

Gordon Pinsent's

John and the Missus

In John Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright*, Charles Winninger plays Judge Priest, a judge in a small Kentucky town, circa 1910, who behaves in a moral manner — stopping a lynching, arranging a church funeral for a “fallen woman” — which may cost him his reelection. He is, of course, re-elected, and the people who parade past his house that night carry signs saying things like “He Saved us from Ourselves.”

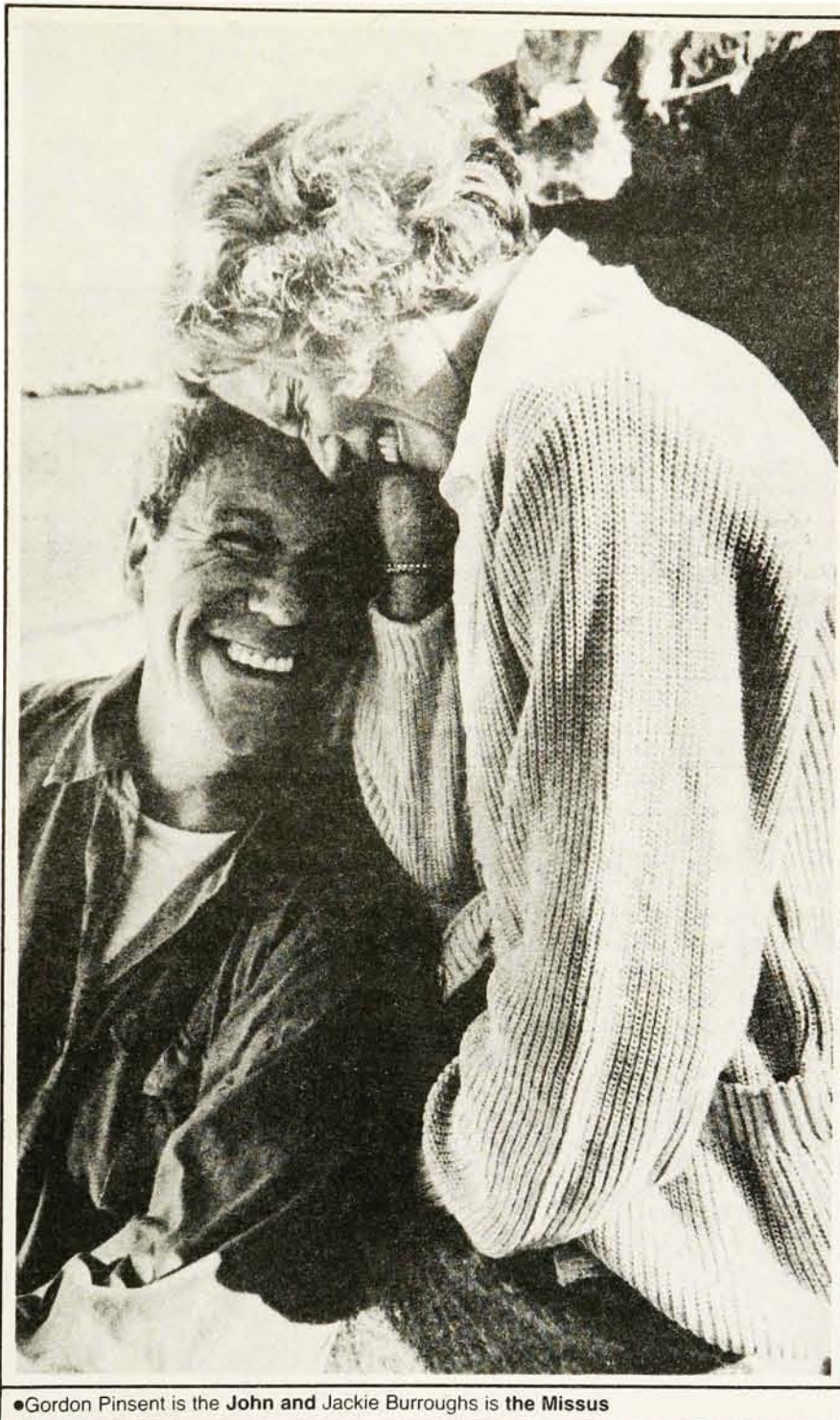
Peter O'Brian is the Judge Priest of the English-Canadian cinema. He seems to have been invented by the surviving tax-shelter producers so that they could go on making *Schlock* while pointing with pride to O'Brian, who makes small-scale, heartfelt, honest, decent motion pictures.

My basic problem with O'Brian is that when I see one of his films, I'm supposed to be impressed. What's wrong with that, you ask? When I see *Scanners*, I'm supposed to be scared. When I see *The Bells of St. Mary's*, I'm supposed to cry. When I see *Ghostbusters*, I'm supposed to laugh. But when I see *John and the Missus*, or *My American Cousin*, I'm supposed to be impressed, and long to throw Genies at it.

O'Brian makes award-winning films that were born to be shown on the CBC. Leaving aside for the moment *The Grey Fox*, which had the benefit of Philip Borsos' visionary style and an enormously persuasive Richard Farnsworth performance, O'Brian's films leave me cold. I can see the virtues of *My American Cousin*, *One Magic Christmas*, and now *John and the Missus*, and why people feel absolutely compelled to honour such clean virtuousness, but virtue doesn't do anything for me. Whenever I see a film that's supposed to give me some sort of moral uplift, I long for the crass commerciality of an Ivan Reitman, the vulgar stupidity of a Bob Clark.

What's really fascinating is that his directors are definitely the *auteurs* of their films — Sandy Wilson's *My American Cousin* is autobiographical, Philip Borsos' style in *The Grey Fox* and *One Magic Christmas* is unmistakable, and Gordon Pinsent's *John and the Missus* inhabits the psychogeography of Pinsent's birthplace as surely as did *The Rowdyman*. But one can see common threads running through them that indicate the producer's personality and taste.

None of them are set in the present (*One Magic Christmas* is, but as *Cinema Canada* reviewer Mary Alemany Galway noted, it could as easily be set in the '30's), which means we don't have to worry about contemporary issues. They are all extremely tasteful and low-key, made on limited budgets but with immense craftsmanship. There is minimal violence, minimal sex, nothing that



● Gordon Pinsent is the John and Jackie Burroughs is the Missus

could really offend anyone. (Actually, *One Magic Christmas* offended the hell out of me — there's Mary Steenburgen, depressed and anti-Santa, a sane island of integrity in her economically afflicted but nonetheless cheerful family, so Santa sends a Christmas angel to teach her to count her blessings. How does he teach her that she should be happier? By killing her husband and children. Jesus!)

Vladimir Nabokov once wrote that few things are more exhilarating than philistine vulgarity, and that is a quality that O'Brian's films utterly lack. (It was exceptionally interesting to see Philip Borsos' non-O'Brian feature, *The Mean Season*, in this light — now there's a picture with some zap.)

Which brings us, in a roundabout way, to *John and the Missus*. Written by Gordon Pinsent, starring Gordon Pinsent, directed by Gordon Pinsent, based on a novel by Gordon Pinsent, it is the story of John Munn, a man who lives in a godforsaken corner of Newfoundland with his wife. (The missus is played by Jackie Burroughs, who has lit-

tle to do but be wise and supportive. Burroughs is one of this country's great and lunatic talents, and she deserves much better.) His son is coming back home with his new bride. He's going to join his dad down the mine which is the town's sole economic base. How Green was Your Outport then, Gordon Pinsent?

But into this quasi-idyllic existence comes harsh economic reality and the evil government, wanting to close down the mine (it doesn't have any copper left) and uproot the town, it being 1963 and the beginning of the closing of the outports. Now John, whose family was among the town founders, isn't going to take this lying down, no sirree. He makes angry speeches. When someone tells him the town's dead, he lashes back “Then so are we?” and accuses the government of wanting him to die among strangers.

I may be the wrong person to review this film — I spent my childhood being dragged over half of North America as my father got transferred from place to place — southern Ontario, New Jersey,

Nova Scotia. The six years I've lived in my current apartment is the longest I've ever spent at one address. So as a rootless cosmopolitan, and, worse, one from that most hellish of all places, Ontario, I have almost no sympathy with or comprehension of these movies — not just *John and the Missus*, but the American farm movies like *Country* and *The River*. What's so great about a tiny village at the ass end of an economically depressed province? What's so great about a farm that belonged to your great granddaddy. Just because your kin are buried there, it's no reason to jump into the grave with them.

Which brings us to an essential hypocrisy of *John and the Missus*. Gordon Pinsent left Newfoundland, the press notes tell us, in 1948, at the age of 18. That is, he left the Rock before it was a part of Canada and before he was old enough to vote. If you want to write about film (and make a living at it), it doesn't make any sense for me to live in Saskatoon. If the mine closes up, and you're a miner, you'd better move somewhere with a working mine. The history of man on this planet — of life on this planet — is that you adapt or you die. Dinosaurs aren't especially sympathetic figures, and neither, really, is John Munn.

The operative comparison, I suppose, is with Mike and Andy Jones, who knocked themselves out for almost a decade to make *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood*, which is a movie about Newfoundland with a sense of humour (the “humour” in *John and the Missus* involves sniggering at the conjugal passion of the newlyweds, an old joke) and without any false nostalgia for a bucolic past that probably never looked half as clean as Frank Tidy's cinematography makes it out to be. (Hell, people of Scots-Irish heritage in a small community isolated from the mainstream? Two more generations, and they would have looked like the road company of *Deliverance*.)

John and the Missus is well-crafted, professionally acted, and is honest, sincere and bloody dull. *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood* is lunatic, sloppy, technically impossible, and suffers from extremely peculiar continuity. Guess which one is a better film. Now guess which one will win lots of awards.


John Harkness ●

JOHN AND THE MISSUS d. Gordon Pinsent sc. Gordon Pinsent, based on his novel p. Peter O'Brian, John Hunter exec p. Peter O'Brian co-exec. p. S. Howard Rosen assoc. p. Gabriella Martinelli ed. Bruce Nyznik orig. mus. Michael Conway Baker art d. Earl Preston d.o.p. Frank Tidy, B.S.C. costumes Olga Dimitrov east. d. Deidre Bowen sup. sd. ed. Bruce Nyznik loc. sd. mix. Rob Young prod. man. Gabriella Martinelli 1st a.d. William Spahic script sup. Penelope Hynam make-up and hair Suzanne Benoit asst. ed. Anna Pafomow asst. art d. Fred Geringer ast. cost. des. Petra Kravjansky spfx sup Martin Malivoire 1st asst. cam. Martin Malivoire 1st asst. cam. Christopher Raucamp dev. exec. for ind. pic Debra Henderson prod. exec. for CBC David Pears l.p. Gordon Pinsent, Jackie Burroughs, Randy Follett, Jessica Steen, Roland Hewgill, Timothy Webber, Neil Munro, Michael Wade, Jerry Doyle, Jane Dingle, Frank Holden, Barry Greene, Ricky Raymond, Austin Davis, Judy Furlong, Brian Downey, Kevin Noble, Lulu Keating, George Earle, Greg Thomey, Doug Seymour, Rick Hollett, Paul Steffler, Mack Furlong. Filmed in association with The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation with the participation of Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Film Development Corporation. colour 35mm running time 90 minutes.

The image features a stylized, high-contrast graphic of two human profiles facing each other. The profile on the left is a light gray silhouette against a white background. The profile on the right is a dark gray silhouette against a dark gray background. The two profiles are positioned such that their noses and lips appear to meet in the center, creating a sense of connection or dialogue. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and graphic.

PRIX
GÉMEAUX

ARTISANS DU
SUCCÈS DE NOTRE
TÉLÉVISION
BRAVO!

 Telefilm Canada

François Labontés

Henri

François Labontés's *Henri* is about the reunification of a family after it has been split apart by tragedy. The story is a good one, filled with emotion, humour and a laudable sort of righteousness, i.e. the good guys *do* come out on top, love and caring *are* important, and things *do* work out in the end.

The story revolves around Henri (Éric Brisebois), and his relationships with a despondent father, younger sister, teachers, classmates, and in a sense, the world at large.

Henri's mother has recently been killed in a boating accident that forced his father, Joseph (Jacques Godin) to choose between saving his nine-year-old daughter, Liliane, and his wife. He managed to rescue Liliane. That choice haunts him, adding to the emotional loss he is suffering, making him morose, irritable and seemingly indifferent to life. Logically, the family has fallen apart, with just Henri struggling to maintain some semblance of continuity in family life.

Symbolically, Joseph has locked the door to the bedroom he shared with the dead woman, turning it into a kind of shrine no one may enter. He sleeps on the couch in front of the television, drinks and broods. Liliane has been in the hospital since the accident, more for emotional reasons than physical. Believing she will die before her father will reclaim her, at one point she explains her feeling to Henri -- that their father looks at her as though she has no right to live. For his part, Joseph, unable to cope with the reminder Lili embodies, has resigned himself to the thought that she is better off in the hospital.

The outcome of the film and the resolution of this situation is fairly transparent from the outset. The agitation between Henri and his father must reach a peak, and it does, which snaps Joseph out of his stupor.

The turn-around comes as a result of Henri's passion for running. He runs everywhere -- not for competition, not for sport, just for the sake of running. Our first glimpse of his character, in 'real-story' time, is his daily early-morning run across the picturesque village of Ste-Marie de Beauce to visit Liliane at the hospital. Henri is apparently a loner who needs to run as a kind of catharsis. Roch Chabot, (Claude Gauthier), the local garage-owner/mechanic, is Henri's surrogate-father/friend, and recognizes in Henri something of himself at the same age as he explains that Henri runs because he is just "too full".

Henri ultimately defies his father to run in the village marathon, beats his arch-enemy, the school principal, and proves himself a hero. The night before the race, after the crucial confrontation between Henri and his father, the shell Joseph has built around himself cracks, somewhat too quickly to believe. He appears at the race with Lili, and as

Henri stumbles across the finish line, the family reunites in a joyful embrace.

The ending is too conveniently fortuitous, but forgivable because the film has carefully built enough identification between viewer and character. We really want Henri to win, so it doesn't seem so important that, when he does, it is rather silly.

Henri is a visually pretty film, adding to the story's entertaining quality. The camera concentrates on faces, and the film is full of fascinating ones. It also plays up the beauty of the village of Ste-Marie de Beauce and the Chaudière valley which in themselves become another character.

The opening scenes are a recreation of the accident, giving the viewer the needed background information with a pleasing change from such drastic filmic conventions as strange dissolves or fish-eye distortion. From a very long wide shot of the village, the camera tracks in very slow as the scene blanches from stunning autumn colours to black and white, then cuts to the people talking and pointing at the river. The event is acted out minus colour and voices, just a musical score that punctuates the sense of trauma. When the men dragging the river finally locate the body and begin to haul it up, the action cuts back to colour and 'present' time. It is an effective and visually interesting way of flashing back.

Much of *Henri*'s solidity arises out of its truth in its creation of personalities and relationships. Some of its most appealing moments occur between Henri and his peers. The scenes in the classroom, locker-room, and on the school

bus which Henri ends up racing against, are credible representations of high-school life and the interactions it fosters.

While I enjoyed this film and believe it is a sample of solid, straightforward movie entertainment, I think it has some inherent problems. There are some uncomfortable incongruities between what *Henri* portends to be and what it is.

The central character, the hero, is undoubtedly Henri. The viewer is drawn into his life, his teen-aged world. In its story-line and characterization, *Henri* is a teen movie. But there are certain production elements that do not uphold this orientation.

It is full of picturesque long takes and is shot mostly with a slow-moving, at times even lyrical camera that will probably pass right over a teen audience which, generally speaking, has been raised on rock videos and space-invaders. For example, when Henri and Rock take to the dunes in an off-road vehicle, the camera keeps a leisurely pace and distance. Rather than a gritty, fast-paced active and exciting moment that would be more appreciated by a young audience, it induces a feeling of a moment out of time, with the emphasis falling on the sense of union between the two friends.

I had the same feeling about the musical score, -- while it is enjoyable, it feels all wrong for the film. At times it connotes a humour that is inappropriate and acts like the voice of an adult looking upon an adolescent situation that mustn't really be taken seriously.

These are serious flaws if the film was

intended for a teen-aged audience, and with a 15 year-old protagonist, it's difficult to imagine who else it was intended for. In other words, the *style* of *Henri* seems to contradict its *content* to its detriment.

Hopefully, *Henri* will prove me wrong and find its audience, because, despite some hokeyness and a tendency towards sentimentality, I like the characters, the story and visual quality Labonté has produced.

Jamie Gaetz •

HENRI p. Claude Bonin assoc. p. Suzanne Hénault. Jacques Bonin d. François Labonté sc. dialogue Jacques Jacob d.o.p. Michel Caron art d. Jean-Baptiste Tard ed. André Corriveau music Denis Larochelle sd. Alain Corneau musical d. Marcel Pothier 1st a.d. Alain "Lino" Chartrand 2nd a.d. Norbert Dufour casting d. extras Richard Vachon cont. Monique Champagne trainee Sandrine Fayos 1st asst. cam. Daniel Vincelette 2nd asst. cam. Christiane Guernon gaffer Marc Charlebois elec. Jean-Marc Hébert asst. elec. Stéphane Picard key grip Serge Grenier grip Michel Bertrand musical rec. and mix Studio Jean Sauvageau boom Philippe Scultety sd. ed. Marcel Pothier. Claude Langlois asst. sd. mix Myriam Poirier. Antoine Morin post-synch co-ord Marielle Gaudreau post-synch assts. Normand Bélanger, Maude Jacques. Daniel Vincent set dec. Michèle Forest props exterior Jean Labreque set props Daniel Huysmans ouvriers Clément Dulac, Raymond Dulac cost design Blanche-Danielle Boileau ward. Pierre Perrault, Francesca Chamberland dresser Luc le Flaguais make-up Diane Simard add. sd. Dominique Chartrand asst. add. sd. Louis Marion sd. re-rec. Jocelyn Caron mix. Joe Grimaldi, Dino Pigat p. man. Suzanne Hénault asst. prod. man. Ginette Guillard loc. man. Mario Nadeau prod co-ord Micheline Cadieux sec. Nicole Bernier, Diane Gagnon prod. assts Lucie Bouliane, Martin Dubois, Pierre Guillard prod. acc. Daniel Demers asst. prod acc. Louise Dupré pub. Danièle Papineau-Couture et Communipresse stills. Bertrand Carrière add. photog Philippe Scultety l.p. Eric Brisebois, Jacques Godin, Lucie Laurier, Marthe Turgeon, Claude Gauthier, Yvan Ponton, Julien Poulin, Kim Yaroshevskaya colour 35mm running time: 91 min. 20 sec.

•Yvon Ponton, Claude Gauthier and Eric Brisebois as Henri



photo: Bertrand Carrière

Allan Eastman's
Crazy Moon

The French do it. The Americans flaunt it. The Russians have been caught at it and the British certainly aren't above it. So why is it such an unbearably tawdry spectacle when Canadians make a lousy film?

Maybe it's because film-lovers in those other countries can point to the likes of Renoir, Ford, Eisenstein and Hitchcock and contrast their works of genius with the tripe of lesser lights; but Canadians are afforded no such luxury. So few feature films have been made in this country that, should one ever make it to theatrical distribution (does Canada lead the world in undistributed tax-shelter-write-off movies?), it has to bear up to greater critical scrutiny than would a forgettable effort from another country.

'Forgettable effort' would be a charitable — no, make that a generous — description of *Crazy Moon*. The film is so awkward and amateurish that it could have been offered up during the good old days of *Monster*, *Horror*, *Chiller Theatre*. Oooh, that's scary kids. Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the movies.

Kiefer Sutherland plays a... well, what does he play anyway? He's supposed to be a bright, sensitive, but marginal youth, out of synch with the '80s. He photographs excrement, pines for his absent mother and fears water. You can just sense that screenwriters Tom Berry and Stefan Wodoslawsky thumbed a pop psychology primer, looking for interesting defects that could give Sutherland's character substance. They came up a closetful of neuroses short.

One major problem is that Sutherland has nothing to do. He spends most of his time courting a deaf girl (Vanessa Vaughan) and enduring the rigors of sibling rivalry. That's it. And, though Sutherland looks like a good actor, it's only because he resembles his father.

Both Sutherland, film, and Vaughan are hurt by the leaden directing of Allan Eastman. Vaughan is continually obliged to 'react' with a demure smile every time Sutherland does something goofy, which is often. His character is so out-of-date that even to call him a nerd



•Kiefer Sutherland gets wild and crazy in wet Moon

would make him seem too modern. He's either a goof or a goon, take your pick.

The filmmakers are constantly undercutting their own good intentions. Sutherland is locked into an apparently marginal mind, and he falls for an ostensibly handicapped woman. The parallels of psychic & physical pain are obvious, and not without potential. Unfortunately, every time that Sutherland opens his mouth, he utters such banalities that it is impossible to care for Miss Vaughan's efforts to draw him out.

Vaughan's character wants to travel alone to Europe. Presumably, this could be somewhat difficult for a deaf person, but the writers do nothing with this. No obstacles on her way there, no sense of what she might face. Who can identify with her achievement?

If Sutherland's and Vaughan's characters are lacking development, then the other players must have gone to the Consolidated-Bathhurst school of acting. As flat and inanimate as cardboard: a dime-store imitation of Karl Malden as the father and a Sigmund Freud cum Inspector Clousseau aberration as the psychiatrist. Performances not for the squeamish.

The soundtrack is so awful that you can't even joke about it. In a film about an uncommunicative boy who meets a deaf girl, the music clearly takes on greater meaning. Or should. Woody Allen can make New York more vibrant than ever with the dated sounds of Gershwin and Dorsey, but the makers of *Crazy Moon* dug up some dreary tinkling that might have been Muzak except that it was written before the invention of the elevator.

The cinematography is also staggeringly bad. This crew wouldn't know an original camera angle if they were invited to go dancing on Lionel Richie's ceiling.

Finally, the only thing that does get a sympathetic laugh in this movie is the use of a mannequin in a motorcycle sidecar. Very fitting that a dummy can steal a scene from the 'live' actors in the film.

The fact remains that, contrary to the situation of French-Canadians, or Australians, there is no daunting barrier (save the attainability of a green card) to keep English-Canadians from going to Hollywood. Therefore, an otherwise healthy talent pool gets drained, and the only bodies left to mount a purely domestic show are the second-raters. Hence, we get the likes of *Crazy Moon*. In the year of *Le Déclin de l'empire américain*, it's a truly pathetic offering from the country's other principal linguistic and cultural group.

Stan Shatenstein •

CRAZYMOON p. Tom Berry and Stefan Wodoslawsky d. Allan Eastman sc. Tom Berry and Stefan Wodoslawsky line p. Franco Battista art d. Guy Lalande d.o.p. Savas Kalogeras ed. Franco Battista orig. mus comp and arr. Lou Forestieri casting Diane Polley and Elite Productions asst. d. John Rainey prod. man. Michel Martin prod. co-ord Elisabeth-Ann Gimber studio admin Marie Tonto-Donati cam op. Susan Trow loc. sd. rec. Yves Gendron sd. ed. André Galbrand dialogue ed. Wajtek Klis cont. Joanne Harwood make-up Tom Booth props Claude Charbonneau ward Sylvie Kraker underwater and 2nd unit cam Georges Archambault titles Val Teodori Additional Story Conc and research. Jeff Rosen sign lang. coach Barry Cooney unit pub. Sally Bochner loc. man. Donald Brown gaffer François Warot best boy Claude Pothier bs elec. Mike Slobodzin key grip Robert Lapierre grip Michel Caron asst. cam René Daigle loader clapper Naomi Wise boom Thierry Morlaas and Hubert Mace de Gastines 2nd asst. d. Pierre Houle 3rd asst. d. Pacal Bonnière prod. sec. José Lachance asst art d. Richard Tassé asst. props Réal Baril asst. ward. Tamara Deverell asst. make-up Coleen Quinton 1st pict. assem Glenn Berman asst. pict. and sd. ed. Jean-Pierre Viau extra grip elec. Guy Bissonnette and Christopher Reusing craft service. Janet Cavanaugh prod. asst. Raynald Lavoie, Marie Ghislaine Crétier, André St-Arnauld, Jennifer Robertson, Pierre Archambault, Karl Archambault, Jacky McClintock, Sylvie Fortin and Mark Collette stills Piroška Mihalka extra mae-up Martin Ménard photog. Paul Cowan (Rock concert) steadicam op Christian Duguay asst cam Simon Leblanc and Stefan Nitoslowski post prod co-ord Grace Avriith Foley Artist Andy Malcolm Foley rec. Louis Hone sd. re- rec Hans Peter Strobl and Adrian Croll neg. cut. Arlene Sawyer color timing Gordon Wallbank neg. and rush insp. Barbara Hutchison sync rushes Stephen Reizes and Kevin Smith film processing by the National Film Board of Canada video mast. Philippe Vandette orig. mus. rec. at Studio St-Charles mus. Engineer Roger Rhodes l.p. Kiefer Sutherland, Vanessa Vaughan, Peter Spence, Ken Pogue, Eve Napier, Sean McCann, Bronwen Mantel, Terri Hawkes, Harry Hill, Barbara Jones, Eddie Roy, Sheena Larkin, Chantal Condor, Carla Napier, Tara O'Donnell, Andrea Robinson, Joanne Meath, Michael Duguay, Rodney Gorchinsky, Rational Youth, Tracy Howe, Kevin Breit, Jim MacDonald, Owen Tennyson, Rick Joudrey. Produced with the financial participation of private investors, Telefilm Canada and CFCF Television. colour 35mm running time 89 min. 17

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Gaston Ancelovici's

Récits d'une guerre quotidienne

If, as Ionesco wrote on Kafka, the Absurd is that which has no purpose or goal, General Pinochet's regime in Chile is not absurd. Its goal is clearly the consolidation, maintenance, and extension of power. The society which such a regime engenders is, however, illogical and unreasonable. It has no rational or orderly relationship to people's lives. Gaston Ancelovici's *Récits d'une guerre quotidienne* (loosely translated as *Stories of an Everyday War*), co-produced by the National Film Board with Les Amis de la cinémathèque Chilienne, depicts a country whose government is engaged in a war with the civil population, a society where people can be arrested and killed overnight for no reason, a society that spends its resources on arms while the people it's supposed to serve starve. Ancelovici, a Chilean exile living in Canada, shows that Chileans live their daily life in the midst of the absurd.

"Confronted with this reality, I can't remain silent," says a young man in the film. "We have to speak, we have to fight." *Récits* is the contribution of its cast and crew to that fight.

The film begins with grainy footage of helicopters, smoke, and the sound of firearms. *Carabinieri* are chasing after civilians. A woman is running, holding her child by the hand. A policeman overtakes them and they are led to the paddywagon where other policeman await. One is holding a huge Doberman. As mother and child are about to enter the vehicle, the beast lunges at the child. There's a freeze-frame of the dog's paw on the child's shoulder, the film's title appears and the scene is set for the stories of everyday war that are to follow.

A stanza from a poem that urges people to "Write your name on the walls of my city," is superimposed over the film's first images. The quote is appropriate — anonymous yet public, graffiti are often the only means by which those denied a voice can articulate and make known their oppression. *Récits* attempts both to contextualize the need for this wall and to be that wall, at the same time giving some people the opportunity to spray out their grievances.

In *Récits* Ancelovici exposes and subverts the regime. He continuously juxtaposes the pomp, grandiosity, symmetry and affluence of the state to the poverty, denigration and chaos that engulfs the populace. He even talks to an expert to give us the facts and figures necessary to understand the context in which people in Chile live. But it is the individuals with real names and unforgettable faces, not abstract ideas, who charge the film with emotion and conviction. It is they who make it a uniquely moving experience.

(In 1984, Ancelovici, with the Cine-Ojo collective, produced *Chile, I Don't Invoke your Name in Vain*, screened at the 1985 World Film Festi-

val in Montreal. It examines the structures of oppression and organized resistance to the state in greater detail than *Récits*.)

Ancelovi interviews priests, housewives, a professor, an actor, an ex-police-officer, a member of the regime and others. For the most part they are simple people. But they get before the camera as if they had an overwhelming need to speak, to unburden themselves of what they know, to bear witness to the absurdity in which they live, to testify that it continues to exist and remains unacceptable.

Récits clearly articulates one of the major effects of life in the absurd — the



effect it has on language. The official discourse is an Orwellian mutation. "We represent the dictatorship of democracy," says Pinochet, "We are celebrating ten years of tranquility," "We are fighting a war — we are fighting for liberty." "The left has no morality... the state, education, religion, all is fair game to them." Pinochet's rantings are juxtaposed to scenes such as the one in which a French priest speaks in a room surrounded by photos of his initiate as he was found, shot through the back of his head by the police as he read, a clump of hair pierced by a bullet resting on a bloodied bible. The priest tells us that you don't have to draw blood to kill a man. Though his parishioners often engage in physical battle with the police in his sub-proletariat parish, the worst killers are hunger and cold.

The official discourse and social factors have debased language. Ana, a middle-aged woman, talking about her lover who has disappeared, fumbles with, "He was... He is," before telling us, "One can't even conjugate verbs anymore." Language has become ineffectual as a means of expression. Worse, words have been used to falsify, distort and invert so much that language has become something to be wary of.



•Stills from the smuggled opening footage of *Récits d'une guerre quotidienne*

Much of the power of the film comes from the realization that *Récits* is a record of people telling their truths. Since words can't be trusted, one has to see to believe. Thus, faces, gestures, surroundings, the conviction with which they speak, all reinforce the words to convey meaning. People may refuse to believe what is happening in Chile but they can't look anyone in the eye and say these people are liars.

For the interviewees even to get in front of the camera calls for great bravery. (Since the film was made, the priest was deported and the actor was killed.) For *Récits* even to exist is an affirmation of hope — people would not risk their lives appearing in the film if they did not have faith in a future that will be different. *Récit's* greatness lies in reaching into the chaos of Chile, and through the conviction of a few admirable individuals, articulating and embodying a simple, universal message of courage and hope.

José Arroyo •

RÉCITS D'UNE GUERRE QUOTIDIENNE Co-produced by The National Film Board of Canada and Les Amis de la cinémathèque Chilienne a film by Gaston Ancelovici, Jaime Barrios, Rene Davila d. Gaston Ancelovici d.o.p. Peter Leblanc ed. Lorenzo del Vecchio add. footage Pablo Solas, Diego Charron sd. Michael Bronson sd. ed. Gilles Quintal sd. fx. Vital Millette asst. ed. rene Davila narration Cynthia Brown sd. mix Adrian Croll co-ord Edouard Davidovici admin Jacqueline Rivest asst admin. Gaetan Martel sec. Johanne Cappuccilli prod. Gaston Ancelovici, Jacques Vallee, Jaime Barrios, Dario Pulgar songs interp. by Lilia Santos "Je t'aime" by M. Benedetti, A. Favero, "Cambomba du questionneur" by M. Capella, "En chantant, tu reviendras" by M. Capella music. arrang. Rodrigo Villaseca music. themes "Je t'aime" by M. Benedetti, A. Favero "Je te nomme, Liberté" by P. Eluard, G. Pagliaro themes int. by Tim Moran, Luisa Bustamante, Diane Orson, Rodrigo Villaseca extract from theatre piece "Printemps avec un coin brisé" by M. Benedetti adapted and interpreted by Groupe Ictus French. trans. A.G. Lecorps French voices Manuel Aranguiz, Rejean Roy, Christiane Raymond, Jocelyn Berube, Monique Belisle, Gilbert Sicotte, Monique Mousseau, Guy Thauvette. The film was made possible thanks to, Comission Chilienne des droits de l'homme, Habitants de la Victoria, Association des familles de detenus-disparus, Maidon de la culture de La Legua, Groupe Ictus, Mouvement contre la torture Sebastian Acevedo Fasic, (Fondation d'aide sociale des églises chrétiennes Thanks to Association du 21 juin (France), Alternative Media Network (USA), Film Transit (Canada) color 16mm running time 59 min

George Mihalka's
The Blue Man

George Mihalka's *The Blue Man* seems to be Canada's answer to such American films as Paul Schrader's remake of *Cat People* and Tony Scott's *The Hunger*. Instead of the vampires or menacing felines featured in the earlier films, this story deals with astral travellers who become spiritual vampires in order to continue their timeless existence.

At the center of the story is Paul Sharpe (Winston Rekert), a director of TV commercials who is fed up with both his work and his family, and only finds pleasure in his experiments with astral projection — the ability, we are told, to leave the confines of the body and enter the free world of the soul. Things, however, start going wrong when both Paul's doctor and father-in-law are killed in a most gruesome way as a result of Paul's flights of fancy. The worst part of it though, is that Paul isn't able to remember the dreams which caused the deaths and doesn't seem able to control the destination of his astral form during sleep.

Perplexed and confused, Paul goes to see Janus (Karen Black), a mysterious dancer and ex-junkie who had first introduced him to the wonderful world of astral projection. She tells him that he is just confused by his new-found powers, and that everything will turn out just fine.

Obviously, everything isn't "just fine" and Kauffman (John Novak), the police detective assigned to the case, knows it. Kauffman has a strong feeling that Paul is somehow connected to the mysterious deaths, and starts looking into his past. He discovers that seven years earlier, Paul had made a documentary called *Wandering Souls*, a film which told the story of two supposed astral travellers who, periodically, are in search of new host bodies.

At this point, Paul doesn't really know what's going on, Kauffman (although justifiably confused) has been able to put most of the clues into place, and the audience has the whole thing already figured out. If the real point of a thriller is to keep you on your toes until the closing credits, then one during which you can predict the ending two thirds of the way through cannot be considered entirely successful.

Certain sequences in *The Blue Man*, especially at the beginning, are quite effective and enshroud those sections of the film in a suitably chilling atmosphere. But as the plot thickens (or more accurately, coagulates), the stylish effects, which are too few and far between in the first place, do little to help thaw out the proceedings.

The premise of the film is of course a silly one, but a certain amount of tension and intelligence would have gone a long way to make the film more effective. Certainly, the stiff dialogue between many of the minor characters can largely be excused, but the lack of

urgency in every major character's portrayal points to the general ineptness at work here. After all, if none of these people have the appearance of caring in the least whether they live or die, there isn't much reason why we should either.

Greg Clarke •

THE BLUE MAN New Century Productions Ltd. Buck Houghton p. Pieter Kroonenburg exec. p. Nicolas Clermont, David J. Patterson special asst. to P. K. Julie Allan d. George Mihalka prod. man. Luc Campeau prod. co-ord Patricia Cahill unit man. Jeffrey S. Bessner 1st a.d. Mike Williams 2nd a.d. Nick Rose cont. Joanne Harwood prod asst. Jean-Pierre Fautoux, Ken Banks, Jean-Marin Basley acbe Manon Bougie-Boyer art d. John Meighen set dresser Skip Hobbs prop buyer Donna Noonan set props François Gascon art dept prod. asst. André Guimond store master Maurice Tremblay painter Ross MacKay cost. design Paul-André Guerin ward mist. Claire Garneau make-up Charles Carter hair Henri Khouzam d.o.p. Paul Van der Linden cam op. Christian Duguay 1st a.d. Paul Gravel 2nd a.d. Maarten Kroonenburg sd. mix. Gabor Vadnay boom Pierre Blain key grip André Ouellette grip Philippe Palu gaffer Jean-Paul Houle best boy Luc Marineau elec. Yvan Bénéard, Steven Hunt spfx Jacques Godbout spfx make-up Edward French spfx - rigging Matt Vogel ed. Nick Rotundo asst. ed. Peter Cooke casting Elite Casting storyboard artist Jean-François Kelahear stills photog Piroshka Mihalka books Lilian Partheniou, Nancy Partheniou Nathalie Laporte comp. op. Ronald Gilbert Jr. dog trainer Jane Conway asst. to Hane Conway George Martin colour 35mm running time 87 min.

Danièle J. Suissa's

The Morning Man

Danièle J. Suissa's *The Morning Man* is based on a true story. Paul Nadeau, a young criminal convicted on 22 charges of armed robbery,

escapes from jail to prove to himself that he can walk the straight and narrow path. He then becomes a successful morning man for a radio station in Lennoxville, Quebec, and on the first anniversary of his escape, turns himself in. Unfortunately, though the story is ripe with cinematic possibilities, they remain unrealized.

The major problem with *The Morning Man* lies in the way the title role is written. According to the film, Nadeau, a nice middle-class boy, turned to armed robbery for the thrill. Why he chose armed robbery instead of sex, drugs or aerobic exercise, more common middle-class stimulants, is never explained. The way Nadeau is depicted — strong, smart, motivated and oh-so-nice — they could all have been interchangeable choices.

His criminal past aside, Nadeau has no flaws of character. Obstacles are laid in his path only to be surmounted. The same discipline and sureness that made him an excellent bank robber now make him a model of self-rehabilitation. Nadeau's Achilles' heel is supposed to be his circle of friends, a sure lure back into a life of crime. But it is presented as helpful (they give him money, a new social insurance number, time) and no more than a minor nuisance (they are total failures in their attempts to seduce or pressure him). Since Nadeau has no weaknesses to confront, nothing can swerve him from the path to righteousness. Frankly, he's a bore.

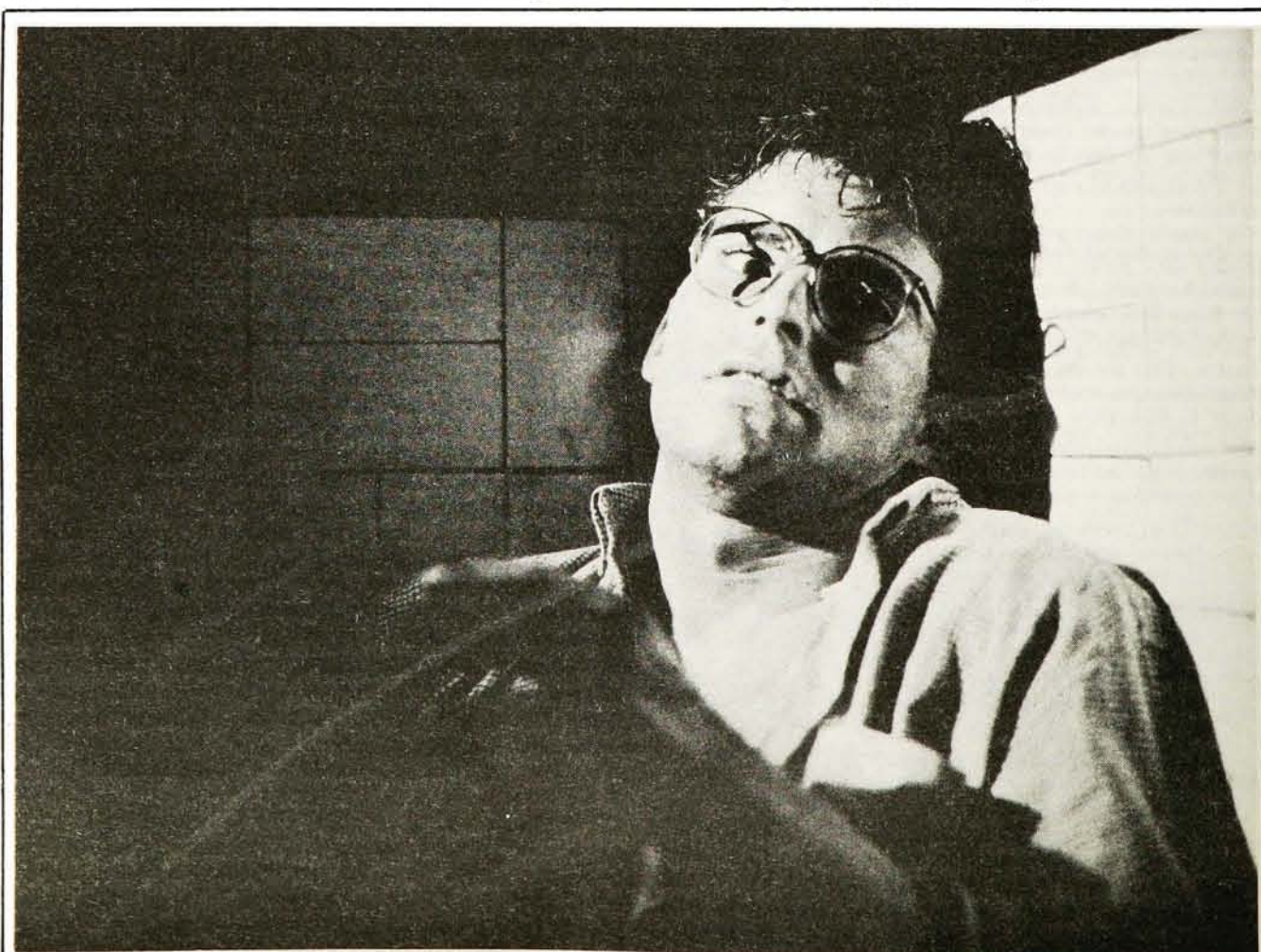
Danièle J. Suissa, the director, is widely experienced in theatre and television but *The Morning Man* is her first theatrical feature. And it shows. Shot mostly in close-ups and medium long shots, *The Morning Man* looks like a TV movie. One is also very conscious that everything in the film has been 'staged'. The action takes place

mostly in interiors, whether it be inside jails, apartments, or cars. Places are used as mere settings in which the actors can exchange dialogue.

The film really begs for a sense of milieu that is just not there. This may have something to do with the weird hybridization that occurs when one shoots a modern-day Quebecois folk story in English. The language, the turn of phrase, the distinctness of place, all these things that immediately create a background for characters in Québecois films are missing. Nothing is made of Nadeau (played by Bruno Doyon with a heavily accented English that doesn't help his line readings) falling in love with Kate Johnson, a WASP doctor played by Kerrie Keane. The film feels strangely dislocated.

Suissa uses no 'establishing shots'. Though a more experienced director could have turned this into an asset, she just leaves the audience disoriented. We get a very limited sense of where the characters are, where they want to go or where they are actually heading. A good example is the escape scene at the beginning of the film. Suissa does not give us a longshot of the jail the convicts are escaping. Thus we don't know if it's difficult, if they're heading in the right direction, or what their chances of making it are. The scene lacks tension. Though it's clear that Suissa is more interested in the psychology of her characters than in suspense, I don't see any reason for mucking up scenes like this one — not fully exploiting action scenes that are dictated by the story do not make us better understand the characters.

René Verzier, (who's justly been nominated for a Genie as best cinematographer for his work here), has shot *The Morning Man* in pastel blues, greys and dirty whites and it looks



•Bruno Doyon as Paul Nadeau, *The Morning Man*

photo: Piroshka Mihalka

great. But neither this, a very good score by Diane Juster, or the very charismatic acting of Kerrie Keane and Bruno Doyon can keep the film from being one long yawn.

If you're thinking of waking up to this morning man, don't bother. It will send you right back to sleep.

José Arroyo •



•Abducted – A picture substantiates 500 words

THE MORNING MAN An SDA Productions Limited Presentation in association with 3 thèmes **exec. p.** François Champagne **p.** Gaston Cousineau, Danièle J. Suissa **d.** Danièle J. Suissa **sc.** Clarke Wallace **d.o.p.** Rene Verzier **eds.** Yves Langlois, Jean Lepage **orig. mus. score** Diane Juster **arrangements** Normand Roger, Denis L. Chartrand **co-ord. T. J. Scott** **stunt team** Marco Bianco, John Goar, Ted Hanlan, Jamie Jones, John Normand, David Rigby, Ron Vanhart **line p.** Monique H. Messier **prod. man.** Daniel Louis **prod. acc.** Muriel Lize **asst. prod. acc.** Leon G. Arcand **prod. co-ord.** Micheline Cadieux **prod. sec.** Johanne St-Arnauld **director's personal asst.** Michel St-Pierre **1st a.d.** Mireille Goulet **2nd a.d.** Pierre Plante **cont.** Johanne Prgent, Monique Champagne **cont. trainee** Marie-Thérèse Brouillard **dialogue sup.** Alexander Ary **art d.** Charles Dunlop, François Seguin **asst. art d.** Lynn Trout **set dec.** Jean-Baptiste Tard, Gilles Aird **set dresser** Michele Forest, Philippe Chevalier **asst. set dresser** Jean Labrecque, Ghislaine Grenon **prop master** Denis Hamel **asst props** Anne Grandbois **spfx** Ryal Cosgrove, John Walsh **draftsman** Michael Devine **art dept. asst.** Mary Lynn Drachman **scenic painter** Tristan Tondino **labourer** Sidney Leger **vehicle co-ord.** Reg Massey, Maurice Charest **cost. design** Nicoletta Massone **ward** Francesca Chamberland, Caterina Chamberland **make-up** Marie-Angèle Breitner-Protat **asst. make-up** Christiane Fattori **hair** Gaetan Noiseux **1st asst. cam** Denis Gingras **2nd asst. cam.** Jean-Jacques Gervais **2nd. cam.** Louis de Ernsted, Daniel Jobin, Serge Ladouceur **2nd. cam. assts** Paul Gravel, Christiane Guernon, Pierre Duceppe, Jacques Bernier, Sylvie Rosenthal, **set photog** Piroška Mihalka **cam. trainee** Claude Beauchamp **sd.** Serge Beauchemin **boom** Thierry Hoffman **unit man.** Mario Nadeau **loc. man.** Richard Lalonde **asst. loc. man.** Josette Gauthier **prod. asst.** Lucie Bouliane, Norbert Dufour, Martin Dubois, Benoit Mathieu, François Fauteux **craft service** Janet Cavanagh **driver** Christian Fluet **prod. trainee** Marie-Louise Laurier **gaffer** Jacques Fortier **elec.** Gilles Fortier, Claude Fortier **key grip** Michel Periard **grips** Jean Trudeau, Pierre Charpentier, Sylvain Labrecque **gen op.** Michel Canuel, Yves Ouimet, Jean Paul Auclair **elec. trainee** Brigitte Dugas **casting** by Elite Productions **Unit pub.** Susan Chernoff **pub.** David Novek and Assoc. **asst. film eds.** Melanie Gillman, Martine Beauchemin **sd. ed.** Danuta Klijis **sd. eds.** Pierre Beland, Nicole Thuault **Foley Artist** Andy Malcolm **mixers** Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi **music mixer** Serge Lacroix **post synch** Hubert Fielden **post-prod co-ord** Lorraine du Hamel **post-prod tech co-ord** Robert Cote **Lenses and Panaflex Camera** Panavision Canada Limited **Prod and sd. labs** Bellevue Pathe Quebec (1972) Inc. Pathe Sound and Post Production Centre Warner Hollywood Studios **Titles and Opticals** Film Opticals Limited **Music recording** Studio Marko Limited **Music Publisher** Les Editions Diane Juster **Produced** with the participation of Canadian broadcasting Corporation, Telefilm Canada, Societe Generale du Cinema **Special Thanks** to La Galerie Michel Tétrault, Art Contemporain, La Brasserie O'Keefe Limitee, Dankoff Richer Furs, Herdt and Charton Inc. I.p. Bruno Doyon, Kerrie Keane, Alan Fawcett, Mark Strange, Rob Roy, Linda Smith, Mark Blutman, Walter Massey, Vlasta Vrana, Damir Andrei, Yvette Brind'Amour, Doris Petrie, Ralph Millman, Dorian Joe Clark, Antick Faris, Stephanie Morgenstern, Danette Mackay, Sandy Stahlbrand, Luis de Cespedes, Ruth Dahan, Sam Lemarquand, John Novak, Dean Hagopean, Joan Heney, Robert Heney, Robert Laval-Menard, Daniel Nalbach, Mark Burns, Guy Belanger, Jacqueline Blais, Hamish McEwan, Anthony Sherwood, Peter Colvey, Griffith Brewer, Roch Lafortune, Ken Roberts, Robert Parson, Pier Kohl Paquette, Gayle Garfinkle, Donald Lamoureux, Darry Edward Blake, Andrew Johnston, Babs Gadbois, Arthur Corber, Vincent Glorioso, John St-Denis, Ian McDonald, Brigitte Boucher, Anthony Ulc, Michel Therrien, Joe Singerman, Cassandre Fournier. **colour** 35mm **running time** 97 min

Boon Collins

Abducted

Rumour has it that Boon Collins raised funding for *Abducted* from private sources. This might be because Collins is a resourceful man. But it's also likely that any bureaucrats who took one look at the final product fell over themselves trying to disown it. *Abducted* is a cheap-looking, mean-spirited film with precious little to recommend it except some pretty scenery.

As the opening credits roll we see Rene, the heroine, jogging through virginal mountain wilderness. Film cuts to the point of view of someone in the bushes and a close-up of a booted foot. Moments later *be* darts out from a bush, grabs her by the pony-tail, and carries her off. That's the story: wild hillbilly abducts poor-little-rich-girl unaccountably leaping about the Rocky Mountains.

The plot is bizarre enough to be true, and strange enough to be funny, but Collins erodes interest and humour with a seemingly unending series of beat-up-the-girl scenes. Lucky Vern (the wild hillbilly) has found himself a pet. Good for him, not so great for Rene. She gets leashed like a dog and dragged through the wilderness. Vern makes her climb mountains and cross raging rivers. He fishes her out of the rapids once or twice, tries to rape her two or three times, and hits her an awful lot.

Even the worst filmmakers know that consistent brutality can get monotonous. Just in case the sexual overtones don't spice things up enough, Collins

throws in some characterization. Vern, we discover, isn't all that bad. He offers Rene some food a few times. And, as he explains to Rene, he gets lonely up there in the mountains.

Halfway through the movie, Vern's dad, Joe (played by Dan Haggerty) shows up to explain that life has been tough on Vern. He's been subjected to the horrors of reform school, jail, and, worst of all, a slutty mother. ("She saw men. She saw a lot of men," he tells Rene.)

Understandably guilt-ridden at having produced scum like Vern, Dad has hid him off to the mountains, where presumably the beautys of nature will purify Vern's heart and restore him to a semblance of humanity.

Dad may be a little weird – he's fixated with stone sheep but he knows that kidnapping and rape are bad things. He tells Vern they have to take the girl back. Vern doesn't like this much, and finally decides he's had enough. He bops Dad on the head real hard and drags poor Rene back into the wilderness. Vern is not without justification in insisting she go with him. After all, as he tells her, "I killed a man for you."

It takes more than a smack on the head to kill a mountain man. Joe wakes up and binds his wounds. Forgiving to the end, he knows better than to let a woman drive the fatal wedge between father and son. He sets off on his game leg (which he injured while rescuing a baby sheep) to save Rene and Vern from Vern.

Joe is such a sweet guy he'll forgive his son abduction, attempted rape, and even murder – but when he sees what Vern does to a sheep, tears stream down his face. He realizes that Vern is *Really Bad* and he'll have to hunt him down to kill him. He does this just in time to save Rene, who by this point doesn't care much anyway.

Neither do we. Vern and Joe aren't exactly what you'd call believable characters, and poor Rene is too busy

getting her sweatsuit all ripped up to portray much thought or emotion. Or maybe she's just stunned by the scenery.

After all, it certainly is beautiful. Collins alleviates some of the audience's misery with some shots of milky-eyed deer nosing through the rain-forest. And there's a hint that he was attempting to make some sort of ecological point about the evils of man versus the beauty of nature.

Unfortunately, though, he juxtaposes them with too many shots of Rene getting tied up or clubbed across the face. Violence does not substitute for action, and it certainly doesn't round out a character. Collins might as well have put in some nudity. He could have made a tidy sum of cash in the soft-core market. It certainly wouldn't have been any great artistic compromise. *Abducted* is just a nasty little fantasy ineptly disguised as a movie anyway.

Stacey Bertles •

ABDUCTED A Modern Cinema Marketing Inc., Interpictures Releasing Corporation and Erin Film Limited presentation. **d.** Boon Collins **p.** Harold J. Cole **exec. p.** Alex Massis **sd. ed.** Steven Cole **film ed.** Bruce Lange **music** Michel Rubini **art d.** Kim Steer **d.o.p.** Robert McLachlan **sc.** Boon Collins **story** by Boon Collins, Lindsay Bourne **stunts** Dawn Stofer, Jacob Rupp J.J. Makaro **prod. co-ord** Eileen Szabo **1st a.d.** Judy Kemery **2nd a.d.** Mike Henry **cont.** Shelley Crawford **asst. cam.** Tom Turnbull **gaffer** John Houtmann **grip** Peter Reynolds **sd. rec.** Peter Clements **boom** Skip Borland **cost.** Rae Ford **make-up** Kathy Kuzyk **spfx** makeup Todd McIntosh **casting** richard Conkie **set design** Alan Wilson **set construct** Lee Rome **spfx** J.J. Makaro **asst. film ed.** Michael Werth **sd. ed.** Michele Cook, Richard Kelly **stills** Daniel Collins **catering** Sandy Steer **prod. asst.** John Gaytmann, Shane Shemko, David Small **helicopter pilot** Bob Ingram **animal props** Steve Kulash **wildlife footage** Tommy Tompkins **re-rec. mix** David Appleby, Don Whitesd, lab. Pathe **sd. film labs** Medallion Labs **opticals** Film Opticals, Toronto **prod. consult.** Stan Cole **legal counsel** Gabor Zinner **music** Rubini **Music - BMI financial part.** by Film Fund Financial Group. I.p. Dan Haggerty, Roberta Weiss, Lawrence King-Phillips, John Welsh, Jim Brown, Rae Ford, Jarold J. McCullough, Skip Borland, Rob Morton, Nelson Camire, Earl Jergens, Roy Waggoner, William Nunn, Steven E. Miller **Mr. Haggerty's double** Norm Mackie **stunts** Dawn Stofer, Jacob Rupp, J.J. Makaro **colour** 35mm **running time** 91 min