

ally and unself-consciously, to be very Canadian.

Of the performances in *The Brood*, only Michael Magee's as Inspector Mrazek, seems wrong. Art Hindle is convincing as a low-key, unemotional man coping with his fears and his deep love for his daughter in a low-key, unemotional way. Samantha Eggar as Nola treads the fine line between the obviously sane and the obviously insane with sympathetic and eerie effect. Nuala Fitzgerald shows all the tension, fear and self-deception in Nola's mother. The best performance, though, comes from Bob Silverman as a victim of Dr. Raglan's methods. The part is small

and mostly comic. Silverman milks his lines for all they're worth and gets more laughs from bits of business. At the same time his bitterness and obsessions make him a menacing figure constantly on the verge of losing control. He's like one of those eccentrics who used to inhabit *The Avengers* in the days of Emma Peel, but much more effective.

The Brood closed in Toronto in less than a month. I suspect its potential audiences were more interested in *Alien* and *Prophecy*. But in twenty years, when they're long forgotten, *The Brood* will be a television and revival showing favourite and just as enjoyable then as now.

Andrew Dowler

Theodore J. Flicker's Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang

d. Theodore J. Flicker, asst.d. Mireille Goulet, Pierre Poirier, sc. Theodore J. Flicker, casting Howard Rysphan, ph. Francois Protat, camera op. Allen C. Smith, sp.ph.effects Michael Albrechtson, sup.ed. Stan Cole, sd. Ken Helley-Ray, sd.ed. Patrick Drummond, Ellen Adams, continuity Monique Champagne, a.d. Seamus Flannery, m. Lewis Furey, cost. Francois Barbeau, makeup Marie-Angele Protat, Diane Simard, l.p. Stephen Rosenberg, Alex Karras, Guy L'Ecuyer, Joy Coghill, Claude Gai, Earl Pennington, Victor Desy, Marfa Richler, Thor Bishopric, Yvon Leroux, Basil Fitzgibbon, Walter Massey, Jill Frappier, Nan Stewart, Deena Baikowitz, Ainsley Robertson, John Wildman, Kirsten Bishopric, Marc Goldstein, Geoffrey Kramer, Stephanie Brandman, Peter Tanaka, Ryan Campbell, Rona Sinclair, exec.p. John Flaxman, p. Harry Gulkin, p.manager Mychele Boudrias, p.c. Gulkin Productions, (year) 1976, col. 35mm, running time 80 minutes, dist. Gulkin Productions/Saguenay Films.

In recent years, feature films made for a children's audience or "family films," as the industry likes to call them, have been something of a graveyard for directors. The 1976 version of *The Blue Bird*, directed by elder statesman George Cukor, was disparaged and ignored. Bryan Forbes, who had a reputation as a sensitive maker of films with youngsters, saw that reputation damaged when *International Velvet* — even with Tatum O'Neal — did



Stephen Rosenberg who plays Jacob Two-Two awaits the verdict that will sentence him to children's prison

so badly that M.G.M. would not even release figures on it. To be sure, the stature of Walt Disney Productions remains high, but now it largely rests on their past triumphs and the occasional (for them) innovative idea like *Freaky Friday*. By and large, however, the output from Disney is so trivial that even such traditionally favorable observers like Judith Ripp of *Parents' Magazine* have taken the studio to task for their shallowness. In spite of this, these films continue to do good business, for fairly obvious reasons:

they enable parents to send their kids to the movies without the moral qualms that attend even so innocent a film as *Star Wars*, and they enable exhibitors to make a killing on the concessions.

Once in a while, though, a film does come along which tries to be entertaining for children and has some artistic pretensions as well. Such a picture was Alan Parker's *Bugsy Malone* which, in spite of its kinky overtones, was really just a game of dress-up carried to a logical conclusion, made for a generation which, because of television, is more cinematically literate than its predecessors. And *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* should have had a similar effect and have made a fair bid to become a classic in the manner of *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz*. That the Harry Gulkin-Ted Flicker production is not really up to those standards is a disappointment, but perhaps understandable in the light of the troubles that have surrounded it.

The story of the "repatriation" of Mordecai Richler's best selling children's novel has already been told (*Cinema Canada*, No. 31), and the further problems which Harry Gulkin encountered may be summarized briefly. The American distributor, Cinema Shares, lost interest in *Jacob Two-Two* after some negative test screenings in 1977 and, for the next year or so, stories appeared telling of how the producer was trying, without much success, to find an alternative source to handle it. With 1979 designated as International Year of The Child, Gulkin decided to do it himself, and in March opened the film at Montreal's Snowdon Theatre. Soon, the cast-off film was outdrawing Disney's *The North Avenue Irregulars*. That was enough for Saguenay Films to pick it up.

As finally released, the film, at 80 minutes in length, is able to avoid the extraneous padding that often causes family films to sprawl unnecessarily. Jacob (Stephen Rosenberg), a two-plus-two-plus-two-year-old who has to say everything twice because no one listens to him the first time, falls asleep in Mount Royal Park after running away from a grocer (Earl Pennington) who threatens to have him arrested for insulting an adult. In his dream, he finds himself before Mr. Justice Rough, (also played by Pennington), and a jury-cum-choir which sings platitudes at him ("It's for your own good...



La Presse's Paris correspondent Bernard Robitaille masked as Richard Nixon faces off with director Michael Rubbo masked as Valery Giscard D'Estaing

to the documentary genre. Rubbo is different. He appears an open filmmaker interested in culture and politics, and above all in film. Rubbo shares with the unit B filmmakers (Colin Low, Wolf Koenig, Tom Daley) a playfulness and an aesthetic delight in the medium. His films have the humor of *Lonely Boy*, the sense of social responsibility of *Back-Breaking Leaf* and the commitment to entertain, even in as dry a subject as astronomy (the NFB film *Universe*).

Now, to the case at hand, Michael Rubbo's latest film, *Solzhenitsyn's Children Are Making a Lot of Noise in Paris* (1979). The title is as double-edged as the subject matter. One almost expects a tour of the political sandboxes of Paris or the discovery of a new wave of "flower children" emanating from Truffaut's cultural garden. Instead Rubbo presents us with an update on the upset of the state of political philosophy in Paris, where philosophy and politics have been mixed these past two centuries. Did you know that both Marx and Lenin spent significant time in the cafés of Paris?

Political philosophy is in itself a very non-visual subject for a film. Rubbo does all he can to respect the concepts but to humanize their delivery to us. First of all he, himself, stranger to Parisian politics, appears in the film. To introduce himself and us to the ideas and personalities, he takes as his guide,

Bernard Robitaille, Paris correspondent for the Montreal newspaper *La Presse*. And during the presidential election of 1977 — the first election in forty years to threaten France with a Leftist Government — he talks to the political thinkers of Paris, and he discovers why France will not have a Communist Government — there is a serious crisis in the Left. The Communists, the Maoists, the Leninists, all the factions of the left are undergoing an identity crisis, and Solzhenitsyn, his stature, his writing, his moral courage point to the heart of this crisis — the Russian experiment has not proved to be what it set out to be.

This rather simple observation may prove to be more revolutionary in its practical ramifications in world politics than the Revolution itself. (An exaggeration I make knowingly for dramatic effect.) The ripple effect from Paris outward is certain to touch us here in Canada where political and cultural identity could consequently blur even more.

Rubbo's approach is straightforward. He talks first to Jean Ellenstein, the philosopher of the French Communist Party. Communism in France is very different from the Russian experience. The French Communist Party believes in pluralism, in democracy. One by one, the victories of Communism are examined, via first hand participants. From Russia, the Jewish dissident, Victor

Feinberg. His protest of the invasion of Czechoslovakia was staged in Red Square. It lasted less than a minute. Beaten by KGB agents, he was taken away and institutionalized as insane. The "Cancer Ward" tries to cure all dissent in the USSR. Now in France, he is free. From Czechoslovakia proper, Rubbo interviews a former politician whose trial under Stalin foreshadowed the inevitability of the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia. If the Czechs could flirt with freedom, who would be next? Perhaps the Russian people themselves.

In one of the last interviews in the film Rubbo speaks, or rather is spoken to by Bernard Henri-Levy, the key man among the new philosophers, the young political thinkers who are attempting to turn France away from the Left. (Very reminiscent of the revival of Conservatism, neo-Conservatism as it is called in the United States.) Levy is ascetic, in black and white with his sand colored furniture. Austere and rather hypnotic. He identifies strongly with Solzhenitsyn's artistic power and moral courage. The Gulag ended all preconceptions about Communism. French Communism is not exempt. It is as great a threat to Democracy as is the Russian experience. But in France "the Barbarism," as he calls French Communism, wears a new face, but it remains what it always was.

French Communism and Russian Communism are not alone in coming under critical scrutiny. Rubbo and Robitaille speak to the authors of a book praising Maoist China. Having spent two years in China consequent to their first book, they wrote a second book condemning the Maoist experience. "The Enemy is From Within." They condemn the control the Communist Party holds over all aspects of life in China. If you want to marry, you have to ask permission of the local Party Committee. If you want to have a child, the Committee will tell you, if and when. There is no freedom of choice.

And onward to the other experiments in the Communist ideal — Vietnam, Cuba, Cambodia. Each in its turn is condemned in spite of Rubbo's own kind words about his Cuban experience. Each has become far from ideal. Each Communist State has created its own Gulag.

The reader might conclude that Rubbo's film is an anti-Communist tract. No at all. It is a film about disaffection of Communists with Communism as it exists. In this sense it is a disturbing

it hurts us more than it hurts you"). He is sentenced to two years, two months, two days, two hours and two minutes in the infamous Children's Prison on Slimers' Island ("from which no brats return"). In the custody of the scaly Master Fish (Guy L'Ecuyer) and the beak-nosed Mistress Fowl (Joy Coghill), he is taken to meet the warden, the Hooded Fang (Alex Karras), a roaring former wrestler who determines to break the boy of his duplicative habit. However, Jacob, with the aid of the representatives of Child Power, The Intrepid Shapiro (Marfa Richler) and The Fearless O'Toole (Thor Bishopric), is able to discover that the terrible creature is himself quite the child, and so is able to liberate the small prisoners.

It is to Ted Flicker's credit that he does not try to embroider this fairly simple fable and its message that the sensitivities of children should be respected, with any great flashiness, even if it does mean a rather uncinematic reliance on Richler's essentially verbal humor. Where he does use effects, it is with restraint, as in the trial scene, where Francois Protat's low angle photography heightens Jacob's feeling of insignificance before the implacable Adult Law. The design of the Children's Prison, though it could be criticized for looking too artificial, is a suitable surreal experience for a child exposed to animated cartoons and television commercials, while the jeans-and-jersey uniforms of Child Power form a link to Jacob's siblings' games in the prologue (again, the same persons double the roles), and the comic heroes they (and Richler) dote on. The only effect that really does not work is the gray makeup on the child prisoners, which makes them look uncomfortably like Romerian zombies.

Since the film is so verbal, Flicker and Gulkin were fortunate to be able to get the ideal person to play Jacob in Stephen Rosenberg. Neither too cute, nor too clever, he is justification enough for having the film made in Montreal, when one considers how a Disney child like Sean Marshall or a "personality" like Jimmy Osmond would have done it had it been shot in California as originally planned. Thor Bishopric and especially Marfa Richler (daughter of Mordecai) are outstanding among the 200 or so Montreal area children who appear alongside Stephen. Of the adult characters, the Judge, Master Fish, Mistress Fowl and

Mister Fox (Claude Gai), the head guard and saboteur of toys, are all creations worthy of Lewis Carroll. But Alex Karras is much too broad in his characterization of the Hooded Fang to be either menacing or pitiful, and this is a major weakness in Flicker's treatment.

By far, the greatest problem with *Jacob Two-Two*, aside from the Slime Squad, is in the variable quality of the sound. Some voices like the children's and Alex Karra's are relatively clear, but others like Guy L'Ecuyer's and Victor Desy's (who is not well used as the hapless lawyer Louis Loser), are almost hopelessly blurred. The songs are impossible to understand, and Lewis Furey, in an attempt to be gentle and innocent, winds up sounding like Cat Stevens instead.

Michael Rubbo's Solzhenitsyn's Children Are Making a Lot of Noise in Paris

d. Michael Rubbo, special collaboration Louis-Bernard Robetaille, sc. and narr. Michael Rubbo, ph. Andraes Poulsson, adnl.ph. Michael Edols, Michel Thomas-D'hoste, asst.camera Serge Lafortune, ed. Michael Rubbo, asst.ed. Stephan Steinhouse, loc.sd. Joseph Champagne, sd.ed. Andre Galbrand, asst.by Danuta Klis, re rec. Jean Pierre Joutel, Adrian Croll, unit admin. Janet Preston, exec.p. Arthur Hammond, p. Marrin Canell, p.c. The National Film Board, (year) 1979, col. 16mm, running time 87 minutes, 21 seconds.

While the rest of the world is struggling with its own changing nature, and the attendant angst and excitement, we, here in Canada, are looking for heroes. In no area is the search more intense than in the media. Media and culture, the right hand and the left, scrutinize and are scrutinized. Film is no exception. Indeed there is an implicit certainty in some circles that if Canada develops a feature film industry all will be well in this land.

That is quite a responsibility for the cultural artifact, the film, and for its maker. Think of it. A film is made, finally screened, on television or in a

It should not be thought that the film of *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* is a disaster, for the large audiences of children that have seen it during the matinee-only-screenings which Gulkin arranged as an interesting experiment that also saves money, are quite attentive to the story. There is little of the restlessness that is usual in the auditoriums when Disney films play. But there is also too little of the excitement found in the book. It would seem that the familiar problems of lack of time, money and co-ordination continue to bedevil the attempts of Canadian filmmakers like Harry Gulkin to translate literature into cinema.

J. Paul Costabile

theatre. It's like a sheep slaughtered at Delphi — inwards to be examined and analysed for portents of portents. First glimpse must reveal Canadian content. A sigh of relief then with the work of a Peter Pearson. Mine it, mine it for deep meaning. It is after all certifiably a national product. Very self-conscious. Often self-righteous. What of the subtle, non-overtly Canadian work of Michael Rubbo? It doesn't take place in Canada. The ideas aren't Canadian in any particular way. No wonder. He's Australian. Yes, dismiss him. Well, he does work for the National Film Board. They're all aesthetes and Communists. They, he, are of no account.

This very process has, in the past, lost to us, great artists. John Grierson immediately comes to mind. It would be shameful, if the same attitude, prompted Michael Rubbo to leave Canada.

In the past ten years Rubbo is responsible for at least two films that can rightly claim and have received recognition beyond our borders, *The Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1971) about the Vietnamese interface with the West during the Vietnam War and *Waiting for Fidel* (1974) about an attempted interface between a Canadian capitalist and his guide, politician Joey Smallwood and Fidel Castro. In both films Rubbo, as narrator or visual participant has placed himself as filmmaker in the unusual position of explorer.

He admits interest, curiosity, sometimes bewilderment, but never the distant sophomoric or all-knowing sensibility that has in the past lent the label dogmatic, or more subtly, educational,