



• Anthony Nahuliak sells his farm to pay *The Price of Daily Bread*

John Paskievich and Michael Mirus'

## The Price of Daily Bread

Winnipeg filmmakers John Paskievich and Michael Mirus started out to make a film about an auction sale and emerged with *The Price of Daily Bread*, an understated, disarming eulogy to a dying institution — the family farm.

The timing of the film's release last May, coinciding with the disastrous fall in world wheat prices, could not have been more appropriate. When the film begins, the bank already has Anthony Nahuliak by the throat — there is no way he can repay the big loans he was encouraged to make some years before. Events proceed with deliberate inevitability: Nahuliak, a farmer in Manitoba's stark Interlake region, can't pay; he has to auction off all his equipment but is still in debt; finally even the house and land must be sold and Nahuliak, stubbornly insisting that he still wants to farm, heads out to Alberta in search of work.

As in their first film, *Ted Baryluk's Grocery*, Paskievich and Mirus tell the story of an uncomplicated man whom events have passed by. Once again the narrative is conveyed through black and white still photographs, recorded voices, and a voice-over.

The art in these films is firstly in Paskievich's arrestingly human photos, then in their arrangement, and in the complementary relationship between the photos and the sound track. When Nahuliak receives a call from the auctioneer asking when he can come and look at the machinery, his hand half-

covers his face in an unconscious gesture of restrained despair. When Nahuliak's daughter is shown gathering eggs he says, "Dixie used to complain about doing chores but not any more. She cried when we told her we might have to move away from here." Just then, from above, we see the eggs in the pail — perfectly white and oval and fragile, symbols of the life the Nahuliaks are losing.

Almost from the film's first frame, Nahuliak's father is a disapproving presence. He has had the farm passed on to him from his father, has passed it on to his son, and now he becomes increasingly withdrawn as he realizes that this inter-generational continuity is going to be broken. The auction sale is presented with energy (the auctioneer trading jibes with the crowd) and humour (one farmer comments: "My boy's a school teacher. He doesn't need machinery — they even buy him his own pencils") and pathos (Nahuliak sitting in his combine as it's being auctioned, as though he is himself on the block). Then, after the sale, there is a white expanse of the fields in winter and the matter of fact observation: "Dad died a few months after the auction."

If there is a fault in this piece it is that, in its unqualified approval of family life, ethnic roots and good neighbours, it pulls a little too hard at the viewer's heart strings. But it is so well put together that you hardly notice. In the background there is the shadow of a Darwinian social system, indifferent to its victims. Against that background the Nahuliak family stands with dignity.

Ralph Friesen •

**THE PRICE OF DAILY BREAD** d./sc./ed.p. John Paskievich, MMichael Mirus cam. John Paskievich addt. cam. Peter Tittenberger narr. Anthony Nahuliak sd. rec. Mick Mirus, Leon Johnson sd. ed. Michael Mirus anim. cam. Svend-Eric Erikson, Jill Haras re-rec. Clive Perry music Kelly Senkiw prod. co. Galicia Films Colour., running time: 16 mins.

Jean-Claude Lord's

## He Shoots, He Scores

Some say nothing exemplifies Canadian culture better than hockey. Others say the best vehicle for conveying a sense of nationhood to all Canadians is the CBC, and that it is drama which most clearly reveals us to ourselves, imparting a sense of unique identity. What then could be more essentially Canadian than a CBC-TV drama about a hockey player, broadcast coast-to-coast in both official languages?

Was it thoughts like these that led CBC/Radio-Canada to get involved in Claude Héroux's production of *He Shoots, He Scores*, 13 one-hour episodes broadcast Tuesday nights at nine? If so, some vital elements got lost in the translation of the idea to the screen, because the series is derivative, superficial and uninspired, a *Dallas* of the hockey rink. The most ambitious television project ever produced in Quebec is a blatant betrayal of the principles of excellence, distinction and relevance espoused by CBC/Radio-Canada.

Pierre Lambert, a 20-year-old junior hockey player from Trois-Rivières, makes it to the NHL with the Quebec "Nationals" In the process he deliberately injures his best friend, and, forgetting the girl he left at home, guilelessly and guiltlessly slides into bed with man-hungry Marie-Lou. But not to worry, he's scoring goals and the fans love him. Sure, his teammates give him a hard

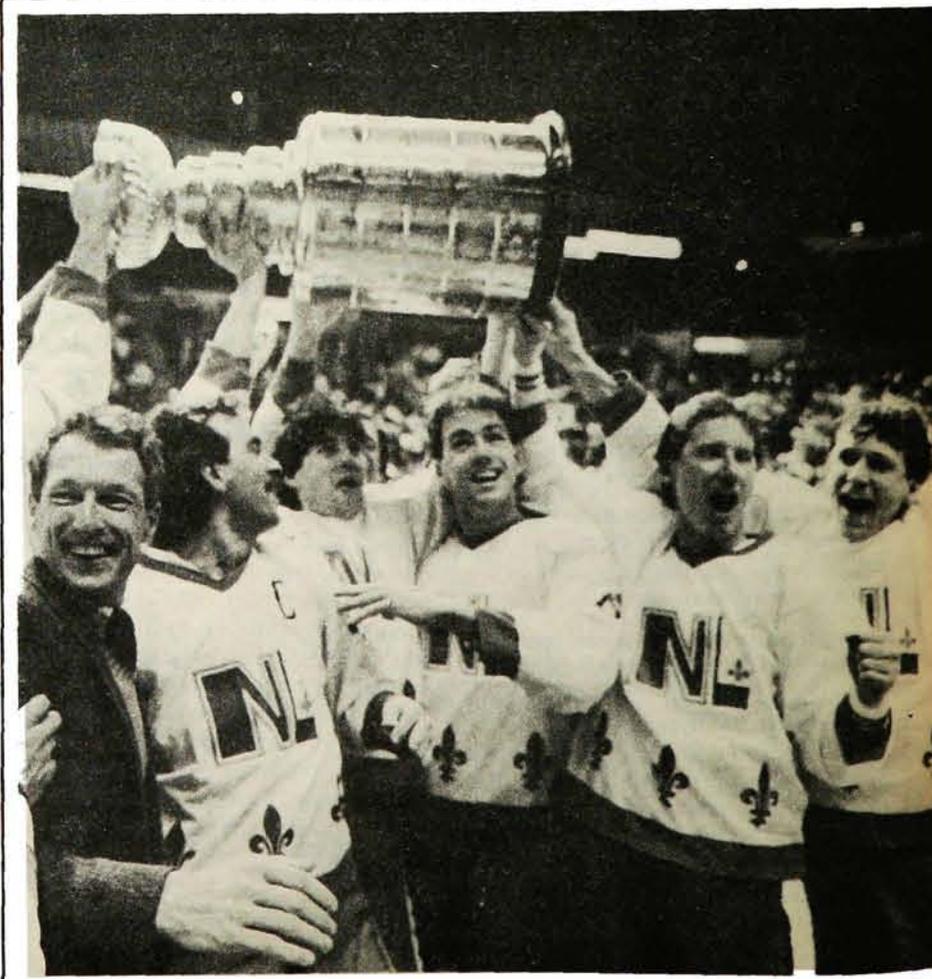
time at first for getting bigheaded, and sure, the coach is extra hard on him in practice. It doesn't matter: the fans adore him, his mother and girlfriends adore him, and he adores himself. The producers' expectation seems to be that the national TV audience will happily join in. Pierre is cute, charmingly naive and talented, a winner. What more could we ask?

The whole project smells of soap opera. Nearly all the shots are interiors. The characters are absorbed in scheming, betrayal, sex, success. Some have drinking problems, others have dying fathers with tubes up their nostrils. Everybody who's anybody is beautiful. People say things like "hockey drives a man mad" or "love is the only thing that makes any sense in life." It better, because the way people in *He Shoots, He Scores* talk doesn't.

When Pierre's sister dallies with his teammate Marc Gagnon over drinks in an expensive restaurant, she mentions that her late father was a fine businessman and that her mother didn't finish university, then interrupts herself: "But I don't know why I'm telling you all this." Neither do we. There is simply not enough substance in her life for any revelation to be interesting or truly personal. The same holds true for everybody else.

As if dead dialogue weren't enough, the series also suffers from technical problems. In each of the first three episodes the sync is off at certain moments. Why should this happen in a big-budget production, even if it was shot in two languages simultaneously?

*He Shoots, He Scores* misses the opportunity to show Canada to Canadians. Apart from kitchens, living rooms and boardrooms, there are interiors of hockey arenas. None of this is at all distinctive. The Nationals travel to Winnipeg, but all we see is an anonymous



• No more guessing — The Nationals win in *He Shoots, He Scores*