

LES QUEBECOIS

"I am a happy man. That's a good way to start. Next month is my thirty-first birthday, I eat good food, drink good wine, and I am a happy man." "I realized one thing at thirty, that I don't have to be ashamed of myself. I accept myself as I am, I try to live with myself and have a lot of fun." "It's awful, because for the young people in Quebec, the young directors or those who want to make films, to them I am an old man! You know, it's funny to imagine this, a pioneer at thirty, an old man, a member of the cinematic aristocracy. But the only thing I can say to them is, goddamn, put me away, put me aside, but fight back! Don't just yell and do nothing."

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre was born in Montreal in 1941. The son of a pharmacist, he attended a Catholic

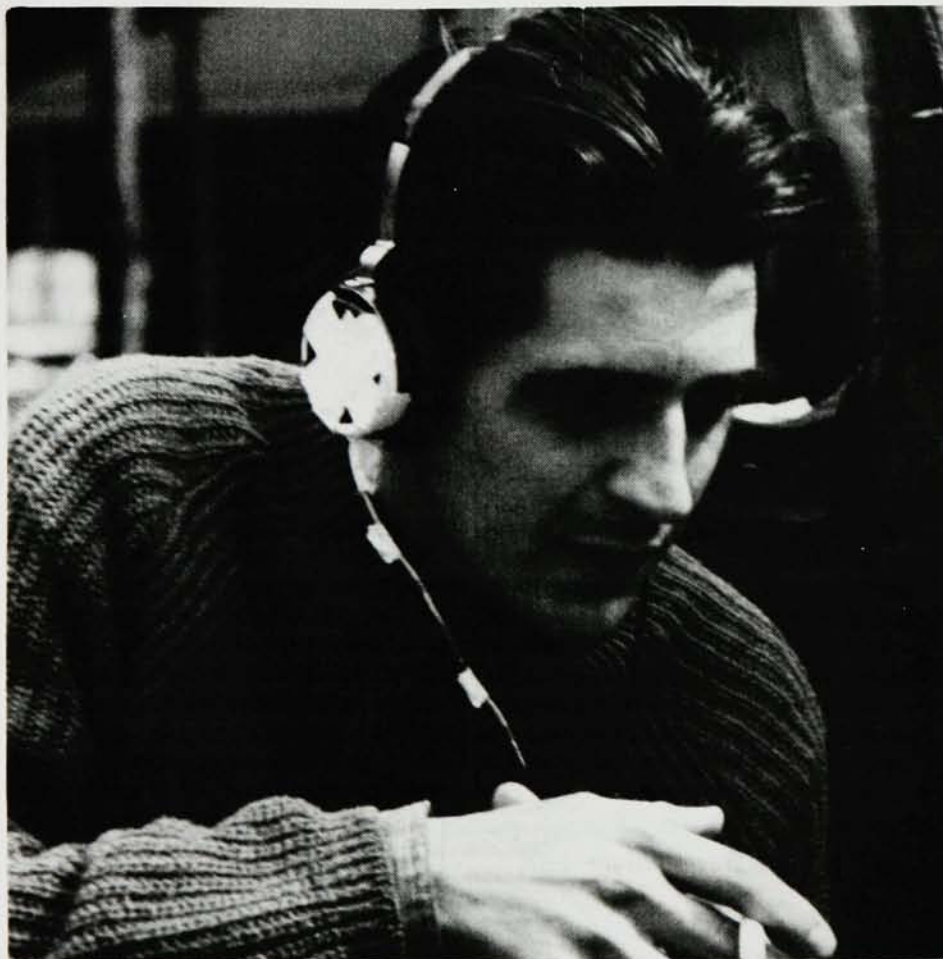
boarding school, where he developed a great love for literature. At the film club he acquired a passion for cinema.

"At sixteen I had a personal revolt. I couldn't stand any more French literature. I threw it away. And for four years all I read was Americans. I discovered I was closer to Faulkner or Steinbeck or to Dos Passos than I was to French writers. And this is a great problem in Quebec, this split. We don't know exactly what to choose. We don't know where we belong. It's like a child having to choose between two pieces of candy. . . ."

Lefebvre started writing feverishly: short stories, poems, novels, screenplays. In 1960 he joined with some other enthusiastic cinephiles and

founded OBJECTIF, an independent cinema review.

"You know when I was a critic I was damned severe on Canadian films. I was so severe, that I asked myself is it because in a way I'm jealous, because I was making no films at that time? Or is it because I think that these people are no good, but maybe I would be the one to make good films. It was really getting serious, because by then I was thinking of quitting writing and I wasn't able to do films. But I saw one day LE CHAT DANS LE SAC by Gilles Groulx, and it was wonderful. All my complexes disappeared. There was a film that caught me from beginning to the end and I had no more problems. There are very few films like that in your life, that give you energy to go on five or six years more, working."



He went to Europe in 1962 for a year, then came back to study literature at university, but soon realized his real vocation. Ever since he was fifteen, Lefebvre dreamed of making films. As he got older, he became conscious more and more of the special needs of Quebecois society, and of people in general to have collective experiences, to communicate. He wanted to hold up a mirror, which was not folklore or myth, but which would reflect the true face of "l'homme Quebecois." In 1964, after several unsuccessful attempts, he finally made his first film L'HOMOMAN, a twenty-four minute, black and white short subject on a kind of Quebecois superman.

According to the critics, L'HOMOMAN set the pattern for all feature films he's made since then.

A rejection of traditional technique, a unique, poetic vision of reality, coupled with dramatic recitation.

So: taradadaaaaa!

FILMOGRAPHY
of Jean-Pierre Lefebvre



Lefebvre directing a scene from *Jusqu'au Coeur*

1964 **L'HOMOMAN**. Direction, scenario, photography and production: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Editing: Marguerite Duprac. Music: Stéphane Venne. Cast: Louis St-Pierre, Jean-Pierre Roy, Marie Thibault, André Poirier, André Leduc. 24 min. B/W.

1965 **LA REVOLUTIONNAIRE**. Direction, scenario and production: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Michel Régnier. Sound: Roger Leclerc. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Music: Lionel Renaud (violin). Animation: Pierre Hébert. Cast: Louise Rasselet, Louis St-Pierre. 74 min. B/W.

1966 **PATRICIA ET JEAN-BAPTISTE**. Direction, scenario and production: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Michel Régnier. Sound: Roger Leclerc. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Cast: Patricia Lacroix, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, H.M. Kaden. 83 min. B/W.

1966 **MON OEIL**. Direction, scenario, and production: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Unfinished.

1967 **L NE FAUT PAS MOURIR CA**. Direction: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Scenario and dialogue: J-P Lefebvre, Marcel Sabourin. Camera: Jacques Leduc, Editing: M. Duparc. Music: Andrée Paul. Sound: Serge Beauchemin. Sound editing: Pierre Bernier. Cast: Marcel Sabourin, Monique Champagne, Mouffe, Suzanne Grossman. Production: Les Films Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. 75 min. B/W.

1967 **MON AMIE PIERRETTE**. Direction and scenario: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Jacques Leduc. Sound: Serge Beauchemin. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Sound editing and mixing: Jean-Pierre Joutel, Joseph Champagne. Cast: Francine Mathieu, Yves Marchand, Gérard Fortier, Madeleine Thibault, Raoul Duguay, Francine Thibault, Annie Fortier. Production chief: Clément Perron, NFB. 68 min. Color.

1968 **JUSQU'AU COEUR**. Direction and scenario: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Thomas Vámos. Music: Robert Charlebois. Sound: Claude Hazanavicius. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Sound editing: Jacques Jarry. Mixing: George Croll, Jean-Pierre Joutel. Cast: Robert Charlebois, Mouffe, Paul Berval, Denis Drouin, Pierre Dufresne. Production Chief: Clément Perron, NFB. 93 min. Color and B/W.

1969 **LA CHAMBRE BLANCHE**. Direction, scenario and dialogue: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Thomas Vámos. Music: Walter Boudreau. Sound: Claude Hazanavicius. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Cast: Michèle Magny, Marcel Sabourin. Production: Cinak, with CFDC assistance. 80 min. B/W.

1969 **QUEBEC MY LOVE – UN SUCCES COMMERCIAL**. Direction and scenario: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Thomas Vámos. Music: Andrée Paul, performed by l'Infonie. Sound: Claude Hazanavicius. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Cast: Anne Lauriault, Larry Kent, Jean-Pierre Cartier, Dennis Payne, Judith Paré, Raoul Duguay, André Caron. Production: Cinak. 83 min. B/W.

1970 **LES MAUDITS SAUVAGES**. Direction, scenario: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Camera: Jean-Claude Labrecque. Sound: Claude Lefebvre. Editing: Marguerite Duparc. Cast: Pierre Dufresne, Nicole Filion, Rachel Cailhier, Marcel Sabourin, Jacques Thisdale, Denise Morelli, Roger Garceau, Gaétan Labrèche. Production: Cinak, with CFDC assistance.

1971/72 **ULTIMATUM**. Direction: Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Cast: Francine Moran, Jean-René Ouellette. Production: Cinak Compagnie Cinematographique Ltee.

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre today looks like a man possessed with a passion for making films. His eyes are ringed by the crow's lines of sleepless nights and the black circles of too much energy burnt away. He has a classic 'gaulois' face, outlined by his black, shoulder-length hair combed back European style, and he smokes Gitanes, the cigarettes that can literally drive you to the point of nausea, as their acrid

smoke fills Montreal editing rooms. He is thin, gangly, gesticulates frequently, and looks you straight in the eye to make sure you understand that the words are coming from his heart.

"I don't know what the solution is. I only know that there is total confusion in Quebec today, and that my films express that confusion. I made eleven features and if you see all these films you wouldn't believe they were made by the same guy. And you would probably send me to a doctor, saying, you know, he needs treatment. But because the reality in Quebec is so complex, we don't know yet, we just don't know yet."

The only one of his features that made it to Toronto this year or anywhere in English-Canada for that matter, is *JUSQU'AU COEUR*, which played at the Poor Alex recently. He came especially to attend the first night of the screening and to talk to the audience about his film.

"I would be happy to come here with my films in a suitcase even if it is for only ten people, to show them, to discuss them. This is true. It is more important for me to show my films here or elsewhere in Canada than to show them in Europe. But there is so little communication between us, between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Bilingualism is a fabrication, a myth perpetrated on us by politicians."

"This film is about the daily violence we have to face, which is not, for us, War with a big W, because we don't know what war is. A North American doesn't know unless he's gone to war, and even then, he doesn't know what war is, because he's bringing war, he's never received war. So I couldn't honestly make a film about war. But we must realize that everything in our daily life is bringing us toward war. *JUSQU'AU COEUR* is about the daily aggression we have to face, the violence on television, Vietnam followed by a soap commercial, and very soon we cannot differentiate between soap and death. Everyone thinks that we are more aware of what's going on, but on the contrary, the more informed you are, the less you react, because you think you know everything. You get less and less involved everyday with your own life. This is very serious. And I don't think it is possible to use the traditional language to fight back, to bring the audience to a certain level of creation on its own. Or I

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could simply say reflection. All cinema is a way of living, a way of getting in contact with people, a way of finding solutions, of seeing if there's any possibility of changing things. This a very idealistic position, I know.

"*JUSQU'AU COEUR* was a film on aggression. In a way it's a paradox of creation, that I had to make an aggressive film. That's why I chose — over the titles in the beginning — the scene of the snake eating the frog. Because anyone seeing that scene, will immediately refer back to his moral feelings or to his biological feelings, which are connected one way or the other. So some people get nauseous, others close their eyes, and still others ask themselves why is that scene in that film. And it's the main problem in the film, because animals are eating each other since the beginning of the world, so should we do the same thing? I don't know if we should go on eating ourselves, each other, or if there is a possibility for man to use a little bit of his brain, which we are supposed to have in our heads."



Robert Charlebois and Mouffe

"The effect of *JUSQU'AU COEUR* on people is ninety per cent subliminal. I've used single frame images in that film. People don't realize that it was American films that sold the world on Coca Cola. Now you can go to the Sahara, to an oasis and find a coke machine. In order to try to make the audience aware that something's going on, I had to break the structure, I had to break the graphic aspect, I had to break the color aspect. Color is much easier to perceive than black and white, because it fulfills the eye much faster. With black and white you have to make a bigger effort. Someone once said that you couldn't shoot a truly revolutionary film in color. I am not sure

that this is completely fair. So I chose to have parts of *JUSQU'AU COEUR* in color, parts in black and white, and some parts we tinted. I broke the structure of the script by putting the end in the middle, after writing it in the normal way. The same way there was rational thought behind which parts were to be color or black and white. Color, because it's easier to perceive, was chosen for all the parts of the film referring to society, black and white for all the sequences referring to the individual, and the tinted parts to act as corridors between the individual and society."

"That's why I'm being treated as an awful intellectual in Quebec, because for me a film is something that has to be thought about for months and years, and I make no move without careful thinking. I've learned, especially with *JUSQU'AU COEUR*, that the more you structure something, the more freedom you have. The editing script was written before the film was shot. We made changes all along the way, but we knew exactly why we were making them."

"The structure of my films is for me a way to break the regular way of seeing things, to force the audience to react in some way. I know that I can lose a lot of people but in a way I prefer to lose certain people and get into contact more deeply with others. I think that's much more important."

"If you go to see an erotic film like we make in Quebec, like *Valerie* or *L'Initiation* perhaps in a way you're satisfied, if you haven't seen a nude woman before, but this is on a very individualistic level. I don't think that as a community, as a collectivity, you're gaining a lot. So I know I'm losing a lot of people but I also know I'm getting in contact very deeply with others. That's a more important thing to me."

"*JUSQU'AU COEUR* is like a big T-Bone Steak eaten with a cup of creamed coffee with too much sugar in it. To me this just doesn't go together. I mean that this film is quite different from my other films, which are more moral, one can say more French. I made *JUSQU'AU COEUR* in this style, because I was accused at the Film Board of not knowing film technique, so I decided to use every available trick (rear projection, tinting, mixing color with black and white, etc.)"

"My style is to work very fast. *QUEBEC MY LOVE* was shot in three and a half days with the big Mitchell 35, pro-

fessional actors and a big crew. I had to be prepared minute by minute to say that at 11:30 we shoot scene 22B, and at 12 we shoot scene 27A, etc.”

“The script of *JUSQU’AU COEUR* was written especially for Charlebois and Mouffe, because we were friends and we wanted to make a film together. So they came to my home and I said I have an idea and what do you think of this and this, so they said O.K., so I wrote the dialogue for them and so on. But after we had discussed the film with everyone, I threw away the script. Then I gave everyone just one page, on it was a circle in three parts: the centre was black and white (the individual), the middle tinted, and the outside ring color (society). The only thing they had to keep in mind during the five weeks of shooting was that whenever they made a move (especially Tamas Vamos, my cameraman); when we shot color they had to ask themselves why we shot color, when we shot black and white, why black and white, and so on. *cont. on Page 58*



Charlebois on the receiving end while Mouffe stands by.

naked came the maple leaf at the poor alex

Aug 1 – 6 Double Feature – 8 p.m.

A TOUT PRENDRE: (1963) *bw, 105 min.* direction – Claude Jutra, production – Cassiopee Films and Orion Films

Boy meets girl, boy gets girl in trouble boy leaves girl –

“It is a rich, suggestive, provocative work – one that I could go back to again and again. It is the only thoroughly contemporary American (albeit French-Canadian) film of my generation – that is perhaps why it seems so alive”. Colin Young, *Film Quarterly*.

10 p.m.

MON ONCLE ANTOINE: (1971) *col, 110 min.* direction – Claude Jutra, production – NFB.

“My Uncle Antoine is a French-Canadian film . . . of such beauty, emotional power, and restraint that it must be ranked with world masterpieces . . . Claude Jutra’s ability to suggest . . . is something possessed only by a master of the medium”. Archer Winsten, *N.Y. Post*.

A film about growing up in a small Québec town about 30 years ago. 8 prizes, 1971 Canadian Film Awards, Best feature film, 1971 Chicago International Film Festival.

Aug 8 – 13 – 8 and 10 p.m.

MORE THAN ONE: (1971) *b&w, sound, 90 min.* direction – Murray Markowitz.

“A documentary about young people who are retarded . . . but inside are people with ambitions, hatreds, dreams, loves. People who cry when they are frustrated and laugh when something pleases them . . . a stirring recognition and a disquieting sense that retarded doesn’t mean a hell of a lot”. Marshall Delaney, *Saturday Night*.

Aug 15 – 20 – To Be Announced.

Aug 22 – 27 – 9 p.m.

LA REGION CENTRALE: (1970-71) *col, 180 min.* direction – Michael Snow, production – Michael Snow.

Michael Snow’s most recent and ambitious work in structural cinema. An exploration of space and mood on top of a mountain in the wilds of Labrador with the help of a machine later exhibited at the National Gallery.

Aug 29 – Sept 3 – 8 and 10 p.m.

FACADE: (1968) *bw&col, 90 min.* direction – Larry Kent, production – Lawrence L. Kent Prod.

Unavailable in Canada until now. A film about the problems of being a woman. . . . an experiment, a very visual film”. Larry Kent.

Sept 5 – 10 – 8 and 10 p.m.

L’ACADIE, L’ACADIE: (1971) *bw, 117 min.* (Eng. Vers. 80 min.), direction – Michel Brault & Pierre Perrault, production – NFB.

The eyewitness account of the events which marked the Acadian reawakening at the Université de Moncton in 1968-69. It is about the struggle of a people to keep their language and find themselves.

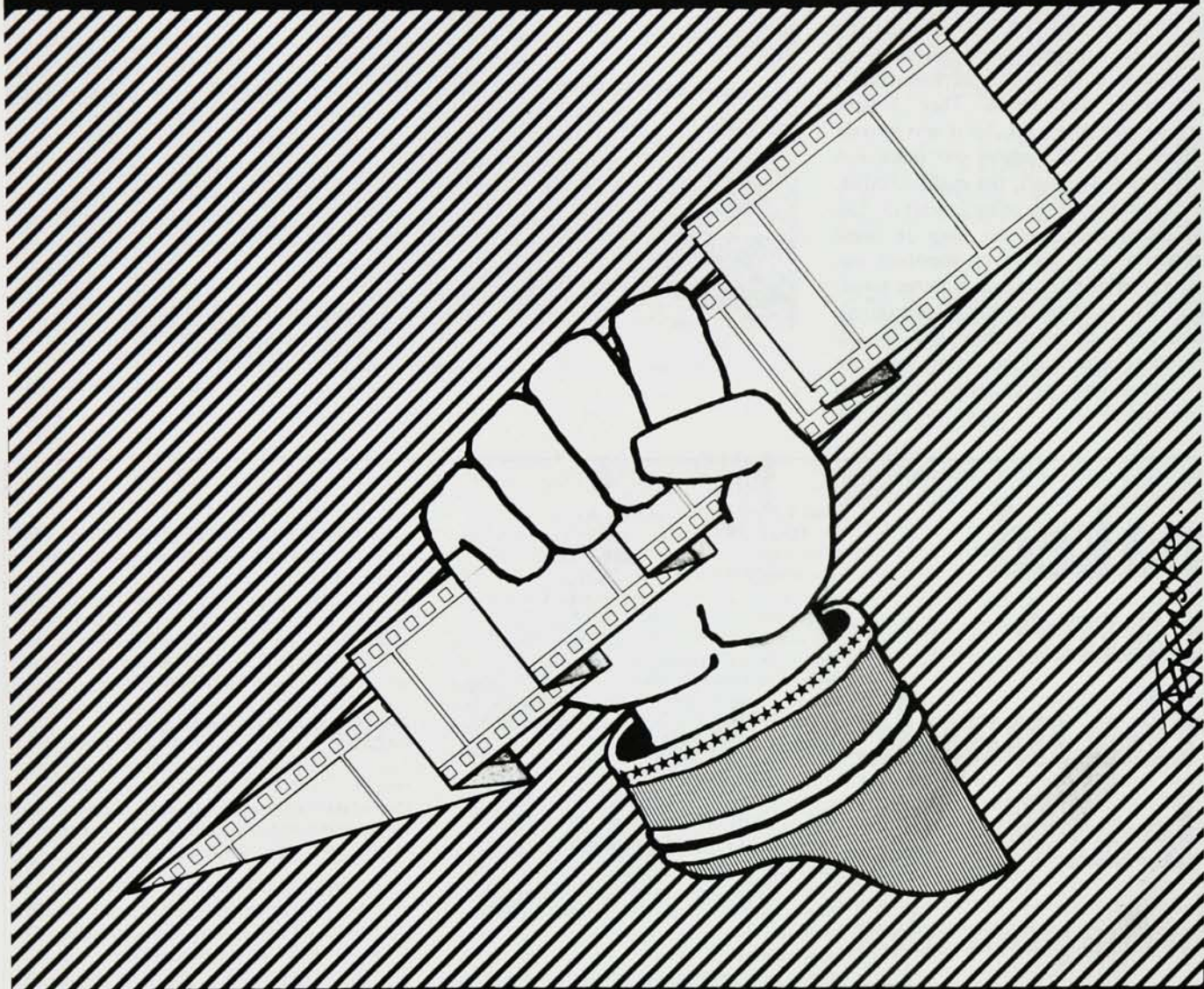
Pierre Perrault is a lawyer, radio producer, poet, and with this his 5th feature film, remains one of Canada’s best known and most influential filmmakers. Best feature film, Festival Dinard, France.

Sept 12 – 17 – 8 and 10 p.m.

UN PAYS SANS BON SENS: (1970) *bw, 117 min.* direction – Pierre Perrault, production – NFB.

A study of the notion of “country” which is found in the hearts of men. This documentary unrolls in the context of a nation searching for itself – the French-Canadians, including others also landless – the Indians or Québec and the Bretons of France.

NAKED CAME THE MAPLE LEAF AT THE POOR ALEX THEATRE



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