



● **Danger Bay** stars kids Ocean Hellman, Chris Crabb, and leads Wakeham and Rhodes

Mom's absence isn't really explained, Joyce's relationship to Doc is largely undefined and the researcher's role limited to the lab. Both kids may cook, but the boy makes peanut-butter omelettes while the girl prepares dinner for company.

Danger Bay also must integrate its social concerns with the requirements of good drama, something it doesn't do in director Allan Eastman's first episode. The story seems more science lesson than drama, the characters never really come alive, and the music annoyingly covers what seems like 95 percent of the show. Gil Shilton's second episode works much better, which may mean *Danger Bay* will improve each time out. The story has conflict and tension, so the educational aspect is submerged — where it belongs. Joyce and Doc banter back and forth, the kids come in at the top and end for comic relief, and the music is less prominent. It's a solid, well-crafted TV half-hour.

It's hard to establish *Danger Bay's* true political line. Despite its left-leaning aspect, it also bears an unquestioning reverence and trust in advanced technology. No birch-bark and pinecone backwoods nature show, *Danger Bay* sets Doc Roberts in command of an impressive technological array — which of course he uses only for good. In episode one technology rescues Doc's daughter from rabies. An improved vaccine not only saves her life but greatly reduces her treatment, while sophisticated telecommunications and transportation systems deliver it to Vancouver overnight. In episode two Doc's medical knowledge and the lab's findings uncover the real reason grizzlies

are attacking campers. While the forest rangers would simply shoot the bears each time, Doc's probing intelligence — an intelligence patterned on, developed and assisted by technology — works out the entire picture. There's nothing false about this, and an intelligent TV hero is refreshing, but let's hope the whole series does not ignore the various ills modern technology has also produced.

There doesn't seem to be any reason to be cynical about *Danger Bay*. Its makers seem sincere and committed in their attempt to create a genuine alternative to current TV fare. Unfortunately, these good intentions may not help their scramble for viewers and survival. To succeed, *Danger Bay* must consolidate its present strengths and take more risks, while audiences must be patient and accept that early victories will be small.

Above all, the show must avoid becoming merely a TV form of diet cola — same product, except no bad sugar, no bad caffeine, no bad calories and no bad fun. Such an approach appeals immediately to a certain mentality. But in the long run, compared to the guilty, irresistible pleasures of the original, how many will continue to bother?

Bruce Malloch ●

DANGER BAY d. Allan Eastman, Gil Shilton, Michael Berry **exec. p.** Paul Saltzman **creators** Saltzman & Peter Dixon **exec. story cons.** John Duggan **p.** Mary Eilts **post-p.** Paul Quigley **l.p.** Donnelly Rhodes, Ocean Hellman, Chris Crabb, Deborah Wakeham, Kyle Skinner, Hagen Beggs, Michele Chan, Tom Heaton, Roy Vickers. *A more complete crew list was unavailable from CBC for this issue.*

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Jean Beaudry
& François Bouvier's

Jacques et Novembre

Is it surely no accident that this extraordinary first feature has already been selected as one of 15 by young directors from around the world for the Tokyo International Film Festival next summer. For the sensibility that informs *Jacques et Novembre* — by its acceptance — and celebration — of the fleetingness of life — is profoundly Japanese in spirit.

If in every other sense, *Jacques et Novembre* is Canadian, (or rather a Montreal film) this is simply because it is a film in the purest sense: a perfect balance between the universality of its theme and the specificity of its location. For *Jacques et Novembre* addresses a topic that concerns all human beings, namely death.

Jacques, in a performance of stunning simplicity by Jean Beaudry, is 31 years-old and dying of an unspecified disease. It is November, which will be his last month. The film is a diary of Jacques' farewell to life, or more accurately, three films: the film itself, and within it, the film that Jacques' friend, Denis (Pierre Rousseau), is making with him about Jacques' ultimate month, intercut with a video diary that Jacques keeps when he is alone. Beautifully constructed — the editing is also by Beaudry — the film plays totally effectively on all levels, cutting effortlessly from film, to video, to stills, and pushing each level of medium to its fullest expressive capability, conscious all the while of the evanescence of its subject.

Jacques et Novembre displays remarkable control over all its elements; not once does it falter; not once does it slip into sentimentality. Above all, it is a film permeated with respect for filmmaking, and for its subjects; and when one considers furthermore that it was made for \$15,000 in costs, the achievement of these young filmmakers is simply miraculous.

Jacques et Novembre was originally conceived as a documentary film on the last weeks of a 24-year-old cousin of Bouvier's, stricken by leukemia. The rapidity of the boy's death, sadly, outpaced the filmmakers. However, the impact of what Bouvier terms "this extraordinary death" left a searing imprint on the project that explains the (as yet unpaid) devotion to the film of all concerned with the production as well as the uncompromising nature of the filmmakers' approach. *Jacques et Novembre* stares death in the face, yet does not flinch.

But it is not in any sense a morbid film. As its varied literary references (a Jacques Brel song, a line from Marquez's "100 Years of Solitude") make clear, it simply accepts — as we must all accept — that dying is a part of life. The courage of this film is in its belief that this realization is something all human beings can share in.

Jacques is thus Everyman and as such embodies what is both mortal and eternal in man — a very powerful video scene of Beaudry's emaciated body against a wall of light and shadow unmistakably states the "Ecce homo" theme. But Jacques is also more than a

symbol: he is the particular, specific individual having to come to terms with his own finitude in the context of life that will continue without him. This saying goodbye to life is brilliantly handled with both sadness and humor in all its heart-rending fullness: his reconciliation with a distant, hard-working father; his ex-girlfriend who is pregnant with another man's child; his tiresome relatives with whom he no longer has time to pretend; the sale of all his worldly possessions to raise money for the film-within-the-film.

In one hilarious scene, Jacques, calculator in hand, is adding up a balance-sheet of what his life has amounted to. Totalling the years spent eating, sleeping, reading and watching television produces an unaccounted-for time-gap. Then he remembers sex. He carefully quantifies his sexual experience and comes to the conclusion that he's known only 39 days of pleasure in his 31 years.

Slowly, painful hurdle after hurdle, with its funny moments and its bitter ones, Jacques makes his peace with the life that he is leaving. An immense calm permeates the ending of the film: gaunt, thin and ashen, Jacques has begun the final journey. Alone in his nearly empty apartment, he waters his collection of plants, each one carefully named and representing significant moments of his life — a jade is November. The film does not so much come to an end as, with a mounting intensity of visual awareness, it seems just to hold its breath.

"In fact it wasn't death that mattered to him, but rather life," goes the passage from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel that Jacques has read to him twice, and fully describes the spirit of *Jacques et Novembre*.

For after seven years since the project got underway, after having experienced every conceivable difficulty known to filmmakers, after having been spurned and rejected by Quebec film-funding juries, *Jacques et Novembre* is a profound, life-asserting affirmation of artistic and cinematic integrity.

Simply put, *Jacques et Novembre* is a triumph.

Michael Dorland ●

JACQUES ET NOVEMBRE d. Jean Beaudry & François Bouvier **a.d.** Marquise Lepage, Marcel Simard **sc.** Beaudry, Bouvier with Claude Laroche, Marcel Simard **p.** Bouvier & Marcel Simard **art d.** Bouvier **cam.** Serge Giguère, Claude De Maisonneuve **sd.** Marcel Fraser, Diane Carrière, Dominique Chartrand, Christine Lemoine, Michel Charron, Gilbert Lachapelle, Andre Dussault, François Reid **ed.** Beaudry **mus.** Michel Rivard **p.c.** Les Productions du Lundi Matin, with the financial participation of the crew, Telefilm Canada, the Canada Council and the National Film Board of Canada. **dist. (Canada)** Cinema Libre (514) 526-0473 **foreign:** Films Transit (514) 527-9781 **colour** 16mm and video **running time** 72 mins. **l.p.** Jean Beaudry, Carole Frechette, Marie Cantin, Pierre Rousseau, Reine France, Jean Mathieu.

● Jacques (Jean Beaudry): ledger of a life

