

and our beloved Toronto passes not only for Washington D.C. but Connecticut as well.)

And there's the promise of a cracker-jack plot: we witness a terrifying scenario hot off the front page. Terrorists (à la Bader-Meinhoff gang) seize the American consulate in Munich and brutally gun down an innocent young woman in front of the TV cameras. The sharp, emotion-wrenched message is clear: once and for all, something must be done about these barbarians. And we have the man to do it, Charles Heller (played by John Savage), the murdered woman's lover, a cog-in-the-wheel computer analyst at the CIA. Undaunted by his company's hands-off edict, Heller turns vigilante and embarks upon an elaborate and intrepid pilgrimage of revenge which leads him into Czechoslovakia, the known hide-out of the terrorists who executed his girl.

Heller is after blood, especially that of Schraeger, the steely-eyed Arian leader of the group (played by steely-eyed Canadian Nicholas Campbell).

Inarguably, the ingredients for a first-rate potboiler are all here. Michaels and Drabinsky have been astute enough to buy the right kind of cookbook. So what's wrong with *The Amateur*? Plenty. In fact, the makers of this film will be lucky to escape being boiled in oil by those unfortunate few who will be lured into theatres.

Writers Robert Littell and Diana Maddox foolishly expect us to swallow a plot that resembles Swiss cheese, with holes big enough for all those shiny Mercedes Benz production cars to drive through. Initially, they have Heller ingeniously blackmailing the CIA into helping him enter Czechoslovakia. Once in Prague, however, the writers wage war on plausibility by having Heller encounter a horde of James Bondian black-gloved spies, all carrying their KGB or CIA affiliations as if they were readily sold at the corner store.

Director Charles Jarrott fares no better. He comes off like some sort of Maytag repair man, deluded into believing that there are similar iron-clad guarantees in film. He is sadly mistaken. The need for a fine directorial touch is painfully evident throughout *The Amateur*. Suspense, and methods of creating it, seem completely out of Jarrott's grasp. (Not surprising mind you, from the man whose last "memorable" work was *The Other Side of Midnight*.)

The really sour points in this film, however, come from the performers, and in particular, John Savage. Never has a leading actor so savagely maligned the profession. His acting range is so limited, his presence so non-existent, that one wonders why somebody - somewhere along the line - didn't have the sense to pull the plug on this poor man's constipated excuse to be on the big screen. Savage literally mumbles and stumbles his presence so non-existent, that one wonders why somebody - somewhere near tension. One has to reflect on (and perhaps re-evaluate) his role as the war amputee in *The Deer Hunter*. In Michael Cimino's film, Savage seemed perfect as the shell-shocked veteran constrained to a wheelchair. But in *The Amateur*, given the full use of his arms and legs, he's at a total loss.

And there's not much to be said about Marthe Keller as Chuck's Czech accomplice. Ms. Keller has been in this kettle before and seems destined to forever play a European-accented woman caught on the wrong side. Only Christopher Plummer, as Prof. Lakos, adds the proper

flavouring to his part. Plummer is fully aware of the schlock being served here. He doesn't hold back on the ham, making his Lakos a Czechoslovakian Columbo with a dash of Sherlock Holmes.

How Lakos fits into the scheme of things, and how *The Amateur* limps to an end is not worth recounting here. Suffice it to say that Charles Heller finds his steely-eyed terrorist in a chandelier factory... a shoddy symbol that serves only to point out the film's shattering vacuity.

Oh, yes, there is a surprise ending. Heller's sweet taste of revenge is tainted, somewhat, by the disclosure that Schraeger, our steely-eyed terrorist, was not really a terrorist but working all along for the... (need it be said?). By this time, none of *The Amateur* comes as a surprise, but as welcome relief that the whole sloppy affair is finally over.

Stephen Zoller ●

**THE AMATEUR** d. Charles Jarrott p.c. Balkan Film Productions Ltd. p. Joel B. Michaels, Garth H. Drabinsky sc. Robert Littell, Diana Maddox, based on novel "The Amateur" by Littell exec. p. Mario Kassar, Andrew Vajna cam. John Coquillon, b.s.c. p. des. Trevor Williams sup. ed. Richard Halsey, a.c.e. mus. Ken Wannberg USA cast. Fenton-Feinberg Cda cast. Walker-Bowen p.man. Marilyn Stonehouse 1st asst. d. Jon Anderson prod. co-ord. Suzanne Lore exec.asst. to prod. Margaret Livingston ed. Stephan Fanfara asst. ed. Bruce Lange art d. Richard Wilcox cost. des. Suzanne Grace set dec. Rondi Johnson, Steve Shewchuk asst. to prod. Patricia McCarthy asst. to d. Margo Ley cam. op. James Turrell 1st asst. cam. Thom Ryan 2nd asst. cam. David Makin prop mast. John Berger asst. set dec. Dennis Kirkham asst. prop mast. John C. Rose draughtsman Richard Harrison loc. man. Michael Brownstone key grip Ron Gillham gaffer Chris Holmes 2nd asst. d. Otta Hanus 3rd asst. d. Bob Wertheimer 2nd asst. ed. Marta Nielsen sd. mix. Peter Shewchuk sc. sup. Sandra Ulosevich Marley sc. research Connie Josefs boom op. Herbert Heritage best boys Glen Goodchild, Tony Eldridge grips Wayne Goodchild, John Davidson stills Shin Sugino unit pub. Lynda Friendly makeup John Brock hair James Keller asst. makeup Patricia Green asst. hair Albert Paradis ward. mistress Aleida Macdonald ward. asst. Nadia Ongaro Steadicam op. Robert Crone elec. John Spurrell, Sam Hughes sp. efx. Gene Grigg, Michael Clifford, Leland (Bud) Fisher p. sec. Angela Heald stunt co-ord. R.L. (Bobby) Hannah gen. op. Herbert Reichel underwater cam. Rich Mason underwater cam. op. Bob Saad prod. cont. Heather McIntosh prod. acct. Lyn Lucibello, Lorraine Valentine, Joanne Jackson orchestrations Albert Woodbury mus. mix. sup. Len Engel re-rec. Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi, Dino Pigat sd. efx. ed. Dennis Drummond, Wayne Griffin, Michael O'Farrell asst. sd. off. ed. Michael Rea, John Szoges 2nd unit d. Richard Halsey 2nd unit cam. James Devis 2nd unit cam. op. Michael Rutter prod. asst. Tom Pinteric, Rich Watts, Alan Zweig trans. co-ord. Bill Jackson scenic artist Guenter Bartlik head painter Willi Holst const. sup. Ron MacMillan craft serv. James Carruthers background extras Film Extra Services prop stills Lynn Goldsmith Inc. Vienna crew: prod. sup. Hannah Hempstead prod. man. Otto Boris Dworak asst. to p. man. Andreas Debowski art d. Herwig Libowitzk p. sec. Gerda Haller asst. d. Gusti Brunjes prod. asst. Isabelle Groote, Carl Ludwig property buyer Juri Juda prop. asst. Reinhard Binder makeup, hair asst. Margarete Ehringer ward. asst. Lena Ilgisonis gen. op. Adolf Wazin gaffer Erich Kristufek grips Peter Holba, Eduard Richter elec. Norbert Erben, Waldemar Haidinger, Walter Lobarzewski, Anton Pniesz prop stills Lynn Goldsmith Inc. Washington D.C. crew: loc. man. Stuart Neuman trans. co-ord. Eric Young prod. sec. Victoria Eves title des. Douy Swofford opticals Film Optical title opticals Movie Magic Lp. John Savage, Christopher Plummer, Marthe Keller, Arthur Hill, Nicholas Campbell, George Coe, John Marley, Jan Rubes, Ed Lauter, Miguel Fernandes, Jan Triska, Graham Jarvis, Jacques Godin, Chappelle Jaffe, Lynne Griffin, Vladimir Valenta, Vlasta Vrana, Neil Dainard, Lee Broker, Tedde Moore, Maruska Stankova, Irena Mayeska, George Buza, George R. Robertson, John Kerr, Guy Sanvido, Robert Beatty, Walter Reyer, François-Regis Klanfer, Peter Wolsdorff, Henry Gomez, Erin Flannery, Lisa Schrage, Susan Young, Tony Kramreither, Paul Reymont, Aubrey Taylor, Roman Chabursky, Bob Lem, Fred Culik, Peter Langley, Harty Hornisch, Helmut Graef, Zdenek Gruner running time 112 min. 35mm colour Canadian dist. Pan-Canadian Film Dist. Inc. U.S. dist. Twentieth Century Fox.

Denys Arcand's

## Le confort et l'indifférence

"Gouverner c'est rendre vos sujets hors d'état de vous nuire."

Machiavelli

"On aime ça d'même."

Beer commercial

One wonders what sort of film Denys Arcand would have made, had the *Oui* won the May 1980 referendum. For *Le confort et l'indifférence* only makes sense in the light of the No victory. Yet it is the reality of that defeat that lets Arcand amuse himself with unfair arguments against History. In this sense, Arcand's is a hypocritical film, but, in the same sense that Max Beerbohm once said "Every kind of writing is hypocritical," this is in part, the hypocrisy of art.



● Denys Arcand and crew

To be sure, when Arcand began filming as of 1977, there was no way to know what would be the referendum's outcome. Like the Toronto news producers who would send camera crews to Montreal at every provincial election to film what they imagined would be instant independence, there was still some hope perhaps of capturing great History in the making.

Sometime after the grim returns, Arcand began rereading the classics of political thought.

"I wanted a commentary, something from outside, by a foreigner," Arcand explains. "I began to read Aristotle's *Politics* and Clausewitz' *On War*, but it was only when I reread Machiavelli that I knew he was the one I wanted. It was hallucinatory. Something jumped out from every page!"

*Le confort et l'indifférence* is Arcand-Machiavelli's judging of Quebec society, and the dream of democratically achieving independence by referendum. Machiavelli (admirably portrayed by Jean-Pierre Ronfard) peers across Montreal from the vantage-point of his hotel room and, while sitting down to a hearty lunch, offers gems from *The Prince*, his treatise on how to acquire and preserve a monarchy. Against this background, the viewer gets to relive the events of the referendum from the tabling of the question to the cultural "highpoints" of the summer of 1980 (Canadiens' victory parade after winning the Stanley Cup, the Florallies, etc.).

Arcand's National Film Board colleagues (Pierre Perrault, Bernard Gosselin, Gilles Groulx) provided 10 percent of the

footage. For the remainder, Arcand worked with some 60 hours of film. The result, boiled down to 112 minutes, is a meditation that is sarcastic, cruel, brilliant, facile, sad, and yet mercifully very funny.

Only film could have caught the look René Lévesque gave the camera crews that accompanied him on his trip to Paris to speak before the French National Assembly. Greeted like a head of state, made to review an honor guard, Lévesque goes through the motions with some embarrassment, but when he recognizes the cameras from home he raises his eyebrows as if to say "Gee, for pea-soups, we've sure come a long way." The moment is heart-warming in the naïveté, but there's always Machiavelli's suave voice to remind us that this is no game for the sentimental or the naive.

The Machiavelli excerpts work with especial brilliance in a scene where Ronfard explains that to win the loyalty of his minister, the prince must cover him with honors, positions and riches so abundant that he will oppose any change. Cut to Jean Chrétien listing all the ministerial posts he has held - as proof that there's opportunity for Quebecers in Ottawa.

Arcand realizes a brilliant montage of economic debate reduced to complete triviality over the costs of independence in which Trudeau, Lévesque, Ryan, Camille Samson, Gérald Godin and Bernard Landry all hurl statistics at each other in wild disarray. At one point Landry looks up from his reams of statistics and blurts out: "Il y a quelque chose qui marche pas ici" (Something isn't working out here).

A lot sillier, though still amusing, is the coverage given a *Oui-Non* boxing match involving indépendantiste goon Reggie Chartrand and some poor has-been who is flattened in 45 seconds. Ex-boxer Ronald Jones (of Gilles Groulx' *Golden Gloves*) provides sympathetic non-involvement to this sequence.

Pierre Trudeau (playing himself, namely The Prince) is appropriately hat-chet-faced, and suitably flanked by secret service gorillas, or reviewing troops in the company of Her Majesty, or waxing eloquent over our Rockies and "our" natural resources.

Of considerably less interest are the long scenes devoted to an evangelical "charismatic" rally at the Olympic Stadium, though it does provide the stunning image of Christ framed between an ad for Miracle Mart on the left and Steinberg on the right. But "poor ignorant" religion is just that, and Arcand's attempt to generalize it into a statement about the poverty-stricken dreams of Quebecers (as against the grand dream of independence) simply does not work.

*Le confort et l'indifférence*, reaction to which Arcand says "has surpassed all expectations," has already aroused controversy in the cultural pages of the press, and promises to enliven Québécois intellectual living-rooms for months to come.

For Arcand's film is one of disappointment, and above all, of disappointment in a people's inability to dream, to escape its servitude and live free. That the Parti Québécois had only its verbal version of that dream to go on is criticized as a lack of realism in a world where, as Machiavelli reminds us, a good army is everything. What, after October 1970, was the alternative?

The chief culprit, Arcand seems to be saying, is the miserable, comfortable Quebec people who traded their birthright for a federal pension cheque and

# REVIEWS

UIC benefits, and are uncultured beer-drinking boozers to boot. Maybe and maybe not; but as Brecht once asked, what would you do, dissolve the people and elect another?

Arcand, now 40, whose *On est au coton* and *Québec: Duplessis et après* were outstanding filmic moments of pre-referendum *cinéma engagé*, has come full circle. In this lofty judgment, though, he does more than damn the idols of yesterday. He confronts the viewer (Canadian as much as Quebecer) with History. And if from this perspective, that of Canada is particularly damning, precisely because of its comfort and indifference, Arcand at least has done what the artist can only do: raise questions.

That he has chosen to do so in terms of the reigning *Kulturkritik* paradigm of rich vs. poor, capitalists vs. workers, dreamers vs. walking dead can be taken

as a way of better raising those questions; that is, of questioning the paradigm itself since it was it that produced the dream.

Yet this is only a suggestion, for Arcand only touches upon it obliquely in one moving interview with Greek social worker Irene Typaldos who explains, crying, why she voted No. Because she felt a debt of obligation to those who accepted her when the Québécois would not. It is Typaldos who suggests that there is/was something wrong with Quebec nationalism from the very beginning.

And that, ultimately, is the question. Would Arcand have made such an acerbic film as this had the Oui won? It is the inability to clearly answer that question that makes Arcand's film hypocritical. But then again this is the Baudelairian hypocrisy of *mon semblable, mon frère*.

Arcand's *Le confort et l'indifférence* is a film that invites the most serious self-questioning. That alone makes it totally worthwhile.

Michael Dorland ●

## LE CONFORT ET L'INDIFFÉRENCE

d. Denys Arcand ed. Pierre Bernier d.o.p. Alain Dostie sd. Serge Beauchemin p. Roger Frappier, Jean Dansereau additional cam. Pierre Letarte, André-Luc Dupont, Martin Leclerc, Roger Rochat, Bruno Carrière, Jean-Pierre Lachapelle, Pierre Mignot additional sd. Yves Gendron, Claude Hazanavicius, Richard Besse, Esther Auger, André Dussault, Jacques Drouin, Jean-Guy Normandin mix. Jean-Pierre Joutel cam. asst. Séraphin Bouchard, Michel Caron, Jacques Tougas, Daniel Jobin, René Daigle, Serge Lafortune, Jacques Méthé, Simon Leblanc, Robert Martel ed. asst. France Dubé administration Michelle Mercier, Denise Deslauriers, Diane Leblanc, Evelyn Regimbald p. asst. Lucie D'Amour, Huguette Bergeron consultants Bernard Gosselin, Pierre Perrault, Tahani Rached, Gilles Groulx, Jacques Bensimon, Jacques Godbout, Guy L. Côté l.p. Jean-Pierre Ronfard col. 16mm running time 113 minutes p.c. National Film Board of Canada.

may fix the setting, the next zoom in for a close-up. The lighting also changes according to scene (indoor-outdoor, daytime-nighttime) and mood. Earnshaw exploits this beautifully. Presently a freelancer, his past experience in 10 minute shorts for the Nature Conservancy of Canada, commercials and as a cameraman for Global news have taught him the tricks of the trade. Technically he is quite competent. Minor flaws, such as panning too quickly in the scenes before Caiphas, are more than compensated for by his surprising treatment of Peter approaching the High Priest's palace or his examination of the sleepy disciples at Gethsemani. The paintings themselves partially determine the camerawork but there is ample evidence of one disciplined mind communicating to another. Earnshaw shows fine discernment, self-control and a good eye in his selection of an attention to relevant and striking detail.

As producer and director, Earnshaw deserves a first class grade. The running time of 28 minutes seems like 10, no mean achievement when confronted with still lifes. From his stunning opening achieved with a juxtaposition of colour and images, to the concluding shot of "the consummation of the world", there is a tightness of control over material which, in lesser hands, could easily have slipped away. Earnshaw never loses sight of his story. The \$35,000 production cost was well spent. The colour, especially working from paintings with so many night scenes, is excellent. The narration of the gospel is by Len Cariou and here, except for an unfortunate substitute of a "Jeremy" for a "Jeremiah", there can be no complaint. His pace is steady, his inflection considered and, as one should expect, his rendition is professional. His voice moves the film along. The music is a further embellishment. Composed by Frank Felco (York University) and his wife, Jane Fair, both jazz musicians, their score subtly keeps the action progressing, sets the mood and yet never intrudes. Joining all of this to special sound effects was the work of Wally Weaver of PFA labs.

An English version of the film is ready, and French and Spanish versions are projected for the very near future. For church groups or for television viewers, Earnshaw's film is a worthwhile work and one to be eagerly anticipated. For Kurelek lovers around the world, it marks the completion of Kurelek's dream for the series. And Kurelek would have been pleased with Earnshaw's production. But just as Kurelek's original paintings seem hidden away in the little-known Niagara Falls Art Gallery & Museum on a service road of the Queen Elizabeth Way, so English Canadians may wait awhile to see an important part of their heritage. The religious programming department of the CBC has rejected the film as too "anti-semitic". Maybe Kurelek would point out that "a prophet has no honour in his own country," but English-speaking Canadians will have to suffer the deprivation of such censorship in the interim. Kurelek's paintings and Earnshaw's production deserve a better fate.

Gerard T. Campbell ●

**THE PASSION OF CHRIST** p./d./cam. Phillip Earnshaw ed. Mairin Wilkinson narration Len Cariou music comp. Frank Falco, Jane Fair prod. asst. Guido Kondrus title design Bill Boyer sd. re-rec. Wally Weaver paintings William Kurelek p.c. Shooting Pictures Ltd. running time 28 min., 16mm colour dist. Magic Lantern.



● Kurelek's "Passion of Christ" on exhibit in Niagara Falls

Photo: St. Catharines Standard

## Phillip Earnshaw's The Passion of Christ

On New Year's Day, 1960, Canadian artist William Kurelek began work on a monumental series of paintings entitled "The Passion of Christ." It was to take him more than three years to complete them. Although many of his other works are better known, these 160 paintings were very special to him. They were an act of thanksgiving for his conversion to Roman Catholicism, a conversion from being a "practising atheist" to being a committed Christian, a conversion from a state of intense personal suffering and despair to one of reverent acceptance and joyful celebration of life. It was the

turning point in Kurelek's life and career.

This awesome "Passion of Christ" series, complete in itself, was part of an even more ambitious project, unfulfilled because of Kurelek's early death, of illustrating in paint the whole life of Christ. The paintings in this film portray the Easter story, depicting the last supper, the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ, sentence by sentence, according to the gospel narrative of Saint Matthew. Although Kurelek attempted careful research for historical authenticity, nevertheless, whenever the narrative permitted, he boldly projected his interpretation to times and places other than ancient Israel to show the universal and eternal nature of man's redemption and salvation. No one in the history of painting had ever essayed a project of such epic proportions. Now that effort has been captured on film.

Translation of an artistic work from one medium to another often invites comparison with the original and sub-

sequent disappointment with the translation. Phillip Earnshaw's remarkable production of *The Passion of Christ* provokes neither. Instead, this fine film makes a very fitting complement to Kurelek's paintings. And although the film was produced four years after Kurelek's death, it is entirely proper to rejoice at what is a happy collaboration between Earnshaw and Kurelek.

How does one collaborate with the dead?

Before he even began the paintings Kurelek envisaged the series as one day being produced on film. As a result, his compositions are organized in terms of a dramatic presentation with a camera-conscious arrangement of images. The viewer sees the drama unfold before him. In the trial before Pilot, for example, the viewer sees the action sometimes from Pilot's perspective, sometimes from Christ's, sometimes from among the crowd below or on the porch as a Roman functionary. One painting