

FILM REVIEWS

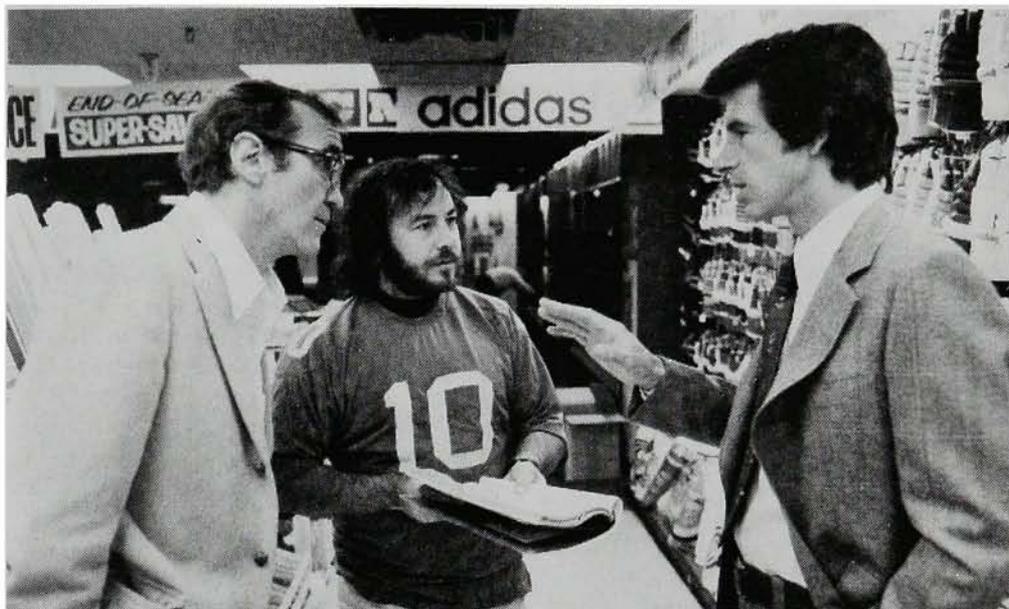
Don Shebib's

Second Wind

d. Don Shebib, asst. d. John M. Eckert, 2nd asst. d. Michael Zenon, sc. Hal Ackerman, ph. Reginald Morris csc, ed. Eric Wrate, asst. ed. Robin Leigh, sd. Russ Heise, sd. rec. Elinor Bolton, a.d. Karen Bromley, set dec. Gerry Deschenes, m. Hagood Hardy, cost. Aleida Macdonald, i.p. James Naughton (Roger Mathieson), Lindsay Wagner (Linda Mathieson), Ken Pogue (Pete), Tom Harvey (Frank), Louis Del Grande (Howie), Tedde Moore (Paula), Gerry Parkes (Packard), Vivan Reis (Winnie) Allan Levson (Kevin), exec. p. Les Weinstein, p. Jim Margellos, p. manager, John Eckert, p.c. Olympic Films Inc. 1976, color, 35mm, running time 92 min. 40 sec., dist. Ambassador Films, release April 9, Plaza II, Toronto.

This is decidedly a non-athlete's review of **Second Wind**. I am at present too out-of-shape to run to a movie. Yet what my assigning editor doesn't know is that I once managed to place twentieth in a group of one hundred boys during a school cross country race and, though that's no big deal, it made me very pleased at the time. There is a feeling and a satisfaction about running that can get to you. It certainly gets to Roger Mathieson, the hero of Don Shebib's stimulating and beautiful new film.

Roger is a successful broker on the Toronto stock exchange. In fact, at the age of thirty, he has just been made a vice-president of his company as the film opens. But this promotion bemuses him. He feels no great challenge or achievement in it. When, almost as a joke, he joins a jogging club, he finds a new freedom and pleasure in running. And he realizes that his age, while glamorously young for an executive, is already advanced



Don Shebib, director of **Second Wind**, with Ken Pogue (left) and James Naughton (right)

for athletics. The film covers his growing seriousness in preparing for an important race and counters his new dedication with the pressures of his work and his marriage. The well-structured script is often sharp and witty about this: it is tacitly understood that his friends would gladly cover up infidelity from his wife but not secret practising! Running is foreign to their ways. It upsets their high-storey, plush-offices mentality and, as one colleague tartly puts it, "interferes with the natural flow of alcohol in your system."

In principle, I am against American lead players in Canadian films, but in practice it is now impossible to visualize **Second Wind** without James Naughton as Roger. He creates a most sincere impression both in acting and on the track. He seems really able to run and thus the detail and conviction of the athletic scenes add enormously to the film's total impact. They are springingly shot, in fine color, with superb images of misty early mornings and burning sunlit afternoons. Toronto never looked better – for once permitted to be a city of parks and lakes, not streetcars and back alleys. The music of Hagood Hardy's inventive score moves well with the runners too, and there is, thank God, a limited use of the expected slow-motion photography. (A little is justified, to point up the actual and sometimes unexpected motions of the sport). Most of the time, camera, music and runners go bouncing along

– "boing, boing" as Roger tries to explain to his wife – just as they should.

What about the character of Roger's wife? The script is below its best level with her, in scenes that resemble too many previous movies where the wife feels left out of her husband's world. It could be argued that the film is about *his* new life, to which she merely reacts, but even so there's a sketchiness to their family unit and relationship (the little son seems like a perky visitor, rather than belonging to either of them). At least Lindsay Wagner makes her attractive and likeable, whereas she could have been, in the context, just a drag. At the same time, Tedde Moore as a vamp with depth reminds us that our own actresses need not be out-classed by those from the States.

There will be talk this spring of Canadian films turning to stories of winners, rather than their previous habitual losers. This talk will have hope to it and so will be welcome. But it may also be a little too simple. Remember, "loser" is what somebody else calls you. At the same time, a person may truly win many things, but on so small a scale and with so quiet an effort that nobody notices. **Second Wind** is really about simply trying – trying quite hard to better one's life and achievements. In this way, it is refreshingly different from many defeatist current films (and not just Canadian films) but not radically divergent from Don Shebib's earlier work. The fellows from the

Film Credit Abbreviations: d.: Director. asst. d.: Assistant Director. sc.: Script. adapt.: Adaptation. dial.: Dialogue. ph.: Photography. sp. ph. eff.: Special Photographic Effects. ed.: Editor. sup. ed.: Supervising Editor. sd.: Sound. sd. ed.: Sound Editor. sd. rec.: Sound Recording. p. des.: Production Designer. a.d.: Art Director. set dec.: Set Decorator. m.: Music. m.d.: Music Director. cost.: Costumes. choreo.: Choreography. l.p.: Leading Players. exec. p.: Executive Producer. p.: Producer. assoc. p.: Associate Producer. p. sup.: Production Supervisor. p. man.: Production Manager. p.c.: Production Company. col.: Colour Process. dist.: Distributors. narr.: Narration.

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Louis Del Grande and Lindsay Wagner in **Second Wind**



Maritimes in **Goin' Down the Road**, the schoolkids in **Rip-Off**, the surfing buddies of **Between Friends**, all were trying to improve things and to prosper, but mostly in gently absurd and incidentally criminal ways. Roger Mathieson has his hopes in better focus, that's the important difference which gives **Second Wind** a more sustained optimism than any earlier Shebib film. But he's far from a clear victor in all aspects of his life at the picture's close. His director is too canny and clear-eyed to suggest that.

Clive Denton

Denis Héroux's **Born for Hell**

d. Denis Héroux, sc. F.G. Ranger in collaboration with Denis Héroux and Clem Wood, ph. Denis Héroux, ed. Yves Langlois, l.p. Mathieu Carrière, Debby Berger, Christine Boisson, Myriam Boyer, Eléonora Fani, Ely de Faleani, Carole Laure, Eva Mattes, Andrée Pelletier, Emmy Bessel, Carl Kreinbaum, exec. p. Peter Fink, George Reuther, p.c. Studio Film G.M.B.H. Bemdesdorf - Tit Sinproduktion G.M.B.H. Munchen - Filmel (Paris) - Compagnia Cinematografica Champion Spa Rome (Carlo Ponti) - Cinévidéo (Montreal) - Lea Productions Mutuelles (Montreal), 1975, **East-mancolor**, 35mm, **running time** 97 minutes, **dist.** English version: Ambassador, French version: Les Films Mutuels.

In a German-French-Italian and Canadian co-production, Montreal's Denis Héroux makes a naive attempt at depicting contemporary violence and its distorting effects on individuals. But Americans have gone so far into this sort of despair that Héroux's **Born for Hell**, even with its terrifying holocaust, just isn't upsetting. It's too romantic and unima-

ginatively sexy to have an effect on your social conscience.

But this type of film, even if it doesn't compare to the **Taxi Drivers** that invade our screens, is none the less among those that travel the world and get shown in the most unusual places. These co-productions are money-makers, popular consumer goods, and it's surprising that a Canadian director was invited to direct this one, considering Canada's investments represent a mere 20% of the \$800,000 budget. **Born for Hell** has already been sold to fifteen countries and during its first weekend in Montreal brought in \$40,000. However, the French, who had invested another 20% in its production, now find that the film is being banned from their country altogether. The original English version lasted barely a week at Montreal's Seville theatre because the people just weren't coming. Distributor says that's because most of the audiences for English versions of action films are French-Canadian, so if you have the film in French in other theatres in town, you lose 75% of your normal customers!

The hitch with this type of co-production is that it really doesn't belong to one creative mind or to one social environment. So how does one fairly criticize it?

The script was originally written by a German Hungarian who had set the basic event of a psychopath murdering eight (or was it nine or seven?) nurses in a small German town. With an American writer, Héroux set the carnage in an obviously violent city, Belfast. The killer is a young man who lost his wife to his best friend while he was still fighting for his country in Vietnam. His boat back from Hong Kong drops him off to beg his daily bread and dream about home in the troubled Irish city. Mathieu Carrière, an ambiguous kind of actor who has been working in sophisticated French films as well as presenting transvestite sado-masochistic live shows, plays the role of the young American who flips very well. He's a believable killer, and he doesn't have to over-play it. But somehow, his need for violence is badly built up, and the script fails to make the link between this individual breakdown and the obvious - too obvious - world corruption. Héroux makes big use of television, of newscasts about Vietnam and the IRA, but as with most of the elements in the film, it comes across like a token gesture, or a naive one.

The casting was greatly influenced by the distribution of the investments. The Germans own the biggest piece of the cake, 40% - and the rest was from Carlo Ponti (another 20%). So Carrière, conveniently enough, turns out to be a Franco-German. Most of the film was actually shot in a Hamburg studio.

The nurses, needless to say, had rather passive roles, but many actresses did their best with what they were given. Quebec's Carole Laure has a strong presence, a beauty that hangs on to an irresistible simplicity and charm. She really would be the girl everyone gathers around. Canada's second contribution (except for Héroux and a few technicians), was actress Andrée Pelletier who seemed uneasy about the whole thing.



The killer and a victim in **Born for Hell**

The most remarkable interpretation - and the director agrees - came from Italian stage actress Eva Mattes, who flips at the vision of the murders and reaches the same euphoria as the killer before committing suicide.

Sex is forever present in the film - homosexuality, pimping, or good old romance - but it doesn't breathe the violence one would expect in such a context. There is even a steal from **Emmanuelle**, with actress Christine Boisson who tries to seduce one of the younger nurses.

Born for Hell is a good film given what it aspires to be. It's a competent supermarket type of product - and God knows Canada can use some of those profits if they ever make it back home!

Carmel Dumas

Ron Hallis'

Toni, Randi and Marie

d. and ph. Ron Hallis, ed. Ophera Hallis, sd. Cinelume-Yordan Nicolov, m. Leon Aronson, p. Hallis, p. assts. Ron Tibbett, Jenny Cleary, p.c. Ron Hallis Films 1973, black and white, 16mm blown to 35 mm and 35 mm, running time 65 minutes, dist. Ron Hallis.

Toni, Randi, and Marie are, respectively, a transvestite, a male, and a female prostitute. They are members of our society and Ron Hallis was interested in them as individuals before people on the sexual fringe, as it were, came into vogue among the analytical bourgeoisie. But Hallis doesn't analyze these people, nor exploit them. He is simply interested in them - at least, interest appears to be the sole inspiration behind his film.

If Hallis had had a well thought out purpose behind **Toni, Randi, and Marie** it might have been possible to determine whether or not he succeeded in his aims. As it is, his banal portraits of three street people are somewhat directionless. They leisurely present us with information, then cut off with undetermined endings, as though time had suddenly run out.

The film is a composite one, comprised of three short films, spliced together into feature length format. Consequently, transitions are convenient, not smooth. The trilogy is tied together with an apt musical score by Montreal composer Leon Aronson and by its style. While the camera shows us simple daily details of their lives, Toni, Randi, and Marie, in voice-over dialogue, tell us about the other side - about the sexual roles they fulfill in society.

This is where the trilogy as a whole becomes interesting. Three people, two of them male, functioning on various levels as female, raise some interesting questions concerning roles and images of women today. But this is all unselfconscious, and as a unifying theme is probably a happy accident. Certainly it seems by the way.

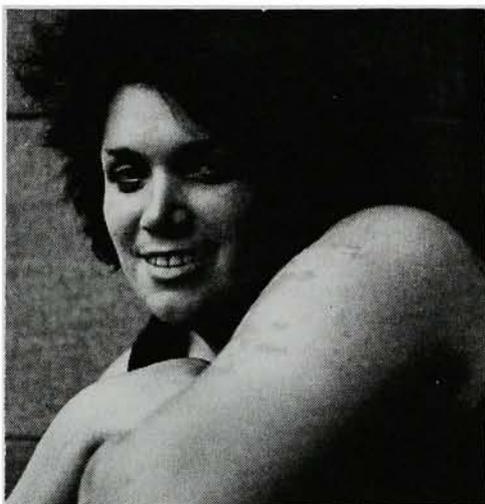
Marie is the only portrait that is really developed in any way. The three films were made over a period of several years, beginning with **Toni** in 1967, and Hallis' maturing direction



Toni...



Randi...



and Marie.

is evident. Toni, an exotic dancer, is seen only at work or nervously watching the camera in the street, and his main focus of conversation concerns his attractiveness to men. The camera shows Randi's life as more varied, but one wishes Hallis had exercised more guidance over the narration - Randi does little more than recite his 'tricks', which is rarely enlightening and somewhat tiresome. Xaviera strikes again.

With Marie, we are given some insight into her life - many shots of her are contemplative, and her narrative speaks of dreams, aspirations, and some thoughts on the role of the oldest profession. **Marie** is the most intimate of the portraits, though each is thought-provoking.

What makes **Toni, Randi, and Marie** an interesting film however, is not its content, but its style, directionless as it is. Because Hallis has attempted something the merits of which journalists and documentarists have been arguing for years. He has taken something controversial - sexual lifestyles outside the 'norm' - and sought to be objective. Insofar as one must select with the camera and reselect while editing, it seems he has succeeded. His lack of purpose has also left him without bias so that he *presents* rather than portrays these street people. No evident editorial comments are made and nothing about the film is sensational. Respect for these people is perhaps the film's major grace.

The film is unpretentious and non-judgmental. As a matter of fact, the only place the issue of morals comes up is in our own minds. Yet no statement can be made. Hallis finds that there are not two sides to the question; that sides are in fact irrelevant to personal lifestyles. The flatness of his presentation almost denies the existence of question. Camerawork is nicely composed but unobtrusive. Facts are presented matter of factly and slip into our visual consciousness easily, like familiar photographs. We may call ourselves liberated, but I doubt there are many who will not find parts of this film disconcerting. Yet Hallis puts them on the screen without the bat of an eye. He subtracts controversy and looks at the bare subject. With a sincerity and an honesty that is almost naive, he then says to us, "I met three people. Here they are." There's something to be said for that.

Jane Dick

