could be the first ripple in a new wave, by a new generation of independent filmmakers. Like its predecessors it touches on problems of labour, the disaffected students and their instructors, the young unemployed, the family, and language. Unlike its predecessors, this film dwells little on sexual awakening — which seems a fait accompli, considering jokes about 52 orgasms! The young appear afflicted with late '70s ennui, in contrast to the fervent political and social commitment of the '60s.

Third, the problems explored are not necessarily the consequences of Quebec's relationship with Canada. Rather, they seem to arise from regional disparities and difficulties in communicating with Quebec City. The climax — if there is one — comes when, after a struggle, the leader of the Association des Accidentés (The Rouyn Noranda Injured Workers



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