

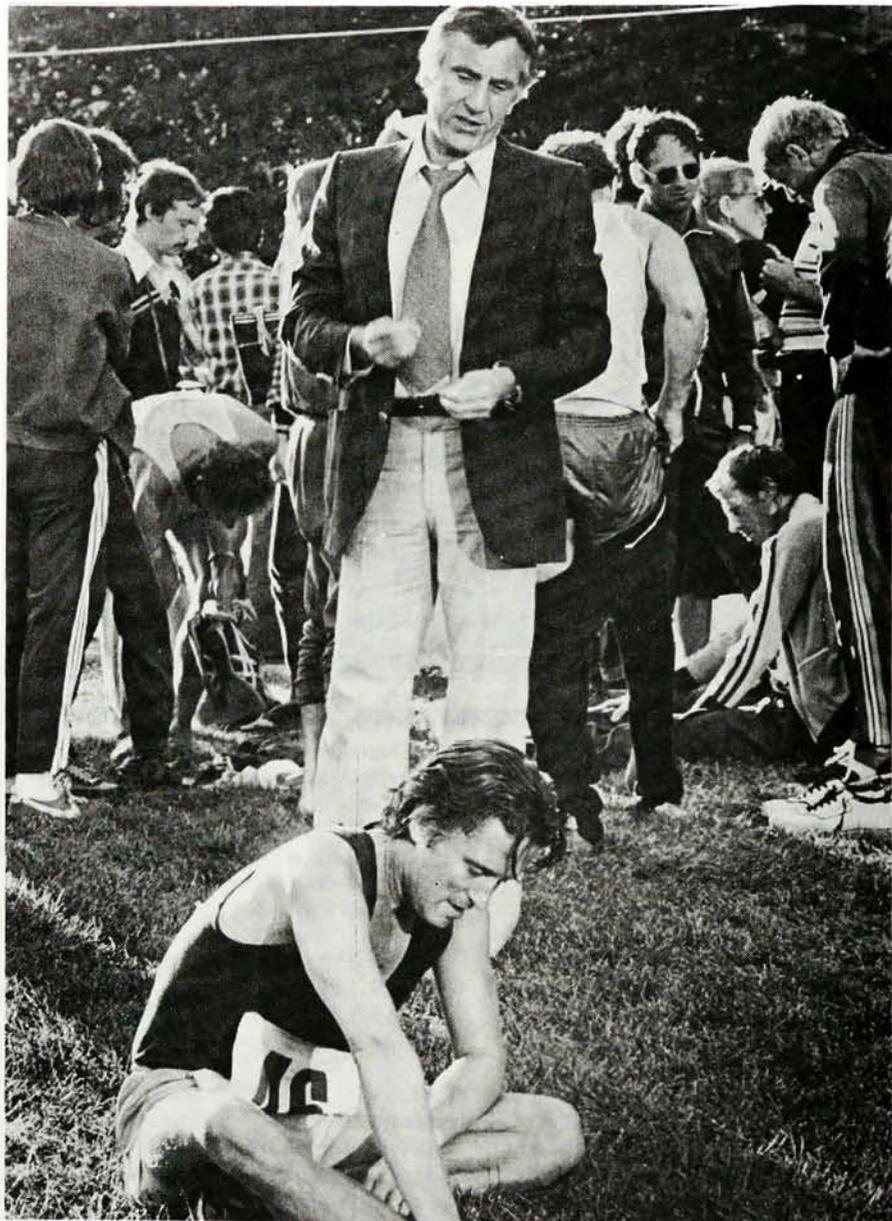
FILM REVIEWS

Steven Stern's Running

d. Steven Hilliard Stern **1st asst. d.** Alan Simmonds **asst. d.** Donald McCutcheon, Francois Ouimet, Ewa Zebrowski, Bruce Pustin, Bob Meneray, David Bailey **sc.** Steven Hilliard Stern **sc. sup.** Penelope Hynam **ph.** Laszlo George, csc **cam. op.** Henri Fiks, Bill Steiner, Jack Priestley, **1st asst. cam.** David Douglas **sup. film ed.** Kurt Hirschler **ed.** David Nicholson, cfe **asst. ed.** Michael MacLavery **loc. sd.** Owen Langevin, Nat Boxes, **boom op.** Stephen Switzer **sd. ed.** Alban Streeter, cfe **asst. sd. ed.** Hayden Streeter **sd. re-rec.** Joe Grimaldi, David Appleby **p. designer** Roy Forge Smith **prop. mast** John Fisher, Michael Bird **a.d.** Susan Longmire **asst. a.d.** Alfred Benson **set dress.** William Reid **make-up sup.** Maureen Sweeney, Rosemarie Gardner **hair** Sheila Yacimov **gaf** Ray Boyle, Richard Quinlan **grips** Jonathan Hackett, Eddie Quinn **unit pub.** Prudence Emery **m.** André Gagnon **m. rec.** Studio St-Charles Inc. **m. consult.** William McCauley **cast.** Karen Hazzard Castings Ltd., Victoria Mitchell; Duo Casting (Mtl.); Joy Todd Inc. (N.Y.) **ward. design.** Lynda Kemp **l.p.** Michael Douglas, Susan Anspach, Lawrence Dane, Eugene Levy, Charles Shamata, Philip Akin, Trudy Young, Murray Westgate, Jennifer McKinney, Lesleh Donaldson, Jim McKay, Lutz Brode, Deborah Templeton Burgess, Gordon Clapp, Marvin Goldhar, David Laurence, Robert Hannah **p.** Robert Cooper, Ronald Cohen **co. p.** John M. Eckert **p. account.** Shirley Gill **p. manager** Liz Butterfield, Raymond Hartwick (N.Y.) **loc. man.** Phil Desjardins, Keith Large **p.c.** Bobron Film Productions Inc. **sec.** Judi Rubin **col.** 35 mm **running time** 101 min. **dist.** Universal **year** 1979.

When a picture bills itself as, "A story about having the courage to be what you are," it's got a tough row to hoe. In this instance, it is the new Steven Stern film, **Running**, which Universal has opened with a prestigious campaign in 50 locations in Canada and 700 more across the U.S. As with its spectacular predecessor **Rocky**, the protagonist manages to "go the distance." Regrettably, the movie doesn't.

Running gets off on the wrong foot by making some surprisingly naive and erroneous assumptions. The story centers around a 34-year-old New Yorker who has a history of being a quitter (law school, medical school). His name is Michael Andropolis, played by Michael Douglas, and herein lies one of the first misjudgements: it is that Michael Douglas



When a quitter converts... Michael Andropolis (Michael Douglas) with his coach (Lawrence Dane) in a scene from **Running**

can carry a film.

In this boom of tax shelter-inspired, Canadian production, there is still too much awe of imported movie stars. We're not used to having them around and the expectation must have been that the audience would be as intrigued with the

presence of Mr. Douglas as the producers and the director were.

His credits look impressive, but the transition from television to the big screen is a tough one for an actor, and one can't overlook the fact that **Coma** was really Geneviève Bujold's picture, and in **The**

China Syndrome, the bulk of the weight was carried by Jane Fonda and Jack Lemmon. This is not to say that he doesn't make a valiant attempt, but if he had the required depth and intensity, we might be able to stay involved in what are otherwise turgid scenes where he just sits in a chair thinking, or talks about mundane domestic issues with his wife. But throughout, the thin story line forces him to carry more weight than he is capable of. When the camera moves in tight on him in these moments, and his face is suddenly twenty feet high, there just isn't enough happening in that face to make us forget that there just isn't enough happening in the story.

Andropolis' pattern of being a quitter applies also to his marriage which, despite the fact that he and his wife still love one another, is about to end in divorce. Janet Andropolis is played by Susan Anspach, usually a terrifically engaging actress. However, in **Running**, she is restricted to three main functions. She has to cry a lot at which she is very good. She has to smile a lot at which she is even better. And, she has to smile while crying at which she is wonderful. Unfortunately, the script doesn't call on her to do much more.

Andropolis is a runner and even at this he has been a quitter. Once, several years ago, after he had qualified for the Pan Am Games he failed to show for his event.

Andropolis' youngest daughter (Jennifer McKinney, a ten-year-old with such charm that she walks away with every scene she appears in) adores her father. But his eldest daughter (Lesleh Donaldson) is ashamed and embarrassed that he is a runner. Surprisingly, through her and other characters, the film implies that many people think running is weird. When Andropolis trains in the streets of New York City, the natives yell taunts and treat him like some sort of freak. (Perhaps, going back to the sales line of the picture, the implication here is that it takes courage to be something as outrageous as a runner.) Presuming that an audience will find this credible is not only faulty but astounding; even the press releases for **Running** state that, by a recent Gallup poll, over 26 million Americans are now regularly running or jogging.

Despite this, Andropolis decides to enter the Boston trials for the Olympic Marathon and ends up, by default, qualifying for the Montreal Games. Well, all the world loves a winner and suddenly, everyone who thought he was ridiculous thinks he's wonderful.

He begins training, and here, the film naively divides the world, equally, into good guys and bad. In the former category is Andropolis wanting so much to prove himself. In the latter is his coach (Larry Dane) who glowers at him relentlessly, reminding him that he is a quitter (and this, despite one of the film's truly incongruous lines where Dane says, "You never give up, do you?"). The examples become increasingly blatant. We find Andropolis in the unemployment office, where an eight-months-pregnant woman — from the good side — who has patiently spent three hours in line waiting for her benefits, is contrasted with the fat clerks passing office hours filing their nails and eating chocolates. When Andropolis politely asks for a pencil to fill out a form, a jaded, male clerk sighs disgustedly and rolls his eyes heavenward with such theatricality, that he's lucky he doesn't knock himself over backwards through the wall. Infuriated with the sloth at the unemployment office, Andropolis yells at the clerks, tears up his forms and leads us to the next good guy/bad guy cliché: he humbly applies for a job from his wife's new boyfriend, Howard (Chuck Shamata) who, as a used car salesman, is so slimy that it's amazing his image doesn't ooze right off the screen onto the floor of the theatre.

So, Andropolis works and trains until just before he is due to leave for Montreal. Then, for reasons not explained to us, he chooses this moment to tell Janet that he wants her back. Then again, for reasons unexplained, she chooses the very night

before the race to show up at Montreal's Olympic Village to tell him that she too wants to get back together.

Race day finds Andropolis in top form and well into the race he is leading by a good margin. But rain is his undoing. Rain and fate and that terrible error we all remember from the Bible about looking back. He falls, dislocating his shoulder and disqualifying himself from the race.

But no... Like Lazarus he rises, and after the sun has gone down and the race is over, he decides to finish it by himself.

According to the formula, here is where we should get the **Rocky** ending (where our boy goes the distance, and we cry and cheer for his courage and stamina). We should, but we don't for a number of reasons, one being that Douglas and his make-up artist got carried away. With bruises and blood all over one side of Andropolis' face, and his dislocated shoulder making him lurch along like a cross between a sleepwalker and Quasimodo, the effect is so much more grotesque than stirring that it becomes embarrassing.

The old adage, "No one ever lost a dime underestimating the intelligence of the general public," might be true. But where **Running** veers most seriously off course is in underestimating the *heart* of the audience. Despite a story line based on elements from other emotionally evocative films, despite Laszlo George there to film it all prettily, despite André Gagnon's score — one that could make Michel Legrand cringe — and a cast of cute children and characters who weep

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openly on the screen for us, you can't get to the feelings of an audience if you haven't created a film with a heart. To achieve that takes courage and emotional sensibility: both missing here in spades.

If drama is supposed to be life with the boring moments cut out, **Running** seems more like life with the exciting moments cut out. Steven Stern's script and direction fail to engage us in the story's most decisive and emotional moments. Each time one occurs, he makes a point of dashing off in another direction to avoid it. Instead of giving us a sense of the real grit and power of Andropolis' struggle, and the joys of his accomplishments, the filmmakers hide the dramatic moments in montages and kill the real sound with layers of thick Musak: a bland and pretty musical detour is the result. Too many long shots force us to watch like distant bystanders. And, with annoying regularity, dramatic scenes take place off screen.

Janet's decision to return to her husband and Andropolis' decision to get up and finish the race are only two examples of missing scenes that would have allowed us to know these people and perhaps, to care for them.

It's a combination of all these that brings the ending of the film to grief. During Andropolis' last grizzly run, we are never permitted to get close enough to feel his agony or to sense his powerful need to drive himself on in spite of his pain. Rather, we must see it in medium-long shots, or view it on the family's television set, or hear about it from a news commentator. When he crosses the finish line, the camera is so far away that we are literally behind the crowd that has assembled to welcome him.

As per the formula, he collapses, half dead, into his wife's arms. But in its grotesqueness, what with the excess of blood and all that somnambulist lurching, it is a joyless victory indeed. And when she sadly leads him away, the emotional rhythms finally go completely awry and the bottom falls out of the movie. For here, we are cheated out of seeing what, by this point, should have been an obligatory scene — the one where we could see at least a glimmer of his pride and happiness at finally accomplishing what he set out to do.

As it is, we see Andropolis and his wife, and indeed the picture, limp wearily off to the sidelines leaving us with the conclusion that "having the courage to be what you are" must be a pretty miserable affair.

Roy Moore

TELEVISION



Matt and Jenny, brave little waifs pitted against the New World, in the T.V. adventure series **Matt and Jenny**: a Manitou/Global co-production

Matt And Jenny

d. Joseph L. Scalan (1st series), René Bonnière (2nd series) **asst. d.** Tony Lucibello, Gary Flan Agan **sc.** William Davidson **exec. sc. ed.** Martin Lager **ph.** Matt Tundo **cam. op.** Douglas Connell **ed.** Martin Pepler, cfe (1st series), Hans Van Velsen, cfe (2nd series) **dub. ed.** Al Streeter **sup. ed.** Vincent Kent, cfe **nature sd.** Dan Gibson **sd. rec.** Karl Scherer, cfs **sd. rec.** Len Abbott **a.d.** Gerry Holmes **asst. a.d.** Fred Geringer **set dress** Earle Fiset **m. comp.** Ron Harrison **m. ed.** David Applebaum **cost.** Larry Wells **ward.** Mary McLeod **make-up** Maureen Sweeney **hair** Malcolm Tanner (1st series), Marlene Schneider (2nd series) **cont.** Jean Christopher **gaffer** Brian Montague **key grip** Carmen McDermaid **prop. mas.** Walter Woloszczuk **l.p.** Neil Dainard, Duncan Regehr,

Derrick Jones, Megan Follows, Bary Morse, William Osler, Desmond Ellis, Vincent Murray, James Conroy, Rita Tuckett, Dennis Highway, Derrick Jones, Megan Follows, Barry Morse, William Osler, Desmond Ellis, Vincent Murray, **p. co-or.** Brigitte Sarthon **p. manager** Gordon Robinson **p. account.** Heather McIntosh **p.c.** Manitou Productions Ltd. in association with The Global Television Network, Polytel Film Ltd., Shelter Films Ltd. **col.** 16 mm **running time** 23 min. per program **Canadian distrib.** Manitou Productions.

What's in a name? It seems as though Manitou Productions, the producers of Global Television's newest family drama series isn't taking any chances. The two main characters, Matt and Jenny, made