



The team spirit is willing, but the film's content is weak

*American Cousin*. The theme, however, does manage to produce a few choice lines such as "I know a place down by the river, there's nothing but Americans down there, we could do whatever we want." If only.

To name but a few lost opportunities/movies: the effects of limiting horizons on masculinity, how the nuke plant supplants traditional labour, such as farming; the return of the prodigal father/lover; evangelism and psychosis, a much-trampled road these days. *Blue City's* rush to cover all of the bases of small-town life strikes out subtlety. All that remains is a series of clichés.

Such eclecticism brings constant shifts in tone. We move from self-conscious parody, (in spite of sidling up and living with these small-town folks to do his "research", the film feels like writer Layne Coleman was distanced from his subject) to downright cheap sentiment. We move from gothic scenes with Mr. Walker (a fundamentalist preacher and father of the team's pitcher) that echo *Blue Velvet* to the antics of *Animal House*. Mr. Walker, however, does retain some degree of interest. In one sequence, character and *mise-en-scène* come together. Walker sits in a kitchen bathed in gold light and sinister music. As the camera tracks in on him, he reaches inside the fridge for his gun. But the rest of the film rarely rises above the hackneyed. "I've had enough of oil rigs and yellow trailers," the prodigal lover mutters upon returning to

**BLUE CITY SLAMMERS** p. Bruce Raymond d. /co-p. Peter Shatalow sc. Layne Coleman, Peter Shatalow ed. Leslie Borden Brown cons. ed. John Victor Smith p. man. Tony B. Armstrong 2nd a. d. Glenn Carter 3rd a. d. Dean Emerick filmSTAR op. Nancy Borsa p. asst. Cyndie Clayton set/props mest. Kim Stitt 1st asst. pops. Michael Meade 2nd asst. props Reid Barnett art dep. /p. a. Ken Winter hd. ward. Vickey Vandepoel asst. ward. Stacey Pegg makeup/hair Adriane Sicova, Andrea Sicova d. o. p. Robert New 1st asst. cam. James Crowe 2nd asst. cam. Trevor Haws, Gerald Van Deelen key grip Mark Mavrinac 2nd grip Tracy Shaw 2nd unit cam. Michael Savoie gaffer Adam Swica drivers Kim Smith, John Copping pub. Sharon Singer loc. sd. mix Marc S. Green boom op. Craig Baker l. p. Eric Keerleyside, Tracy Cunningham, Mary Ellen Mahoney, Gary Farmer, Fran Gebhard, Paula Barrett, Barry Greene, James O'Regan, Murray Westgate, Michael Copeman, Samantha Langevin, Stuart Clow, Gabe Hogan, Lynda Russelo. Distributed by Cineplex-Odeon Films.

Blue City.

*Blue City* might have looked appropriate for funding bodies or City TV. It might have looked promising as a theatre workshop. But it hasn't made the transition to film.

Kass Banning •

## Jean-Claude Lord's Tadpole And The Whale

**T**adpole And The Whale is the sixth film in producer Rock Demers' *Tales For All* collection of "family films." The story is stock: a young, idealistic girl named Daphne (Fanny Lauzier), who can communicate with whales and dolphins, saves a humpback whale. Her heroism brings together two stubborn brothers, "Grandpa" Hector and "Grandpa" Thomas, who haven't spoken to one another in years. Dubbed "Tadpole" for her amphibian pursuits, Daphne befriends a young couple who have come to holiday at the coastal inn where her parents work and where she has spent most of her life. The universe unfolds as it should until Daphne discovers that "Grandpa" Hector, the man who owns the inn, is planning to sell and that she will lose her dolphin friend, Elvar.

Replete with freckles and irresistible curly red hair, Fanny Lauzier is Quebec's answer to Megan Follows. Although her giggle is sometimes forced, Lauzier manages to charm, and was certainly made for this role of a 12-year-old who communes with nature in general and cetaceans in particular, has hypersensitive audio perception, and knows how to navigate motorboats on the high seas.

Shot in Quebec, Florida, and the Virgin Islands, the scenery is wild and lush but gives Québécois children a rather muddled idea of a landscape which they assume to be local. As far as I know, dolphins do not summer in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. The pacing is fast, thanks to the direction of Jean-Claude Lord, whose

success with the television series *He Shoots, He Scores*, was due in part to the American formula of short, action-packed scenes.

If Lord set out to make an audience-pleaser, he has succeeded: for though adults may find that *Tadpole And The Whale* is predictable to a plot complication and often borders on the saccharine World of Disney films of their youth, children will be entertained. This is not to condescend to children, but judging from their response on the day I saw the movie, children love a ham and find slapstick, even the most obvious kind, funny. What saves the film, what preserves its spontaneity (for adults) and dignity (for children) is the documentary footage of the humpback whales and the graceful, awe-inspiring antics of Elvar the dolphin.

We are introduced to Daphne through the eyes of Marcel and Julie, (Denis Forest and Marina Orsini) who have come to stay at the coastal resort where Daphne's parents work. In the opening scene, the couple is speeding down a highway in their open jeep when they spot a child lying face down in the water, apparently drowned. The audience shares Marcel's relief when, soaking wet, he discovers that this child is very much alive and is only keeping her ears below the water's surface in order to hear the whales who are some 15 kilometres away.

Both Julie and Marcel are taken with Daphne, who not only introduces them to the mysterious music of the whales, but also teaches them how to play with her dolphin friend. This child-adult relationship, developed so spontaneously between a couple and a 12-year-old girl, is interesting in several respects. It feeds on children's desire to be noticed and admired by people other than their parents, though the makers of this film were careful to make sure that there is no misinterpreting Marcel's interest in Daphne. She is merely a delightful addition to his nascent family, for Julie is pregnant with their first child. The film also represents children as powerful mediators between nature and the world of adults. When "Grandpa" Thomas asks Daphne what secrets Elvar the dolphin tells her, she says she can't tell him until he's young enough to understand.

Daphne enjoys recognition as a "special child," not only by the adults who surround her, but even by her younger brother, Alex, who joins her in her good-natured battles with adults whom, as she sees it, invade nature for no good reason. For in this film there is no evil as embodied in a single individual. Evil is what humans do when they fail to notice or to listen to what is around them. When Daphne discovers Hector's plans to sell the inn, it is clear that he is not the enemy, nor are the developers who want to buy the place, nor even are the fisherman who might kill the humpback whale because he has ruined their nets. All these things are presented as human complications with human resolutions.



Quebec's answer to Megan Follows - Fanny Lauzier

In other words, aside from Daphne's inexplicable ability to hear sounds emitted at 40 kilohertz when the rest of us mortals hear them at 16, there is wishful thinking but no magic in this film. Daphne is the agent of goodwill and good sense and her magic is that of a child who refuses to give up on the place she most loves. At a time when we are all threatened with environmental destruction and nuclear annihilation, the message that children are powerful, that they can be responsible for their habitat and teach adults something about communication, as simplistic as it is hopeful, is still a necessary one.

Naomi Guttman •

**LA GRENOUILLE ET LA BALEINE** p. Rock Demers d. Jean-Claude Lord. Original idea by Jacques Bobet sc. Jacques Bobet, André Melançon d. o. p. Tom Burstyn art d. Dominique Ricard ed. Helene Girard orig. mus. Guy Trepanier, Normand Dube cost. des. Huguette Gagne sd. Serge Beauchemin sd. des. Claude Langlois line p. Lorraine du Hamel p. man. Huguette Bergeron 1st. a. d. Louis-Philippe Rochon cast. Lucie Robitaille 1st asst. cam. Yves Drapeau cont. Sandrine Fayos unit man. Estelle Lemieux set dec. Diane Gauthier key props Denis Hamel 2nd a. d. Marie-Christine Lavoie asst. to p. Louise Belanger makeup Diane Simard elec. John Lewin gaffer Don Saari key grip Thorton Bayliss boom op. Pierre Blain stills photo Jean Demers dolphin trainer Mandy Rodriguez acc. Micheline Bonin p. coord. Simone Leroux publ. Kevin Tierney, Jocelyne Dornis, David Novek and Associates. l. p. Fanny Lauzier, Denis Forest, Marina Orsini, Felix-Antoine Leroux, Jean Lajeunesse, Lise Thouin, Louise Richer, Thomas Donohue, Roland Laroche, Pierre-Olivier Gagnon, Jean-Pierre Leduc, Jean Lafontaine, Jean Lemire, Andre Doyle, Claude Grise, Aline Lavoie Gray, Nat the dolphin. Produced by Les Productions La Fete. 35 mm, colour.