

David Cronenberg's  
**Dead Ringers**

Once again, as they did with *The Fly*, the hordes have rushed into print to proclaim *Dead Ringers* a masterpiece. And once again, as with *The Fly*, I get to stand on the sidelines, think for longer than most of my colleagues are allowed, and proclaim it isn't a masterpiece. It's got problems and weaknesses all over the place.

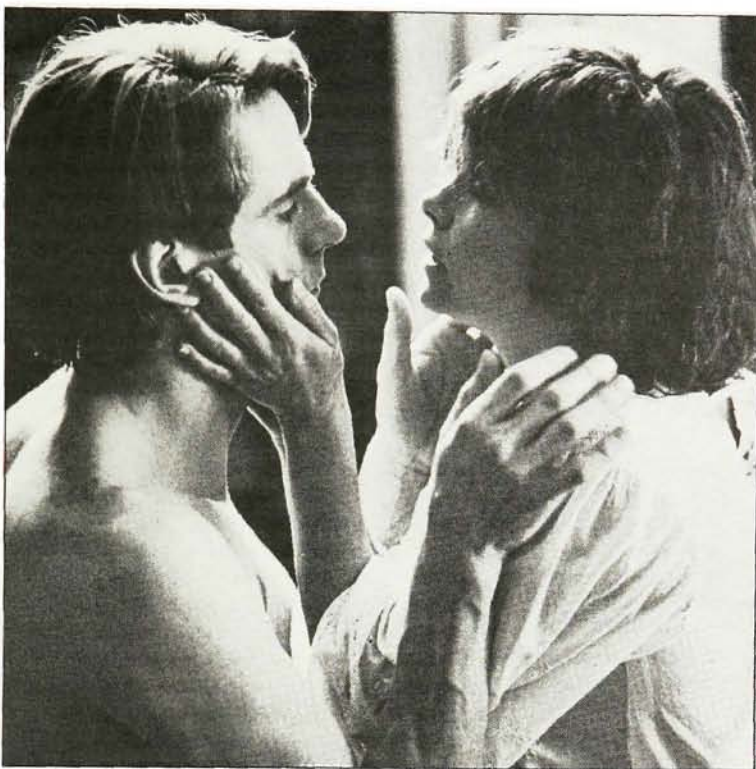
It's still a terrific movie, though, far better than most. Jeremy Irons is as good as acting gets. He not only clearly differentiates twin gynaecologists Elliot and Beverly Mantle, he takes each through a wide emotional range with full depth and character consistency. Playing against himself he develops such rapport and rhythm that it's easy to forget the impressive technical feat and simply become absorbed in the characters.

More than Irons, it's got sequences as good as any ever put on film – Beverly's eyes-averted shuffle past his brother's corpse as he whimpers Elliot's name again and again in anguished denial – the sex scene with Claire Niveau that's once hot, repellent, comic and so vivid you can smell the sheets – others, too.

But underlying and uniting everything is *Dead Ringers*'s greatest strength and the source of its major failings – its mood. The sense of decay and inescapable doom begins with the unbelievably ominous credits. Antique-looking woodcuts of surgical instruments and gynaecological anatomy float over black and blood-red, accompanied by Howard Shore's supremely eloquent dirge. Cronenberg builds from there with gliding camera, claustrophobic framing, somber pacing and sets impeccably dressed and designed to point up the Mantle brothers' antiseptic lives and spectacular decay.

To sustain the funereal mood, Cronenberg has resorted to a strategy of absences. After the credits, Shore's dirge doesn't return until well into the second half, leaving the movie largely music-free, which makes the music phenomenally effective when it does arrive, allowing Cronenberg to further darken an already-lightless atmosphere.

There are virtually no exteriors, only the opening sequence and a couple of transition shots framed as tight as possible. This, too, works well, giving immense force to the shot, third or fourth from the end, when Beverly, his brother slaughtered, leaves his office building and walks across a bit of grass to make a phone call, only to abandon the effort and return to his waiting death. It's the first time anybody has stepped away from a building into the sunlight, the first time extras move freely in the frame, the film's only sweeping diagonal movement. In one shot, it's everything Beverly tries for and, in trying, loses. It's a great shot, I only wish it were longer.



Jeremy Irons as Dr. Beverly Mantle falls in love with Claire Niveau (Geneviève Bujold) in *Dead Ringers*

There are virtually no characters but the Mantles. Though Geneviève Bujold turns in a fine, full-fleshed performance every bit as absorbing as Irons', kinky, pill-popping actress Claire Niveau is little more than a plot device, a catalyst to activate the flaw in the Mantles' shared identity. Though we can see why she prefers Beverly to Elliott, who's a thorough cad, we're left to our own guesses about why she cares at all. Elliott says she's neurotic, but he's a liar with no feeling for anybody but his brother, so why should we believe him? Except for the pills she doesn't seem neurotic – kinky sex in my books is indication of an active imagination, though Cronenberg may well disagree. At any rate, Claire Niveau is ultimately so unimportant to the movie that she isn't even given a payoff.

The lack of characters is a weakness, but it does serve to keep our attention on the Mantles and, taken all together, the mood-creating elements do fully prepare us to give the Mantles all the pity and terror they deserve when they finally decide, in madness, that surgical separation is their only salvation.

But the success of mood comes at the cost of other important elements, among them pacing. The montage sequence – Elliott ransacks their apartment for Beverly's stashed dope – is cut so slowly it loses its effect. Beverly's dream – Claire bites through the ligament that, in fantasy, binds him to Elliott – is too abrupt. In both cases it feels as if Cronenberg feared – needlessly – that his mood couldn't stand the strain.

The absence of other characters leads to a lack of definition in the film's social setting – the

world of medicine. We know that what little identity the brothers possess is as doctors, medical inventors, researchers, clinicians and we know they've risen to the heights of their profession to receive awards, grants and prestigious teaching positions. But we don't see how they're regarded as people, whether they're liked and accepted, or regarded with distaste as the *sui generis* freaks Cronenberg paints them as (he doesn't even allow them parents).

Without something – some character or sequence – to locate the Mantles with, or against, other doctors, the gynaecological background loses much of its potential to enrich the drama. We see the casual drug use, the dehumanization of the patient, the monstrous ego, the authoritarian attitude and the hypocritical cant surrounding it all. But we see it all as Mantle brothers behaviour and they're weird from the word go, 11-year-old freaks, as we first see them, who want to have sex in the bathtub with a neighbour girl as "an experiment" and who, when rejected, retreat to "operating" on a Living Woman anatomical doll. He's making the point that these guys are naturals for careers in surgery – but are they the only kind who are?

The Mantles' status as twins, not doctors, is at the core of their tragedy. Their shared temperament leads them into gynaecology, but their twin-ness, the fact that together they function better than either could alone, makes them a success. It is their attempt to move beyond twin-ness, when Beverly falls in love with Claire and tries for a separate life, that

destroys them, their status as doctors only provides the specific shape of their tragedy.

But how one views Western medicine profoundly affects how one views the tragedy and, without a view explicit in the film, we're left on our own. Personally, I think Western medicine is a good thing, far from perfect, but good. So I see their fall as real. You might take from other Cronenberg films, particularly *Shivers*, *Rabid*, *The Brood* and *Scanners*, the view that doctors are at best irresponsible and at worst dangerous egomaniacs and conclude that *Dead Ringers* offers the same view. What does this do to the tragedy?

You may not see it as tragedy at all. Some feminist writers – check out the works of Deirdre English and Barbara Ehrenreich, particularly *Witches, Midwives & Nurses* – have pointed to gynaecology as a male usurpation of an essentially female job, as a key element in the overall dehumanization of women. It's a reasonable view, but if it's your view, you're not likely to give a flying fuck about the Mantle brothers. No tragedy, no emotional involvement, just a couple of severely diminished assholes getting what they deserve.

They are diminished. Beverly can't get laid under his own identity, panics at Claire's lightest probing of his emotional life, cares about nothing but medicine. Elliott cares for glamour and womanizing, that's all. Emotional shallowness in him appears not as fear but as coldness. They're both struggling with limitations that, in one sense, most of us have long ago overcome, but that, in another sense, as twins, most of us will never face. I find them tragic and fascinating anyway. You may not. Either way, the thread of common humanity is slender and better use of their social setting might have worked to strengthen it.

In the film's middle section, mood exacts its heavy price from action and plot. Claire discovers she's been fucking both brothers and walks out. That kills the suspense of waiting for Elliott to do something drastic to keep his brother. Then Beverly gets loaded and depressed. Claire returns. Beverly gets loaded and depressed. Claire leaves. Beverly – loaded and depressed – returns to Elliott, who starts him on a rehab program, which fails, so he starts another one. Claire returns. Beverly – loaded and depressed – goes to her, then returns to Elliott for the final showdown. By which time you feel like you've been in the theatre for hours.

Part of that feeling comes from the plot repetition combining with the dirge tempo. Cronenberg keeps the scenes as edgy as he can and he does it well. But it still isn't enough to overcome the inertia.

To make matters worse, we're teased with glimpses of much more interesting material that's forever being shoved aside to give us yet another look at Beverly's progress into drug psychosis. You see, he develops this truly warped delusion: he thinks the women he's

PHOTO: ATTILA DORY

treating are all mutants. We think this is going to lift things into a whole new dimension. We remember those cruel surgical instruments from the credits and we know Beverly's an inventor. We know Claire is herself a sort of mutant - a "trifurcate", three cervical openings, hitherto unknown - and we suspect this may be the source of Beverly's interest in her. We're primed for something seriously bizarre.

We don't get it. We start with a scene of Beverly abusing a terrified, yet docile, patient. But only later do we learn that he saw her as a mutant. So, as it plays, the scene is one more look at the course of Beverly's drug problem.

And let's digress from that scene to the question of women in Cronenberg's movies: does he hate and fear 'em, or what? More than once I've both read and heard the argument that Claire Niveau is the bad guy here, that she disrupts their perfect boys-club lives and brings the Mantles to ruin. This is a view that requires ignoring the blatant evidence that the boys were a mess before they ever heard of her, that Beverly got his tendency to addiction on his own. If Cronenberg hates and fears women, he isn't exacting a celluloid revenge here - Claire, potential victim of brotherly rage and madness throughout, isn't killed, isn't mutilated or assaulted - and neither is any other woman. Rich in opportunities to slaughter many, *Dead Ringers*, in fact, slaughters none.

Women take a variety of roles in Cronenberg movies, but when they spread evil, that evil has invariably been put into them by a male scientist - check *Shivers*, *Rabid*, *The Brood* and *Videodrome*. Hell strikes indiscriminately in the Cronenberg universe, taking men and women both as agents and victims, but its source is always male science. Beverly, terrorizing his patient, certainly offers gut-level fear to women viewers, but the scene itself is less about women's fear of gynaecologists than the reverse.

Anyway, next time we get anything more than a little dialogue about Beverly's delusion, we're watching him, in a rather flat scene, persuade an artist to make working prototypes of his designs for surgical instruments for operating on mutant women. The idea is shocking, but the drawings only glimpsed. Nor have we seen what manner of soul-threatening mutations he's hallucinated - admittedly a near-impossible sight to get onto commercial screens. We haven't seen his sketches of the mutants, nor his doubtless fevered designing of the instruments. It's all handled as quietly as possible.

We wait for the instruments and they're worth it - strange and beautiful, brutal and loathsome. Beverly, ritually garbed in blood red, brings them into the unnaturally dark operating theatre. He's going to use them. Their unveiling and the subsequent build-up make a classic suspense sequence, but the moment Beverly strikes, everything dissolves into unintentional comedy as he flings himself atop the patient to grab her anaesthetic mask and babble, "I need



Geneviève Bujold, playing Claire Niveau, in *Dead Ringers*

something to slow me down." It's Hunter S. Thompson time and we're right back staring at Beverly's drug psychosis.

We wait for the instruments to be brought to Claire, convinced that her fate and the Mantles' are intertwined. But when they're brought, Beverly just tells her they're for separating Siamese twins and rushes out to slaughter his brother. That's it for Claire and that's it for surgical instruments - except Beverly does use them, in no very interesting or explicit way, on Elliot.

With potential to do so much more, surgical instruments for operating on mutant women are confined to standing as a visual correlative to Beverly's mental decay, a function already perfectly well served by the gold-plated Mantle Retractor that he first invents, then misuses and destroys. They make no significant connections of mutants, love, Claire and the Mantles.

Despite its shortfalls, *Dead Ringers* is, as noted, a terrific, original movie that shows Cronenberg's growth as an artist. The work with actors, camera and cutting continues the growth so prominent in *The Fly*. The familiar themes, not much developed since *Videodrome*, receive new treatment, new focus - the scientist examined rather than the consequences of scientific folly; the body's decay and war with the mind seen as springing from an internal, emotional state rather than being imposed from outside.

Yet *Dead Ringers* also shows Cronenberg shrinking - restraining, almost neglecting his unique, most developed power. The man is known throughout the world for his complex and original visual imagination, for his ability to infuse his fantastic creations with solid, real-world meaning. Why did he create such powerful images - mutant women and surgical instruments - and then so lightly use them? Why use them at all when they so disrupt the flow? Or were they, once thought of, too tempting to abandon?

It is, of course, no part of the artist's job to cling only to the tried and true. Experimentation promotes growth and David Cronenberg particularly deserves the chance to keep on growing.

Nor is it any part of the reviewer's job to deal with the motives and mind of the artist - trust the tale, not the teller, is our credo. But a couple of lines from *Dead Ringers'* press kit may do much to explain why the movie is the way it is and why, despite being this way, it is hailed as a masterpiece.

The kit quotes Cronenberg as calling the film, "much more naturalistic," and "not a horror movie." Co-writer Norman Snider adds, "This, on the other hand, really deals with some of the horror of life. People can't dismiss it as a mere fairytale."

As literal truth, these statements are

ludicrous. There is scarcely a naturalistic frame or line of dialogue in the film, a condition found in all of Cronenberg's best work. A mood of horror pervades the work and horror films, however fantastic, can and do deal with the horror of life - check *The Brood* on child abuse, *Videodrome* on cultural conditioning via TV. And any boob capable of dismissing something as "a mere fairytale," is equally capable of dismissing something as "a mere movie."

As cultural imperatives though, they're dead on the mark. We are generally trained to value "naturalistic" mimetic fiction over fantastic fiction. At the same time, we're trained to suppress our imaginations so that fantastic fiction becomes harder to derive meaning from. No wonder, then, that a "naturalistic" Cronenberg movie draws highest praise and no wonder that Cronenberg, here committed to naturalism, steps so hard on his instincts.

But he has those instincts. He has that imagination and *Dead Ringers* offers further proof that when he unleashes it, together with his fully-developed talent, he will, indeed, produce a masterpiece.

Andrew Dowler •

**DEAD RINGERS** exec p. Carol Baum, Sylvio Tabet p. David Cronenberg, Marc Boyman d. David Cronenberg sc. David Cronenberg, Norman Snider based on "Twins" by Bari Wood, Jack Geasland assoc. p. John Board d.o.p. Peter Suschitzky ed. Ronald Sanders p. des. Carol Spier cost. des. Denise Cronenberg mus. Howard Shore casting Deirdre Bowen p. man/post-prod. sup. Gabriella Martinelli 1st a.d. John Board 2nd a.d. Izadore K. Musallam 3rd a.d. Laurie Mirsky a.d. trainee Cyndie Clayton sup. art. d. Alicia Keywan art d. James McAteer 1st asst. art d. Peter Grundy, Vlasta Svobda, Gregory Keene asst. art d. Ken Watkins art dept. trainees Rocco Matteo, Yasna Stesanovic, Alexandra Thompson loc. man. Lillian Sarafinchan set dec. Elinor Rose Galbraith set dressers Clive Thomas, Chris Dutton loc. sd. Bryan Day boom op. Michael Lacroix sc. sup. Dug Roistein opt. fx. sup. Lee Wilson sp. fx. des. Gordon Smith lab sup. Derek Howard mech. des. Walter Klassen artist Don McLeod 1st asst. cam. Marvin Midwicki 2nd asst. cam. Arthur E. Cooper cam. trainees Marjio Corcoran, Andres Trauttmansdorff motion ctrl. programmer Randal Balsmeyer motion ctrl. asst. Richard Palin steadicam op. Robert Crone, CSC assoc. ed. Steve Weslak sd. ed. Wayne Griffin, David Evans, Richard Cadger, David Giammarco mus. ed. Suzana Peric makeup artist Shonagh Jabour hair Juy Duboisson p. coord. Alice Ferrier assts. Sandra Tucker, Lesley Clark, Jami Abell, Janet West opt. dir. George Furniotis, G. John Furniotis opt. printer Jon Campfens, Dimitris Anapliotis opt. lineup Chris Furniotis, Bob Yoshioka rotoscope artists Alan Peppiatt, Don Snowdon animation stand Peter Gruza gaffer Scotty Allan best boy Ian Scott generator ops. Duane Gullison, Roger Bowden key grip John Zulinski, Michael Iwan, Don Payne vid. sup. David Woods unit publ. Prudence Emery, Jeremy Podewas stills photog. Attila Dory rad. surg. inst. 2 Gorillas, Standing Metal Works orchestration Homer Denison studio sculptures Ted Hunter l.p. Jeremy Irons, Geneviève Bujold, Heidi Von Palleske, Barbara Gordon, Shirley Douglas, Stephen Lack, Nick Nichols, Lynn Cormack, Damir Andrei, Miriam Newhouse, David Hughes, Richard Farrell, Warren Davis, Jonathan Haley, Nicholas Haley, Marsha Moreau, Denis Akiyama, Dee McAfferty, Susan Markle, Murray Cruchley, Jane Luk, Tita Trevisan, Jacqueline Hennessy, Jillian Hennessy, David Walden, Liliane Stillwell, Bob Bainborough, Nick Rice, Joe Matheson, Hadley Kay, Cynthia Eastman, Nora Colpman, Rena Polley, Madeline Atkinson, John Bayliss, Graham Evans. An Astral Films release.

PHOTO: ATTILA DORY

Lea Pool's

## À Corps Perdu/ Straight for the heart

"I love a man, a woman and a cat, but I don't have any photos of them to show you," says globetrotting photo-journalist Pierre Kurwenal on a Nicaraguan bus to a fellow Québécois who has just pulled out his (nuclear) family snapshots. Seconds later, contras ambush the vehicle and massacre two of the passengers. Sexual politics meets geopolitics but Pierre gets only the latter on film.

The outline of a profound alienation, both personal and professional, is already established in the first minutes of Lea Pool's *À Corps Perdu*: not only does the brooding Pierre have nothing in common with his chatty compatriot but he seems also to have nothing to say to the Nicaraguans whose struggle he is recording. The only exchange comes when a frantic woman clutching her slaughtered husband and child screams "Assassino" at him, accusing him and all photographers of complicity in their images.

When Pierre gets home to Montreal, he finds that all that remains of his *ménage à trois* is a few flashbacks of sensuous group showers and tense breakfasts, and the loyal cat, Tristan. The Nicaraguan accusations still ringing in his ears, Pierre instinctively starts documenting the fragments of his identity, his vocation and his relationships as they disintegrate before his eyes.

This is familiar territory for Pool, the leading director of fiction among the young Quebec generation of the eighties: in *La Femme De L'Hôtel* it was a filmmaker and a singer-actress, in *Anne Trister* a painter, and now it's a photographer whose art triggers, not a Romantic reconciliation with the world, but an ever deeper entrenchment in its insoluble crises. For Pool's anguished artist-figures, art interlopes disastrously on living and vice versa. Now however, instead of the feminist heroines of her first cycle of films, a male protagonist embodies her vision. But Pierre is in many ways as alienated by his marginalized sexuality and by his morally tainted profession of observer of the world's agony, as his earlier female counterparts.

One can understand how Pool, after three films of such searing autobiographical probings, barely camouflaged by the devices of fiction and by glacial cinematic control, was eager to try her hand at adaptation, at translating someone else's guts onto the screen for a change. Yet she couldn't resist a novelist of many obvious affinities: for one thing, the filmmaker whose voice more than any other in Quebec films has articulated a certain lesbian sensibility gravitated



Matthias Habich (Pierre) with Johanne-Marie Tremblay (Sarah) and Michel Voïta (David) in happier times. Where's Tristan?

to the work (*Kurwenal*) of France's prize-winning gay novelist *par excellence*, Yves Navarre, a fellow chronicler of the risks of feelings and commitments on the margins of society.

On the surface Pierre's homosexuality is not a big deal: there is no need for him to declare, as Anne Trister did, "J'ai besoin d'aller au bout." Pierre is so at ease in fact that he is able effortlessly to pick up deliriously handsome young men in *straight bars*. Despite her recent professed interest in the external politics of relationships, Pool doesn't project Pierre's sexual nonconformity as political except in matter-of-fact terms of its utter ordinariness. It's hard to believe that this "matter-of-factness" of novel and script was enough, as Pool contends, to panic the original producers, who backed out of the project because of the sensitivity of homoeroticism during the AIDS epidemic (the same producers who apparently had no compunction about backing Arcand's moralistic linking of gay sex with disease in *Decline Of The American Empire*). It's harder still to believe that the ongoing cycle in both Quebec and English Canada of sex-coloured fiction in film is making us notorious abroad, as *The Globe And Mail* recently headlined from the Venice festival after the official presentation of *À Corps Perdu*. As it is, we're barely keeping pace with the Germans and the Spaniards, and even the British are well ahead in kink. In any case, it is current Canadian video that is really breaking the sex barrier, and making the words of Arcand, Rozema, Burroughs et al. look rather cheap, baby, to borrow a line from *Decline*. Producers Denise Robert and Robin Spry of Telescene weren't exactly in danger of frightening the horses by coming to the rescue of the unjustly stranded project, but are to be commended all the same for their decency.

Unfortunately, for all of Pool's sympathy with sexual nonconformity, the retroactive depiction of Pierre's triangle with David and Sarah, and her delineation of the three characters and their

final rupture, come across as the weakest element in the film. For one thing the scriptwriters' compression seems hard-pressed to capture the intricacies of a relationship postmortem, though one Steadicam manoeuvre choreographing the realignments on Pierre's mattress offers a lush melancholy that is worth pages of dialogue. Otherwise, the invention of scenes of post-breakup violence between Pierre and both of his former lovers somehow fails to telescope or add to the pain of separation.

As for the characters themselves, Matthias Habich as Pierre skilfully manages to propel the movie with a zombie intensity that evokes Louise Marleau in *Femme De L'Hôtel*. Sarah (Johanne-Marie Tremblay) and David (Michel Voïta), however, are less successful creations; it's hard to believe this relationship lasted 10 years (20 in the novel!). Parachuting Sarah and David into more cinematic professions (from the novel's advertising designer and teacher to Pool's violist and dolphin-keeper respectively) is simply not enough. Ultimately, as the ending unfolds, measurably more upbeat than Navarre's utter desolation, the arbitrariness of the whole arrangement rises to the surface.

Part of the problem may be Pool's geographical transplantation of the novel from Paris to Montreal, while retaining European actors for two sides of the triangle. In *Anne Trister*, the cross-cultural vibrations arising from Swiss and Québécois actors working together, rendered among other things an imaginable figure of the immigrant experience in Quebec. Here the result, for all Habich's skill, is a whiff of the deadly mid-Atlantic nowhere-ville that is the curse of coproductions, with their non-organic nationality-based casting protocol. Unlike an earlier generation of European immigrants in Quebec cinema, including Lamothe and Dufaux, Pool seems to have resisted immersing herself fully in the specific textures of everyday living in this place. When world-weary Pierre meets Quentin (Jean-François Pichette), the deaf

mute guardian angel of his disintegrating universe, the film really begins to pick up, simply because this bright-eyed Québécois performer is the first character with a sense of belonging in the studiously evoked landscape. As for Québécois actress Tremblay, her mature and magnetic presence can't rescue the first Pool female role that doesn't really come across. Maybe it would have helped to keep Navarre's edge of distrust - Pool omits, for example, Navarre's revelation that Sarah is the one who has the excessively adorable Tristan put to sleep (a detail that the growing silent majority of animal-haters in the Quebec film audience will be sorry to miss).

The theme of photography works much better than this nexus of characters and relationships. Not that the movie genre of photographer as prophet-martyr is not already well populated. (Click... black and white freeze-frame... poignant chord... existential/political/narrative epiphany.) The genre has a decent lineage even among Montreal "city movies", with Jacques Leduc's *Albedo* (1982) its unrecognized masterpiece. Pool brings a baroque sincerity to a genre that is by no means exhausted. All of her films have incorporated moody Montreal urbanscapes that seem to translate the immigrant's discovery of an alienating aesthetic of the new environment, and this one is the most fully developed. Here the setting is the register of Pierre's gradual breakdown, as the globe-trotter tries to make a belated family album of his ex-lovers in their comings and goings, as he tries to make visual sense of the cavernous building hulks and graffitied walls of his home turf. Luc Chessix's photos of an eviscerated Montreal mirroring a world and an identity in ruins are well-chosen, though the political edge to this album of an overdeveloped city cannibalizing its birthright seems occasionally muted in a trendy aestheticism.

These hesitations notwithstanding, Pool's directorial craft certainly continues to be flawless: Pierre Mignot's prizewinning cinematography on *Anne Trister* is splendidly reprised, the director's collaboration with editor Michel Arcand and scriptwriter Marcel Beaulieu continues to mature, and the soundtrack is richly textured thanks to composer Osvaldo Montes and sound designer Marcel Pothier. Critical responses are thus far respectful but fail to echo the sweeping acclaim for *Femme* or answer the impossible expectations that still exist four years after that big breakthrough.

As Quebec filmmakers continue to shift their allegiance away from the documentary realism of their ancestors Flaherty, Renoir and Rosselini and edge towards another kind of classicism, the precise illusionism of Hitchcock, Lubitsch and Ophüls (Simoneau, Arcand, and Mankiewicz, respectively), it is hard not to admire Pool's persistently artful consolidation of a small place for classical modernism (Resnais-Antonioni) in Quebec cinema. At the same time, we should be

thankful that a literary source of Navarre's relevance and cinematic potential has finally been interpreted, and approached with such forthrightness and imagination by a filmmaker who has always recognized the filmic in the artifice of the written and recited word. Only time will tell whether the important step outwards that *À Corps Perdu* represents for Pool's career will mean the same for Quebec cinema.

Thomas Waugh •

**A CORPS PERDU/STRAIGHT FOR THE HEART** p. Denise Robert, Robin Spry exec. p. Jamie Brown, George Reinhart co-p. (Switzerland) Ruth Waldburger d. Léa Pool sc. & dialogue Léa Pool, Marcel Beaulieu sc. & dialogue cons. Michel Langlois d.o.p. Pierre Mignot art d. Vianney Gauthier cost. des. Louise Jobin sound Luc Yersin photographer Luc Chessex ed. Michel Arcand sound des. Marcel Pothier music comp. Osvaldo Montes p. man. Daniel Louis 1st a.d. Pierre Plante 2nd a.d. Carole Dubuc cont. Josiane Flaux-Morand loc. man. Mario Nadeau asst. p. man. Louis-Philippe Rochon interim pre-prod. man. Muriel Lizé p. coord. Micheline Cadieux (Switzerland) Claudia Sontheim admin. Diane Arcand books Christian Fluet p. sec. Lucianne Rousseau 1st asst. cam. Christiane Guernon 2nd asst. cam. Martin Dubois steadicam & 2nd cam. Steve Campanelli 2nd still ph. Lyne Charlebois d. trainee Jeanne Crépeau set dec. Claudine Charbonneau set props Patrice Bengle ext. props Ian Lavoie, Anne Galea asst. props Mario Racicot set carpenter Gilbert Leblanc wardrobe Josée Boisvert dresser Mario Davignon 2nd dresser Solange Côté makeup Diane Simard hair Bob Pritchett boom op. Barbara Fluckiger 2nd boom op. Jean-Guy Bergeron additional sound Michel Charron gaffer Normand Viau best boys Claude Fortier, Paul Viau genny op. Jean-Paul Auclair key grip Jean-Louis Daoust grips Robert Auclair, Jean-Pierre Lamarche, Jean-Mark Lapointe trainee Raphaël Reyes p. assts. Michel Bolduc, David ODonnell, Richard Châteauevert, Normand Fortin trainees Isabelle Ungaro, Chantal Dagnosneau loc. scouts Louis Bolduc, Guy Bouchard, Mona Medawar, Roseline Laverdière craft service Margoline Arsenault post-prod. man. Suzanne Comtois asst. pic. ed. Patricia Tassinari 2nd asst. Roseanne Cohen ed. during shooting Marie Hamelin sd. efx. eds. Marcel Pothier, Antoine Morin asst. Mathieu Beaudin dialogue eds. Diane Boucher, Carole Gagnon lip synch. Matthieu Roy-Décarie trainee Céline Béland detection Normand Bélanger post-synch & sound efx. rec. Jocelyn Caron re-rec. sound efx. Yvon Benoît sound efx. eng. Jérôme Décarie trainee Monique Vézina sound mixer Michel Descombes asst. mix. Luc Boudrias neg. cutting Jim Campapadal music arrangements Osvaldo Montes music sup. Jimmy Tenaka music ed. Michel Arcand orchestration of theme Mario Parent sound rec. Studio Tempo sound eng. François Deschamps asst. Louis Valois Foreign Crew-p. man. Lise Abastado p. José Villar asst. d. Mayra Segura p. asst. Javier Gonzalez, Luis Gomez, Alejandro Barcelo cam. asst. Julio Simoneau cost. Cardidat Sanchez makeup Carmen Vina props José Amat, Carlos Ramirez sp. efx. René Varona, Ovidio Fuentes, José Galan gaffer Humberto Figueroa best boy Sergio Berútez key grip Orland Perez Vizcaine grip Jimmy Gonzalez l.p. Matthias Habich, Johanne-Marie Tremblay, Michel Voita, Jean-François Pichette, Kim Yaroshevskaya, Jacqueline Bertrand, Pierre Bogeil, France Castel, Victor Désy, Mimi D'Estée, Louise Caron, Marilyn Gardner, Jean Cascon, Andrée Lachapelle, Louise Marleau, Albert Millaire, Peter Pearson, Marthe Turgeon, Gisèle Trépanier, Pierre Germain, Roch LaFortune, Evelyne Régimbald, Carmen Ferland, Michel Maillot, Ylial Page, Dino Fatighentti, François Julien, Michel Beauchemin, Guy Brouillette, Henri Scheppeler, Gérard Soler, Claude Desparois, Michel Daigle, Giorgio Uehlinger, Jean-Michel Léonard, Richard Hoenich, Chantal Rémillard, Stéphane Allard, Alison Eldridge, Monique Laurendeau, Valérie Legge, Hélène Plouffe, Brian Bacon, Suzanne Careau, Peter Purich, Jean Cardinal, Nieves Rivalles, Carlos Adrian-Albas Castello, José Murillo, Norberto Echementia, Oscar Villar. 35mm colour. Produced by Telescene Films, Montreal and Xanadu Film AG, Zurich. Distributed in Canada by Provifilms. Foreign sales by Films Transit.

## Allan E. Goldstein's The Outside Chance Of Maximilian Glick

**B**oy, just what the world needed; another Canadian-ethnic family drama. It'll make you laugh. It'll make you cry.

Just when you thought it was safe to return to the movie theatre, along comes Allan Goldstein's film adaptation of Morley Torgov's novel, *The Outside Chance Of Maximilian Glick*. This is not to suggest that *Glick* is a dreadful film; in fact, it's downright competent. So competent is this effort, that it almost drowns in its own safe, conventional framework.

*Glick* is sort of what you'd get if the Waltons were Jewish and moved to Beausejour, Manitoba. Everything that was wittily acerbic or genuinely human in Torgov's book becomes, respectively, abrasive and maudlin on film.

On the plus side, what *Glick* definitely has going for it is the presence of Saul Rubinek. Why is it that so many recent mediocre Canadian films (*Ticket To Heaven*, *Obsessed*) have been raised to the level of engaging viewing because someone had the foresight to cast Rubinek in a central role? As the unorthodox Orthodox Rabbi Teitelman in *Glick*, Rubinek's sly, inventive performance seems incongruous with the rest of this ploddingly uninspired effort.

For what it's worth, the plot focuses upon the coming of age of one Maximilian Glick (Noam Zylberman), a freckle-faced 12-year-old who is about to embark on the traditional Jewish rite of passage, the Bar Mitzvah. Max wants only to do what's best, but his middle-class parents have other ideas. Their concern is purity of race. So when Max takes a shine to the pretty, non-Jewish Celia (Fairuza Balk), all hell breaks loose.

What Max can't quite comprehend is how his family - concerned as they are with keeping everything in the faith - are so anonymous in the small Prairie town. This hypocrisy of faith is one of many reasons why Max does *not* want to be Jewish anymore. To make matters worse, his parents demand that he stop seeing Celia. This complicates things further since Max and Celia are duet-partners for a big piano competition in Winnipeg.

At first, Max tries shunning Celia. This, however, doesn't last too long; basic biology and the common wisdom imparted by Rabbi Teitelman reign supreme.

Add to this stew the fact that Teitelman is basically a closet-comedian. Ah, the plot thickens. Teitelman too, is having some doubts about his faith, since deep down he knows that



Finjan session: Max (Noam Zylberman), Rabbi Teitelman (Saul Rubinek) and Celia (Fairuza Balk) get down to some (Jewish) roots music

he'd be more at home on the stage of a comedy club rather than teaching the Talmud.

Whew! This is getting complicated. However, never fear. Just like the stuff of real life, everybody gets everything they want. Max gains the love and respect of his parents (while teaching them a trick or two about basic human decency). Teitelman leaves the synagogue and finds himself on a talent-show stage. The faith is restored. Everybody's happy. The audience laughs. The audience cries.

It's a wonderful life, ain't it?

Regrettably, the film seems to be missing the kind of nasty twists and turns that can raise an ethnic family drama several notches. Almost all of the characters and events in the film are presented with such a "wholesome" touch, that much of the tension and conflict seems contrived and TV-movie-ish. For example, one scene which works quite splendidly is when Max and Celia hop a bus to Winnipeg to take part in the piano competition. They meet up with Teitelman, who takes the kids to the home of some friends, where they all take part in a glorious musical celebration. Meanwhile, there is some real urgency on the part of both Max's and Celia's parents back in Beausejour; the hours are ticking on and nobody's heard from the kids. Juxtaposing the "fun" stuff in Winnipeg, with the "worry" in Beausejour, works perfectly. The audience can revel in both the wonder of the scene in Winnipeg (where Max, Celia and Teitelman are having a grand time playing music and dancing), plus the apprehension of what horrors will befall all three of them when they return to Beausejour. It's unfortunate, however, that the rest of the film seldom matches this fine moment. Most of the proceedings are simply predictable.

One of the things which makes this sequence work is the presence and performance of Saul Rubinek. As played by Rubinek, Teitelman is not only the most appealing character, but the most believable as well. Rubinek not only adds flesh to an otherwise conventional character type (the authority figure with common sense and a heart of gold), but he knows how to work an audience. He does it so well, that most everything in the film pales miserably when he's not on screen.

Noam Zylberman in the title role, is no slouch either. Kudos are indeed in order for casting a kid who isn't a Disney-moppet type. The only trouble is that Zylberman is a tad one-note; he handles the comedy well, but his range in terms of expression beyond the wisecracking is exceedingly limited. One of the most troublesome points occurs when Zylberman is attempting to tell his grandfather (Jan Rubes) off: it's a serious moment, but the tone in Zylberman's voice suggests Max would much prefer to be zinging off a one-liner. This, of course, may well be a directorial decision, and if so, a very wrongheaded one. Max is funny, but he's also a serious young man with some very serious questions about hypocrisy and prejudice.

Fairuza Balk is charming as Celia, while Jan Rubes lends solid support as Granddaddy Glick. Unfortunately, the writing is at fault with respect to Rubes; he gets by on his shrewd presence alone. The character's transformation at the end of the film (from a shallow, disciplinarian patriarch to a kind, benevolent and understanding granddad) is a bit hard to swallow. The film rushes into tying up the loose ends and everything takes on a *Wonderful World of Disney* glow.

All of this is not to suggest that *The Outside Chance Of Maximilian Glick* will not appeal to a wide audience; Lord knows, many Canadian films have (such as *Mentballs* and *Porky's*). The film is definitely a crowd-pleaser, and at the very least, it should have no problems in this area. At a budget of \$ two-million-plus, the film is extremely well-produced. Technical credits are slick (yet uninspired) and the use of locations is extremely imaginative. In fact, the whole affair appears as if it might be more comfortable on television, rather than up on the big screen.

What it all boils down to is that *The Outside Chance Of Maximilian Glick* is safe, sound, regional filmmaking; it resembles an American film, crafted as competently as any other American film and at half the American budget. It just seems too bad that this is the sort of stuff being championed as the ultimate goal in regional filmmaking. There are many stories from the regions that have yet to be told; this one has been told much too often.

Greg Klymkiw •

**THE OUTSIDE CHANCE OF MAXIMILIAN GLICK** p. Stephen Foster & Richard Davis d. Allan Goldstein sc. Phil Savath p. man. Vonnie Von Helms 1st. a. d. Karen Robyn, Stephen Reynolds p. des. Kim Steer d. o. p. Ian Elkin sd. mix Leon Johnson ed. Richard Martin p. coord. Marie Fournier p. acct. trainee Phyllis Laing asst. p. man. trainees Elizabeth Janzen, Shar Carrick p. sec. trainee Lynda Mann p. asst. trainee Rosalie Bellefontaine 2nd a. d. Jack Clements 3rd a. d. Maureen Smith 2nd a. d. trainee Gerry Turchyn script Denise Kenny loc. man. Anne Klein asst. loc. man. Connie Bortnick loc. p. a. Saul Henteleff art dir. Phil Schmidt asst. p. des. Deanne Rohde props Neila Benson asst. props trainee Mark Gebel set dressers Elizabeth Jarvis, Vickie Mowchun cost. des. Charlotte Penner ward. trainees Linda Madden, Kathie Penner makeup Pearl Louie hair Rita Steinman makeup trainee Pam Athayde makeup daily Cindy Warner hair daily Connie Hanreck set carpenter Olaf Dux set painter Len Schlichting asst. carpenter Louise Fournier asst. painter Kathy Burke-Gaffney fog machine Ron Mymurck video synch tech. Klaus Melchior art dept. assts. Gordon Gregg, Wayne Patrick, Alan Pakarny cam. op. Tom Fillingham 1st. asst. cam. Charles Lavack 2nd. asst. cam. Holly Gregory steadicam David Crane boom op. Andrew Koster cablieman Norman Dugas gaffer "Scotty" Allan key/lighting grip Bill Mills best boy Peter Larocque electrician Bryan Sanders 2nd grip Owen Smith grip Michael Marshall generator op. Rod Merrells lighting trainee Michael Drabot grip trainee Robert Dalley asst. ed. Cheryl Buckman, Debra Rurak sup. sd. ed. Cal Shumiatcher dialogue ed. Stuart Copley ADR ed. Debra Rurak effects ed. Cheryl Buckman, Ingrid Rosen, Shannon Mitchell asst. sd. ed. Ellem Gram Foley artists Marco Ciccone, Scott Goodman Foley mixer Patrick Ramsey rerecording mixer Paul A. Sharpe cast. Colleen Ferguson, Shelagh Carter, Peggy Sarge, John Kozak publ. Sharon Singer, Billie Stewart trainee Dorothy Harvey stills photog. Bob Tinker transport. coord. Dave Perich drivers Michael Benson, Dan Neil craft services Janice Badger tutors Robert Dumontier, Mimi Singer, Rachel Fink neg cutter Gay Black colour timer Bruce Whidden 2nd unit dir. Richard Davis l. p. Jan Rubes, Aaron Schwartz, Sharon Corder, Ken Zelig, Howard Jerome, Susan Douglas Rubes, Noam Zylberman, Alex McClure, Matthew Casey, Nigel Bennet, Joan Nakamoto, William Marantz, Casey Chisick, Allan Stratton, Rosalie Rudelier, Stan Lesk, Fairuza Balk, Cathryn Balk, Wayne Nicklas, Saul Rubinek, Nancy Drake, Dennis Persowich, Debbi Kremksi, Gabriel Hall, William Krawetz, Evan Stillwater, Shayla Fink, Jon Ted Wynne, Ernest Slutchuk, Martin Kinsey Posen, Myron Schultz, Victor Schultz, Daniel Koulack. Produced by Outside Chance productions Inc. with the participation of Telefilm Canada, B.C. Film Development Society, Canada-Manitoba CIDO, Beacon Group Ltd., BCTV.

## Robin Spry's Obsessed

A hit-and-run driver kills a 12-year-old boy. The guilt here is so obvious that the one responsible will certainly be brought to trial and justice done – right?

Hold it. Nothing is quite so simple in real life or in Robin Spry's latest psychological thriller, *Obsessed*. Here, complex issues intersect with equally complex human emotions, lines of right and wrong waver beneath our feet, and simple resolutions are simply not to be found.

*Obsessed* is not a formula thriller: there is no gratuitous gore to titillate or nauseate, no psycho-killer to fear and hate. Instead we have a very realistic (shockingly so) portrayal of a fatal accident that kills a child, and the equally realistic emotional wringer that results for the people involved. In addition, it is a story that manages to introduce a level of suspense and tragedy as an element of entertainment, and at the same time remains a kind of morality-play of the modern world.

Director Spry shows his love of the socially relevant once again, using it as a base to build his levels of meaning while maintaining an undercurrent of tension. He tugs at the audience's emotions without ever jangling them into submission, for he keeps the focus on the human beings involved rather than on the issues.

Kerrie Keane plays Dinah Middleton, an 'everyday mother' who becomes obsessed (hence the title) with finding and punishing the hit-and-run killer of her only son, Alex. She tracks him to his home across the U.S. border, where he remains safe behind a technicality of law: hit-and-run offences are non-extraditable according to the standing treaties. Dinah's outrage that the man who killed her son should go totally unpunished is so strong that she sets out to wreak horrible revenge. She will follow him, pester him, disguise herself and seduce him as she schemes of kidnap and murder: until she comes within a heartbeat of actually becoming a killer herself.

Her focus will change with the help of her former husband Max, played by Daniel Pilon. He is a corporate lawyer who is struggling in his own way to bring his son's killer back to Montreal for trial. Despite his disillusionment that the law may be used to protect the guilty, he cannot sink to the level of an-eye-for-an-eye revenge.

Their relationship evolves to where they rediscover the love that they lost long ago, and each moves to a more common ground that in the end will prove to be the only effective way to get their son's killer, finally, back to the site of his crime, back to where he can look his guilt straight in the eye.



Kerrie Keane is *Obsessed* with pursuing the hit-and-run driver who killed her son

Both Keane and Pilon deliver fine performances, despite the fact that the writing for their characters is at times weak. But the one actor whose performance most affects this film is Saul Rubinek in the difficult role of the American hit-and-run driver, Owen Hughes. He takes the concept of the Anti-Hero and turns it inside-out, transforming his character into a sort of 'Anti-Villain'. True, his Hughes is a self-absorbed, spineless wimp who uses convoluted reasoning to convince himself that his problem will go away if he can only ignore it long enough. Being confronted with his guilt by the incessant hounding of the dead boy's parents is to him an inconvenience that becomes more and more disagreeable, until he goes whimpering off to a high-priced and very competent lawyer to get them off his back. Yet there is humanity to his performance as a basically weak man, so that it inspires not horror and damnation, but pity and sadness. His transformation is therefore all the more powerful when the realization of what he has really done finally penetrates all his cool defences: that a boy's life snuffed out is more than just an arm's-length abstraction. Then, alone before the truth of his guilt, he is utterly and totally shattered.

What is especially chilling about Rubinek's character is that Owen Hughes could just as easily be your neighbour, or he could be your uncle or, given the right circumstances, he just might even be you...

Two other actors, Lynne Griffin and Allan Thicke, have smaller roles where they also do very well. Griffin delivers all she can as Hughes' wife, Karen. It is a role slim on actual dialogue yet pivotal to the balance of the story, where she's asked to stay more in the background yet still evolve strongly like the other main characters. Thicke has a more prominent profile as sharklike lawyer Conrad Vaughan, oozing expensive cologne and soullessness. The fact of a boy's death is to Vaughan but a notation upon his legal papers. When his client Hughes, in an emotional moment, tries to explain to him how it really 'was just an accident', Vaughan interrupts him coldly, saying "This is not a confessional. Do you want to save your soul, or do you want to save your ass? If it's the latter, then you've

come to the right place."

For all the strengths of this film, there remain faults that stand out like exposed plumbing in an otherwise fine piece of architecture. Some of the scenes and some of the dialogue seem a bit contrived, with occasional sloppiness of cohesion nagging at our credulity. Unfortunately, there remain a few fits of incredible-coincidence-disease left over from Spry's last feature, *Keeping Track*. The script by Douglas Bowie shows moments of depth in story weaving and sharp dialogue, but is uneven and the ride is sometimes very bumpy indeed. Also uneven is the look of the film, which varies greatly as if lit by three or four different people.

Despite these faults, *Obsessed* remains a very strong story which, like all good filmic stories, doesn't mold the reality of which the filmmaker speaks, but rather holds up a mirror to it and allows it to speak for itself.

André Guy Arseneault •

**OBSESSED** p. Jamie Brown exec. p. Neil Leger p. & d. Robin Spry line p. Allan Nicholls casting d. Vera, Elite Productions p. man. Peter Bray p. coord. Janine Anderton p. sec. Astrid Koch p. acct. Bernard Lamy books Elizabeth Lamy 1st a. d. Mireille Goulet 2nd a. d. Jacques Laberge art d. Claude Pare asst. art d. Jean Kazemirchuk set dresser Pierre Blondin set props Pierre Fournier asst. props Louis Gascon props buyer Paul Hotte props vehicles Jacques Arcouette art dept. driver Nathalie St-Pierre unit man. Estelle Lemieux asst. unit man. Huguette Bergeron loc. man. Barbara Shrier cont. Claudette Messier d. o. p. Ron Stannett 1st asst. cam. Luc Lussier 2nd asst. cam. Jacques Bernier stills Proška Mihalka gaffer Gilles Mayer best boy Jacques Gauthier 2nd lighting asst. Bill Muloin gennie op. Michel Canuel key grip Robert LaPierre, Jr. grip Philippe Palu 2nd grip Alain Singher cost. des. Ginette Magny wardrobe Blanche Boileau dresser Suzanne Canuel makeup Penny Lee hair Yves LeBlanc sound eng. Gabor Vadnay boom Veronique Gabillaud stunts Dave Rigby sp. efx. Jacques Godbout driver captain Don Riordan drivers David O'Donnell, Drew Brazil, Greg Edwardson, Don Poole, Harald Mueller, Alain Brouillette p. assts. Clod Lacoursiere, Michel Bolduc, Frederic Lefebvre p. driver Dianne Prupas craft service Christian LaFortune swing crew Chris Gilmore p. placement Michel Roy ed. Diann Ilnicki asst. ed. Borek Sedivek 2nd asst. ed. Roseanne Cohen lawyer Michael Prupas New York Crew: contact Randy Ostrow extras casting Todd Thaler l. p. Kerrie Keane, Daniel Pilon, Saul Rubinek, Allan Thicke, Mireille Deyglun, Ken Pogue, Ann Page, Jeremy Spry, Mathew McKay, Leif Anderson, Meredith Beaudet, Peter Blackwood, Aaron Rand, Harry Standjofski, Joanna Noyes, Catherine Colvey, Allan Nicholls, Lynne Griffin, Jessica Caplan, Jacob Tierney, Jamie Brown, Claire Rodger, Judith Hilderman, Judah Katz, Sandi Stahlbrand, Gary Plaxton. Produced by Telescene Films. Distributed in Canada by Astral Films Ltd.

Hubert Yves Rose's  
**La Ligne de Chaleur**

**L**a Ligne de Chaleur is a deeply satisfying film that owes its critical success in equal measure to its direction, writing, acting and the filmmaking integrity of the Association coopérative de productions audio-visuelles (ACPAV). It is a moderately budgeted film (at \$1.3 million) that will not make big bucks at the box office but neither do we live in a perfect world. With the exception of extremely minor roles played by Pat Phillips, Lorena Gale, Charlotte Boisjoli and Charlotte Lelièvre, you will not find women in this film or popular inducements like sex, violence and exotic locations that only money can buy.

Rather, *La Ligne de Chaleur* stands as a reminder to the filmmaking community of what can be achieved with a talented cast and crew and the will to make a good film.

In a word the film is "funereal", with a dark pallor hanging over it. It proceeds in whispered tones yet there is much unrestrained emotion. It is an evocative film about the estranged relationship between father and son, a classical relationship that Rose treats with admirable subtlety and respect.

The story opens on a Montreal snowstorm. Robert Filion (Gabriel Arcand) is obliged to travel south where he must identify the body of his father who has died of a sudden heart attack in a Florida resort. Robert's parents have been separated for years just as Robert is separated from his wife and son Maxim (Simon Gonzalez) who is reunited with his father for the trip.

Father and son get along well during the first sunny day on the Florida beach. They share a kindred sense of trust while living in the deceased's beach apartment. Here, for a brief moment, the old man is dead (long live the old man!) and everything is peachy.

*La Ligne de Chaleur*, the road movie, begins after the body has been shipped north by train, to be buried. Father and son, who have not planned this trip, follow in the deceased's car to find that the coastal road through Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia and Virginia is lined with overbooked motels. As they drive north, the rooms they do find become darker and colder as does the relationship between father and son.

This relationship finally breaks down on the "heat line" (*La Ligne de Chaleur*) where the warm weather meets the northern cold front. What was once a breezy beach apartment has gradually become a low-lit roadside motel where father and son face, indeed attempt to exercise, the fears and anxiety inherent in their relationship. Thus, what had appeared early in the story to be an awkward but not unusual

father/son relationship requiring a period of reacquaintance, becomes something much more menacing.

Norman G. Simpson (Gerard Parkes) is a cloyingly nice, retired journalist who is working on a photo-essay called "Motels and the Decline of Adventure." He is a key character, a simple-happy-go-lucky individual engendering all the characteristics of someone on permanent vacation (a large percentage of Florida's wintertime population). Maxim is fascinated by this old wizard to whom he can talk regardless of language differences, but Robert cannot put enough distance between himself and Simpson.

Robert chooses not to like this older man who appears to want to play the role of his father. His tolerance of Simpson does not improve even after we learn that Simpson is dying of a terminal illness and is lonely.

By, in effect, bringing Robert's father back to life to show the continuity of the father/son relationship through the years and from generation to generation, Rose and co-writer Micheline Lanctot underscore the complexity of such a relationship.

Guilt, a product of his relationship with his late father and feelings of inadequacy as a father to his son, culminate in Robert's dark - albeit drunken - night of the soul.

Here, on the heat line, in the Motel Drama, Chesapeake Bay, Va., the sins of the father are visited upon Robert while his own son is the sympathetic victim/witness.

Arcand, with minimal (drunken) dialogue, is brilliant and Gonzalez does not deter from this first-class performance.

The story ends the same way it begins - in the north on the cold side of the heat line to where the corpse has been shipped, where Simpson

expects to die, where Robert has experienced the mortification of self.

In the last shot, the coastal road leads north towards a tunnel entrance that expands quietly - save for the beat of car windshield wipers - and envelopes the whole screen in darkness.

*La Ligne de Chaleur* is like attending your own funeral. It should not be missed. You will marvel at what you learn about relationships you thought you had pegged.

Jan Chantale •

**LA LIGNE DE CHALEUR** p. Marc Daigle d. Hubert-Yves Rose sc. Micheline Lanctot, Hubert-Yves Rose d. o. p. Michel Caron sd. Yvon Benoit p. man. Danny Chailour 1st a. d. Lise Abastado continuity Thérèse Bérubé loc. man. Carle Delaroché-Vernet casting Deirdre Bowen. Annie Pierard makeup Micheline Trépanier dresser Mario Davignon props Simon La Haye chief elect. Jean-Marc Hébert electricians Pierre Provost, Jean Courteau key grip François Dupère grip Christian Benard 1st. cam. asst. Christiane Guernon 2nd cam. asst. Martin Dubois gaffer Claude La Haye set designers Jean-François Leblanc, Simon Laforge p. admin. Marina Darveau p. asst. Louise Cloutier p. sec. Suzanne Castellino, Denise d'Amours accountants Luc Forcier, Marie-Reine Mailhot ext. loc. man. Marie Potvin, Jennifer Jonas prod. assts. Alain Labrosse, François Paille, David Morin, André Dupuy still photog. Paul-Émile Rioux a. d. trainee Annie Pierard American crew: prod. coord. Gary McNutt, Ron Oer electrician Russell C. Parsons Jr. Virginia: prod. man. Timothy Gabbert 2nd cam. asst. David L. Haycox prod. assts. Denise Nations, Donna Toole, George Koury, Vernon Nimetz Florida: p. man. Sally Glaesner 2nd. cam. asst. Gary Schlifer grip Scott Mumford p. assts. John Piccolo, Ray Nieman orig. music Richard Gregoire musicians Marc Gillett, Pierre Daigneault sd rec. & mix. Joe Petrella sd. ed. Marie-Claude Gagné sd. fr. Lise Wedlock sd. fr. rec. Jocelyn Caron asst. ed. Theresa De Luca asst. sd. ed. Paule Bélanger ed. trainee Marnie Stubley mix Michel Descombes l. p. Gabriel Arcand, Simon Gonzalez, Gerard Parkes, Charlotte Boisjoli, Gérard Poirier, Pat Phillips, Lorena Gale, Jean Mathieu, Paul Giaros, Vlasta Vrana, Charlotte Lelièvre, Carl Norling, Moses Gibson, James C. Montague, Lucien Hamel, Herb Lifschultz, James W. Almond. Produced by the ACPAV, with the financial participation of Telefilm Canada, Société générale de cinéma du Québec. 35mm, colour.

Bruce Elder's  
**Consolations (Love is an Art of Time) Part III: The Body and the World**

"Well this is a mission and I do hope to say that Western concepts of reason have driven us into an absolutely extreme situation - a situation that threatens life on this planet, actually. And these films are partly a call to recognize this extreme condition."  
(Bruce Elder, *Cinema Canada* #124.)

It's a small word, but it means a lot, "us." In the above quote it seems to me to be the key to understanding Bruce Elder's recent film work. Though the quote is taken from an interview conducted after the completion of Elder's *Lamentations*, it remains applicable to *The Body and the World*, and it sums up what I believe to be that film's central issue - community.

*The Body and the World* is the last film in the *Consolations* trilogy, a 14-hour experimental work completed this year. Elder describes *Consolations* as being about "resentment and its overcoming, that is, about the overcoming of the pastness of the past through grasping its presentness and through a thankful submission to the Wholly Other, since nothing is more obvious than that Hell is to be one's own." Hmm.

But *Consolations* appears to be about nostalgia rather than resentment. If, as Michael Dorland suggests, *resentment* is in part "the emotional content of the catastrophe of modern culture", with modern culture being defined as that which totalizes and obliterates difference, nostalgia precedes it. Nostalgia felt and re-felt develops into *resentment*. But *The Body and the World*, the culmination of a trilogy that purports to be about the overcoming of *resentment*, instead travels back through the layers of "re-feeling" to reclaim the original sentiment - nostalgia.

Instead of rejecting totalizing forces, *The Body and the World* swoons elaborately in a wished-for but never realized unity with a whole host of others, among them women, tropical cultures and the landscape. And the film's strategies - epic length, extensive quotation, avant-garde formal practices, "essential" concerns (being, knowing, loving, losing, etc.) - allow it to take on the guise of universality, certainly of Significance. The film presents such exhaustive "evidence" and cloaks itself so completely in the garb of Western intellectual avant-gardes that it forgoes its status as the product of a single



A drunken Robert (Gabriel Arcand) struggles to communicate with his son Maxim (Simon Gonzalez) in *La Ligne de chaleur*

PHOTO: PAUL-ÉMILE RIOUX

consciousness and presents itself as the *only* intelligent response to "our" times.

There are ramifications, but first it is necessary to describe the film.

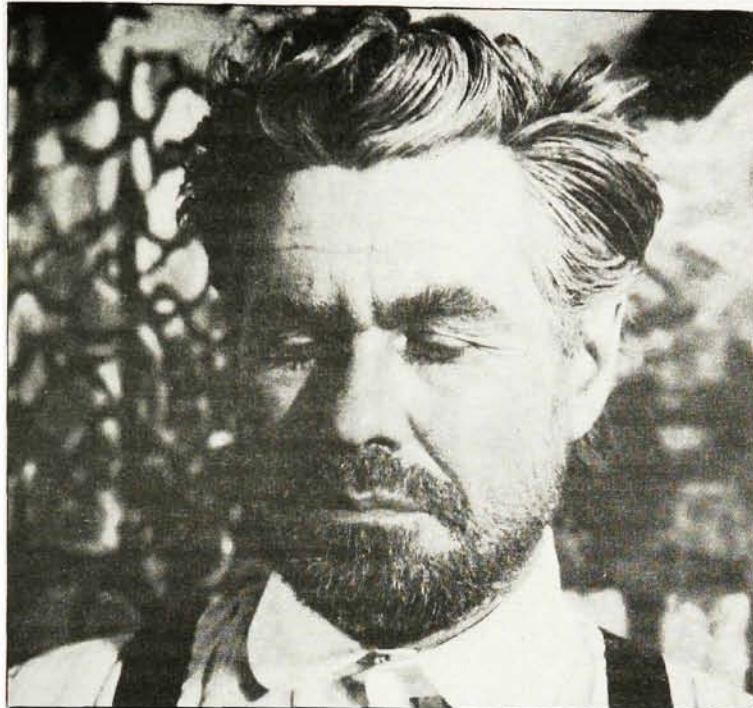
*The Body and the World* works by an antiphonal structure. The basic material is made up of shots – usually framed by an erratically moving camera or edited together rapidly – of the external world. These shots fade in and out of existence, and are most often of the following: brightly-coloured "postmodern" apartment buildings of the sort found in the U.S. sunbelt, European baroque architecture, sandscapes, roads and road signs, fire, a carousel, and women's naked bodies. There is much more, but this is the basic material.

Fairly regularly, white text on a black screen interrupts these images, a technique that appears regularly in recent Elder films. The text is presented as *print* – that is, in a recognizable typeface with regular margins – and appears to be quoted from sources external to the film. Sometimes these "quotes" are attributed to writers, e.g. "Wittgenstein"; at other times they have no attribution. But there is no perceptible difference in content or form between what is attributed and what is not. Partway through the film mathematical equations are also presented in the manner of the quotations.

This two-part structure (text and images) is in turn interrupted, though less frequently, by acted sequences. These sequences vary widely in tone, length, number of participants, and fictional time and space, but there are some commonalities. All use non-actors, for example, and all use quotation. In one of these scenes a character named "Paul 1986" explains his nuclear-resistant sunglasses to an "interviewer", then goes on to play *The Star Spangled Banner* and *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by slapping his cheeks. In another, Elder stands before a cloth painted to resemble a European square; he is wearing 19th century garb and aged by make-up and he recites a text.

In still another scene a man in an office recites a text into a tape recorder, then sits impassively while a country song plays. And in one long sequence a middle-eastern scene is set, with palms and pyramids on a painted backdrop, and American advertisements displayed in the foreground. A veiled blonde woman performs a belly dance, while a man reads barely discernible philosophical material (including Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*) from behind a cocktail bar. Then, a naked man enters the scene wearing a large wolf's head and diving flippers. Elder enters shortly after in a bathing suit and relaxes on the chaise lounge in the foreground. The belly dancer has by now removed her veil and is sweating profusely. Elder attempts to engage in financial transactions with the woman and the reader.

Again, this description cannot do justice to all of the dramatized sequences in the film; it merely suggests their range.



Bruce Elder as poet Ezra Pound in a dramatic sequence from *Consolations*

The film's soundtrack, composed by Bill Gilliam and assembled by Tom Thibault, Alexa-Frances Shaw and Susan Oxtoby, is an extraordinarily complex mix of found sounds, electronically generated noises, and processed voices. Since much of the film is text and voice-over, the soundscape serves to diffuse the directness of speech into a rich background of partial, constantly shifting sounds.

But the larger meanings generated by the film's various strategies all return to nostalgia. The dependence on texts written at least 50 years ago, the repeated return to an image of a woman's breast, even the melancholy tone with which Elder reads, all contribute to an acute sense of loss that the film never overcomes. But *The Body and the World's* post-lapsarian anomie doesn't result from a Biblical fall from grace; to follow the film's suggestion, the fall came with the move from Europe to the New World, specifically Canada.

And yet Elder's films do not simply reject Canada. There remains a strange tension between a desire to be swept away by Europe, a keening passion for the intellectual high courts that once dictated what was and how it was, and a desire to discern Canada, to discover and maintain a uniquely Canadian tradition in cinema. Deborah Knight has called this pull between the there-then and the here-now "exquisite nostalgia", but the adjective may be a matter of taste. Knight also notes that in the Canadian and Quebecois cinema the sense of loss or desire is usually focussed on an abstraction or concept rather than the fetishized female body, as is the norm in Hollywood cinema. *The Body and the World* counts as

something of an accomplishment, fetishizing both women and ideas.

Elder's "Wholly Other" may represent some divine presence, a transcendental, signified, God, but within the context of *The Body and the World* the term also connotes those areas inaccessible to the white, male unified subject, constructed as he is so thoroughly by "culture" – women, blacks, the landscape, for example.

And so women are constantly within the film's frame but they rarely speak. At one point a black woman gazes sullenly at the camera, and late in the film the camera dwells on the body of a muscular black man, but the film's philosophical pearls never cross their lips either. Women and blacks are iconic in Elder's film, like the sand and the architecture.

A shot tracking down the length of a woman's body is intercut with the curves of a desert landscape, while a section of the Song of Songs is read. And in what must be the most repeated single image in the film, the camera returns endlessly to a woman's nipple, fascinated. These bodies (or parts of bodies; they are almost never framed whole) are made to bear the weight of otherness and transcendence within the film. Regardless of formal innovations or lofty intent, some things remain unchanged from dominant to experimental cinema; one of them is the positioning of woman as spectacle.

One might also quibble with the dearth of women's voices among the many quotations. *The Body and the World's* erudition is impressive but highly selective: there is no Kristeva slipped in with Wittgenstein, no Cixous next to Spinoza, no Mary Daly to match the Song of Songs. The film ignores the fact that much of the best recent

scholarly and creative writing on the body has been done by feminists. That can't be taken as a slight, though, because it ignores nearly all recent writing.

*The Body and the World* is a film from another time; it attempts to work through some sort of *fin-de-siecle* sentiment, but watching it one can't help but feel that it is speaking from the end of some other century. Its tone suggests that everything has ended and there is little left to say, but nowhere does it acknowledge that this opinion doesn't hold sway everywhere, with all people. But the film's intended scope is universal; it speaks consistently (and at length) of "us."

In one telling instance, a speaker on the soundtrack speculates on "beings with a temporal perception rooted in the present." "If we encountered such beings," the voice muses, "we might be unable to communicate."

This "we" once again includes the audience (and all audiences) in a Western concept of time, and relegates to imaginary beings the centuries-old African notion of time based on simultaneity rather than duration. But given the film's other weak spots, ethnocentrism comes as no surprise.

*The Body and the World* speaks from an age when white middle class men could comfortably express their concerns as the concerns of the world, and when they could enforce their power with no fear of contradiction because they controlled the critical apparatuses – the press, university teaching and publishing, museums, etc. – that celebrated and reinforced their ideas.

This film acts as a sort of microcosm of those structures of control. Its density barely allows a place for the viewer to help complete the film text. All of the print on screen, including the equations and questions, function as assertions, and the assertions come non-stop, each of them carrying the force of Western high culture. Though it deals with a subjective apprehension of the external world, the film appears universal because it does not locate the subject within the class and gender and cultural contexts that shaped him. Further, the film's images aggressively position women, blacks and tropical cultures as Other, as raw material for metaphor. The viewer must either reject that positioning or reject the film. The viewer of *The Body and the World* realizes early on that if she's not with "us" she is against us. The viewer is pinned.

Cameron Bailey •

**CONSOLATIONS (LOVE IS AN ART OF TIME)** a film by Bruce Elder co-maker Alexa-Frances Shaw asst. Cindy Gawel, Marilyn Jull, Susan Oxtoby, Tom Thibault comp. matte prep./opt. print. Cindy Gawel mus. comp. Bill Gilliam perc. Richard Sacks sd. asst. Tom Thibault titles/photog. Sue Cormack addnl. photog. Gerald Packer neg. assembly Piroshka Hollo scene painter Greg Carleton l.p. Yasmina Ranzzy, Ron Tomlinson, Jim Smith, Ellen Ladowsky, Seth Feldman narr. Cindy Gawel, Peter Harcourt, Marilyn Jull, Doina Popescu, Shelley Morgan King. Produced by Lightworks with the support of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

Deepa Mehta Saltzman,  
Norma Bailey and Danièle J.  
Suissa's

## Martha, Ruth & Edie

**T**he short story holds the potential to express strong feelings attached to a situation, no matter how shortlived, commonplace or simple the situation appears. This condensed form of writing pleases and intrigues the reader in its ability to get to the heart of the matter, to exemplify life's most ordinary and passionate moments.

*Martha, Ruth and Edie* is a film based on three short stories. From these points of departure, stories by Cynthia Flood, Betty Lambert and Alice Munro, an unusual process ensued. Three screenwriters, Anna Sandor, Janet Maclean and Barbara O'Kelley, adapted the stories for three directors. Deepa Mehta Saltzman, who originally conceived of the idea for the film and produced the project with her husband Paul Saltzman, and directed one of the sections. Directors Norma Bailey, noted for the beautifully crafted films *Ikwe* and *The Wake*, and Danièle J. Suissa worked on the others. Together the three created the connecting story, pulling together the tales of women, strangers to one another.

That story goes like this: three women find themselves at a seminar meant to help the exclusively female participants confront their fears and share with one another their feelings about sex. Hyperbolic and pretentious Whitney Gerrard (Page Fletcher) leads his ladies on this journey. Becoming vehement and disturbed as Edie makes her way out towards the bathroom, he pronounces that fear is making her move and that she owes it to her sisters to stick it out. However, the calm and composed Edie, played graciously by Lois Maxwell, continues down the aisle and is joined by Ruth who balks at Gerrard's attempt to humiliate Edie. Outside the closed door of the seminar they laugh at its absurdity. They happen upon Martha who is mumbling something about how she hates rules; she has been barred from the seminar as she is late.

On a bench, the three women begin to speak. A simple object, a lighter, sparks a story from Edie's past: a farm in Ontario becomes the setting in the early years following the war. The young Edie is played by Margaret Langrick who made her acting debut in *My American Cousin* for which she won the 1986 Genie Award. Langrick seems a natural, portraying Edie as the 16-year-old hired girl on a small farm. While in the company of her employers, Edie's body and face express a typical adolescent ennui. Left alone, Edie indulges in fantasy. She bathes,

perfumes her body, dresses in her boss' clothes. White-gloved and jewelled, Edie descends the farmhouse stairs in evening dress and unfamiliar high-heeled shoes. Her delights becomes our own as we watch her fuss and pretend, pouring milk into wine glasses, a performance joyfully stylish. Edie is acting for her own enjoyment, Langrick too seems to partake in the pleasure: she moves throughout this sequence with a felt happiness, a convincing air.

The innocence we sense from Edie quickly becomes nerves and excitement as she falls under the spell of a young pilot's dash and kiss. Dash he does and Edie waits impatiently for the letter he promised he would send. Of course it never comes, but her future husband does. He is the mailman who naively believes that Edie's impatience and bated breath are signs of her feelings for him. He asks her on their first date. Langrick's acting displays yet another series of emotions: her original giddiness, and headiness of young love are gone, the following pain and disappointment wane. We see Edie now curious and amused by her new suitor.

Bailey's ability to find and show resonance in the ordinary allows the rendering of the short story to be as successful as it is here. Bailey is consistently sensitive to the ephemeral. The quick, knowing glance between Edie and her charge, as the young postman makes his intentions clear, speaks of the girls' complicity. It doubles back to an earlier shot where the two girls sit together at the window and pine over the stranger who flew into their lives, changing the order of things, if only briefly. Now order has returned and the two girls giggle silently, making something special of life's routine.

Next to tell her story is Ruth, a librarian whose routine is interrupted by her mother's death. Andrea Martin, who appeared on SCTV as a member of the Second City troupe, uses her experience with comedy to portray Ruth's peculiar character. A timid, rather deadpan Ruth keeps her distance from life. She prefers to read about passion than to partake. In her own world everything makes sense, like leaving the electric blanket to heat her dear Mum's corpse as she waits for the undertakers to take it away. Her brother Charles, however, is a true pragmatist, a divorce lawyer who finds Ruth's behavior infuriating and irrational. Their rapport suggests Charles has always had the upper hand. But as Ruth decides to break free from her passive lifestyle, Charles finds himself at the mercy of her whims or more precisely, without a car. With a little encouragement from her aunts Clara and Rosalie, Ruth borrows the car for a spontaneous picnic. The two aunts fly in from Hollywood, whose magic they ran to as teenagers, for their beloved sister's funeral. These eccentrics give Ruth the push she needs to crack her reserve. The emotional transformation is well carried through by Martin's acting and Mehta Saltzman's direction.



Martha, Edie and Ruth (Jennifer Dale, Lois Maxwell and Andrea Martin, respectively) share a laugh and some memories

One of Mehta Saltzman's goals for the film was to create a different feeling for each segment, as each is about a different character. The film successfully does this. The three individual stories are interwoven and any disjointedness is avoided. Both the connecting narrative and the fact that the same director of photography, Doug Koch, and technical crew worked on the entire film contribute to its final smoothness and integrity.

The third vignette is about Martha, a woman with two children, whose husband comes home one night and tells her that he is leaving her for another woman. Jennifer Dale plays the part of the super-mom who has devoted the last 17 years of her life to home, husband and unhappiness. As her world falls from under her, Martha decides to take a big risk and returns to her pre-marriage career of teaching. This time she ventures into a men's prison and teaches literacy skills. The subtlety of changing emotion seen in Edie's story and the humor displayed in Ruth's are never fully realized in this section of the film. The story's potential to be funny and sensitive is foreshortened by the awkwardness of the script. Inside the prison, stilted dialogue and stereotypes abound. Large complex issues have not successfully been boiled down to some comprehensive representation. The detail and succinct, well-chosen scenes crucial to the short-story film are missing. The result is a strain in the acting and direction of this section.

Patricia Kearns •

**MARTHA, RUTH AND EDIE** p. Deepa Mehta Saltzman d. Danièle J. Suissa, Norma Bailey, Deepa Mehta Saltzman sc. Anna Sandor, Barbara O'Kelly, Janet Maclean exec. p. Paul Saltzman assoc. p. Rossie Grose line p. & p. man. Bob Wertheimer p. coord. Kris Michael asst. to p. Carolyn Wong p. sec. Sheila Woodley p. acct. Joyce Caveen asst. acct. Peter Muldoon asst. d. Richard Flower 2nd a. d. Frank Siracusa 3rd a. d. Terry Gould trainee Jill Compton unit & loc. man. Manney Danelon asst. loc. man. Terry Hayes d.o.p. & cam. op. Doug Koch asst. cam. Marvin Midwicki 2nd asst. cam. Arthur Cooper cam. trainee Neil Gibb art d. Tom Doherty asst. art d. James Oswald art dept. trainee Terry Wareham set dec. Gina Hamilton set dresser Michelle Convey asst. set dresser Bill Lee props Vic Rigler asst. props Fiona Andrew costume des. Delphine White asst. costumes Maureen Gurney wardrobe Debbie Williams hair Reg Leblanc makeup Shonagh Jabour story ed. Barbara O'Kelly script sup. Diane Parsons sound rec. Bryan Day boom Mike Lacroix gaffer David Owen best boy Edward Mikolic elec. Tony Ramsey gennie op. Robert McDonald key grip Mark Silver 2nd grip Greg Palermo 3rd grip Blake Ballentine ed. Lara Mazur asst. ed. Susan Shipton 2nd asst. ed. Susan Maggi p. assts. Lisa Jensen, Alyson Reisman, Nigel Protter stills Michaelin McDermott storyboard artist Peter Grau 2nd unit cam. Rich Wincenity clapper loader Joel Guthro key grip J. C. (Jim) Craig pic. vehicle coord. Richard Spiegelman transport. coord. David Chud driver captain G. Kris Hawthorne driver Christa Schadt craft service Brian Cole music Alexina Louie, Alex Pauk l. p. Margaret Langrick, Jeff Christensen, Kate Trotter, Richard Blackburn, Dorian Davis, Daniel Dicks, Jane Dingle, Brenda Bazinet, Jeremy Ratchford, Watt Martin, Olly Jasen, Andrea Martin, Helen Hughes, Lynne Gorman, Chuck Shamata, Frank Moore, Rita Tuckett, Hans Engel, Derek Keurvorst, Charles Kerr, Ruth Rotenburg, Rebecca Applebaum, Monica Bampton-Young, Jennifer Dale, Paul Brogen, Joanna Vannicola, Genevieve Appleton, Tom Butler, Tom Jackson, Elliot McIver, Ric Sarabia, Eric Keenleyside, Peter Colvey, Damir Andrei, Rossie Grose, Adrian Pellet, Lois Maxwell, Nicky Guadagni, Page Fletcher, Irene Pauzer, Marjanka McComb, Jayne Heeley Liliane Clune, Lisa Lelliott produced by Sunrise Films Limited, 35mm, colour.



## Barbara Willis Sweete's Music In the Midnight Sun

In the fall of 1987, *The Toronto Symphony* embarked on its most ambitious tour to date. Over one hundred musicians travelled to the Canadian Arctic – further north than any major orchestra had ever been before. (Opening titles to the film)

These simple sentences are a prelude to a stunningly photographed and intelligently organized record of a unique undertaking by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO), all enhanced by simply beautiful sound and a generous helping of wit and humour.

Under the opening credits we see the Inuit people in traditional performance, singing and drumming. On the radio in Inuvik, William Tagoona sings his own country-style song, "Our Land", in Inuit, and the announcer reminds everyone that the Toronto Symphony will be in town next week.

In Toronto the TSO rehearses at Roy Thomson Hall; members of the orchestra look forward to the first trip to the North; the tour manager worries if sleeping bags are required; and the stage manager starts loading the aircraft with, among other things, hockey bags and sticks for an important game. As the non-musical stuff and opinions are batted around, the excitement builds and the music comes to the fore.

Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" in rehearsal is melded with the tour aircraft being readied, the cargo being stowed, and hand signals from airport workers synchronise with the music. The plane lifts into the air as a map appears and the line of flight creeps across Canada to Edmonton, then north to Yellowknife and on to Inuvik. The orchestra is greeted on arrival by local dignitaries. The Valkyries continue to ride on, and the musicians are now playing a first concert, transformed from rehearsal to formal clothes, and music director Andrew Davis is giving his all before an entranced audience.

After this invigorating sequence, the film continues skillfully to interweave the musicians with the Inuit performers and artists, with the children and with the natural outdoor life, inducing an ebb and flow that is quite hypnotic.

A number of glimpses of orchestra members provide interesting little "off-stage" anecdotes. In Fort MacPherson, near Inuvik, oboist Frank Morphy is somewhat apprehensive during an interview on the CBC morning show by Neil Collin, a great forthright character who doesn't hesitate to ask plain up-front questions, but lets his attention wander somewhat when Frank talks about classical music. Neil also removes his headphones smartly at the loud bits of brass in a TSO recording, and returns quickly to his own



Music in the Midnight Sun

style with "Wednesday Waltz". Willie Gordon, Mackenzie Delta Fiddle Champion, teams up with violinist Andrea Hansen; double bassist Ruth Budd stays with another woman, Cece McCouley, chief of the Dene Nation; Andrew Davis chats up a woman preparing fish for the smokehouse; a special fashion show is staged for men and women – and so the exchanges go on.

Oh yes, the hockey match comes off – not on ice, but tarmac – and the Symphony struggles gamely against the Inuvik All-Stars, losing 5-0. "It's agonizing," says a TSO player, "to lose again. If we'd been on ice we'd have beaten them..."

The swelling strains of Mussorgsky start at the hockey match and the film draws to a close with "The Great Gate of Kiev" from "Pictures At An Exhibition" and, again, the orchestra is in concert, the audience rapt with some slight swaying and toe-tapping. The images of the North (which must be ingrained in the minds of orchestra members) slide by as in a dream. A flock of white birds seen from the air, land and water merge into a dazzling abstract painting, and one comes down to earth as the concert ends and Andrew Davis bows and blows kisses, and the orchestra beams at the applause.

The charm of this film is endless, the images pass ceaselessly, yet with real feeling and emotion, before the eyes, not prettified, not neatened or scrubbed in any way, and the glorious music made by the Toronto Symphony matches the mood and atmosphere of the North. The children, the dogs everywhere, the spirit of people who live in a hard land, are all captured. And it was no easy task.

At a preview screening during the summer for the TSO and the film crew at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, director Barbara Willis Sweete said that a skeleton crew was in the North for 10 days, but the TSO footage was shot in two-and-a-half days. The camera crew went through a lot of stock...

This superior offering was seen on CBC-TV as

part of *Adrienne Clarkson's Summer Festival* in August.  
Pat Thompson ♦

**MUSIC IN THE MIDNIGHT SUN** p. Niv Fichman, Barbara Willis Sweete d. Barbara Willis Sweete assoc. d. David Morton ed. Sam Chu, Bruce Lange d. o. p. Len Gilday stereo sound Brian Avery p. man. Renee Gluck loc. man. David York 2nd unit d. Stephen Roscoe cam. Tobias Schliessler, Joan Hutton additional cam. Tony Sloan, Jon Joffin, Robert MacDonald, Gordon Langevin, Robert Brooks additional ed. Christopher Reilly, Steve Weslak cam. assts. Lynnie Johnston, Jon Joffin, Chris Higginson, Lori Longstaff, Colleen Norcross, Ernest Spiten, Steven Tushima additional sound John Martin, David Springbett sound assistant Sandy Twose sound ed. Barry Gilmore asst. sound ed. Tony Gronick gaffer Robert Spears lighting Peter McAdam, Tom McMongle graphic animation Warren Collins animation photo. Robert Mustysyn stills John Bassett asst. ed. Robert St. Hilaire sync. David Ostry, Stephen Roscoe p. coord. (CBC) Paul De Hueck unit man. (CBC) Gail Cochran assoc. p. (Rhombus) Larry Weinstein music rights (Rhombus) Mary Nikles business affairs (Rhombus) Brian Katz, Paul Brown marketing (Rhombus) Sheena MacDonald sound re-rec. Paul Massey neg. cutter Sharon Street p. cons. Julia Sereny translations Renie Arey, Leonard Harry, Tommy Ross produced by Rhombus Media in association with the CBC, TVOntario, and the Toronto Symphony; with the participation of Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Film Development Corp.

## Tom Berry's Something About Love

Thematically, *Something About Love* is a typical '80s film, like *Moonstruck* and *Crossing Delancey* and scores of others. The Me generation of the '70s is reverting to type as they come home to the tribe, turning into the We generation of our era.

Those we had once watched *Goin' Down the Road* to get away from the straight and narrow and the parochial are coming home in droves.

Their homeward journey is within the new conservative mainstream, signalling a turning-away from experimentation and risk-taking and a return to traditional values. The film *Something About Love* is very much in that mainstream too.

As the film opens Wally Olynyk (Stefan Wodolawsky), son of a Ukrainian mortician in Cape Breton, is editing video footage in a Los Angeles studio. Now what can be more down-home Canadian than that? In one fell swoop we get the perfect socio-economic and ethnographic snapshot of the multi-cultural media Canadian with carefully cultivated eccentricities. Alas, even if the inspiration is genuinely autobiographical, the totality smacks of construct.

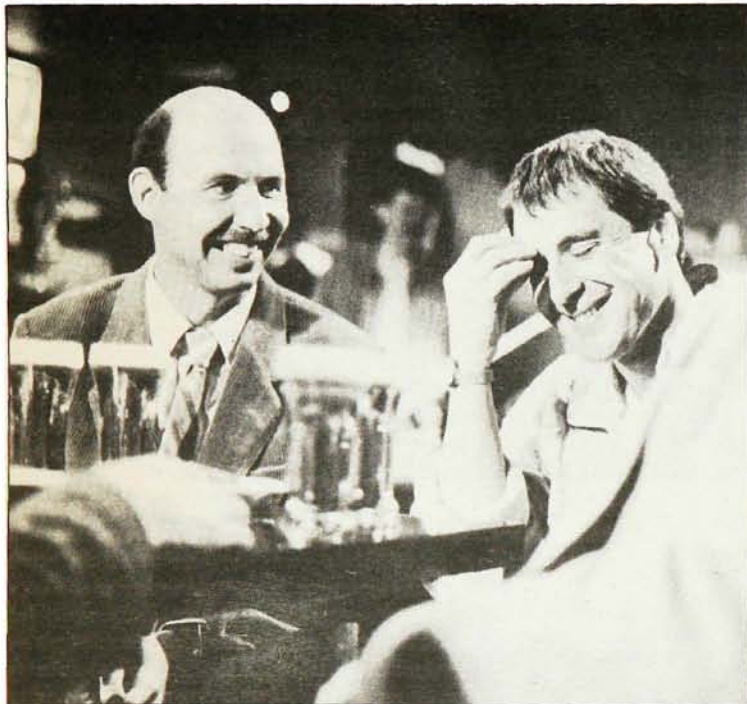
As the film progresses Wally is called home to deal with his aging, estranged father (Jan Rubes), an opera-loving patriarch who begins to display symptoms of what is ultimately diagnosed as Alzheimer's disease. Wally, at first ill at ease with his family, old friends and the love of his youth (Jennifer Dale), gradually becomes heavily involved with his roots, duties and relationships. The story culminates during Easter with the arrival from L. A. of Wally's pregnant girlfriend, his reconciliation with his father and his father's ultimate act of generosity: he commits suicide by driving his hearse off the cliffs into the sea.

Here we have a story based on common (albeit quirky) humanity which, through the use of a set of easily accessible metaphors for death and rebirth centred around Easter, attempts to ascend to the mythical. One of the central anecdotes in the film concerns memories of a childhood baseball game in which the young Wally is characterized as a great player who saves his team – even though another kid becomes the hero of the game.

This feeling of watching a fielder's choice or a sacrifice fly characterizes the way this film affects the viewer – there is balance everywhere: In the script. In the careful direction. In the tasteful blending of realism, sentiment, low comedy and high intensity. In the two outstanding performances of the film, the very fine acting duet of Jan Rubes and Stefan Wodolawsky.

There is balance too in the way the next echelon of players – the Olynyk family, Ron James and Lenore Zann – provide accomplished accompaniment and the way the rest of the competent cast provide background with nary a shrill note. Even the soundtrack strives for balance; for once, the dialogue is up-front and easy to catch.

In fact, all is exemplary in Tom Berry's and Stefan Wodolawsky's screenplay. It has textbook structure, proportion and development. Perhaps the baseball metaphor, opportune as it may have been, is less fitting than a musical one. This is a carefully orchestrated, operatically composed work. So with all these ingredients and with so many



Don Lake and Stephan Wodolawsky share some of that masculine mystique in *Something About Love*

qualities invested, why doesn't this film soar?

The answer is in the very balance that keeps the enterprise afloat. The film lacks tension. The relationships may teeter but never capsize into passion. Everything is clear, accessible, up-front, middle-of-the-road.

The good news is that *Something About Love* is not a loser. But it ain't a winner, either. It's another tie. I suspect it's a tie because the filmmakers are not playing the right game.

At these budgets they should be making alternative films: single-minded originals that do not strive for balance but excess; risk-taking films that turn out to be either surprise successes or ambitious failures. They should be making anything but balanced, controlled mainstream product that makes no waves because it just doesn't have enough current going for it.

There is one sequence in *Something About Love* that shows the potential of glorious excess. Father and son are taken through a therapy centre for Alzheimer victims. A documentary camera explores the faces of old people singing *Tipperary* and the track continues under Wally and his father's journey home on the ferryboat. It is a transcendent moment, more Canadian and more powerful than 10 times 90 minutes of our mainstream feature films. The team that made *Something About Love* is more than capable of creating a winner. If they could only lose their sense of balance....

Paul Gottlieb •

**SOMETHING ABOUT LOVE** p. Tom Berry, Franco Battista, Stefan Wodolawsky d. Tom Berry line p. Franco Battista sc. Tom Berry, Stefan Wodolawsky d.o.p. Rodney Gibbons art d. Guy Lalonde ed. Franco Battista casting Anne Tait additional casting Elite Productions assoc. p. Eric Rose

asst. d. Pierre Houle 2nd a. d. Carole Dubuc 3rd a. d. Sylvain Arseneault p. man. Michel Martin p. co-man. Chentale de Montigny loc. man. Donald Brown p. sec. Josée Lachance NFB studio admin. Marie Tonto-Donati studio clerks Ida Di Fruscia, Jacqueline Libouran legal counsel Tony Duarte cam. op. Kent Nason asst. cam. René Daigle clapper loader Doris Pilote 2nd unit cam. Georges Archambault loc. sound Jacques Drouin boom Hubert Mace de Gastines cont. Marie La Haye loc. research Ken Korrall, Victoria Frodsham gaffer Guy Remillard best boy Christopher Reusing elec. Mike Slobodzin key grip Walter Klyrkiw best boy grip Jean-François Bourassa asst. grip David Setter set dec. Richard Tasse art dept. assts. George Henderson, Denis Lemire art dept. trainees David Lamey, John Weatherbee props. Daniel Huysmans asst. props Anne Grandbois wardrobe des. Nicole Pelletier asst. wardrobe des. Sophie Beasse wardrobe Tamara Devereill asst. wardrobe Barbara Mortell makeup Coleen Quinton hair André Morneau additional makeup Djina Caron scenic painter Greg Bishop painters John Young, Mark Butts, Robert Beck carpenter Lee MacKenzie asst. pic. ed. Kevin Smith ed. on location Les Halman asst. ed. on location Angela Baker titles Val Teodori unit pub. Karen Lajoie craft services Louise Pearce, Ana Casagran Montreal coord. Stephen Reizes on location books Diane Williamson on location sec. Kimberly Hillier asst. unit man. Real Chabot p. assts. Marc Beaulieu, Bruce Piercy, Kathy MacGuire, Elaine Moir stunt coord. Jerome Tibergien stunts Marc Desourdy, Stephane Lefebvre, Jerome Tibergien post-prod. coord. Grace Avrith post-prod. accountant Nicola Minotti sound eds. André Galbrand, Wojtek Klis dialogue ed. Danuta Klis asst. sound ed. Pierre Beland Foley Andy Malcolm Foley asst. James A. Gore Foley rec. Louis Hone music eng. Murray McFadden computer & keyboard tech. Ron Cunningham ADR eng. Chris Cooke sound re-rec. Hans Peter Strobl re-rec. asst. Natalie Fleurant neg. cutting Pierre Comte, Robert-André Juteau colour timing Colin Sancerster neg. & rushes inspection Susan Trow, David de Volpi video mastering Philippe Vandette l. p. Stefan Wodolawsky, Jan Rubes, Jennifer Dale, Lenore Zann, Diana Reis, Ron James, Gordon Masten, Susan Rubes, Rob Roy, Frank Macleod, Don Lake, Wayne Robson, Jillian MacKenzie, Robert Bednarski, Daniel Nolback, Ida Donovan, Trinna Hennick, Pat Steele, Kelly Edwards, Simone MacKinnon, Kathy MacGuire, Nick Sobol, Janet Arseneault, Ralph Cameron produced by Allegro Films in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada.

### SPRING SKY MURAL

The Council Chamber of Mississauga's City Hall boasts a distinctive mural depicting The Great Bear and the Seven Hunters—a tale of long ago told by Indians along the banks of the Mississauga. Optically lit, it is exactly the view of the spring sky during June. Sharon McCann, the creator of this mural, talks clearly and forcibly about her inspiration for this ambitious project and how it was realized.

Though terrified of heights, McCann found that the challenge of getting the mural on the curved ceiling was so absorbing that she forgot her fear.

The design was finalized in a year and then took four weeks to install. A number of artists were each allotted a block of the mural, and chalked in the outlines from gridded drawings which were then painted. Not as easy as it sounds, up on a scaffolding, arms raised and sometimes with one artist holding a template and another tracing from it!

This pleasurable little film weaves together some interesting facts from the mural's creator with glimpses of the artists at work, creating a beautiful blue ceiling with drawings in gold, and clouds and twinkling stars, and the vision accompanied by some apposite choral and string music. As well as being a useful record of an artistic endeavour, it's also intriguing and easy to watch.

p. co. Fine Cuts Productions. p./d. Maurizio Belli. cam. Stephen Smith. 17 mins. 16mm/3/4"/VHS. With assistance from the Ontario Arts Council. Distributor: Marlin Motion Pictures Ltd., 211 Watline Ave., Ste. 200, Toronto, Ontario, Ont. LAZ 1P3 (416) 890-1500

The Bloor Cinema in Toronto continues to support *LIFT* (Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto) and showed a second program of films by five of its members this summer.

### THE INSIDE FILE

David Watson, host of a TV news program *The Inside File*, features the mysterious disappearance of Karen Kotterdam, a popular newswoman. Intrigued by the rumour that she had a personal conversation with Jesus Christ, Watson zeroes in on a quiet, ordinary suburban house. With his cameraman hovering, he buttonholes a young woman getting out of a car in the driveway—she denies being the missing Karen. Watson then tracks down a Marxist aunt who, in an interview, denounces right-wing yuppies and airs a number of other strong opinions, but gives no clue as to her niece's whereabouts.

This little fiction is competently turned out but, ultimately, the storyline is flaccid and unengaging. One cares little about the fate of Karen Kotterdam, which is left up in the air. A film by Richard Mackenzie. 21 mins. 16mm

### TREE TALE

A girl climbs into her favourite tree to escape from it all. But her refuge is far from quiet, and various disturbances include a wandering bag lady and a rolling ball of knitting wool. A slightly fey, but pleasant black-and-white fable.

A film by Amy Bodman. 12 mins. b&w. 16mm.

### WHAT'S IT TAKE

A look at a young black boxer who turned professional a year ago and is now aiming for a shot at the Canadian Lightweight Championship. Although not too articulate, he knows that in spite of being seen all over Ontario, he needs more experience and says flatly, "I don't want to be a coloured person, I want to be a somebody." His trainer cannot make a living from boxing alone and has tried many businesses, but says "the antique business suits my personality."

The edgy relationship between the two comes across well. The trainer is a disciplinarian and wants his word to be law; the boxer says he knows what is best as he drives off to Atlantic City to look up a girlfriend. A fight at Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre leads to the pair parting with some recriminations. The boxer feels he has been financially ripped off, and that his trainer doesn't understand his "style" of fighting. The trainer is resigned—he's seen all these young fighters and their problems before...

Not a new documentary subject, to be sure, and the protagonists are far from dynamic, but the film does succeed in capturing this seedy and sad underworld in a realistic manner.

A film by Peter Vinet. 34 mins. 16mm. These three films available from Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 67-A Portland St., Toronto M5Y 2M9 (416) 593-1808

### FAT MAN/THIN MAN

Oh, a lot of empathizing goes on while watching this small epic! The Fat Man loves the vast amounts of food he stores in his pride and joy—a spiffy 1950s refrigerator. Amid gargantuan feasts his alter ego, The Thin Man, gives endless trouble, and is everywhere, nagging and hounding him. The Thin Man ultimately desires The Fat Man's prized possession, and goes to great lengths to try and succeed in his ambition.

A funny moral tale, not side-splitting, but well done, with lots of thought and food. And who could not love a film in which the inimitable (and thin) Gerry Quigley appears?

A film by Derek Rogers. 21 mins. 16mm. l.p. Walter Villa (The Fat Man), Gerry Quigley (The Thin Man) Availability: Derek Rogers (416) 979-9381

### HEART OF THE FOREST

The fifth film in the program, by Linda Outcalt and Adrienne Mitchell, has already been favourably reviewed in *Cinema Canada* #150.