

FILM REVIEWS

Landry, doing a nicely restrained version of the Bad Seed character. The other juvenile parts (Lise Langlois and Laurent Malet as the young lovers) are awkward and self-conscious with a kind of the look-at-me-Ma-I'm-in-the-movies quality to their acting. Stephen Audran (Mme. Chabrol) is badly dubbed and this discolours her entire performance in the film. And why was she dubbed in the first place? She has appeared in American films; *The Blackbird* and *Silver Bears* among them.

Chabrol, as usual, has created a wonderfully moody piece. The dank streets of Old Montreal are properly eerie and the feeling of gloom and doom is nicely captured by Jean Rabier's camera. Rabier is to Chabrol what Sven Nykvist is to Bergman: both make a perfect team. But in *Blood Relatives* the timing is off. Rabier sets the shot, but Chabrol fails to follow through with the volley. Atmosphere is everything to Chabrol but it doesn't add-up to a thrill.



It's all in the family in *Blood Relatives*

Zale Dalen's SKIP TRACER

d. Zale Dalen, asst. d. Tom Braidwood, sc. Zale Dalen, sc. cont. Gayle Scott, ph. Ron Orioux, asst. ph. Chris Gallager, Jan Martel, ed. Zale Dalen, asst. ed. Vicki Duggan, sd. Richard Patton, m. Linton Garner, J. Douglas Dodd, cost. Mary Crawford, l.p. David Petersen, John Lazarus, Rudy Szabo, Allan Rose, Sue Astley, John Scott, Mike Grigg, p. Laara Dalen, assoc. p. Paul Tucker, p. manager Martin Walters, p.c. Highlight Productions Ltd. 1976, col. 16mm blown up to 35 mm, running time 90 minutes

Skip Tracer is such a briskly told, well-acted, engagingly shot genre exercise that one can almost ignore the puerile moral at its base. Almost.

John Collins (David Peterson) is the skip tracer, a loan company clerk, whose job is to hound and collect from delinquent borrowers. He is the model collector, who has devoted his life and every energy to his job. Now he is vying for his company's Man of 46/Cinema Canada

the Year award, for an unprecedented fourth year.

But time wounds all heels. The cold professional crust is beginning to crumble. The film anatomizes the costs of this kind of professional success.

The story-line is familiar enough, with its dramatization of the soul's chill by ambition and the dog-eat-dog (or vice versa) world of business. What distinguishes this film is the freshness of its Vancouver setting and the calibre of performance, which is generally much better than the script.

Especially effective is David Peterson, a Cardston, Alberta, native working with the Tamahnous Theatre Workshop, who makes his film debut as a soft-edged Widmark type.

The husband-and-wife director-producer team of Zale and Laara Dalen must be credited with a film that looks far classier than its \$145,000 budget would suggest. Since the setting doesn't strangle the film with its local habitation and a name, it should thrive wherever there is a market for a genre thriller.



Director Zale Dalen confers with lead Peterson

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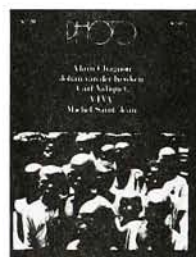
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FILM REVIEWS

The problem with the film is that its mind is not as good as its craft. Behind the whole story lies a moral hollow.

For the basic stance is that it is wrong for a man to enforce the repayment of debts. Collins' job requires that he make, and then recover loans; that this job should be considered inately villainous is stupid.

All kinds of problems grow out of this attitude in the film.

First, although Collins is supposed to be a callous sort of Shylock-Hitman, he is from the outset played as a rather honorable man. He tries to warn an old pensioner off his company's cut-throat terms, for example. And he spurns the sexual compromise offered by the wife of his most important account.

Second, his ostensible moral awakening begins under paradoxical conditions. The man who first advises him bravely to confront himself is a rather unattractive debtor who has himself been cowering in a sewer pipe. There is no honor in the hero's moral awakening.

Nor in his awakening. The film's climax has the hero screw his company by misinforming the computer that all his clients are deceased, their debts cancelled. He is to be applauded for shafting his company.

Now, it should be as wrong and as self-degrading to shaft a company as it is to shaft a person. Companies work for people. And it is the shafting that is wrong, not the nature of the shaftee.

This film requires us to sneer at the hero when he does his helpful job reasonably and well, and to applaud him when he defrauds his company

and gives his clients the chance to cheat.

Shades of *One on One* wherein the snotty puling hero exploits his athletic scholarship and is supposed to command our admiration when he walks out on it after finally making the team!

Maybe it's in the air. Maybe it's the dying gasp of the flower children, with a pistol-packin' flourish where a bit of logical ethics should be.

Were I a financier, I wouldn't hesitate to fund a feature film by the Dalens, as far as their arts and crafts are concerned. But I'd have to assume that the moral lapse is only a lull in the narrative logic, but a sign of some subversive bent.

Three minor elements locate the film in the noble tradition of American B-films. From the Western comes both the ambush of the hero, and the motif of the old hand training a young naif (the engaging John Lazarus here), while ardently warning him away from the life of specious glory. From the urban crime film comes the overall atmosphere of sweaty greed and manipulation, and the subplot of a debtor driven to suicide.

An efficient genre film like this provides the audience connection and the technical experience on a larger scale and with better results than do the host of glossy co-productions that have been visited upon us of late.

Maurice Yacowar

SHORT FILM REVIEWS

ANOTHER KIND OF MUSIC

d. Glen Salzman/Rebecca Yates, ph. Mark Irwin, sd. ed. Glen Salzman/Rebecca Yates, m. Ishan People, p. Glen Salzman/Rebecca Yates, p.c. Fruits and Roots, col. 16mm. running time 24 min. dist. International Telefilm.



Another Kind of Music is a straightforward (sometimes too much so) plea for tolerance. However, it is also more than this. It is positive in its approach to people and things, and it maintains that an open mind is a virtue because there are things of value in different lifestyles and cultures that can, and should, be enjoyed.

The plot concerns itself with two young, Toronto teenagers, one white and one black. Dave is a drummer who is tired of playing hard rock. After an argument with his closed-minded band members, he goes to a record shop

where he meets Tony who introduces him to reggae. From this point on, the plot becomes fairly predictable. Dave's friends do not like Tony and Tony's friends do not like Dave. After a certain amount of emotional upheaval on both sides, the film ends happily.

Most of the film suffers from obvious artifice. The major flaw is the uniformly poor acting. I assume everyone in-



the skip tracer collecting