

Arthur Lamothe's
Equinoxe

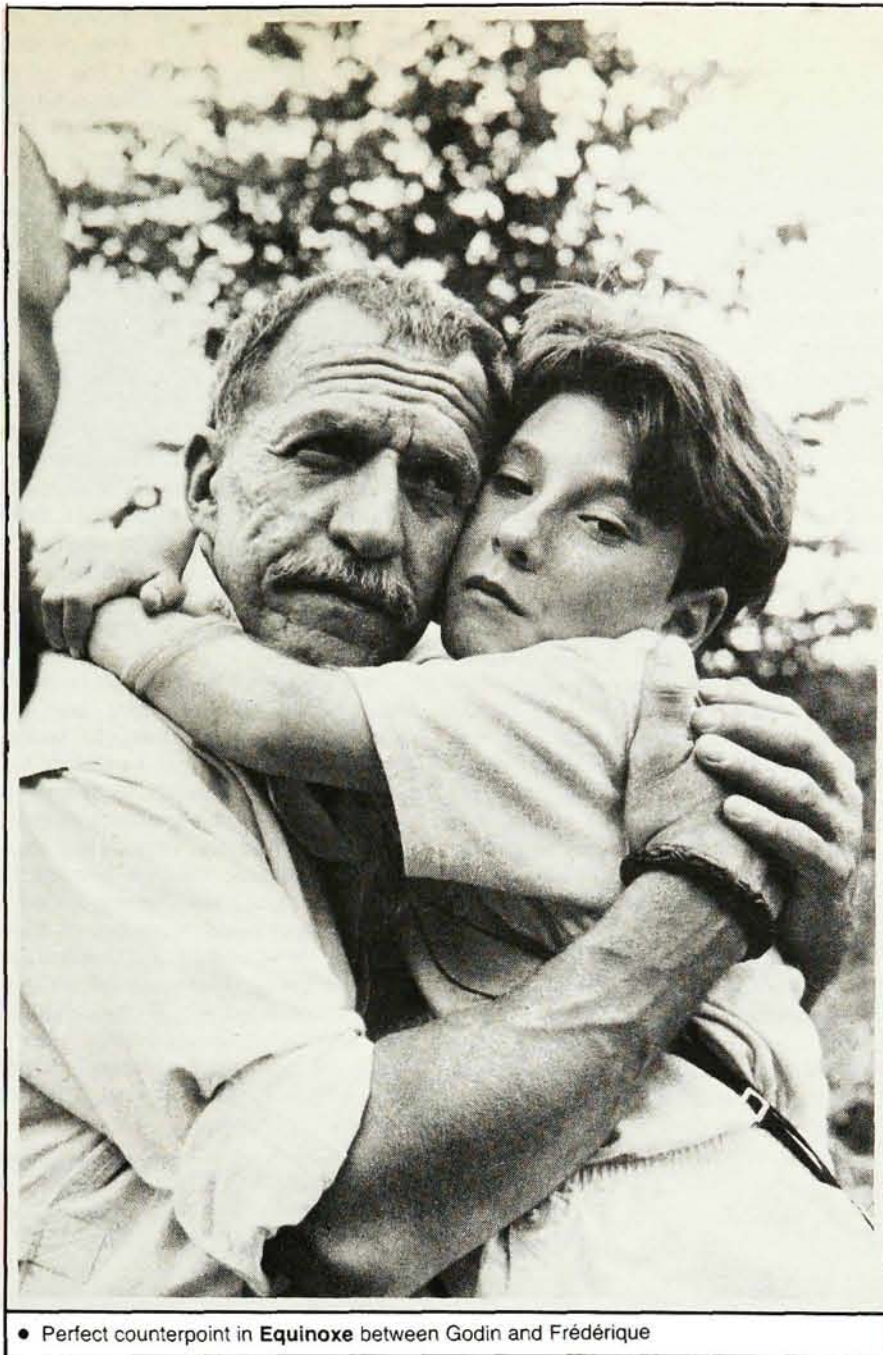
Four weeks after its release, Arthur Lamothe's **Equinoxe**, his first fiction film in 20 years, can no longer be seen first run in Montreal. It's too bad that we haven't discovered how to market films that aren't immediate critical hits or that don't capitalize on recent scandals. A bit slow and structurally weak, **Equinoxe** will nevertheless return a large reward to the patient viewer.

Lamothe has cast Jacques Godin as Guillaume, an innocent man who, because of his best friend's lies, was arrested by the police and sentenced to a jail term. After many years in prison, and many more years of self-imposed exile in Venezuela, Guillaume, accompanied by his granddaughter (Ariane Frédérique) returns to his old village to find out why he was betrayed and to come to terms with himself and his life.

The film is structured as a mystery/suspense film. We are told that Guillaume is an ex-convict but we are made to wait before we're told what crime he committed. We think he wants revenge but the form it will take, the person who will be the victim of it, and the reason for its existence are revealed to the audience little by little. On his way to his village Guillaume also enraged a few local troublemakers by passing them on the highway. Mistaking him for one of those tourists who think they own the places they visit, the rednecks (they really are depicted as drunk, ignorant, brutal slob) go on a rampage to make Guillaume pay for his cheek. When they will find him (we know they will) and what they're going to do to him are elements of a subplot intended to add to the suspense.

As a mystery/suspense film, however, **Equinoxe** does not quite work. Lamothe's universe allows for the unexpected but leaves no room for the absurd. We're never really afraid for Guillaume because Lamothe doesn't give the goons a motivation for doing anything other than scaring him. The long scenes and leisurely editing, which enhance the psychological dimensions of the characters, dilute the tension created by the plot. Lamothe's half-hearted attempts to create suspense through the possibility of violence is at odds with the main theme.

The film works best as a psychologi-



• Perfect counterpoint in **Equinoxe** between Godin and Frédérique

cal drama with Guillaume's journey of self-discovery as a focus. The Sorel islands are the setting. Lamothe's experience as a documentary filmmaker here serves him very well. As Guillaume canoes through the marshes and rivers around the islands, Lamothe's camera lingers over the flora, the water and the sky. The beauty of the setting is communicated sensually. You can almost feel and smell those islands. You can certainly understand how they helped form Guillaume's character, why he would be so tranquil there.

As Godin plays him, Guillaume is a lonely man, marginalized by society and cut off from his roots by his past. As such, his character is almost a fic-

tionalized exploration of subjects Lamothe treated in his documentaries of native people like **Carcajou et le péril blanc** and **Terre de l'homme** from a different perspective. (Except in this case, it's a white man. The only depiction of a native person is that of an old friend of Guillaume played by Marthe Mercure.) In a quiet, almost motionless way, Godin communicates his character's tumultuous dramatic past and his present serenity simultaneously.

As Guillaume mingles with the ghosts of his past, old memories (the building of a pond, once-forgotten canoe trails, a favourite dish, old relationships) are not only unearthed, but in sharing them with his granddaughter, transformed into

vital and life-forming events.

His relationship with his granddaughter gives Guillaume an extra dimension. As an element of the plot she exists as a reason for the explanation of past events and as the source of Guillaume's vulnerability. As a character she is outgoing, talkative and rambunctious – the perfect counterpoint to Guillaume. His honesty with her, and her love for him, convinces us that whatever he did in the past, and whatever he'll do during the course of the film, were and will be the actions of a basically decent man.

People have complained that the climax is a letdown. When the goons find him and his granddaughter and harass them, the situation is quickly brought under control by the native woman. When he finds the ex-friend whose lies sent him to jail, all he does is punch him. Nevertheless, I think that within the context of the film these resolutions make sense. It would have been irrational for Guillaume, after unjustly spending a great deal of his life in jail and in exile, to come to his old town only to do something that would either make him flee again or justly land him in prison.

Equinoxe could have used a tighter structure. But it is very well acted and beautifully shot. I find the image of a leonine Godin, paddling a canoe through marshes to come to a rendezvous with his past, unforgettable. A film that has this much going for it deserves to be seen by more people.

José Arroyo •

EQUINOXE d. Arthur Lamothe p. Nicole Lamothe sc. Arthur Lamothe, Gilles Carle, Pierre-Yves Pépin orig. idea Pierre-Yves Pépin d.o.p. Guy Dufaux ed. François Gill music Jean Sauvageau, Jean-Claude Tremblay p. man. Carole Mondello coord. Nicole Fréchette coord. (Sorel) Nicole Hilaréguy unit man. François Sylvestre 1st a.d. Alain Chartrand dit Lino 2nd a. d. Norbert Dufour 3rd a.d. Jean-Roch Marcotte cont. Marie Théberge 1st asst. cam. Nathalie Moliavko-Visotsky 2nd asst. cam. Sylvaine Dufaux addt. cam. Jérôme Dal Santo asst. unit man. Pierre Houle art d. François Lamontagne props. Denis Hamel ward. Ginette Magny, Suzanne Canuel make-up Micheline Trépanier stills Claude Rodriguez sd. Yvon Benoit boom Claude Lahaye gaffer Claude Fortier grip Jean Trudeau asst. grip. Sylvain Bergevin prod. asst. Sylvain Arsenault, Paul Bujold, André Desrochers music d. Jean Sauvageau sd. ed. Claude Beaugrand asst. sd. ed. Lucie Marion sp. efx. Ken Page post-syn. d. Marc Bellier mix Michel Descombes, André Gagnon lab. Sonolab Inc. optics Film Docteur titles Ciné-titres sd. efx. Michel Brohez pub. David Novek et Associés, Bernard Voyer, Danièle Gauthier l.p. Jacques Godin, Ariane Frédérique, Marthe Mercure, André Mélançon, Luc Proulx, Jerry Snell, Marcel Sabourin, Gaston Lepage, Diane Lamothe, Johanne Fontaine, Rejeanne St-Laurent, Félix Richard, Camille Hébert, Claude Gauthier, Paul Savoie, Jean-Roch Marcotte, Richard Laforest, Paul Berval, Philippe Michaud, Paul Guévremont, Patrick Allard, Philippe Roger p.c. Les Ateliers audio-visuels du Québec. With the participation of Telefilm Canada, La Société générale du cinéma du Québec, La Société Radio-Canada Colour, 35mm running time: 83 mins.

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