Christmas), carries more disturbing overtones. While in a sense he receives a gift of time, he is given it because he, as his father jokingly tells him, is now mature enough to assume responsibility for it. Bobby Lee is on the verge of being thrust into the role of family patriarch and into the next generation.

If his birthday and his wife's constant reassurances about how great he is for forty have made the hero restless, his son's graduation makes him reflective. The valedictorian enthuses about the future, but Bobby Lee, a once-promising architect turned designer-contractor of Senor Abe's taco stands, counters her optimism with what he, in self-pity, considers the truth of his life. Live for the present, he would warn, for the future is only "fat butts, TV and beer."

Thus middle-aged and dissatisfied with both his past and his present, Bobby Lee is totally unprepared to accept his own future when his father dies. As his mother, his wife, his neurotic sister, and his troubled son all turn to him for help, he cries out, "I don't want to be the daddy!" Words get translated into actions. He sheds his Olds for a Porsche, his three-piece suit for cowboy gear, and his responsibilities for the irresponsibilities of a boy in a Halloween costume. He, who has always built, decides to renovate both his life and Senor Abe's private suite in the Dallas stadium. His choice of a partner with whom to be irresponsible is alarmingly suitable. The moist-eyed, sensuous Dallas Cowgirl (Deborah Wakeham) fits his new image, and, since his first love was a cheerleader and professional virgin, Nancy obviously fulfills his fantasies about the past as well as the present. Clearly, Bobby Lee is regressing. By refusing his proper role, he begins to destroy everything that is important in his life — his family, his work, and his own values. Not until his world is in ruins and he turns to "no strings" Nancy for reassurances about how great he is for comfort does he recognize the magnitude of his losses. Only then can he throw over the tawdry joys of the red and tinsel heart-shaped balloon tied to a white Porsche, for the comforts of an Olds in the driveway and a warm life in that ever-simmering hot tub.

It is not surprising that Middle Age Crazy is finding its audience, for it mirrors the concerns of 1980. Superficially, it feeds the modern preoccupation with "lifestyles" and catches the details of each with beautiful telling economy: mother's bouffant hairdo and pastel mink stole; father's Winnebago; sister's dramatically stylish, hard-edge hat (contradicted by her pigtail); the earnest shining face of the born-again Christian; the vulgarity of Senor Abe, whose foul language unfortunately pervades the film; the groping inarticulateness of the young Nancy's clinging, red, pseudo-gym clothes; and the split-level bedroom with raised hearth of the affluent middle class. Yet, while these often provoke laughter, the effect is more generous than satirical. The focus is on Bobby Lee, not on his society.

More fundamentally, the times are ready for the film's comedy and its moral. Deftly directed by John Trent, the scenes end on good lines and run swiftly to good visual laughs, and the movie paces itself to the hero's life reflecting his own sense of time. Moreover, in a year when the popular press has dropped R.D. Laing's notion of family-as-destructive, for articles on family-as-life-enhancing, Middle Age Crazy hits the right note. Today, facing up to middle-class responsibilities is once again respectable. (Did anyone else notice that abortion is never considered when Greg Burnett's girl becomes pregnant?)

Anna Carlsdottir

Claude Fournier's Les Chiens Chauds (Hot Dogs)

After playing leading man (the hood) to Linda Lovelace in Deep Throat and Georgina Spelvin in The Devil in Miss Jones, Harry Reems has decided to let it all hang inside as he makes his Canadian acting debut in Claude Fournier's Hot Dogs (formerly The Clean Up Squad).

This farcical whimsy is Fournier and Marie-Josée Raymond's two-dimensional kiddie story for adults about the misadventures of a police vice squad and its attempts to clean up prostitution. Fournier's warm colour cinematography makes the film appear to cost more than 1.8 million dollars.

In this ridiculous story there are no bad guys. In fact, everyone is likable; cute, lusty hookers, and just-a-job cops alike. Mr. Clean (Reems), the new head of the vice squad, is out to maintain his reputation as an efficient purveyor of correct social morality. "I'm not known as Mr. Clean for nothing," he boasts as he shows his vice squad slides of a deserted Yonge Street, his last conquest. The vice squad hot shots then proceed to entrap prostitutes and pimp, in scene after mindless scene — often fumbling their lures and arrests.

One masseuse-hooker, upon discovering her client's badge, turns the sun lamp on his vitals for revenge. Cute? Perhaps. Funny? Snicker.

Chiens Chauds's first-week gross of $130,000, in Montreal and Quebec City, has set a new record for Famous Players Canada. Fournier, ever-popular since he made Deux femmes en or a decade ago, may explain the good box office — as may the presence of a host of Quebec film stars. Perhaps willing audiences want inflated funniness in these inflation-filled times.

The story: a cop, Morris (Geoffrey Bowes), loses his wife Lilli (Denise Napoles), when she learns that her husband is dressing as a woman to entrap prostitutes. She in turn is swept up in a raid when visiting a masseuse friend and is booked as a hooker. A furious Morris vows to get rid of Mr. Clean. He hires Stella Moon (Nicole Morin) — who is to prostitution, what Mickey Mantle is to baseball — to seduce Clean, then take compromising photos.

But this is the new Harry Reems. He's all innocence, a boy scout leader and bird watcher, who's seemingly uninterested in sex, and impossible to compromise. Stella finally lures him to dinner but fails to entice him. Mr. Clean reveals his depth, when he explains that he likes his job because that's what he's paid for. They accidentally trigger the automatic sprinkler system and are drenched. Stella's pert breasts are now wholly visible through her wet see-through dress. Reaching still further for character depth, Clean, back at his apartment, explains how he has modeled himself after his father, a martinet inspector.

Stella's alluring bosom fails to make Clean think of anything but a hot bath and his rubber ducky. Stella soaps him
Looking for Hot Dogs? Monique Lepage checking out Gilles Latulippe's pocket

up but he resists. It's all very clean. Then, movie magic! They fall for each other. And while consummating their burning passion in the back seat of his car, Clean develops a crook in his back, only to get stuck in an uncomfortable missionary position. His car is towed to the police garage, where a welder must cut away the roof so he can be lifted out, and finally, straightened out at the hospital. At the same time, a group of transvestites and weight lifters are being herded through after vice squad entrapment at the Fire Island beach party. A reporter photographs the hapless Mr. Clean and when the photo hits the papers, he wants to be taken for a serious (?) gravy.

The new vice squad chief is Benito Don Parchesi — amusingly burlesqued for package-laden consumer, lures the hapless do-gooders to habitually rear their heads when city administrations wish to divert attention from municipal corruption. There is a recurring, running gag involving Harry the Exhibitionist who, either in disguise as an armless cripple or package-laden consumer, lures women to reach into his bottomless trenchcoat pocket for change. He gets a free feel while the hapless do-gooders are grossed out. Harry the Exhibitionist's identity is the only surprise in the film.

A final word about Harry Reem's metamorphosis from prurience to purity. Seeing him stand on two legs instead of three, one can't help but conclude that he's as wooden as Howdy Doody's wooden...(ahem) head. While shooting in Montreal in 1979 he claimed that he wanted to be taken for a serious (?) actor. Who would have guessed that born-again Harry, with or without clothes, decent or indecent script, had it in him? It's lucky his colleagues sustain the film. With Hot Dogs executive producers Dunning and Link (of Meatballs money fame) may have found more gravy.

Gary Evans

George Mendeluk's The Kidnapping Of The President

d. George Mendeluk p. George Mendeluk
John Ryan exec. p. Joseph Sefel sc. Richard Murphy, based on the novel "The Kidnapping of the President" by Charles Templeton