

which seem to belong to a vanished past. However, if one thinks of such films as *Star Wars* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a pattern does seem to evolve. U.S. critic Fredric Jameson, in an essay on postmodernism and consumer society, points out that such films reinvent the mass media cultural experiences of the '30s to '50s so that we can re-experience them. James states that, by reinventing the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period, these films seek to reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects.

ritual death and rebirth of the young god, sometimes accompanied by the actual sacrifice of a young man. Jack takes the place of this sacrificial victim and, like the dying god, he is reborn as the same person. Finally the Christmas tree, symbolic of the tree of life, is the central motif around which the community gathers at the end of the film to celebrate the continuance of its life and beliefs.

Mary Alemany-Galway •



I would go further and state that these kinds of films also try to recreate a sense of values associated with the past. This is made clear in *One Magic Christmas* when the children go to visit their great-grandfather in his old farmhouse and explore the attic with him. There they find a Christmas book which had belonged to the grandfather as a child and old-fashioned glass ball containing a snowy scene of Santa's house. It is to this location that Abbie will later travel in her efforts to bring her father back to life. Another artifact from the past which appears throughout the film and which obviously has a lot to do with past values is the antique doll which Abbie is usually clutching. The doll looks completely out of place in the suburban environment of her home but, again, it is an artifact which speaks of past values, this time those of a lost femininity. The allusive plagiarism of older plots is also a feature of post-modernism as is the recreation of the '50s atmosphere in a contemporary setting.

The effectiveness of the film in making these old-fashioned values attractive can be accounted for, in part, if we understand its use of an underlying mythic structure. The dark angel is disturbing but his characteristics are appropriate for a figure that brings death and destruction to this society. It is through Gideon's agency that the tragedies in the film occur. These tragic happenings lead to the death of the idealistic, young hero, Jack Grainger. The underlying myth of Christmas is that of the solstitial cycle of the solar year and its attendant symbolism. At this time of year the theme of a newborn light threatened by the powers of darkness predominates. The angel is usually seen in the blue light of a movie night. When he performs his sleight-of-hand magic trick which brings about the tragedies, all the lights on the Christmas trees, up and down the street, go out. When the tragic events are nullified, like a bad dream, the lights go back on. The feast of the winter solstice also included the

ONE MAGIC CHRISTMAS d. Phillip Borsos sc. Thomas Meehan from a story by Meehan, Borsos, Barry Healey; p. Peter O'Brian p.exec. Fred Roos exec.p. Phillip Borsos assoc.p. Michael MacDonald d.o.p. Frank Tidy, B.S.C. p.des. Bill Brodie ed. Sidney Wolinsky mus. Michael Conway Baker cast. Gail Carr L.A.cast. Janet Thirschenson, C.S.A. and Jane Jenkins, C.S.A. NY cast. Bonnie Timmermann sd.des. Bruce Nyznik p.man. David Coatsworth 1st a.d. Tony Lucibello art d. Tony Hall cost.des. Olga Dimitrov set dec. Rondi Johnson make-up Ann Brodie sp.afx. John Thomas cam.op. Robert Saad, C.S.C. sd.rec. Bruce Carwarding, Glen Gauthier p.assoc. Sarah Hayward unit loc. man. Keith Large 2nd unit loc. man. Howard Rothschild 2nd a.d. Elizabeth Scherberger 3rd a.d. David Till p.asst. Orest Haba p.coord. Debbie Cooke post.p.coord. Elaine McFeat exec.coord. Terri Fettes exec.asst. Debra Henderson p.acct. Joanne Jackson, Judy Roseberg; p.cons. Paul Tucker cont. Penelope Hynam dialogue George Pothitos p.illust. Joe Griffith art dir. Tom Doherty, Alicia Keywan asst a.d.'s Debra Gjendem, Nancy Pankiw, Alistair MacRae, Caroline George; tech.efx. Jeremy Borsos set dressers Gustave Meunier, Dennis Kirkham, Ken Clark; prop.master Mark Freeborn prop.man Chris Biden const.sup. Bill Harman hd paint. Willie Holst standby Fred Geringer head carp. Alex Russell ward.mist. Madeline Stewart ward.dress. Gail Filman, Rose Mihaly; hairstylists Tony Marrero, Bryan Charboneau; make-up artist Beverly Carr cast.assoc. Michael Hirshenson, Jim Simpson; add.cast. Susannah Conebeare extras Peter Laverder animals Steve Martin's working wildlifeanimal krainer Marc Weiner animal master Rick Parker sp.efx. Neil Trifunovich; Bill Orr, J. Tracy Budd; stunt coord. T.J. Scott The Stunt Team stunt driver David Rigby 1st asst.cam. Neil Seale 2nd asst.cam. Perry Hoffman 2nd unit cam. David Crone, Henri Fiks; 2nd unit asst.cam. Michael Hall, Kerry Smart; trainee asst. cam. Pauline Heaton, Tony Guerin; gaffer Chris Holmes best boy Tony Eldridge key grip Michael Dan Kohne best boy Noah Farrill unit pub. Prudence Emery stills Gail Harvey dialog.ed.; Glen Gauthier a.d.r. eds Robin Leigh, Rick Cadger; sd.efx.eds Alan Geldart, Alison Clark, Michael O'Farrell, Peter Thilaye; mus.ed. Denise McCormick sd.efx.rec. Bruce Nyznik, Gord Thompson; re-rec mixers Joe Grimaldi, David Appleby, Don White; asst.film eds. Tim Eaton, Robin Russell, Scott Eldridge; asst.sd.ed. Jan Nicolichuk, Rosmary Conte, Leon Wood, Daleshel-drake, Anke Barker, Roberta Kipp, Anna Pafomow, Susan Lindell, Bob Cooper, Susan Maggi, Bruno Degazio, Sandra Moffat; trans.coord. Fred Ionson driver capt. Stuart Hughes. Re-rec. Pathe Sound and Post Production Centre, Toronto Lenses and Panaflex Panavision 35mm, color by Alpha Cine Service, Vancouver, Canada p.c. North Pole Picture Company of Canada Inc., in association with Silver Screen Partners II and Telefilm Canada. Dist. Buena Vista Lp. Mary Steenburgen, Gary Basaraba, Harry Dean Stanton, Arthur Hill, Elizabeth Harnois, Robbie Magwood, Michelle Meyrink, Elias Koteas, Wayne Robson, Jan Rubes, Sarah Polley, Graham Jarvis, Timothy Webber, Joy Thompson-Allen, John Friesen, Debra McGrath, Julie Beaulieu, Jeremy Dingle, Jane Schoettle, Damir Andrei, Amah Harris, Rita Tuckett, Sam Malkin, Gareth Bennett, John E. Johnson, Alf Humphreys, Gary Bush, Robin McCulloch, Robert King, Rodger Barton, Genevieve Appleton.

Michael Rubbo's

The Peanut Butter Solution

A disclaimer should probably be included when an adult, unaccompanied by a child, reviews a movie made for children. Because it is only a childish audience, with its particular perspectives, that will determine whether or not a film made for them works or not. (See box)

The Peanut Butter Solution is the second film in Les Productions La Fête's 'Films for All' series, following the enormously successful *La Guerre des tuques/The Dog Who Stopped the War*. Based on his original idea and script as well as directed by Michael Rubbo, *Peanut Butter* only loosely fits the for all category. For this reviewer, for instance, there were too many holes in the plot, and the script is in many instances too contrived to have much adult appeal. Even from the older children of this country, sophisticated by American movies, television and computer technologies, *Peanut Butter's* sticky cuteness should draw more derision than honest laughter.

Nevertheless, the film does have certain graces, and merits attention for those elements that display a level of filmic ingenuity.

The story is a fantastical one – about young Michael who experiences a fright that causes him to lose his hair. His fright is the premise of the film and is kept a mystery until the final moments. It occurs when Michael daringly looks into a recently burned-out and presumably haunted house where coincidentally two rubbies he had given money to the previous day die in the blaze. The overnight loss of one's hair would be horrifying for a person of any age and presents a catastrophe to 12-year-old Michael. After several days of shamefully hiding out at home, Michael has a disastrous attempt at wearing a wig that takes him to even deeper levels of despair. Then, one night, the two rubbies, Tom and Mary, miraculously appear, and Mary offers Michael a recipe to be smeared all over the head. The secret ingredient, is, of course, the peanut butter that makes it all stick together. Following one failed try from which Michael is unhelpfully "rescued" by his father and sister, he succeeds in completing the concoction but, disregarding Mary's warning, adds four times the amount of peanut butter called for. And so the adventure begins. Michael's hair starts to grow – and grow – and grow.

The premise is good and reasonably well developed to this point. On the level of the family interrelationships, the kinds of animosities and tendernesses possible in a close-knit family (where the mother is absent) are accurate. Despite some corny lines, the dialogue is good, and the cast well-chosen.

Reflecting a child's perspective, the adult characters tend to be one-dimensional, (i.e. mean, good, silly, authoritarian etc.). The father (Michael Hogan), an artist, is essentially "out to lunch,"

concentrating on his painting and leaving the household management to his wife (replaced in her absence by the daughter). Like many fathers, he just doesn't understand what's going on about him. He is inept, but loves his children and in return is adored by them.

Other adult characters include Miss Prume (Pat Thompson), the school principal, who is forbidding, dominating and just the way you remember all school principals to be: eyes in the back of her head and arms that seem able to reach 20 feet in any direction to grab unsuspecting children in school hallways. The Rabbit, the Doctor and another teacher are all fine, if somewhat formulaic, though it seems logical that the reason the Rabbit is named the Rabbit and why he is a family joke should be shared with the audience.

Where the film doesn't work is in the realm of "evil", personified in the character of the Signor (Michel Maillet). He is the bad guy, evident to any viewer of any age, but why he is so is not. Is it because he's always wanted a son but never had one; is it because he's an unrecognized and unrewarded artist? A child will wonder what produces evil, and unfortunately the question of why the Signor is the bad guy is never answered, even if Michel Maillet does a fine job of portraying the eccentric, egomaniac and thwarted artist.

For their effects, the most wonderful and fascinating scenes are those in the Signor's factory (aside from those between Michael, Suzie and their father at home). Here are elements that should strike any viewer as insidiously horrifying: the visions of children working silently on the factory assembly lines, living completely according to the whims of the Signor. Trapped in a world where there is only work and sleep, a world devoid of natural light, imagination or means of escape, this is fantasy turned nightmare. Added to the images of children on assembly lines are the Signor's incredible paintings that glimmer eerily of "reality." But, as one of the captives explains to Connie (Siluk Saysanasy, the story's hero), they offer no escape from the Signor's prison because they are unreal, representing places that exist only in the Signor's mind. One can walk into these landscapes, but will only end up wandering in a nowhere land. All of this is intriguing, and the paintings themselves do visually exude a magical quality. If only the rest of the film had followed the same imaginative tack, instead of seeking easy solutions and convenient situations.

As an idea for a film directed at entertaining the entire family, Michael's fright is a terrific one, combining fantasy, mystery and humor. Unfortunately, *The Peanut Butter Solution* oversimplifies and over-explains some of its ideas though it fails to carry other ideas through to their resolution. So it has a strangely inexplicable character like the Signor, or a scene where Connie's pubic hair stops growing under the force of his will, but his voice continues to deepen only to return to normal in the next sequence. Why? If it's for the sake of humour, it comes off as cheap. At the same time, in an attempt to make sure the point gets across about imagination and its power, Michael sums up his adventure at the end by saying that the fright was mostly in his imagination.

Isn't that the conclusion we were supposed to reach in the previous sequence when Michael revisits the sight of his fright?

The Peanut Butter Solution is certain to draw a few giggles and laughs, and produce a few gasps and shivers in a younger audience, but that, unfortunately, does not balance the glaring weaknesses. It is disheartening to see a film with so much potential come off this way. Perhaps an indication of where it all went wrong can be taken from the title; originally named *Michael's Fright* which provokes all sorts of questions and wonderment, it was changed to *The Peanut Butter Solution*, which just smacks of trite commerciality.

Jan Teag •

des tuques (though it wasn't funny when the dog got killed).

But I didn't understand why all the people were waving at Suzie when she's riding on her bike after the truck. And dubbing is confusing because you never know who's voice it is.

I think the people who did the movie did a good job. I liked everything. But we had to wait too long for the movie to start.

I really liked the record too and I know the songs by heart.

Christopher Dorland, 7 •

THE PEANUT BUTTER SOLUTION d. Michael Rubbo p. Rock Demers, Nicole Robert exec. p. Rock Demers line p. Jim Kaufman p. man. Lyse Lafontaine p. coord. Jean Gérin aect. Bernard Lamy 1st a. d. Jim Kaufman 2nd a. d. Blair Roth cont. Marie Thérberge orig. idea/sc. Michael Rubbo with the collaboration of Vojtech Jasný, André Pelletier, Louise Pelletier, mus. & perf. Lewis Furcy mus. eng. Ian Terry mus. asst. Denis Barsalo syn. Jim Tanaka per. Paul Picard song by Céline Dion lyrics Eddy Marnay adapt. Howard Foreman, Judy Richards; arr. Jimmy Tanaka publishing La Fête, Mia Musica, Libec, Lewis Furcy; cast. d. (children) Danyèle Patenaude cast. Hélène Robitaille d.o.p. Thomas Vamos 1st cam. asst. Daniel Vincelette 2nd cam.asst. Christiane Guernon 2nd cam.op. Michel Caron, Philippe Martel; art d. Vianney Gauthier asst. art d. Jean Kazemirchuk, Lynn Trout; set props Denis Hamel cost. Huguette Gagné set dresser Martine Drapeau sd. Serge Beauchemin boom Louis Marion hair sp. efx. Roger Cantin manip. Jacques Landesque make-up Marie-A. Brietner-Protat hair Gaétan Noisieux hair des. J.E.S. Productions dog trainer Centre Canin Ducasse stunt coord. Jérôme Tibergien unit man. Estelle Lemieux asst. unit man. Elizabeth Lamy p.assts. Sylvain Labrecque, Frédéric Lefebvre, Léo D. Charpentier, Clod Lacoursière, Philippe Courtois, child tutor Jacques Lavoie, Paulette Vanier 1st elect. Daniel Chrétien elect. Marc Charlebois, René Guillard key grip François Dupéré grip Michel Périard ed. Jean-Guy Montpetit asst. ed. Marie

I really liked this movie. I've seen it two times: with my dad in French, and with my mum in English.

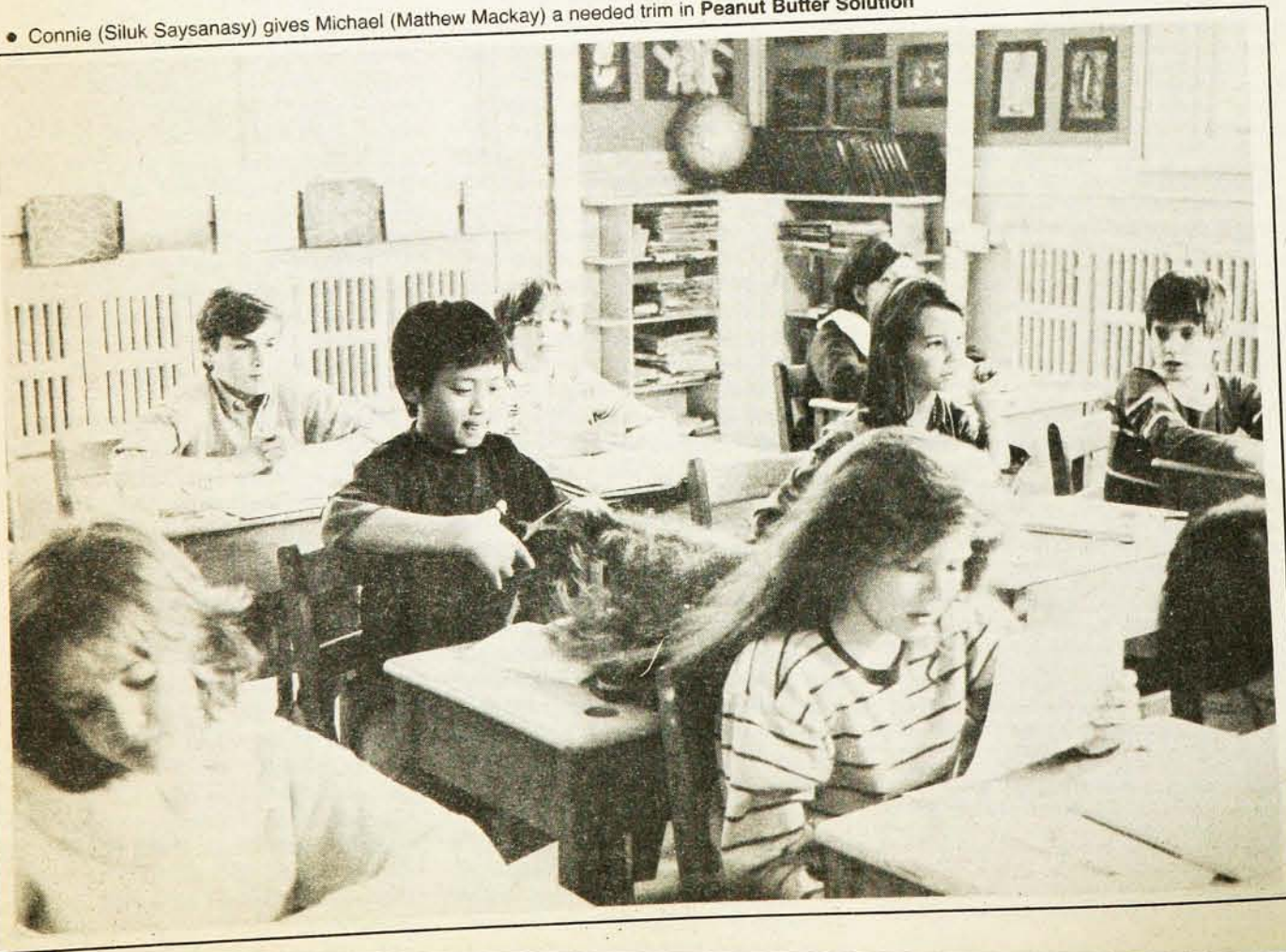
It's a movie that's both funny and scary. I find the haunted house scary. And also when Michael has no hair - that's gross. And the other thing that's gross is when the guy pulls off Michael's wig and we see tons of glue.

There's lots of funny things I like. My favorite quote is the little girl who says: "I don't use my imagination, I use a pencil." It's funny to see Michael's hair growing in his face while he's eating. Funny too is the tube with sugar in it going into the truck. It's also funny when the dog in the art-room is always sitting down.

I liked Connie best because I thought he was neat. I liked the thing in his back, the wire-detector, and I liked that he asked Michael's dad if he could eat the raisins.

I liked everything about the movie. It's funnier and funner than *La Guerre*

• Connie (Siluk Saysanasy) gives Michael (Mathew Mackay) a needed trim in *Peanut Butter Solution*



Gilles Carle's
Ô Picasso

Gilles Carle, commissioned by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to make a documentary on Picasso in conjunction with the museum's much-touted 1985 exhibition of minor works by the painter, has made a film that captures the spirit of Picasso in form and content.

Ô Picasso is not a traditional art film. It doesn't chronologically relate the artist's life. It shows very little of the artist's work. Instead, it combines a variety of Picasso-related images in a fast-paced collage.

The film begins with a café act. A woman singer and her male band perform original songs about Picasso. The music is modern, upbeat, catchy. The words play with Picasso's name and describe the sort of fantastic occurrences - such as an eye found in a hand - that are frequent in his art. The band and their music reappear periodically throughout the film, often providing a welcome break from wordy interviews. Every now and then the film cuts from something totally unrelated to the band members wandering around the museum in startling coloured suits (the red, blue and yellow of the suits are, of course, art's primary colours from which all others can be mixed).

Ô Picasso features behind-the-scenes documentary footage of the museum preparing for the show. After the first segment of the café act, the film cuts to Mirabel airport where large crates marked "Fragile" and "Montreal Museum of Fine Art" are being loaded into a truck. The man in charge of the transport operation is interviewed. In the museum, about 20 people are at work, dismantling the previous large exhibition of work, enormous Bouguereau canvases.

The Picasso works are unpacked and hung to the specifications of the museum director. These are scenes one rarely gets to see, as the people who come to an art-show see it in its final form and usually don't think of all the work that went into getting the works uncrated and hung. This museological element of the film roots it very concretely to the "Meeting in Montreal" show.

However, the vast majority of Carle's *Ô Picasso* is composed of interviews. An art historian, various art-world celebrities, and personal friends all talk about Picasso. The subjects range from the artist's love life to his art. There is much cutting from one talking head to another: too much information is provided too quickly to be absorbable in one viewing. But then Picasso and his work are that way too.

Some interesting comments do emerge. Picasso is described as a great manipulator who needed people's energy. A day with Picasso would leave one exhausted. He had piercing eyes that made you feel he could see through you. The artist chose the name Picasso, his mother's name, because he liked it