

Not a faith story

Bruce Elder's letter (in issue No. 119) invites examples of what I found "trivializing and hallucination" in his review of *Not A Love Story* (reprinted in *Take Two*). Here goeth.

The hallucination in his imposition of a theological framework upon the film, which he then uses as a weapon to flog it. Elder (not the film) substitutes the term "soul" for the term "heart" (p. 238); translates "the best form of love offered by one's fellow man" to "experience the Divine" (p. 239); defines Linda Lee Tracy's development as not the intellectual discovery of truth (or the sensitive person's new awareness of consequences and significance) but as "the soul's purification and salvation" (p. 240), a growth from "not the want of information, but rather of virtue." Elder (not the film) presents our world flooded with images ("We're a victim of fantasy") as the specific work of Satan, "the conjurer of illusions" (p. 241), and the camera's tracking through a dark tunnel, upstairs into the daylight as "patterned on the cosmology of Augustinian Christianity" (p. 241). Elder's basic point, that the film pretends to be an empirical documentary but is really an avowal of conventional Christianity, rests wholly on these arbitrary impositions upon the film.

He trivializes the film and the issues it raises when he imputes to it the anti-psychological and crude behaviourism that would have man simply shaped by the images he sees. The film nowhere is that simplistic. He trivializes the film when he reduces the passion and understanding of so many of its speakers to kneejerk "faith." He trivializes both the film and sexuality when he defends the imagery of sexual violence with the observation that "intercourse is not just caressing" but involves "as harder and tougher sexuality... sometimes even forceful enough to thrust against his partner's pain" (p. 239). This response to the film is of mind-boggling insensitivity.

Elder's piece is a bad review, not because it assails the film, but because (1) it misrepresents it by imposing a Christian framework; and (2) it essentially attacks the film for not assuming the position the reviewer would prefer. Violent missionary.

Maurice Yacowar,
Brock University,
St. Catharines

Community standards?

(The following was addressed to Mary Brown, Ontario Film Review Board chairperson.)

I am writing in regard to an interview that you gave Tom Perlmutter and which appeared in *Cinema Canada* No. 117.

First, I would like to extend my compliments on an informative and constructive interview. However, I do take issue with certain comments you made concerning the Festival of Festivals. At one point you say, "Every year the Festival seems to introduce a film that we

have no choice about and it gets them a lot of publicity." The implication in this statement is that the Festival intentionally selects some films each year which obviously contravene the standards of the Ontario Review Board in the hope of generating considerable publicity.

Nothing could be further from the truth and I feel this is a totally inappropriate statement for a public official to make. I categorically state that no film has ever been selected for presentation at the Festival based on the assumption that it will contravene the guidelines established by the Ontario Film Review Board. At the same time I have never turned down a film because it may or may not be acceptable to the Board. I have never tried to second guess your rulings in respect to certain films.

The objectives of the Festival, since its inception in 1976, have been to present the best of Canadian and world cinema. Each year the various programmers and I screen films from all over the world, attend international film festivals and view recent Canadian films. The films we select for presentation are, in our professional opinion, the best of that year's production.

Regrettably, the aims and objectives of an international film event such as the Festival of Festivals result in us wanting to show films that conflict with "provincially-set community standards." What is considered acceptable in Amsterdam, London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo and New York is not necessarily going to conform with Ontario standards set for Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor or Kirkland Lake.

In respect to *Sweet Movie* which you did not deem acceptable for screening at last year's festival: This is a 10 year-old film. "Community standards" do shift over the years. What was considered offensive a decade ago is sometimes viewed as acceptable a decade later. The film warranted inclusion in the Canadian retrospective we mounted in 1984 for a variety of reasons and not because we wanted you to ban it. We programmed it, the Board rejected it, we appealed with a detailed and serious defence of the film which did not change the Board's decision. We did not show the film.

Artists are continually challenging the conventions and *mores* of society. This is their right in a free and democratic society and we should value the questions they provoke. As long as artists make these statements in a serious, insightful and enquiring way, we at the Festival will provide a forum for their films to be shown to a public who are obviously interested in listening to what they have to say.

S. Wayne Clarkson,
Director,
Festival of Festivals,
Toronto

Parents speak out

RE: Andrew Dowler's review of *That's My Baby!* in *Cinema Canada* No. 118 May/85.

It would seem that our film elicited a very strong response from Mr. Dowler.

The protagonist in our film, Lewis, is a very non-traditional male screen hero. He wants to have a baby and is willing to share in the upbringing of his child. His character is rooted more in emotional logic than rational reasoning. Quite frankly we think that Mr. Dowler finds this male role very disturbing. Not all men and women do.

At the Seattle International Film Festival screening June 1st, 1985, an audience of between three and four hundred people laughed throughout and responded with prolonged applause at the conclusion of the picture. We attended the screening and answered questions from the audience. The first to comment, a woman, congratulated us on introducing a new male role to the movies - a man who is willing to reveal his emotions, is sensitive to others, and ready to share the raising of children. Many in the audience shared this view. Others were impressed with the editing, the beauty of the locations, and the casting - particularly the reality of the relationship of the leads, Timothy Webber and Sonja Smits.

As Mr. Dowler states, the 1980s is a time where jobs and careers are very important. Our film does not propose that we should all give up our work and have babies. What it does suggest is that work is not everything. Love, relationships and working out conflicting desires within a relationship using creative, non-traditional solutions are what is at the heart of this movie.

Your critic is under a very strong impression that we have presented Suzanne, the female lead, as some sort of subversive tool to say that women who want careers are "selfish and shallow." Suzanne is pursuing a career which is expanding. She is involved with a man who, as it turns out, wants to have a baby. This leads to conflicts. Both characters act like normal people under pressure. They fight. As things develop they do not get easier. There is no storybook ending here. Both characters have to make compromises and both have to take on the real and stressful job of coping with life together. The underlying message being that it is not easy to accommodate seemingly divergent goals but it is possible. Sonja Smits received a Genie nomination for best actress for her role as Suzanne. She did an excellent job portraying a woman under pressure in conflict.

Your critic has so many ideas about what the film would be if he or somebody else had made it, that we don't feel he sees the film that is there. As the film is not yet in distribution, the audience is unable to judge his comments themselves. Audiences which viewed the film in its one-week run to qualify for the Genies, responded overwhelmingly positively. Here is a typical selection of the comments from the preview cards provided:

"I loved it all," "a very serious social theme dealt with great insight and feeling," "emotional, funny, spirited and uplifting. For the benefit of man and woman," "I loved the park scene with your understanding of each other's position," "You completely caught the feeling of ambivalence about child raising and loss at returning to work," "really hit the nail on the head."

John Bradshaw, Edie Yolles
Directors and Writers
That's my Baby!

Why worry needlessly?

I was pleased to see *Cinema Canada* Publish Arthur Makosinski's update on the SMPTE time-code (June 1985). We at Arri/Nagra have been at the forefront of the development of time-code systems for audio and film, and appreciate any discussion that familiarizes our industry with the concept. There are a few matters that I would like to emphasize and clarify.

There has been a considerable amount of psychological trauma felt by many film people when they are confronted by the discussion of bits, bytes, data-structure and time-code. The technical details of time-code are for the most part irrelevant to the filmmaker. The code is designed for efficient machine reading and processing, not for human appreciation. To use an everyday analogy, we are all able to select a box of Cherrios at our modern supermarket, watch as the cashier passes the bar code on the box over some strange window at the register and accept nonchalantly the magical process where the price and product is automatically printed by the machine on our receipt. Such should be our familiarity with time-code. As long as the machines perform the basic synchronous activities we expect, why worry needlessly about how they do it?

A discussion of time-code for audio on location and in post-production was an interesting session at the Convergence conference held in Montreal last November. I myself presented the pros and cons of the two incompatible techniques employed by Coherent Communications on one hand and by Nagra, Studer, Otari et. al. on the other. I have attached some of my notes for you and would be pleased to send copies of the presentation to any of your interested readers.

From my understanding of the camera manufacturers developing time-code systems, it appears that Arriflex must be the "one manufacturer" that Mr. Makosinski incorrectly reports "has decided to use the optical track area of the 16mm frame." In fact, the SMPTE time-code format for Arriflex cameras is a single stream of code-bars on each frame outside of optical track area and outside of the Super 16 area. Moreover, this single stream of bars may actually be read reliably by machines at much higher speeds than the Aaton checkerboard. This machine efficiency is the principal rationale behind time-code in the first place.

Ultimately, the application of time-code rests in post-production. Here, we will soon see time-code passing from the original film via a Cintel transfer. Already accelerated video editing for film is coupled via time-code to the original audio tapes without the generation lost by transfer to perforated magnetic tape. But most importantly, quality productions are being delivered promptly and on budget.

Joe Sunday
Vice-President
Arri/Nagra