

wrong with the Canadian cinema. John Huston is without question the best director ever to make a Canadian film. So why did the producers hire one of the last of the old masters, to knock out the kind of story which is regularly knocked out by first-time directors? (The sort of thing that a Carpenter, or a dePalma, does with his eyes closed). Huston's great virtues are as a storyteller (note the sweep of **The Man Who Would Be King**, and the relaxed orneriness of **The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean**), and as a director who can get his characters to inhabit real places — as in the extraordinary cityscapes of **The Asphalt Jungle** and **Fat City**. He has never been wound tight enough to deliver that remorseless little horror thriller that **Phobia** so longs to be. Therefore, we must ask why he was hired. For the class of his name? To control John Colicos?

John Trent, in a recent **Toronto Star** interview, claimed that the Canadian cinema is a producer's, rather than a director's cinema. This would be no problem, if the producers hired the right directors for the job.

Mind, Huston did bring something to **Phobia** — aside from a mere forty-odd years of experience. He gave it a visual sense, which brought out the best in cinematographer Reginald Morris. One need only compare the bland, television look of **Middle Age Crazy**, which Morris lensed for Trent, with the mysterious

darkness that crowds the edge of the frame in **Phobia**. This points the way to a second problem in Canadian movies. With the possible exception of David Cronenberg, is there a single English Canadian director with a distinctive look, or even any visual flair? **Phobia** is the first Canadian film I've seen since **The Brood** that hasn't resembled a bad CBC drama; that looks as if someone actually sat down and thought about how a movie is supposed to look. Contrasting the appearance of recent American films to recent Canadian features, there can be no question as to which side wins. Where are our Carpenters, our dePalmas, our Scorseses — directors whose films are both commercially successful and artistically exciting to look at? Even films like **Days of Heaven** and **The Black Stallion**, which exist in complete intellectual vacuum, are stunning to look at. Until our producers begin to concern themselves with films as more than tax shelters for dentists, and "packages" of talent with "proven" ingredients (out-of-work TV stars, aging hams, hack directors, and plots made out of elements that weren't very good to begin with), we are doomed to second-rate, cinematic, junk food that nourishes neither the mind nor the adrenaline glands.

Phobia itself is destined to become a footnote to a great director's career, nothing more.

John G. Harkness

Parker p.c. Film Consortium of Canada (1979) col. 35mm Panavision running time 105 min.

One of the most fascinating aspects of watching mid-level multinational productions (in this case, one American star, one Canadian star, one British character actress, British director and d.o.p.) is observing the interplay of well-known actors with people you have never seen before. In fact, the "unknown quantities" in these Canadian productions often provide some of the major pleasures in what are frequently awful films — Frances Hyland, for example, in **The Changeling**, blowing the comatose Trish Van Devere of the screen without even working up a sweat.

It is axiomatic that the performances of "stars" are often the same. For stars are not always stars because of talent, but rather chemistry. The ability to sustain a career is a bonus. James Coburn, the eponymous hero of John Guillermin's **Mr. Patman**, has never been the sort of star whose name guarantees the success of his project. Many of his most interesting projects — **Dead Heat on a Merry-go-round**, Peckinpah's **Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid**, Herbert Ross's **The Last of Shiala**, have been his least successful. But he has a fascinating persona and sufficient star quality to often make him the best thing in bad pictures, offering sufficient justification for sitting through appalling messes like **Blood Kin**.

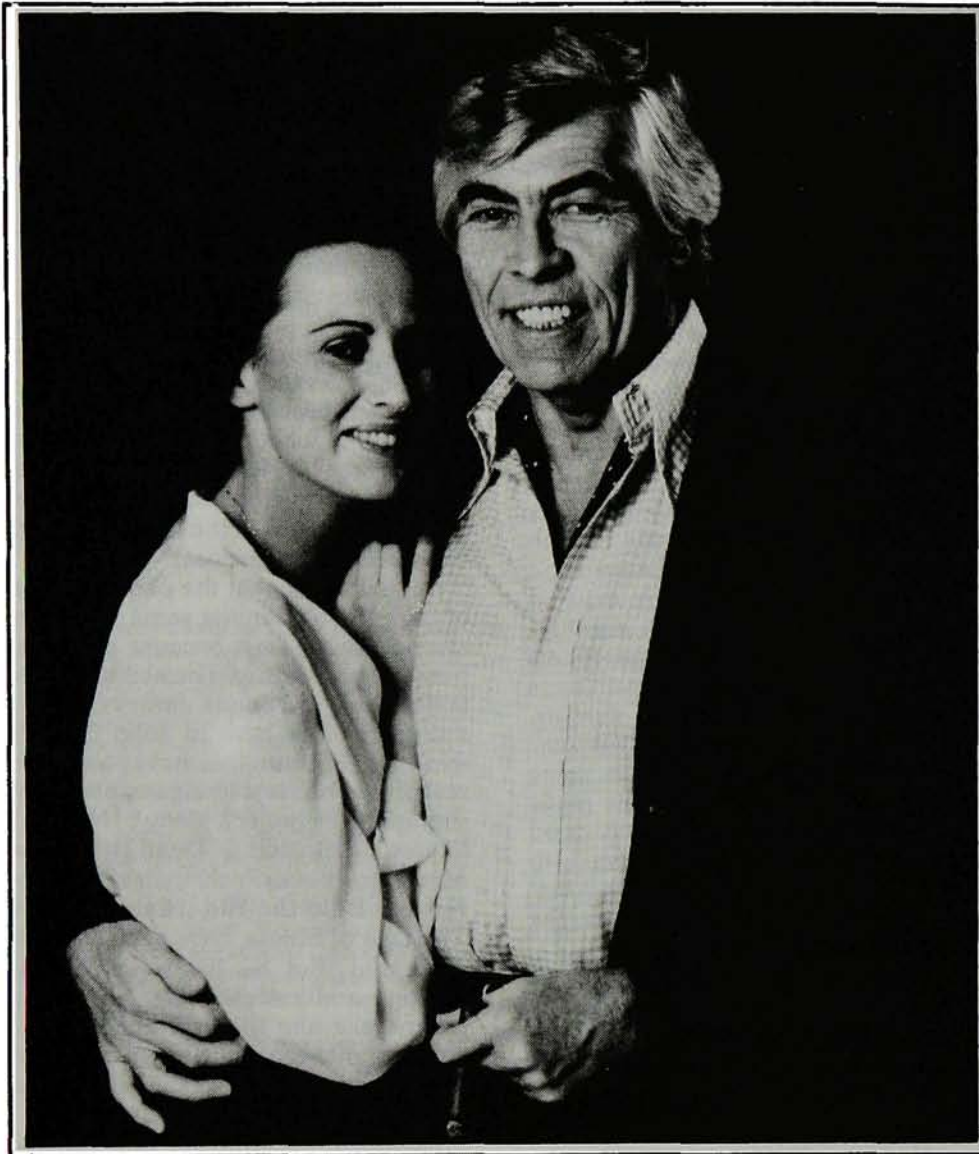
Coburn is certainly the best thing in **Mr. Patman**, but nevertheless, he faces competition from Fionnula Flanagan, who plays his landlady like some demotedly erotic avatar out of Sean O'Casey's more lurid wetdreams. The scenes between the two of them have an erotic charge seldom seen in Canadian films not featuring Carole Laure or Céline Lomez. They are certainly far more interesting than the scenes of Coburn with Kate Nelligan, his official girlfriend with whom he plans to depart at the film's conclusion.

Patman is a male nurse in a psychiatric ward of some major metropolitan hospital. He is not only a ringmaster who can work miracles with his patients, but also as they say, a devil with the lady's. This is the good part, and Coburn's performance is a whirligig of movement and expression. The plot's drama stems from the fact that our hero is "haunted by a terrible secret from his past" (gasp) and is prone to strange delusions which

John Guillermin's Mr. Patman

d. John Guillermin p. William Marshall, Alexander MacDonald exec. p. Herk Van der Kolk sc. Thomas Hedley d.o.p. John Coquillon, bsc. art d. Trevor Williams ed. Vince Hatherly, Max Benedict mus. Paul Hoffert p. man. Marilyn Stonehouse loc. man. Gordon Mark a.d. Tony Lucibello (1st), Fred Frame (2nd), Mia Laschuk (3rd), Doug White (3rd) p.a. Chris Whitside, Steve Marshall asst. to p. Helga Stephenson cont. Natalie Drache casting direc. Karen Hazzard (T.O.), Lindsay Walker (Vancouver) psychiatric consult. Dr. James E. Miles p. sec. Cathy Howard sec. Jan Block p. account. Heather McIntosh, Sandra Palmer (asst.), Leslie Mark (clerk), Sue Anderson (post-prod.) bookkeeper Linda Goldstein cam. op. Tom Laughridge, Dick Meinardus (1st asst.), Brent Spencer (2nd asst.) stills Phil Hersee loc. sd. mix Brian Simmons boom Roland Fowles sd. asst. Richard Patton asst. ed. Maureen Levitt (1st), Mike Smith (2nd) sd. ed. Peter Phillaye, Wayne Griffin asst. sd. ed. Bruce Giesbrecht, Gordon Thompson

post sync. efx Terry Burke, Glen Gauthier engineered by Jack Heeren re-rec. Gary Bourgeois, Tony Van Den Akker dialog. re-rec. Richard Portman gaf. John Bartley best boy (elec.) Len Wolfe key grip Tim Hogan best boy (grip) John Scott art d. Richard Wilcox construc. superv. Ken Chang art dept. asst. Tom Braidwood set dec. Steve Shewchuk, Randi Johnson (asst.) prop. mas. Jimmy Chow special efx Michael Sullivan, Lee Routley, George Erschbamer animal trainer Gary Vaughan word. design. William Theiss head of ward. Christopher Ryan ward. dress. Jean Causey make-up Edward Ternes (for Kate Nelligan, James Coburn); Ken Brooke, Phyllis Newman hair Jim Keeler catering Location Cateress craft services Joanne Ryan transp. co-ord. Scott Irvine driver capt. Bob Bowe, Brian Boyer (co-capt.) mus. asst. to Mr. Hoffert Laurence Shragge glass instruments Eric Harry l.p. James Coburn, Kate Nelligan, Fionnula Flanagan, Les Carlsen, Candy Kane, Michael Kirby, Hugh Webster, Lin Griffith, Lois Maxwell, Alan McRae, Jan Rubes, Charles Joliffe, Ken Wickes, Tabitha Herrington, Laura Press, Cathryn Balk, Hagan Beggs, Paul Rothery, David Diamond, Blu Mankuma, Shirley Barclay, David Drowley, Daryl Hayes, John Vye, Gary Chalk, Lloyd Berry, Bobby Hanna, Rick



Portrait of the radiant and the rugged: here, Kate Nelligan with Mr. Patman himself, James Coburn. photo: Phil Hersee

indicate that he is rapidly losing his tenuous grip on reality.

Thomas Hedley, author of the film's screenplay, is a good writer of scenes. His dialogue, give or take a few clunkers assigned to Kate Nelligan, tends to be excellent. However, like most writers today he has no sense of how to construct an original story. (When did you last see an American film with a truly coherent script? *Manhattan*, perhaps?) Consequently, he Cuisinarts together an assortment of elements from minor O'Casey, bad Snake-Pit-type films and lesser *films noires*. The proof is that he gives his hero a cat — a sure sign of trying to pep up a script by giving the hero a number of interesting character quirks. The proof of Coburn's performance, and those of the supporting

players, is that they can overcome it.

John Guillermin, the director, is one of those faceless technicians who made his reputation doing mindless spectacles for Irwin Allen and Dino DeLaurentiis. His presence is negligible, and while he does nothing to damage the film, nowhere in it does one sense any directorial urgency.

Mr. Patman should be seen for its cast and their performances. And for one other reason. It does not insult the viewer's intelligence: hardly a trivial consideration in a year which has seen such releases as *Bear Island*, *Happy Birthday*, *Gemini*, *Nothing Personal* and *Death Ship*. Simple intelligence is beginning to look like a major virtue.

John G. Harkness

Robin Spry's Suzanne

Suzanne had its premiere screening at the Festival of Festivals in Toronto, and Marc Gervais was there to review it. Since that screening, the production has re-cut the film, and a shorter version is being used in its commercial release. *Cinema Canada* will publish a separate review of this second version of the film.

d. Robin Spry **p.** Robert Lantos, Stephen J. Roth **sc.** Robin Spry, Ronald Sutherland based on "Snowlark" novel by Ronald Sutherland **assoc. p.** Wendy Grean **p. man.** Ted Holliday **d.o.p.** Miklos Lente **art d.** Vianney Gauthier, Claude Paré (asst.) **cost. design.** Louise Jobin **mus. comp.** François Cousineau **ed.** Fima Noveck **a.d.** Lise Abastado (1st), Yvon Arsenault (2nd), Blair Roth (3rd) **assist. cam.** David Douglas (1st), Mathieu Décary (2nd) **sd. mix.** Richard Lightstone **boom** Jim Thompson **unit, loc. man.** Lyse Lafontaine **prop. master** Ronald Fauteux **props buyer** Patrice Bingle **set props** Emmanuel Lépin, Nathalie Moliavko-Visotzky (asst.) **p. account.** Manon Bougie-Boyer **p. sec.** Françoise McNeil **asst. bookkeeper** Ruth Wener **key grip** Johnny Daoust **2nd grip** Pierre Charpentier **gaf.** Donald Sarri **best boy** Charles Hugues **elec.** Gérald Proulx **make-up** Michele Dion, Normande Campeau (asst.) **hair** Pierre David, Tom Booth (asst.) **asst. cost. designer, dresser** Johanne Prigent **asst. dresser** Andrée Jobin **script superv.** Monique Champagne **casting** Daniel Hausmann **pub.** David Novek **unit pub.** Lana Iny **stills** Attila Dory **exec. asst. to p.** Leila Basen **asst. editor** Sidonie Kerr **p.a.** Michel Turcot, Susan Schneur, Gérald Laniel, Michel English **add. cam.** Al Smith, Jean-Charles Tremblay **asst. to cameraman** Claude Simon Langlois **l.p.** Jennifer Dale, Winston Rekert, Gabriel Arcand, Ken Pogue, Michelle Rossignol, Marianne McIsaac, Michael Ironside, Gina Dick, Pierre Curzi, Gordon Thompson **p.c.** RSL Films Ltd. (1979) **col.** 35mm **running time** 105 min. **distrib.** Viva Film Ltd. (Que.), Ambassador Films Ltd. (English Canada).

Like it or not, certain films often find their way onto the public screens burdened with an enormous weight of expectation. Poor *Suzanne* falls into this category. Or perhaps one should say "fell." The moment of its première was ominously propitious. There we were in Toronto, jammed into the Elgin — one of the last of the posh old film houses — on one of its gala nights, right in the middle of the Festival of Festivals, with the Great Film Debate raging a few streets up (cf. the articles on Trade Forum '80, pages 13 to 16 in this issue). All that was asked for, nay, demanded, was that *Suzanne* be the Great Canadian Movie, the reconciling of genuine Canadian Concern with boffo box office.