

## Demetrios Estdelacropolis' Mother's Meat And Freud's Flesh

Repetition, clichés and visual sexual imagery *ad nauseam* have become the mainstay of contemporary synthetic culture. Add a catchy rock score to weave the shibboleths into harmony and *voilà*: there are all our icons, from television commercials to rock video.

To make an original film statement about this, start with an outrageous title, *Mother's Meat and Freud's Flesh*, then create Demira a homosexual, porn-star hero, in a losing battle with his one-and-a-half dimensional domineering mother, Esther, who is straight out of the *Inferno* Dante might have written had he lived in New York City. Add to this struggle a wacky psychiatrist, whose main scientific interest is to undertake a psychological sex-change operation on the mother in order to turn the hero into a heterosexual, while fighting his own passionate homosexual attraction for the young man and you have a vague outline of the Dada story of *Mama* by Montreal director/writer Demetrios Estdelacropolis.

The resolution of the plot is obviously irrelevant, even if the son (Estdelacropolis) is reconciled to life with mother Esther (Esther Vargas) on her own terms. (Are there ever any other?) The fun and art are in the ingestion of countless lines of pap and burlesque, most having to do with our cultural fetish with things psychiatric and sexual. For once we don't have to be serious about communications as a hilarious mother-son, four-day telephone non-conversation proves early in the film. For language fails at every level as poor Demira learns, not only from his own uncomprehending mother Esther but also during a three day blank-out before a television with no vertical hold. Later when Esther complains that she cannot see

the picture, Demira casually throws the set into the fire in what must be the last word to Marshall McLuhan and his minions. Moments like this make for a great cartoon where excess has no bounds.

There have been some, like the writer for *Variety*, who find these broad strokes offensive and crude. The Freudian angle about mother-son relationships and homosexuality is such a parody of contemporary wisdoms that only the most hypersensitive (or Estdelacropolis' real mother) would feel threatened. The 22-year-old filmmaker, if he admits to having read some R.D. Laing, insists, however, that the film is supposed to be a cartoon rendition of Freud. But he adds parenthetically that he has never read Freud, whose name came into the title as a natural balance to his attraction to *Mother's Meat*.

In fact *Mother's Meat* has some autobiographical elements to it, but they have more to do with the Demetrios-Esther relationship, and not that of mother-son. Much of the script came from 48 hours of 'Esther monologues' which he taped while visiting her in New York City. She butchers the English language horribly and sincerely, confusing transsexual with homosexual, using numerous past-tense phrases like "hanged up" or Americanisms like "I just love a man in a uniform," "I tan like a roast chicken," "He loves my sexy clothes," "I chew Trident gum," "How romantic!", and "In the States we don't mix alcohol and pills." Language in each scene leaves the viewer reeling from its banality and mal-appropriateness. A few quirky camera angles confirm the surrealist perspective.

Esther's rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner," sung to an 89-year-old catatonic ex-country and western singer named Speed, above the din of a 10-land highway, is the most original treatment of that icon since Jimmy Hendrix's 1968 Woodstock appearance. One suspects that Esther is only playing herself to a meandering story line and that the whole piece is documentary in drag.

Yet somehow it all leads to a finale - Demira, bilked by his erstwhile porn

film director who insists "We are all artists, Sweetheart," accepts a role in a blood and intestine film. The 'straight' role becomes hopelessly bent as he is disemboweled, castrated and (move over George Romero) eaten by his siblings, as mother Esther sits at the head of the table giving lessons in table manners. It is a supremely gratuitous comment on film gore in general, the kind of thing which adolescents and hollow-eyed film freaks adore, since its shock value and gruesomeness are matched only by its total meaninglessness. But then a contemporary mainstream film like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* does much the same thing in its heart extraction scene. Where Spielberg spent millions for his stunts, Estdelacropolis spent \$120 for his.

The appealing music by the German rock group Trio at times gives the film the feel of a rock video in mime. There's a better than average chance that *Mother's Meat* may become an underground favourite, but it is too far out for commercial viability. By Fall the film will have been screened at the Berlin, Montreal, Toronto and Turin film festivals. One suspects that if Estdelacropolis can smooth out the rough edges in his next film, a comedic, Dadaist view will remain his cinematographic hallmark.

If some aspects of the film are reminis-

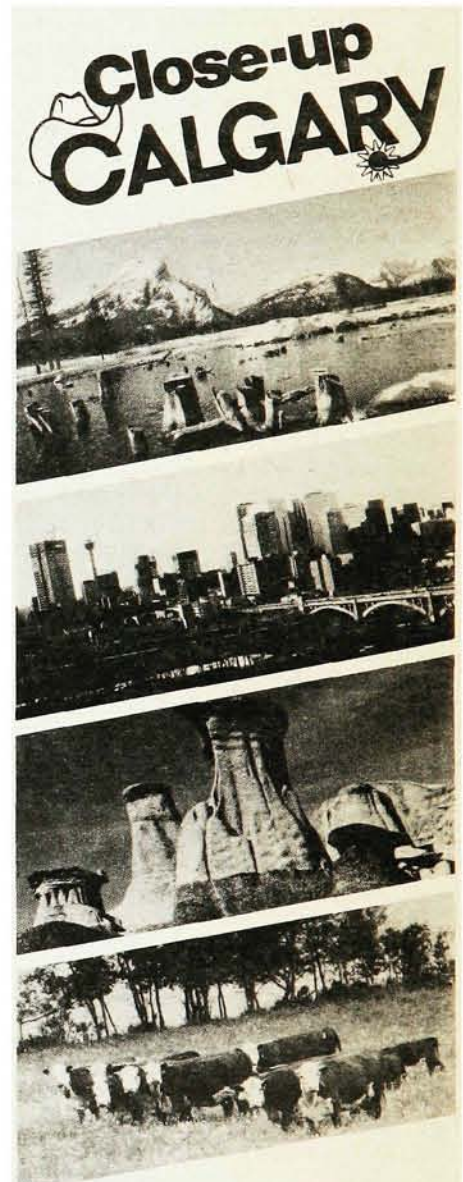
### MOTHER'S MEAT & FREUD'S FLESH

**d./sc.** Demetrios Estdelacropolis **cam.** Jason Levy, Jeane Lebeux, Andre Guimond **op.** Jason Levy, Benedicte Deschamps **asst. cam.** Andrew Nevard, Philip Goulet **2nd unit cam.** Andrew Nevard **loc. sd. rec.** Daniel Masse **gaffers** Roberto Morville, Brett Greggain **speed's double** Brett Greggain **a.d.'s** Simon Davies, Bashar Chbib **sp. efx.** Gregordon Hilderbrand, Gregordon Pastuszko **re-rec.** Deland Jureidini **ed.** Louise Burns, Jean Lebeux **mix** Roger Tyrrell **neg. cut.** Yolande Garant **credits** Normand Rompre **assoc. p.** Simon Davies **p.** Louise Burns, produced with the assistance of The National Film Board of Canada **mus.** TRIO, available on Mercury/Phonogram LP's., TRIO "The Album"/"TRIO & Error", distributed by Photogram GmbH and Polygram Dist. Inc. **p.c.** East Of The Acropolis Films, 1984. (514) 481-7143, 483-4761 **colour, 16mm running time** 90 min. **lp.** Esther Vargas, Christian Dufault, Claire Nadon, Demetrios Estdelacropolis, Pierre Bastien, George Agetees, Marjorie Morton, W.A. McGregor, Rot Wang, Hary Karagopian, E.J. Sullivan, Rick "American Devices" Trembles, Michelle Tardif, Lawrence Joseph.

cent of an early '70s Canadian feature (*Sweet Movie*, directed by Dusan Makaveyev and played with a background ensemble of inmates from an asylum) Estdelacropolis, asked if he thought his film was Canadian, preferred to view *Mother's Meat* as an art film and comedy, with the emphasis more on aesthetic than texture.

Perhaps he is right to want to distance himself from the Canadian mainstream. After all, his direction is one demonstrable way for Canadian film art to break into world film consciousness.

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● Dada story of *Mama*: director Estdelacropolis, left; E.J. Sullivan and Esther Vargas in *Mother's Meat*