

REVIEWS

Don Shebib's **Heartaches**

When Don Shebib emerged with *Goin' Down the Road* in 1970, little did he realize that his \$85,000 film would go on to become a landmark of Canadian cinema. It proved to be a tough act to follow. With one stroke *Goin' Down the Road* marked him out as a director to watch, a man who was capable of placing us on the international map, and someone who had his hand on the pulse of the marketplace. Shebib became the great white hope of English-Canadian cinema. Commercially he has not repeated the success of his first effort (*Goin' Down the Road* grossed approximately ten times its budget). Artistically he has continued to mature. *Between Friends* is arguably one of the finest films to emerge from this country. However, it was his second commercial failure in a row, and it would be three years before he would get the opportunity to make another feature.

His work subsequent to *Between Friends* has been consistently different in a number of ways. Both *Second Wind* and *Fish Hawk* saw Shebib moving into the commercial mainstream, using relatively high-profile American stars like Lindsay Wagner and Will Sampson. The tone of these films reflect these changes. They are far more optimistic and positive. No one can accuse these films of dealing with "losers". While *Heartaches* continues along these lines, it also sees Shebib returning to the territory of his earlier films, most particularly *Goin' Down the Road*.

Heartaches has much in common with Shebib's first feature, but also much that is different. While *Goin' Down the Road* detailed the trip two Maritimers, Pete and Joey, take to Toronto, the big city of their dreams, *Heartaches* sees two women join forces to survive together in the same city. Pete and Joey end up working in a bottle factory; Rita (Margot Kidder) and Bonnie (Annie Potts) find jobs in a mattress factory. Pregnancy features predominantly in both films, serving a similar function - disrupting uni-sexual relationships (that of Pete and Joey in the former, and Bonnie and Rita in the latter), while isolating one character in the triangle that emerges. We are given the same sense of the male as adolescent, playing games of bygone days, while the women wait patiently on the sidelines. Both films start with journeys of one sort - Pete and Joey leaving the Maritimes for Toronto, Bonnie abandoning her life with Stanley - and end with departures. Even classical music, Satie and Puccini, is used as more than mere decoration in both films. Moreover, their overall structure often takes on the form of a replica at times.

Rita, like Pete, is a dreamer whereas Bonnie, like Joey, is much more of a realist. Both people complement each other and their symbiotic relationships act as a kind of barrier against the vicissitudes of life. Rita sets her sights high. She shares this characteristic with Pete, who is continually attracted to women from another social class, who have bourgeois tastes, and they some-



● Staving off another heartache, Rita stands up to Stanley while a surprised Bonnie watches.

how represent the unattainable. Rita is also attracted to this type of person. Marcello (Winston Reckert) is cultured, he is a foreigner, an Italian who has studied design, and he introduces Rita to opera by buying her a record. He dresses fashionably, owns a sports car, and is the nephew of the owner of the mattress factory. Marcello is an emblem of a better life as well. Both Pete and Rita will see their fantasies destroyed in front of them.

Bonnie is involved in a different kind of relationship, one that indicates her pragmatic character, and which mirrors Joey and Betty in *Goin' Down the Road*. Her man, Stanley (Robert Carradine), shares her lifestyle, comes from her social class. There is nothing glamorous about him, indeed he takes her for granted. He has surrounded himself with his beer-drinking buddies and Bonnie must somehow make do. Stanley is still an adolescent, obsessed with *The Bullet*, the car that he and his friends race.

Despite the similarities, there are significant differences between the two films. Pete and Joey are destroyed by the big city, being innocent and naive "babes in the woods" when it comes to dealing with its hardships and its whims. There is a feeling of inevitability about the city's power to crush its more unsuspecting and weaker members. This is not the case in *Heartaches*. Rita knows what it takes to survive - moxy and bravado. On arriving in Toronto, Bonnie thinks she will stay the night at the YWCA (shades of Pete and Joey's first night at the Salvation Army hostel), but Rita chides her: "This is the big city. You've got to be smart, cool." The city liberates Bonnie and Rita, so that the fatalism that underscores *Goin' Down the Road* is absent from *Heartaches*. These characters remain in control of their destiny.

Pete and Joey's male bonding is finally seen as inhibiting as a return to the simple, uncomplicated friendship that precludes women. Ultimately it limits their growth and shows Pete as a character who stands in the way of other people living out their lives - he can't

accept Joey and Betty's marriage, and their forthcoming child. Bonnie and Rita's female bonding has the opposite effect. Bonnie has rejected Stanley - who thinks he is the father of the child she is carrying - because of his immaturity. She leaves because of "the car, the beer, the guys. There's no home, no parents, nothing." Bonnie contemplates getting an abortion, but Rita fights to save the child. She offers Bonnie an energy and a hope for her child that within the context of the film acts almost as a radical alternative.

Indeed, parts of *Heartaches* are predicated on women living their lives free from men. Rita, because she has screwed around so much, has had her tubes removed; she can never have a child. For her, Bonnie's baby will become the child she's always wanted. Both Rita and Bonnie are disillusioned with men. Drinking in the bar one night Rita laments: "Where are the real men?" Nevertheless, Rita still has fond memories of one of her past lovers, and when she comes to burn all the photographs of the men in her life, she cannot bring herself to destroy his.

The two men we see in *Heartaches* are very different. Marcello is perhaps one of the "real men" that Rita has been searching for, yet he ultimately proves to be the biggest disappointment. Rita is blinded by her infatuation and is easily seduced by his manners, charm and looks. When it materializes that he has a fiancé, and that Rita has been a final fling before tying the knot, Marcello is morally stripped before our eyes. But our Latin lover is not one-dimensional as a character. Rita for him is not simply a one night stand. She also has a freedom and vitality that his measured European sensibility responds to. Rita becomes someone to be valued for herself.

It is Stanley though who undergoes the most significant changes. He evolves from an insensitive adolescent into a caring adult, and his maturing is the most positive aspect of *Heartaches*. This maturation is marked by a series of renouncements. He sells his car, he moves out of his house, and by the end

of the film he has expelled his friends from his life, remnants of more carefree and irresponsible days.

At the beginning of the film Shebib links Bonnie to the duck that she keeps on a leash. She is as trapped and domesticated as the duck. At the mid-point of *Heartaches*, Stanley comes into Toronto to set the duck free. He has dressed up for the occasion, discarding his oily overalls for a sweater and trousers. It is a touching scene that communicates the essence of the film. Stanley is coming to terms with letting others find their freedom. Entrapment and coercion don't work. He is prepared to accept Bonnie, respect her space and care for her child, which he now realizes is not his own.

The fact that Bonnie and Rita's "radical experiment" appears to end in failure is not pessimistic within the context of *Heartaches*. Bonnie is reunited with a now caring, loving, more sensitive Stanley. Rita, disappointed by Marcello, signs up to sail on a steamer, rejoining Floyd, whose photograph she could not destroy. *Heartaches* ends on this note of departure, and our response to this final scene is quite complex. We can mourn the separation of two friends, but we can also celebrate in the reunion of another couple. Unlike *Goin' Down the Road*, the characters in *Heartaches* are all perceived as moving forward into the future, not regressing into old, restricting habits.

Despite the optimism of *Heartaches*, something has been lost from Shebib's earlier work. The film has a sentimentality that is absent from his best work. He may be a romantic but never has he been so eager to please and court his audience. This has removed the real pain from the film. Perhaps this is inevitable within the commercial framework he now finds himself in. When asked about the directors that he admires, he describes them as "gut" filmmakers, or as "tough sons-of-bitches". Some of the toughness has been lost in *Heartaches*. On the other hand Shebib himself may be renouncing parts of the macho world for which he has such an affinity.

Piers Handling ●

Jacques Méthé's *La dernière y restera*

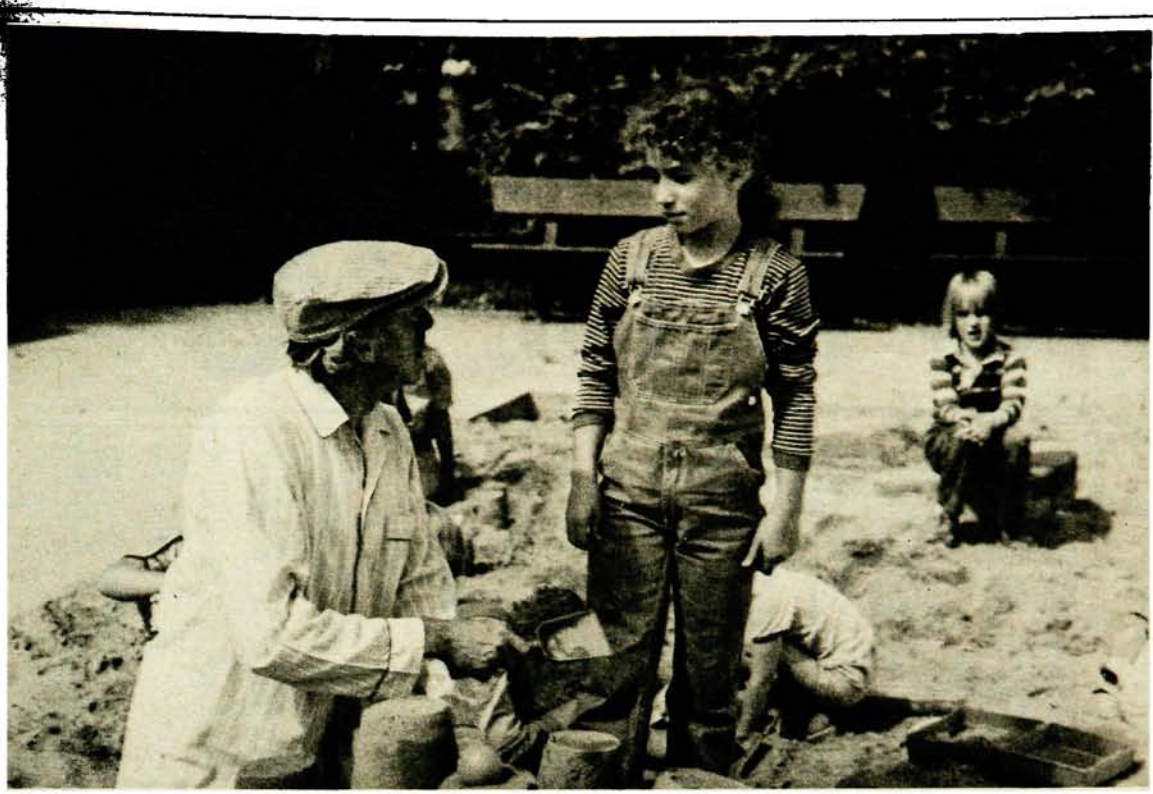
The film opens on the solitary figure of a young girl, bouncing a rubber ball in an alley. The ball bounces into a small yard. She stands at the gate, patiently waiting as an older man emerges with the ball in hand. She takes the ball back without answering any of his questions, and skips down the alley. Throughout this scene, the camera lingers on the child's face and movements. Her expression is ambiguous at best, and her gestures suggest a deliberation not associated with children. On the surface nothing is especially disturbing about this scene. But the atmosphere and the pacing are too benign. There is more here than meets the eye.

Director Jacques Méthé plays with tension continually. Joseph and Germaine Lavoie, a retired couple, seem to have lived out their lives relatively happily. Joseph complains about his toast and Germaine chides him as one would a child. Both have ironed out any problems they might have had long ago — until the little girl appears in Joseph's life.

The child seems to weave a fine web around the older man. Suddenly, Joseph tells Germaine he has an appointment; he is absent more and more often. But it is only when Germaine is told by a neighbour that Joseph refuses to leave the sand box he is playing in, that she realizes what has happened. Joseph has become terrifyingly senile. Caught in a struggle to fight for her husband against a force she does not understand, Germaine tries desperately to maintain some order. But the little girl is relentless, and continues, teasing Joseph. Finally, he sits, exhausted, in his kitchen attended by Germaine. Yet the game is still not over, and when the child throws the ball through the window, Joseph dies.

Germaine is left alone — and then the doorbell rings and the same girl appears in the doorway. This time she is almost angelic, her hair glowing in the sunlight. Germaine asks her in.

Writer Francine Ruel has constructed an intricate work where the idea of innocence and knowledge meet and are played out against each other. The cycle of life is neatly defined in the film. Joseph follows the young girl, seen as willful seductress, to his death. In other



● Weaving a sand-castle web (Paul Hébert and Véronique Démassey).

films, the idea of the child as 'angel of death' has also been successfully used. *Toby Dammit* and *Don't Look Now* depicted 'child like' figures as signals of imminent death. It is the fragility of man versus the indomitable course of events that is so well played out in *La dernière y restera*.

Paul Hébert as Joseph Lavoie is superb. His evolution from perfect normality into senility is extremely convincing. Monique Aubry's Germaine is a woman

that we instantly recognize — the older lady next door. Especially worth mentioning is Véronique Démassey whose portrayal of the nameless girl is at times more than frightening — she really is a diabolical being.

La dernière y restera is a haunting work that meshes superior performances with clean, precise technique and a lean script that uses less to show us much more.

Pia Marie ●

LA DERNIÈRE Y RESTERA d. Jacques Méthé p. Pierre Roi exec. p. Pierre Roy, Jean-Claude Tremblay p. man. Angele Bourgault d.o.p. Michel Caron p. sec. Jocelyne Prenouveau asst. d. Michel Gauthier ed. François Labonté asst. ed. Louise Blais ad. ed. Roger Boire art d. Louise Jobin props Charles Bernier make-up Brigitte McCaughy sd. rec. Serge Beauchemin boom Esther Auger mix. André-Gilles Gagne cont. Johanne Prigent asst. cam. Daniel Vincelet elec. Daniel Chretien grip Marc DeErnsted, Jean Prenouveau apprentices Paul Laflamme Lp. Paul Hébert, Monique Aubry, Veronique DeMassey, Julien Poulin, Diane Miljouis, Fanny Cyr, François Méthé, Guillaume Poulin, Françoise Maheux, Etienne Allard, Annick McKintire, Mélina McKintire, Maxime Grondin, Benjamin Vadenais, Catherine Chouinard p.c. Momentum Film Video Inc. for Radio-Québec (1981) running time 26 min.

Nick Holeris/Jim Theodorlis's *Anything for a million*

Anything for a Million is a 14-minute comedy directed by Nick Holeris of Toronto. This interesting piece of work deals with a winning lottery ticket and the fate of the lucky/unlucky klutz, played with manic enthusiasm by Wayne Veti, who possesses it. But although it is an interesting piece of work, it is not really a very interesting movie.

Explain. For this reviewer the most fascinating thing about *Anything for a Million* is that it got made. For many filmmakers, fledgling and veteran alike, the thing that determines what they may or may not attempt to do is the market. And the market for 14-minute comedies is not exactly huge these days. There are many who think that anyone who tries to raise money for a film which has no market is a freak. And it definitely feels strange to sign cheques from your own account for such a project. So it was inspiring to learn that there is someone out there who has both enough faith in themselves and love for the genre to go ahead anyway and put a film like *Anything for a Million* together. Such a person would appear to be Nick Holeris. More power to him.

But on seeing the film the first thought was that perhaps he hasn't really gone off on such an adventure after all. What has he given us? A movie that is well made, but which reads like a catalogue of every tried and true cliché in the comedy handbook. I gather that was his intention, because we've seen everything in it before — many times: a winning ticket slipping out of the winner's hands and blowing away with the wind; the mad chase past the traffic cop, through the nudist camp with hands bashfully in place, sneaking from tree to skinny tree with the appropriate background music in an attempt to retrieve the errant fortune which has landed on a muscleman's sleeping girlfriend; and finally, so close to satisfaction on the railway tracks, only to have a shoelace get snagged as he reaches for it with you-know-what chugging around the bend...

The ending? You've seen that too. Nevertheless, Holeris knows how to put these scenes together. Wayne Veti's relentlessly high energy level, like that of a little kid who is about to wet his pants, gets on your nerves. But with the help of Holeris's framing he gets the job done: his gestures and movements pay apt homage to Dagwood comic strips and are quite funny.

The story of a lottery ticket has universal appeal. Especially in Ontario. Could that be why the Ontario Arts Council gave some of its precious purposeful money in aid of the film? It's difficult to explain some things. Perhaps they were investing in Holeris's future, if he can continue to produce movies as competent but as unoriginal as this one, maybe he'll soon be doing anything for a million in the film business.

And if that comes to pass, again we'll have to say, more power to him.

John Brooke ●

ANYTHING FOR A MILLION p/d./d.o.p. Nick Holeris, Jim Theodorlis Lp. Wayne Veti, Sherril Lynn, Peter Wall, Ulrich Hahn, Steve Nemeth, David Daub, Doby Waldron, Ligit Grigalis, Gary Hyslop and David Thair p.c. James Nicolas Productions cat. 16mm running time 14 min.

HEARTACHES d. Don Shebib p. David J. Patterson, Jerry Raibourn exec. p. Joseph Beaubien, Nicole Boisvert exec. In charge of p. Pieter Kroonenburg co-p. Bruce Mallen ac. Terence Heffernan d.o.p. Vic Sarin, csc ed. Gerry Hambling, acs. Peter Bolta, gfile co-ed. Barbara Broun-McKay, cf. mus. Michael Martin assoc. p. André Dion p. man. Don Buchsbaum unit man. Ted Rouse 1st ad. Mac Braden dialog. consult. PEGGY Feury creative consult. Dorothea Moore p. account. Irene Phelps cost. des. Julie Ganton cont. Diane Parsons loc. man. Marc Dasso set dec. Patricia Gruben p. co-ord. Debbie Zwicker make-up Kathleen Mifsud hair Barbara Alexander lead casting Michael McLean & Assoc. Toronto casting Walker-Bowen Inc. unif pub. Glenda Roy stills Robert McEwan focus puller Robin Miller clapper loader Marvin Midwick transp. co-ord. Donato Baldassara loc. ad. Don Cohen boom op. Gabor Vadnay key grips Jim Craig, Mark Manchest grip John Trainor gaffer Roger Bate best boy William Brown 3rd elec. Thomas Fennessy gen. op. Alexander Daves 2nd ad. d. Robbie Ditchburn asst. p. account. Doreen Krost-Davis, Terri Mueller-Armitage asst. art d. Carmi Gallo set dec. Robert E. Bartman 1st asst. l. Martin Weinryb 2nd asst. l. props Andrew Deskin master l. Kenneth Clark 1st asst. l. Haim Akum 2nd asst. l. ward. Kat

Moyer mistress. John A. Roberts (asst.) seamstress Alison Till Mr. Carradine's wig by Clayton Shields asst. ed. Roberta Kipp 1st. Les Holdway 2nd) superv. ad. ed. Marcel Pothier sd. ed. Paul Dion, Serge Viau (asst.) dialog. ed. Claude Langlois, Gilles St-Onge (asst.) Robyn Leigh (post-synch) Foley artist Andy Malcolm dialog. coach Lorin Biagini asst. loc. man. Izidore K. Musallam art. dept. trainee Latzezar Avramov drivers John Vanderpas, Randy Jones, Richard Spiegelman, David Chudnosky craft service Wendy Shaver, Debbie Zielinski p.a. Donna Noonan, Ron Hewitt office asst. Michael Parré 2nd unit: d. James Annett cam. Bob New, Ron A. Crapse, Jack Cosgrove asst. cam. Robert Libby, Nik Petrik, Paul Mitchnick cont. James Young gaffer Keith Sherer grip Tony Kuper Smith gen. op. Allen Rollins mus. p. co-ord. Alain Leroux Lp. Margot Kidder, Annie Potts, Robert Carradine, Winston Rebert, George Touliatos, Guy Sanvido, Annie Wehtman, Michael Zelniker, Jefferson Mappin, Maureen Fitzgerald, Albert Bernardo, Rena Tenen, Alberto de Rosa, Gino Martocco, Susan Conway Mitchell, Patrick Bryner, Rocco Natarelli, Robert Vasil, Toby Cuglin, Don Buchsbaum, Paul Newmark, Peggy Feury p.c. Rising Star Films Inc. (1980) running time 90 min. dist. Les Films René Malo



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NFB NEWS



Left to right - Michèle Blouin, Radio-Canada; Robert Verrall, NFB Executive Producer; Carole Langlois, CFDC; Marie-Josée Raymond, Executive Producer, Ciné St-Henri; Fernand Quirion, Radio-Canada; Philippe Laurier, Radio-Canada; Dorothy Courtois, NFB associate producer; Ronald Legault, CFDC; Jean Beaudoin, Radio-Canada; Louise Ranger, Claude Bonin and Zenaide Lussier, all of Institut québécois du cinéma.



The cast: (left to right foreground) Martin Newfeld, Pierre Chagnon, Mireille Deyglun, Michel Forget and Marilyn Lightstone with director Claude Fournier.

NFB Joins "The Tin Flute"

We are proud to join in the film adaptation of Gabrielle Roy's classic story *The Tin Flute*. The result of four years of negotiations, dedication and hustle by Marie-Josée Raymond and Claude Fournier of Productions Ciné St-Henri, the film brings together some of Canada's finest production and acting talent. According to the NFB's Executive Producer, Bob Verrall, the Board just couldn't say no.

"The scripts were too good and the English adaptation by B.A. Cameron is simply superb. It seemed to me that such a project deserved all the support it could get from the NFB," he said.

The search for financial backing, in tight economic times, has resulted in an unprecedented degree of cooperation. Contributions come from CBC/Radio Canada, the NFB, L'Institut québécois du cinéma, CFDC, Famous Players and Ciné St-Henri. Producer Marie-Josée Raymond con-

siders this support an important moment in the development of film in Canada. "Not only do I appreciate the cooperation we have received for *The Tin Flute*, but I hope that this production will set the standard for future efforts."

Filming is being done simultaneously in English and in French. Theatrical distribution in both languages is slated for Spring 1983. A television series of five one-hour episodes will follow.

The cast includes an array of new and established performers: Marilyn Lightstone as Rose-Anna Lacasse, Mireille Deyglun as Florentine; Michel Forget as Azarius, Pierre Chagnon as Jean Lévesque, and Martin Newfeld as Emmanuel Létourneau. Claude Fournier is both director and cameraman. Executive Producers are Marie-Josée Raymond and Robert Verrall; and Associate Producers, Dorothy Courtois and Paterson Ferns.

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