

way it is. It's because the right touches structure, while the left touches individuals. It's always people from the right who break down forms, people who are related to existing structures. And I think that for Hémon, it's a bit the same thing; he broke the ancient pattern of the love story to construct a new one, based on the waiting of the woman, and the desperate effort of the man to reach her. And this pattern is also expressed in the landscape, the land, the country, with all those rivers and those waterfalls, symbols of ejaculation, of masculinity; and the lake, level and calm, not too deep, a lake that warms up easily (laughs), symbol of femininity. Harlequin books have cornered 12% of the international market, using the same story over and over again. Harlequin books, romance, they all copy *Maria Chapdelaine*. But getting back to Hémon, he was also revolutionary in his own way: he was the first sports columnist ever, he fought against pollution, he did his jogging...

**Cinema Canada:** Do you still believe in what you called "production families"; do you still believe, as you once said, that that's the only solution to Quebec cinema?

**Gilles Carle:** I personally believe, as I always did, in small production teams, in production families. I always try to have my own. Apart from my personal talent, this is what helps me continue shooting. But the big mistake with beginning filmmakers is that they associate with people like themselves. You need a truck driver who prefers to carry sets than to carry coal, or an accountant who would like working with a theater group better than at Household Finance, you know. You need people like that. I have my own family, and they have been constantly working with me for ten years now. We need these small teams. The other day, I saw a group from the south-shore (of Montreal) getting lost in the corridors of the NFB, and I was disappointed. Why go to the Board? We must organize ourselves, find money, do new things, but many people are afraid of accountants. But accountants are your friends, you know; you must deal with them. The more you have production teams, the more cinematic freedom; it's simple. Because if I shoot alone, there isn't much cinema freedom. Everybody has to make a film.

But cinema is disappearing anyway. It's finished; now it's television, and I don't know what's going to happen. These electronic instruments are very costly, you know. Bill 109 on the cinema in Quebec, like every law, comes too late. Everything is changing now; we have pay-TV, and all that, and it's all under federal regulations. I don't know what's going to happen, really.

**Cinema Canada:** And what do you think about closing down the NFB, as recommended by the Applebaum-Hébert report?

**Gilles Carle:** Damn it! Let's open the NFB, not close it. Closing it is not the solution, we must open it to young filmmakers, to new artists, give them a chance to work. If we close the NFB, where will the beginning filmmakers do their first film? You know I started there. Some changes, many changes, have to be made in the structure of the NFB, of course. But the solution is to open the NFB, not to close it. All that would do is put more people on the unemployment rolls. And who needs that?

Richard Martineau •

## Gilles Carle's *Maria Chapdelaine*

Gilles Carle's new movie, *Maria Chapdelaine*, pushes all the right buttons to assure its success in Quebec, if nowhere else (in its first week alone, after opening Apr. 29, it brought in over \$190,000). Based on the 1913 novel of the same title by French expatriate Louis Hémon, the movie deals with the travails of a beautiful, taciturn, young woman trying to survive against all odds in the wilds of Lac St-Jean.

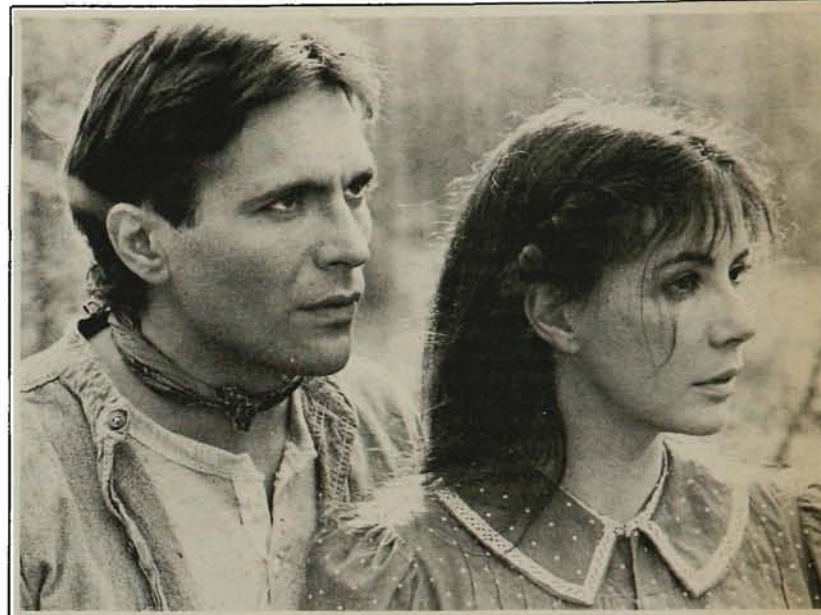
Quebec novelist Roch Carrier claims the novel has captured the Quebec imagination because it's not a work of precise ideas but rather what he calls "a vast emptiness" upon which readers can impose their own ideas or fantasies. Carle, working with a \$4.5-million budget, impose ideas all right - the virtues of obduracy ("j'y suis, j'y reste"), romanticization of alienation, *mon pays c'est l'hiver* and all that - and achieves a vast emptiness of his own: a hollow epic.

An overheated hack at the Montreal *Gazette* once called Carle's next-to-last film, *Les Plouffe*, Quebec's *Gone With the Wind*. This may mean that *Maria Chapdelaine* is our *Dr. Zhivago*, for all that that entails. There certainly is a lot of snow, and when there isn't, woodsy types pick blueberries and do countless other photogenic things, like walking by waterfalls or playing with the famille Chapdelaine's lovable mongrel.

The publicity material accompanying the movie makes a great deal of its authenticity and the difficulties the director faced in shooting four seasons in two months. It feels like Carle shot a lot more seasons than that, but then you tend to lose track after a while, as the authenticity marches steadily sidewise toward nostalgia. (Why, by the way, did no one think to age the costumes? Were lumberjacks really this stylish?)

Carle came late to the project, the third in a series of directors hired to make both a theatrical feature and a four-hour mini-series for Radio-Canada (think of the seasons in store for us there). He and his co-scenarist, Guy Fournier, have been publicly squabbling about which man's interpretation of the novel is the more correct, but in all their ideological wrangling, they didn't get around to solving the central dramatic flaw: Maria and her dashing suitor, the aptly named François Paradis, are almost never on screen together. When they are, they mainly moon about: he asks her to wait for him, she says OK, he departs, and the rest of the movie she waits. And worse, we wait with her.

The casting of Nick Mancuso as Paradis goes a long way to making us under-



• Quebec's answer to *Dr. Zhivago*: Nick Mancuso and Carole Laure in *Maria Chapdelaine*

stand this wait: who wouldn't wait for him? He has such dash and sense of his own presence - he even stands out in long shots of crowd scenes - it's a shame all that's left for him to do is get lost in the snow. He's too well-coiffed for a bucheron, but we can see the energy in him, the eagerness to do something, to make his part real, and that's so much more than can be said for most of the cast. There are at least a dozen acting styles going on here, running from pure maple-cured ham to *téléroman*-gothic, but then this is in keeping with the slapdash style of the whole project. There's no subtlety, no thought-out perspective. Nothing's left in the background for us to discover for ourselves, everything's dragged center-screen and klieg-lit, with Lewis Furey's incessant music providing the wholly unnecessary italics.

The darkly elegant Carole Laure plays Hémon's indomitable, homespun heroine. Laure and Carle have been working together for a long time now (*Fantastica*, *L'Ange et la femme*, *La tête de Normande St-Onge*, *La mort d'un bucheron*), and it's time someone told them to cut it out: they're absolute poison for each other. Laure has revealed a flair for comedy with other directors (in Blier's *Get Our Your Handkerchiefs* and Joyce Bunuel's *Dirty Dishes*), but Carle doesn't seem to want her to act - he poses her. (Their previous collaborations have been notable for her nudity, so much so that local wags who saw the 1975 *La tête de Normande St-Onge* promptly renamed it *Les fesses de...*) For all the dramatic intensity he gets out of Laure's sophisticated, slightly ironic beauty, he might as well be shooting

magazine covers. In Carle's scheme of things, Laure is indomitable all right - indomitably chic. When she goes out to slop the hogs, that trademark blue-black hair sleeking down her slender back, her pancake applied to perfection, delectably soigné in that layered look so popular in the bush, it's the giddiest piece of miscasting since Marie-Antoinette played shepherdess at Versailles.

Will Aitken •

**MARIA CHAPDELAINE** d. Gilles Carle exec. p. Harold Greenberg p. Murray Shostak. Robert Baylis sc. Guy Fournier. Carle, based on the novel by Louis Hémon d.o.p. Pierre Mignot art d. Jocelyn July 2nd unit photography Richard Leiterman ed. Ayde Chiriaeff sd. eng. Patrick Rousseau p. man. Lorraine Richard head unit man. Mario Nadeau 1st a.d. Jacques Wilbrod Benoît prop. master Ronald Fauteux cost. des. Michele Hamel head cost. dresser Blanche-Danielle Boileau head make-up Micheline Poisy hair. Andre Lafresniere cont. Ginette Senecal head elect. Daniel Chretien head machinist François Dupere sp. efx. John Thomas unit man. Ginette Guillard public relations David Novak Associates Inc. unit pub. Mark Lalonde stills Pierre Dury compt. Fred Shacter p. acct. Carole Lagace p. sec. Micheline Cadieux p. coord. in Montreal Marie-Hélène Roy 2nd a.d. Monique Maranda 3rd a.d. Jacques Laberge asst. unit man. Louis-Philippe Rochon 1st asst. cam. Jean Lepine 2nd asst. cam. Christiane Guernon 3rd asst. cam. Nathalie Mollavko-Visotsky 2nd unit asst. cam. Larry Lynn elect. Claude Fortier. Robert Lapierre Jr. machinist Michel Periard boom Veronique Gabillaud asst. art d. Raymond Dupuis props. Alain Singher asst. props Philippe Chevalier. Henri Gagnon, Jean Labrecque, Josiane Noreau set dresser Patrice Bengle 2nd set dresser Simon La Haye const. Andre Bochu, Michel Bochu, Jean-Marie Vallerand, Gaston Brassard head painters Robert Breton, Rejean Paquin painters Guy Lalonde, Gilles Desjardins, Jean-Paul Montreuil sp. efx. asst. Bill Orr. Ken Johnson sp. efx. Roby Baylis asst. cost. des. Christiane Tessier, John Stowe asst. to cost. des. Pierre Perrault cost. dresser Renee April make-up Joan Isaacson p. asst. Michel Veillette. Andre Ouellet, Angele Bourgault messengers Ellen Berube, Alain Belhumeur drivers Pierre Guillard, Sylvain Falardeau chief cook Kitty Baylis cook Leo Evans asst. in kitchen Richard Carroll l.p. Carole Laure, Nick Mancuso, Pierre Curzi, Donald Lautrec, Yoland Guerard, Amulette Garneau, Stephane Query, Guy Thauvette, Gilbert Sicotte, Josee-Anne Fortin, Louis-Philippe Milot, Gilbert Comtois, Paul Berval, Claude Rich, Claude Evard, Dominique Briand, Marie Tifo, Jean-Pierre Masson, Angele Arseneault, Jacques Thisdale, Rod Tremblay, Claude Prezent, Patrick Messe, Guy Godin, Denis Blais, Michel Langevin, Cedric Noël, Jose Ledoux, Renee Girard, Roch Demers, Gilbert Moore, Gilles Valiquette, Yvon Sarrazin, Rolland Bedard, Michel Rivard, Georges Levtehouk, Raoul Duguay p.e. Astral Film Productions Limited, in collaboration with La Societe Radio-Canada and TF1, the first television network of France. colour 35mm running time 108 min.

• *Maria Chapdelaine* gets strong acting assists from France's Claude Rich and Quebec's Marie Tifo





# REVIEWS

## Ralph Thomas' The Terry Fox Story

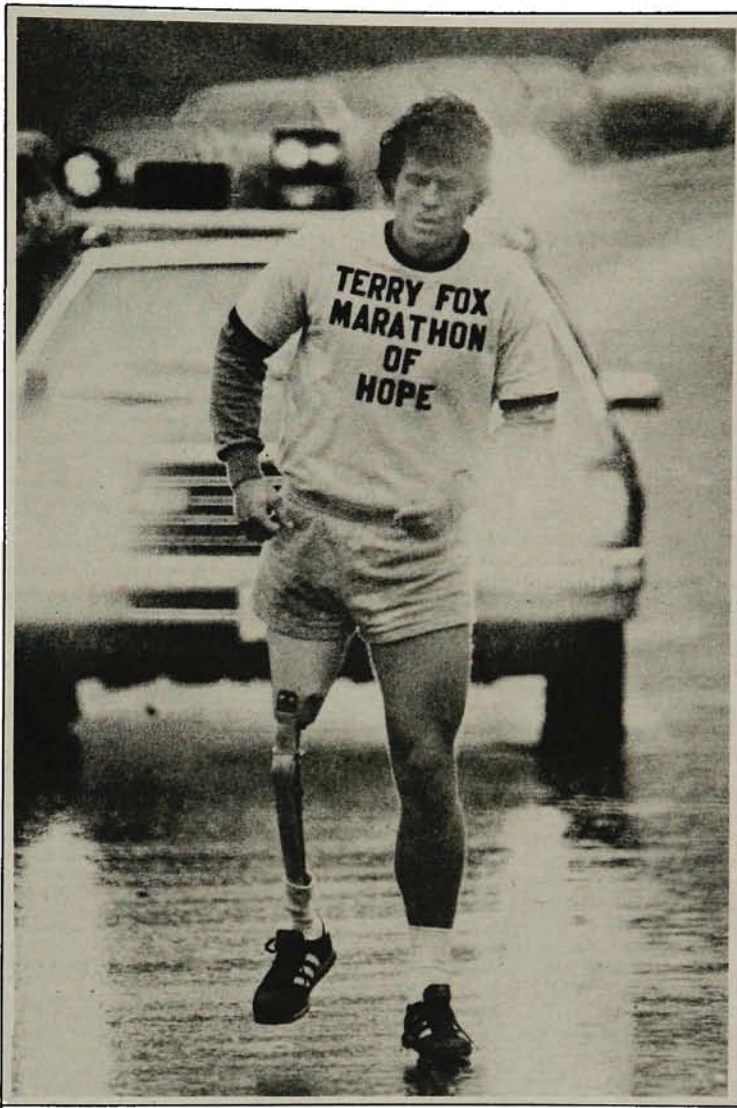
I didn't spend a lot of time following Terry Fox's run when it happened. The massive emotional manipulation of the event bothered me, and there had been a rather frightening series of articles published in Penthouse attacking the research practices of the American Cancer Society, so the idea of giving money to one of their branch plants was not particularly appealing. Almost more interesting than Terry himself seemed the remarkable emotional response that was being wrenched from the hearts of stolid, emotionally blocked Ontarians, who took to Terry as if he were a cross between John-Boy Walton and Lassie, come home at last.

This by way of introduction, to show just how prepared I was for a very bad movie, to cynically park myself in the screening room and snarl viciously if anyone tried force-feeding me the milk of human kindness. Admittedly, there were good signs. Ralph Thomas, the director, is not a man easily suckered. One need only look at the tough docudramas he produced at the CBC (especially *Drying Up the Streets*) and *Ticket to Heaven* to see someone with an immense distrust of pieties, conventional and otherwise. Michael Zelnicker, who plays Fox's best friend, Doug Alward, was insistent in conversation that they had made an effort to show Terry, warts and all.

Well, it works, because there are three stories that come together in the film. The first story, where the automatic emotional response comes in, is during the recreation of the public events that we all know so well – and, if we are Torontonians, lived through. The second story is the private Terry Fox, who seems to have been a major pain in the neck: an obsessive, physically-oriented, petulant monomaniac. When everyone is telling him that he's crazy to want to run across Canada, they not only seem eminently more rational, but they seem to be giving him good advice. One gets the feeling that being Doug Alward for the months on the road (Alward drove the van) must have been rather like being locked in a closet with an unstable badger. Of course, if it were the private life alone, one might react to Terry the same way we did to another recent handicapped hero in Canadian movies, Tom Sullivan, in the execrable *If You Could See What I Hear*.

The third story, and the most important, is the real reason that Terry Fox worked as a national symbol. The story is not about this adolescent who died so that others might be cured, but of a single figure out on the highways. It is an elemental story of a human and an environment, and the desolate, mind-numbing loneliness of that image. It may be the best use of the Canadian landscape as a character that we have ever seen in a Canadian movie (*Silence of the North* and *Who Has Seen the Wind* don't quite make it, and *The Grey Fox* is only a corner of the country).

That story, of landscape and figure, is the most emotionally overpowering image in the entire film, and its sheer force



● A petulant monomaniac turned national legend: Eric Fryer in *The Terry Fox Story*

as history and myth means that Thomas, not by nature a manipulative director, can let the story's force rise naturally from the characters and the images. One quivers in terror at the thought of what an emotional mugger like Mark Rydell (*On Golden Pond*) might have done, had he got his hands on this film.

*The Terry Fox Story* follows its hero from the day he discovers his cancer to the end of the run, where he learns of a new tumor in his lung and is sent home. It covers the relationship with his family, best friend, girlfriend, and Bill Vigers, the Cancer society representative.

Given that Terry Fox is in virtually every frame of the film, an enormous weight falls on Eric Fryer, the young Scarberian who, like Fox, lost a leg to cancer and makes his acting debut here. It is, for someone who must have endured a similar experience to Fox (chemotherapy and learning to walk again), no doubt an emotionally traumatic role as well as one that was physically killing. The first time I saw the film, it seemed that Fryer had an obvious emotional connection with the character he was playing, but that he lacked the acting tools to really give it full expression. The second time through, Fryer seemed more appropriate, as the realization came that Fox himself lacked the expressive tools to bring out what he

was feeling – a great deal of the appeal was that this kid from B.C. obviously was sitting on top of an emotional volcano and struggling to articulate what he felt about his leg, his disease, and the tremendous waves of mass emotion that flowed toward him from the day he crossed the Ontario border to his near canonization at Toronto's City Hall. While it's hard to say if Fryer has the talent to go on and continue acting (he has apparently landed a role in *Home Fires*), he is certainly a major discovery in terms of this film.

Thomas and producer Robert Cooper have been smart enough to surround Fryer with some of the best acting talent available. It is not necessary to speak of the awesome talent of Robert Duvall – anyone who has been to the movies in the past 20 years or so knows how good he is. But a few words are in order on Michael Zelnicker and Chris Makepeace (who plays Terry's brother, Darrell). In a way, the most sympathetic character is Doug Alward. It is not easy for the average person to imagine achieving an impossible task against a crippling handicap. Most people avoid thinking about handicaps, for the simple reason that it is too strong a reminder of the terrible fragility of the human body. Yet it is rather easy to connect with someone who is shunted to the sidelines in an

emotionally stressful situation.

Alward is an interesting character in the film, because he seems to have no family, no friends save Terry, and nothing important to do with his life but drive the van for his friend. With his hair cut jock-short, his glasses and hooded sweatshirts, Zelnicker projects an almost monkish asceticism into the character, simultaneously conveying the sense that he knows he is helping his best friend commit suicide, and being perfectly willing to help him, because he knows that he can do nothing to dissuade him.

It is also very pleasant to see Makepeace, a moist-eyed, worshipful wimp in films like *Meatballs* and *The Last Chase*, finally playing a character with a few smarts of his own. It may be the first time that he has actually been likeable on screen.

The rest of the cast is uniformly good – special mention should be made of Elva Mai Hoover, who plays Terry's mother, and is thus saddled with one almost unplayable scene – and lends a sort of authenticity to the proceedings. The insistence on the Canadianness of the project comes through in large part because all the actors appear with their accents, like, intact, eh? While it may be rare to see a Canadian flag on-screen in a Canadian film, or to hear Toronto referred to as Toronto, it is even rarer to hear that constricted Ontario voice squeezing out through the emotionally clenched vocal cords of real Canadian actors.

*The Terry Fox Story* captures the heroism of its subject by refusing to shy away from his often unpleasant humanity, and that may be its remarkable achievement. It shows some aspect of the reality behind the myth (the most noble suicide of our time) without betraying the innately heroic aspect of the myth.

John Harkness ●

**THE TERRY FOX STORY** d. Ralph L. Thomas p. Robert Cooper sc. Edward Hume story John Kastner & Rose Kastner exec. p. Gursten I. Rosenfeld & Michael A. Levine assoc. p. John Eckert d.o.p. Richard Ciupka art d. Gavin Mitchell ed. Ron Wisman casting Canadian Casting Associates music Bill Conti p. man. Joyce Kozy King unit loc. man. Otta Hanus 1st a. d. Bill Corcoran asst. d. Bruce Moriarty. Kim Winther, Jacques Hubert, Hagan Beggs asst. art d. Rolf Harvey cam. op. Andy Chmura 1st asst. cam. Neil Seal 2nd asst. cam. Kerry Smart Steadicam op. Ted Churchill sd. rec. Bruce Carwardine boom Glen Gauthier sd. ed. Jon Hopkins re-rec. Joe Grimaldi set dec. Mark Freeborn asst. set dec. Paul Harding props master Dan Wladyka asst. prop. master George Farrell ward. Lynda Kempasst. ward. Erla Lank make-up Michele Burke hair Malcolm Tanner gaffer Steve Ferrier best boy John Forjans key grip Michael Kohne grip James Kohne driver captain Brian O'Hara craft service Debbie Beers gen. op. Mike Beer extras Karen Pike & Linda Egan unit publicist Marlee Novak p. assts. Carole Riback, Kelly Makin sc. sup. Sarah Grahame p. acc't. Ann Fitzgerald p. co-ord. Deborah Zwickler asst. to the p. Marlee Novak asst. ed. Bryon White Foley ed. Terry Burke music ed. Steven A. Hope asst. sd. ed. Richard Kelly stills Lawrie Baskin p.c. Robert Cooper Production in assoc. with H.B.O. and CTV with the participation of Superchannel. dist. Astral Films/Twentieth Century-Fox. 35mm colour running time: 98 mins. L.p. Robert Duvall, Eric Fryer, Chris Makepeace, Rosalind Chao, Michael Zelnicker, Elva Mai Hoover, Frank Adamson, Marie McCann, B.H. Thomson, Saul Rubinek, Chuck Shamat, Clyde Rose, Patrick Watson, Austin Davis, Matt Craven, Dorothy Wyatt, Steven Hunter, Robert Des Roches, Jayne Foster, Karen Racicot, Howie Siegel, Laura Vickers, Gary Darycott, Gary Baker, Wayne Brace, Barry Greene, Al Coombs, Lori Chodos, Laurie Oberdin, Jaclyn Stevens, Ian Heath, Brian Kaulback, Murray Lowry, Susan Payne.







## Douglas Williams' **Best of Both Worlds**

CBC's feature-length romantic comedy *Best of Both Worlds*, which aired April 21, leaves one with the uncomfortable suspicion that the more "Canadian" people become, the less value they retain as human beings.

Sharmila (Malika Mendez), a charming young Indian beauty, is flown direct from Asia for a family-arranged marriage with Anil (Sugith Varughese), the Canadianized son of (presumably) first-generation immigrants, whom she's never met. But Anil already has a girlfriend, Tammy (Gaye Burgess), the pampered daughter of wealthy Toronto WASPS, and agrees to the marriage only when he learns about the \$50,000 dowry that comes with his mail-order bride. It's "the big chance" they've been waiting for - Anil plans to use the 50 grand to set up in business, so he'll be able to keep Tammy "in the style to which she's accustomed" (though he'll keep a few thousand aside for an RRSP - Anil's already a very Canadian sort of entrepreneur).

In short, Anil is a creep on the make, and one of the lesser mysteries of the plot is why two lovely women should both be fighting over him. But director Douglas Williams never lets the pace slacken enough for us to worry much about it.

More worrisome is the moral vacuity of characters like Anil and Tammy. Anil, a first-generation-born Canadian, works hard to deny his cultural roots: when his mother serves an Indian dinner, he goes to the fridge looking for left-over pizza. Or he amuses his WASP girlfriend with his 'Peter Sellers' take-off on an East Indian accent, though the humor falls flat with Sharmila there as a mirror for Anil's cultural suicide.

Having defined his identity in negatives - the great Canadian compromise - in the end Anil is loyal only to money. His new wife shows him the antique jewelry she's brought as her dowry; the reflection of light from the gold ripples across her head like the aura of a madonna, and the materialist Anil is impressed. The fact that the dowry takes the form of a family heirloom, instead of ready cash as Anil had expected ("I thought it would be a cheque," he says desperately) is a vivid capsule summary of the contradiction between Old World values and New.

Specifically, the rejection of the Old World implies the disintegration of the power of the family - i.e., arranged marriages - but once 'liberated' from family, the isolated individual finds that his only link with society is through the mega-corporation. Thus Anil's cluttered bachelor apartment is crowded with huge cartons of the soapflake product he promotes in supermarkets. (One of the few times we see any spunk in Anil - or any hint of life in his relationship with Tammy - is when they perform a little guerilla theatre to dupe a supermarket manager into granting Anil's soapflakes better shelf space.)

Anil's scam (ripping off the dowry) expresses his profound disdain for his cultural roots, a common enough New World disorder among first-generation immigrants or *independentistes*.

But Anil begins to sense that he has underestimated the strength of the old culture as he stands under the wedding canopy with his radiant bride, surrounded

by well-wishers - the extended family, the tribe. In the flower-strewn hotel suite when Sharmila (the woman he met only a few hours before) unabashedly summons him to his marital duties, our hero, this child of the new America, destroyer of tradition's stifling bonds, can only flee.

In this sea of moral bankruptcy - like the swimming-pool in Tammy's house which her mother keeps well-stocked with bored young lawyers - Sharmila stands out like a beacon of hope for humanity. She's a sort of Superwoman - beautiful, charming, patient, courageous, and a scrappy fighter. Billed as the unfortunate dupe in Anil's dowry-heist, she quickly makes mincemeat of Tammy and when the melodrama ends we are confident that she may even manage to make, if not a man of Anil, at least a satisfactorily domesticated stud. Tradition will be maintained for perhaps another generation, thanks to this fresh infusion of values from the old country.

Sharmila's secret, of course, is that *her* life is still meshed with her traditional values - she knows what she believes, and therefore she believes in herself. The only thing Canadian about her is that, like the RCMP, she gets her man - and there's something quaintly nostalgic about that too, in this age of cynicism about monogamy. (When Anil claims his parents know nothing of love if they believe in arranged marriages, his father retorts: "In our culture, you don't fall in love, you grow into it!")

And yet *Best of Both worlds* is no blind eulogy to a Golden Age of the past either. Sharmila admits to Anil that the reason she was ready to marry him, was to get out of India. When Tammy, in a last-ditch attempt to hang onto Anil, praises the richness and romance of India, Sharmila shoots her down: "If you haven't been there, how do you know?"

Tradition may carry important human values, but the old worlds that produced them are no longer - and here we come against the major stumbling-block of *Best of Both Worlds*. True, for the moment Sharmila's determination and strong roots have saved the day, but what about tomorrow? In an age when one in three marriages end in divorce, can "girl gets man" really do as a satisfactory denouement? Already by the end, Sharmila has changed her clothes and hairdo for western styles - "You're

beautiful!" Anil exclaims.

A vital key to the politics of cultural imperialism is that the colonized develop a taste for the boss's treacle, and soon prefer it to domestic brands. And so the implicit theme of cultural dilution of *Best of Both Worlds* becomes a critical comment on Canadian production awash in the gooey treacle from the airwaves south of the border. Because Canadian productions are themselves a minority in the continental broadcasting environment, they're judged by a separate standard - and TV in North America prefers not to be judged at all, it just IS.

True, there's often something that chaffs about a Canadian production like *Best of Both Worlds*. At first I thought it was Sugith Varughese's acting that wasn't up to pip - there was something uncomfortably wrong about Anil. But that wasn't it either. American TV has habituated us to expect strong male heroes, surrounded by a court of supportive females. Egos somewhat frazzled at the edges after a day at work, Americans settle down each evening in front of their multi-channel dream machines for a fresh dose of mythology - from the mainline. That's why American TV must be written to a formula, like Harlequin romances.

But while Canadians have proven quite capable of reproducing the formula flawlessly in some of the simpler genres (e.g., Harlequin romances or *Porky's*), on (some) film and TV lingers a revisionist tendency to portray reality. This may be in part a residuum of Canada's strong documentary tradition, but, more important, it reflects the unacknowledged preoccupation with our economic and political - and therefore cultural - dependence. Canadians know only too well that they're not the heroes, and therefore an impotent, equivocating, worm like Anil can slip in as a *pseudo-hero*. Unfortunately, such a radical departure from the prescribed litany generates sufficient discomfort in the regular TV *aficionado* that he often switches channels.

Still, the fact that *Best of Both Worlds* was made and aired at all is proof that Canada has grown a lot. Not so long ago, a CBC producer would have steered clear of a social comedy that made light of the customs of one of our minority groups - and yet, in a country where more people now stem from "minority"

groups than from either of the "founding" nations, what else is Canada about if not the dialectic between Old and New World values?

Recently a group of CBC producers published a proposal recommending that the public network commit itself to a policy of 100% Canadian content. Unfortunately we still live in a time when such a proposal can scarcely hope to be taken seriously. And yet, in the end, a film like *Best of Both Worlds* is an eloquent argument for how much we would stand to gain from such a policy.

Alan Herscovici ●

**BEST OF BOTH WORLDS** p. Lawrence S. Mirkin d. Douglas Williams sc. Sugith Varughese asst. d. Rob Malenfant unit man. Alan MacPherson designer David Moe cont. Kathryn Buck d.o.p. Nick Evdemon casting Dorothy Gardner, Claire Hewitt, Michelle Metivier p. sec. Susan Howard p.e. CBC running time 86 min., 6 sec. Lp. Sugith Varughese, Malika Mendez, Gaye Burgess, Maida Rogerson, Joe Ziegler, Layne Coleman, Angelo Rizacos, Jack Jessop, Desh Bandu, Sanyogta Singh, Swarran Singh, Elena Kudaba, Alf Humphries, Charlotte Freedlander, Al Bernado, Amrita Sethi, Samantha Singh.

Michael Rubbo's

## **Daisy: The Story of a Facelift**

*In documentary, character is everything. In fact I'd say that documentary is the unconscious search for character. I say unconscious because we documentary filmmakers have often not realized the importance to our films of character delineation. We have often been too concerned with issues to notice that it is only when these issues are lived by a real person that they become interesting.*

Michael Rubbo

This is not the story of Daisy's face, before and after. Ironically, in this film about a facelift, the face is relatively unimportant. It is Daisy De Bellefeuille's sense of humour and incisive character that carry the film beyond the level of investigative cinematic journalism. Ultimately the film becomes one of character portrayal, a study of the private person behind the mask. And this is probably exactly what Rubbo intended.

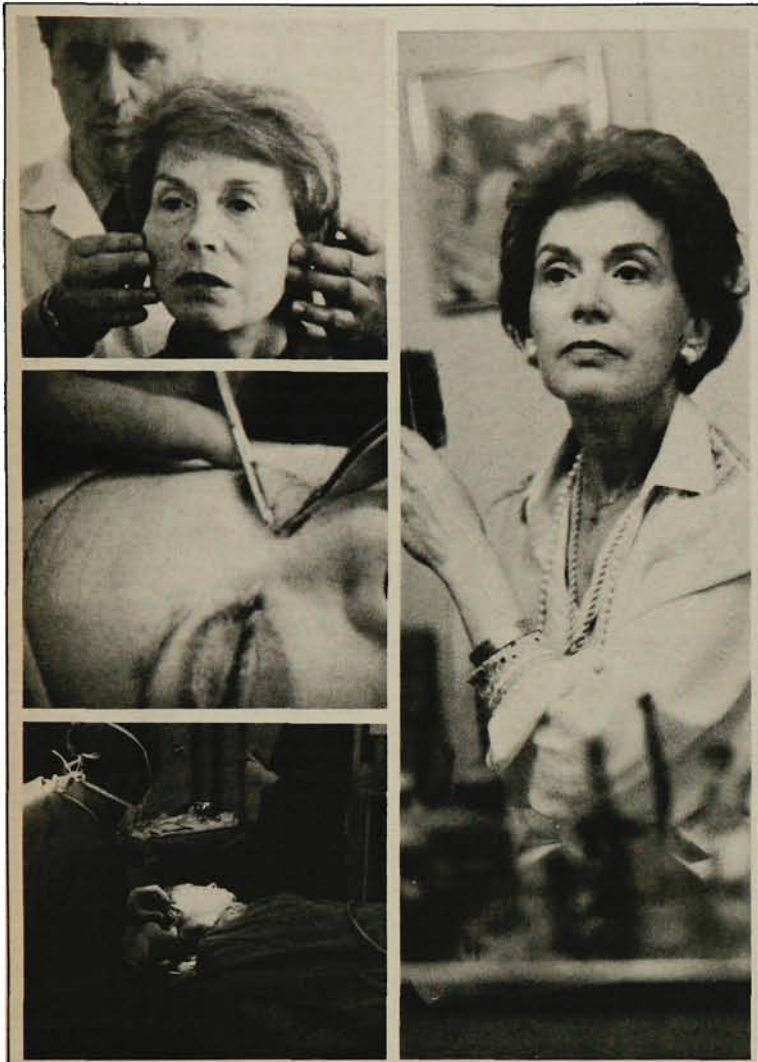
From the moment Daisy, a 55-year-old National Film Board executive, makes her decision to have a facelift, Rubbo and his camera follow her through the various emerging stages of her experience: rational, psychological, emotional and medical. In Rubbo's characteristic documentary style, he forges a relationship with Daisy which allows her to unfold naturally and easily before the camera. Once he has gained her trust and acceptance, he can begin to assert his own opinions as an agent provocateur: he can ask touchy, leading questions which provoke Daisy to unravel motives behind her elective surgery: vanity, insecurity and a need to be loved. Rubbo's discreet yet persistent on-screen presence is the catalyst behind Daisy's unfolding.

Daisy is compelled - in response to the sometimes unsympathetic, uncomprehending judgements of friends and acquaintances, sometimes by Rubbo's



● East-West duologue: Sugith Varughese flanked by Gaye Burgess (left) and Malika Mendez





● Michael Rubbo's latest is indeed a slice of life

photos: National Film Board of Canada

probing questions, and more often by her own propensity for self-analysis – to face the truth within herself. She admits that she is terrified of growing old, afraid that “the past may become more interesting than the future.” In a rather cruel, unobtrusive juxtaposition, Rubbo gives us Daisy's greatest fear – that of becoming “a little old lady who simply behaves herself” – as the camera focuses on a grey-haired old woman attempting against all odds to look dainty whilst eating a sandwich under a hairdryer. Rubbo proceeds to audaciously rub the point in further as he has the old lady pose demurely, newly coiffed and tottering, before the mocking camera eye. Unfortunately, this little old lady who incarnates Daisy's greatest fear, *has* behaved for Rubbo's camera, and has unwittingly derided herself in the context of the act.

The point is driven in, again and again, that there are cogent arguments in support of cosmetic surgery. First and foremost: human beings are inclined to discriminate on the basis of appearance. As an attractive woman whose signs of age are beginning to show, Daisy knows this only too well. A self-proclaimed romantic, she once saw work as “something a woman did in between being in love.” But now she, who lived her life for a man, ends up with a terrific career and no man. The men who used to come and go, now mostly go. So it is time to upgrade the product, because Daisy is ready to fall in love again.

She tests her hypothesis that looks and youth are critical factors which

attract men to women on her doctor-friend's husband. He readily admits that before you open the package, you look at the wrapping. And in an age when quick first impressions are usually the only bases we have for either pursuing or avoiding further contact, older women stand less chance of nabbing the man than their youthful, more attractive counterparts. (Daisy claims that a man's attractiveness is less important.)

Rubbo does some investigating of his own. At the New York Public Library, he researches the work of early physiognomists who claimed that there was some relationship between facial features and character or disposition. To test whether we still look at faces this way, he asks a psychologist from the University of Massachusetts (who unequivocally claims that people's faces influence the way we think about them), an employment counsellor (who says that 85 percent of the information we receive about another person is visual) and a waitress (who admits that the prettier waitresses get the best tips). Obviously Daisy has a point.

Once the value system out of which Daisy made her decision has been fully scrutinized, Rubbo moves in on the medical practitioners who capitalize on it: the cosmetic surgeons. They see themselves as fulfilling a societal need. In restructuring noses, breasts, buttocks, thighs and faces, these sculptors of human flesh bestow their clients with the bodily features they feel themselves entitled to, the features they feel really belong to them. Post-operative clients

willingly testify to their happiness with their new appearance. They candidly admit to a previous dissatisfaction with their looks and all confess that they underwent surgery so that they could have an appearance that they could live with. Vanity is taken for granted; no moral or social guilt trips here.

Daisy perceives herself as fortunate for never having learned the meaning of “Anglo-Saxon guilt.” She philosophizes that everything comes and goes: marriages, children, money... In the end, says this veteran of three failed marriages and mother of two children: “All you're stuck with is yourself.” And as it helps to be stuck with a self you can accept, if that means tampering with the wrapping, so be it.

During the facelift sequence, Rubbo's mellow narration and soothing instrumentals coax the squeamish viewer gently through the gruesome procedure. “Now comes the nasty part, close your eyes,” he warns as a rubbery flap of cheek skin is pincer-stretched to one side, and the surgeon extracts spirals of fat from underneath the patient's chin. At this moment of truth – when an anaesthetized face is being cut, trimmed and re-fitted – we see the face for what it is: a mask.

Six weeks after Daisy's facelift, she is packing for a European tour. She still looks like Daisy. The difference is perceptible, but barely. Like the difference between a tired face and a rested one, she now seems a shade smoother, more relaxed. But she knows her face best after living with it for 55 years, and to her the difference is obvious and striking. She feels more secure about her appearance and projects a more attractive persona. And... yes, Daisy gets her man.

Lyn Martin ●

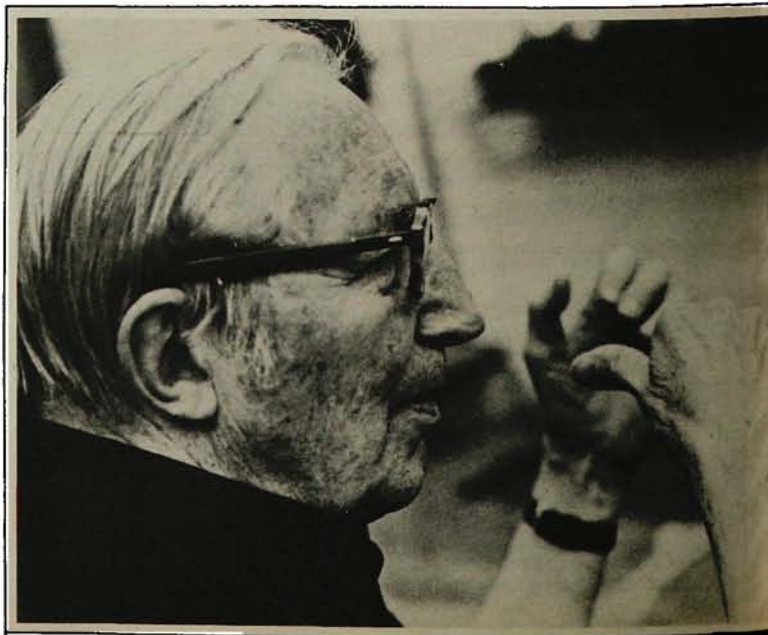
**DAISY: THE STORY OF A FACELIFT** d./ed. Michael Rubbo d.o.p. Susan Trow add. photog. Ned Johnston mus. ed. Julian Olson loc. sd. Claude Hazanavicius add. loc. sd. Alex Griswold, Yves Gendron sd. ed. André Galbrand sd. eff. & mus. ed. Julian Olson re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl orig. treatment Michael Rubbo, Kate Jansen from an idea by Harry Gulkin research Kate Jansen p. Michael Rubbo assoc. p. Giles Walker exec. p. Adam Symansky, produced and distributed by The National Film Board of Canada running time 57:40 colour 16mm.

## Donald Winkler's F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason

Director Donald Winkler has a number of fine films to his credit, including *In Praise of Hands* (1974), *Travel Log* (1978) and *Earle Birney: Portrait of a Poet* (1981). Director-editor Albert Kish has also gained distinction by his work on films like *Best Damn Fiddler From Calabodie to Kaladar* (1968, editor), *Time Piece* (1971), *Los Canadienses* (1975), and *Paper Wheat* (1978). *F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason* is the fourth film on which Winkler and Kish have collaborated. Perhaps that is why I was so surprised to find the film tediously boring and without a heart.

There is no doubt that F.R. Scott is himself an amazing human being: poet, politician, lawyer, constitutional expert, defender of civil liberties. Organizer of the League for Social Reconstruction in 1932 and its president from 1935-36, national chairman of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) from 1942-1950, member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, dean of law at McGill University from 1961 to 1964, F.R. Scott has throughout his life been engaged with the major social questions of our times. He seems, in essence, a man of concepts and words. Clearly, a man of reason. But the title of the film promises rhyme as well. And this, in its deepest sense, we do not find here.

The film does quote from Scott's poetry. But something more is needed, something to humanize for us this man of concepts and abstractions and legalistic brilliance. Instead, the film is strictly academic in the worst sense of that word. It is like a lengthy lecture and its overwhelming verbosity makes us yearn for moments of silence, lightness, laughter. There is almost an endless stream of “talking heads.” The interviews with David Lewis, Leon Edel, A.M. Smith, Louis Dudek, Graham Fraser, and Marcel Rioux all seem coldly analytical in



● Brilliance without heart: poet F.R. Scott as a talking head



content and visually repetitious: a medium-shot of a man discussing an abstract idea. Talking heads are not in themselves anathema, nor is the discussion of abstract ideas, but the combination on such a scale seems to move us further and further into impersonal, academic abstraction. Certainly we move further away from the man, F.R. Scott, and any sense of him as a whole person. There is so little emotion expressed in the film that even the interview with his son, Peter Scott, concentrates on the father's ideas. As words pile upon more words, they begin to seem like a protective device to keep us from seeing who F.R. Scott really is.

Unfortunately, the chronological structure of the film does not serve to its advantage either. The archival stills and footage are simply not visually interesting enough to contribute anything on their own. They are used like visual aids to a lecture, literally translating facts in the commentary. At times this visual paucity becomes embarrassing, as when the filmmakers utilize courtroom sketches to illustrate a legal case undertaken by Scott, or when a montage of newspaper clippings is supposed to illuminate a point. I saw this film with a friend. At its end, she turned to me and said, "This should have been a book." In this monology, the filmmakers have included some of F.R. Scott's poetry; they should have put in little of their own.

Joyce Nelson ●

**F.R. SCOTT: RHYME AND REASON**  
exec. p. Barrie Howells p. Tom Daly d./sc. Donald Winkler ed. Albert Kish d.o.p. Barry Perles, Andy Kitzanuk research Sheila Fischman loc. sd. Bev Davidson, Jean-Guy Normandin, Hans Oomes mus. Alain Clavier mus. rec. Louis Hone re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl colour 16mm running time 57 min. p.c. National Film Board, 1983.

## Mini-reviews

*With this issue Cinema Canada increases its coverage of Canadian short films by publishing a "Mini-review" section each month. Over 1000 Canadian shorts are produced every year. By concentrating on one distributor each month and reviewing a series of shorts, we hope to be able to cover more films than in the past and to give that distributor more exposure. This month features shorts from Kinetic Film Enterprises Ltd., Toronto.*

### ACID REIGN

A short sharp overview of an "invisible, silent, form of violence." Lyrical views of the beauties of nature, including lovely lakes, lead to melting snow which harbours the acid rain released in the spring melt.

Foliage and berries die; lead pipes carrying drinking water are eaten away; building stonework decays inexorably; and a public statutory displays mute evidence of erosion with the loss of extremities and faces smoothed to blankness.

Smoke stacks, factories and car exhausts all lead to the low-key message – a need for laws to contain acid rain and for a combined US/Canada effort.

Good photography and underwhelming music reinforce this introduction to one of today's relentless problems.

**ACID REIGN** A film by Helen Henshaw. 10 min. 16mm.

### HIGHWINDING

Mike Gadd, Harry Hall and Derek Wulff, wizards of board sailing, or wind surfing as it is popularly known, display their fabulous footwork and expertise.

A lesson for beginners shows that everyone keeps falling into the water at first, but it takes only a few hours to learn the basics.

The experts give a nifty display of the tricky stuff – sailing the board on its edge, turning completely around while bowling along (and still staying upright), and a series of backwards and forwards bends with head touching the rushing water.

A lively, interesting look at the popular sport, with not too much talk, pleasant music, and lovely photography from Barry Stone.

**HIGHWINDING** d. Eric Goddard cam. Barry Stone p. Paul Caulfield p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 15 min. 16mm.

### SEASONS OF THE MIND

A look at two senior citizens, Doug Robinson and Bill MacQuillan, who filled the gaps in their lives by going to university.

Both in their early '70s, they had tried volunteer work, but the need to more fully exercise the mind led them to seek the higher learning that had been denied them in the '20s depression.

But it's not all a bed of roses. There's the problem of coping with new equipment, organizing study-time, and the mind too – the old memory bank isn't what it was, says one ruefully.

A stimulating look at the retirement life of two determined people fitting in well with the younger academic element, and all reaping benefits. Competently shot, but with uninspiring 'wallpaper' music which, luckily, doesn't detract from the gutsy subject matter.

**SEASONS OF THE MIND** d./cam. Anthony Hall add. cam. Terence Macartney-Filgate p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 21 min. 16mm.

### JOHN DOE

A rueful look at losing one's job and why – though the 'why' remains elusive.

A scripted piece of gentle humour introducing John Doe discovering the name plate being removed from his office door.

Back in his apartment he telephones without success: "I'd like to talk to someone about my job." But the word is out, and the repossession of his possessions starts. In the end, John Doe is left with the one thing they cannot take away...

A slight, rather soft little exercise, with good production values – well shot by Mark Irwin and with David Grimes' pleasant original music. But what does it say? Not much, really.

**JOHN DOE** d./sc. Larry Moore cam. Mark Irwin musc. (composed/performed) David Grimes p. Paul Caulfield l.p. Larry Moore, Ray Landry p.c. Film Arts Ltd. 8 min. 16mm.

### THE VEGETARIAN WORLD

"Animals are my friends, and I don't eat my friends."

George Bernard Shaw

A whirlwind tour of vegetarianism, hosted by William Shatner, himself a devotee of meatless meals.

An entire approach to life is reinforced by people recounting their reasons for the choice and illustrations from around the world – Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and various eastern countries. Many names are dropped of famous vegetarians – Socrates, Shelley, Schweitzer, DaVinci, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and, of course, Shaw. Discussions of recipes and the array of dishes are enough to make the mouth water.

There's a section of nasty bits relating to chickens being killed and cattle slaughter in abattoirs, plus the horrors of raising milk-fed veal.

Children's perception of animals as friends, and then their eventual realization they are eating them, seems a mite forced.

A summary of facts and statistics indicates that if more pasture land was utilized to produce vegetables and fruit, more of the world population could be fed.

According to publicity, this film was three years in the making and filmed in nine countries. It seems such a big effort for such a tiny nibble at what appears to be a fascinating mode of life. Too many snippets of information are crammed into too little time and the film exudes a faintly self-righteous air. However, as an introduction, a starting point for further exploration, it certainly has its uses.

**THE VEGETARIAN WORLD** p./d./cam. Jonathon Kay sc. William Whitehead & John Benrose orig. mus. Bernie Senensky, performed by Moe Koffman Quintet host/narrator William Shatner. 28 min. 50 sec. 16mm.

Pat Thompson ●

● The lyricism of pollution: Helen Henshaw's *Acid Reign* introduces one of today's relentless problems

