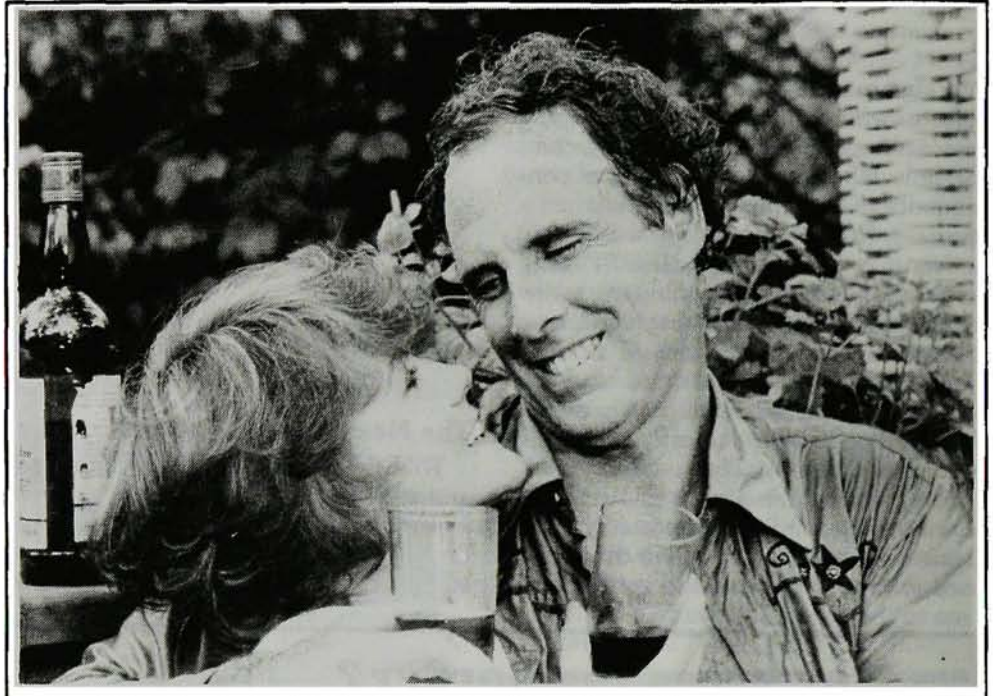


FILM REVIEWS

John Trent's Middle Age Crazy

d. John Trent p. Robert Cooper, Ronald Cohen sc. Carl Kleinschmitt exec.p. Sid Krofft, Marty Krofft co-p. John M. Eckert d. Reginald H. Morris, csc p.design Karen Bromley music & lyrics "Where Did the Time Go?" & "Just Friends" by Burt Bacharach, Carole Bayer Sager orig.mus. Matthew McCauley ed. John Kelly, cfe. Based on the song by Sonny Throckmorton p.man. Ron Bozman, Liz Butterfield loc.man. Keith Large 1st a.d. Barry Berghthorson a.d. David Coatsworth, Louise Casselman, Tricia Galaher (Texas) art d. Jill Scott asst. art d. Dale Davis, Jac Bradette, Susan Vogelfang (Texas) Marlene Graham (trainee) ward. Linda Matheson Ann-Margret's costumes Theoni V. Aldredge asst.cam. Neil Seale (1st), Joan Hutton (2nd), Victoria Lowe (2nd, Texas) cam.op. Bill Steiner sound ed. Alban Streeter re-rec. Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi sound rec. David Lee boom Steve Switzer set dec. Hilton Rosemarin prop. master Doug Madison make-up sup. Maur- een Sweeney Ann-Margret's makeup George Masters hair Malcolm Tanner ward. Marc O'Hara gaf. Ray Boyle key grips Jonathan Hackett, Bill Masters (Texas) casting Joe Scully Casting, Canadian Casting Assoc., Film Extra Services unit pub. Prudence Emery stills Shin Sugino, Marshall Marker (Texas) script sup. Penelope Hynan p.acct. Robert Duckworth asst. to co-p. Phillipa King p.sec. Judy Watt, Kathy Price (Texas) consult. to Marty Krofft Bonnie Dore tech. ad. Steve Moore asst.ed. Kevin Towshend, Richard Kelly asst. sound ed. Terry Burke, Haydn Streeter ward.asst. Ann Russell, Eunice A. Hall (Texas) asst. to ward. Angie Vastagh asst. set dec. Gordon Smith asst. props Robert James, Lewis Calderera (Texas), Jim Reed (Texas) best boy Steve Ferrier generator op. Rodger Dean, Peter Dawes asst. grips Noah Farrel, Jim Krauter, Chris Espeset (Texas) transp. capt. John Cocks, John Plunker Sheedy (Texas) p.a. Tom Smith (Texas) video coord. Michael Lennick Bruce Dern's suits Saul Korman of Korry's mus. consult. Tim McCauley mus. clearances Mary Williams Music Clearance Corp. cam. Panavision re-rec. Pathe Post Production, Toronto opticals and titles Film Effects, Toronto processing Medallion Film Labs. l.p. Bruce Dern, Ann-Margret, Graham Jarvis, Eric Christmas, Helen Hughes, Geoffrey Bowes, Michael Kane, Diane Dewey, Vivian Reis, Patricia Hamilton, Anni Lantuch, Deborah Wakeham, Gina Dick, Thomas Baird, Norma Dell'Agnesi, Shirley Solomon, Elias Zarou, Michele Chiponski, Victor Sutton, Jack Mather, Jim Montgomery, John Facenda p.c. Tormont Films Productions Inc. (1979) col. De Lux 35 mm running time 112 min.



An affectionate toast to middle age craziness: Ann-Margret and Bruce Dern celebrating his 40th.

Away back in 1886, Thomas Hardy prophesied the dangers inherent in an increasingly commercial and urban society. In **The Mayor of Casterbridge**, a restless young lady from London explains the importance of image: "But settling upon new clothes is so trying... You are that person...or you are *that* totally different person...and one of the two, you don't know which, may turn out to be very objectionable." She decides "to be the cherry-coloured person at all hazards," and her choice leads to disaster for others and for herself. **Middle Age Crazy** explores the same problem in a world where people believe that material goods define the man and his style determines his life. When Bobby Lee Burnett changes his clothes, he becomes very objectionable indeed and sets out on a course that could be equally destructive. But as his adventures are conceived of as comic, he pulls back in time. Unlike Hardy's lady, Bobby Lee is not all image; in the end he recognizes that values sustain him. **Middle Age Crazy** could have been

entitled **Middle Class Crazy: A Morality Play**.

Bobby Lee, endearingly played by Bruce Dern, is the victim of a configuration of events: he turns forty, his son graduates from high school, and his father dies. Blessed with a wife who loves him and proves it inventively (Ann-Margret, looking like a well-preserved, energetic suburban wife, and showing all the hopes and the fears that go with the territory), he appears to have his heart's desires, as he celebrates his birthday with family and friends beside his garden pool and his glowing hot tub — the ultimate symbol of his good life. Two gifts, however, upset his equilibrium. The first, an elaborate Betamax, comes with a videotape made by his family. Their words speak not only of their love for him, but also of his trustworthy middle-class image. His son's girl — a beauty about whom he will fantasize — points out, for example, that Bobby Lee is a good "Olds man". The other gift, an old Westclox pocket watch from his ailing father (Eric

Christmas), carries more disturbing overtones. While in a sense he receives a gift of time, he is given it because he, as his father jokingly tells him, is now mature enough to assume responsibility for it. Bobby Lee is on the verge of being thrust into the role of family patriarch and into the next generation.

If his birthday and his wife's constant reassurances about how great he is for forty have made the hero restless, his son's graduation makes him reflective. The valedictorian enthuses on about the future, but Bobby Lee, a once-promising architect turned designer-contractor of Senor Abe's taco stands, counters her optimism with what he, in self-pity, considers the truth of his life. Live for the present, he would warn, for the future is only "fat butts, TV and beer."

Thus middle-aged and dissatisfied with both his past and his present, Bobby Lee is totally unprepared to accept his own future when his father dies. As his mother, his wife, his neurotic sister, and his troubled son all turn to him for help, he cries out, "I don't want to be the daddy!" Words get translated into actions. He sheds his Olds for a Porsche, his three-piece suit for cowboy gear, and his responsibilities for the irresponsibilities of a boy in a Halloween costume. He, who has always built, decides to renovate both his life and Senor Abe's private suite in the Dallas stadium. His choice of a partner with whom to be irresponsible is alarmingly suitable. The moist-eyed, sensuous Dallas Cowgirl (Deborah Wakeham) fits his new image, and, since his first love was a cheerleader and professional virgin, Nancy obviously fulfills his fantasies about the past as well as the present. Clearly, Bobby Lee is regressing. By refusing his proper role, he begins to destroy everything that is important in his life — his family, his work, and his own values. Not until his world is in ruins and he turns to "no strings" Nancy for comfort does he recognize the magnitude of his losses. Only then can he throw over the tawdry joys of the red and tinsel heart-shaped balloon tied to a white Porsche, for the comforts of an Olds in the driveway and a warm life in that ever-simmering hot tub.

It is not surprising that **Middle Age Crazy** is finding its audience, for it mirrors the concerns of 1980. Superficially, it feeds the modern preoccupation with "lifestyles" and catches the details of each with beautiful telling economy: mother's bouffant hairdo and

pastel mink stole; father's Winnebago; sister's dramatically stylish, hard-edge hat (contradicted by her pigtail); the earnest shining face of the born-again Christian; the vulgarity of Senor Abe, whose foul language unfortunately pervades the film; the groping inarticulateness of the young; Nancy's clinging, red, pseudo-gym clothes; and the split-level bedroom with raised hearth of the affluent middle class. Yet, while these often provoke laughter, the effect is more generous than satirical. The focus is on Bobby Lee, not on his society.

More fundamentally, the times are ready for the film's comedy and its

moral. Deftly directed by John Trent, the scenes end on good lines and cut swiftly to good visual laughs, and the movie paces itself to the hero's life reflecting his own sense of time. Moreover, in a year when the popular press has dropped R.D. Laing's notion of family-as-destructive, for articles on family-as-life-enhancing, **Middle Age Crazy** hits the right note. Today, facing up to middle-class responsibilities is once again respectable. (Did anyone else notice that abortion is never considered when Greg Burnett's girl becomes pregnant?)

Anna Carlsdottir

Claude Fournier's Les Chiens Chauds

(Hot Dogs)

d. Claude Fournier p. Marie-José Raymond sc. Claude Fournier, Marie-José Raymond p. Claude Fournier mus. Paul Baillargeon ed. Claude Fournier sd. Richard Nichol l.p. Harry Reems, Nicole Morin, Daniel Pilon, Geoffrey Bowes, Gilles Latulippe, Fione Reid p.c. Squad Film Ltd. (1979) col. 35mm running time 96 min. distrib. Cinépix Inc.

After playing leading man (the hood) to Linda Lovelace in **Deep Throat** and Georgina Spelvin in **The Devil in Miss Jones**, Harry Reems has decided to let it all hang inside as he makes his Canadian acting debut in Claude Fournier's **Hot Dogs** (formerly **The Clean Up Squad**).

This farcical whimsy is Fournier and Marie-Josée Raymond's two-dimensional kiddie story for adults about the misadventures of a police vice squad and its attempts to clean up prostitution. Fournier's warm colour cinematography makes the film appear to cost more than 1.8 million dollars.

In this ridiculous story there are no bad guys. In fact, everyone is likable; cute, luscious hookers, and just-a-job cops alike. Mr. Clean (Reems), the new head of the vice squad, is out to maintain his reputation as an efficient purveyor of correct social morality. "I'm not known as Mr. Clean for nothing," he boasts as he shows his vice squad slides of a deserted Yonge Street, his last conquest. The vice squad hot shots then proceed to entrap prostitutes and pimps, in scene after mindless scene — often fumbling their lures and arrests.

One masseuse-hooker, upon discovering her client's badge, turns the sun lamp on his vitals for revenge. Cute? Perhaps. Funny? Snicker.

Chiens Chauds's first-week gross of \$130,000, in Montreal and Quebec City, has set a new record for Famous Players Canada. Fournier, ever-popular since he made **Deux femmes en or** a decade ago, may explain the good box office — as may the presence of a host of Quebec film stars. Perhaps willing audiences want inflated funniness in these inflation-filled times.

The story: a cop, Morris (Geoffrey Bowes), loses his wife Lilli (Denise Naples), when she learns that her husband is dressing as a woman to entrap prostitutes. She in turn is swept up in a raid when visiting a masseuse friend and is booked as a hooker. A furious Morris vows to get rid of Mr. Clean. He hires Stella Moon (Nicole Morin) — who is to prostitution, what Mickey Mantle is to baseball — to seduce Clean, then take compromising photos.

But this is the new Harry Reems. He's all innocence, a boy scout leader and bird watcher, who's seemingly uninterested in sex, and impossible to compromise. Stella finally lures him to dinner but fails to entice him. Mr. Clean reveals his depth, when he explains that he likes his job because that's what he's paid for. They accidentally trigger the automatic sprinkler system and are drenched. Stella's pert breasts are now wholly visible through her wet see-through dress. Reaching still further for character depth, Clean, back at his apartment, explains how he has modeled himself after his father, a martinet inspector.

Stella's alluring bosom fails to make Clean think of anything but a hot bath and his rubber duckie. Stella soaps him