

La Ligne de chaleur: On the road Quebec-style

The setting is a blue motel-room interior. One of several such stops that Robert Filion (Gabriel Arcand) and his young son Maxim (Simon Gonzales) share on a three-day car trip from Florida to Montreal. Robert's father has passed away in his Florida condo and the job of identifying the body and reclaiming the car has fallen to Robert who borrows his son from his estranged wife for the trip.

Robert's relationship with Maxim is far from harmonious and parallels, in many ways, that of Robert and his own father, whose influence still haunts him. As the 35 year-old-Robert — a loser going nowhere fast — strives to deal with the dismal prospects of his own life, the relationship between him and his son suffers.

A paragon of fatherhood Robert isn't. Maxim would like nothing but to bolt from the motel-room down into which we find ourselves peering while balanced precariously on the lighting technician's ladder.

After one month of shooting, including two weeks on the road, the work-weary cast and crew of *La Ligne de chaleur* look like they have seen one motel-room too many. They are tired; it is late in the shooting schedule and they face one last interior scene before calling it a wrap.

The motel-room location is in Montreal's Panavision studio. Producer Marc Daigle whose name, by now, is synonymous with Association co-operative de productions audio-visuelles (ACPAV) productions is not on the set today. It's the last shot before lunch-break.

Director Hubert-Yves Rose, who co-wrote the feature's script with fellow director and actress Micheline Lanctôt, coaches Gonzales on how to run for the locked door, turn and run back straight in to the arms of his drunken father who is in close pursuit across the motel-room floor. Arcand rolls with Gonzales in a finely choreographed struggle —



photos: Paul-Emile Rioux

• No paragon of fatherhood: *La Ligne de chaleur's* Gabriel Arcand, above, and with Simon Gonzales, right



hand on wrist, hand cupping mouth, arm around waist. The child is finally pacified and placed into bed. Father staggers and collapses in an adjacent bed. It must be time for lunch.

Indeed, Rose lead cast and crew out of the motel-room and into the darker space of the studio where they disperse for food and, if they're lucky, a few winks.

Rose makes it clear that this film is not a road film. Rather, he says, it is a "chamber film," though there is no unusual length of screentime given over to motel-room scenes. Neither, he says, are there expansive shots of the countryside that surround such locations, as Yorktown, Va., Leesburg, Va., Chesapeake Bay, Va., Virginia Beach, Va., and Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The road trip was made essentially to capture the differences in natural lighting between north and south for, according to Rose, we inhabitants of the great North American

hinterland do not find road scenery exceptionally stimulating...except on film perhaps.

The chamber film, Rose explains, confines itself to closed and constricting spaces with the constant use of 24mm and 32mm lenses and few close-ups. ("Occasionally we take a risk and use a 50mm lens," says Assistant Director Lise Abastado.)

"This story is about an internal journey at the psychological level. It has a very burdensome climate," says Rose.

Climate, in one sense or another, has a lot to do with the title of the film which does not translate easily into English. (It is not 'The Hot Line'). *La Ligne de chaleur* is a figurative name for a place where like Robert and son, one notices a change in temperature while travelling on a north/south axis. On a psychological level, this journey from the south to the north is a "regression" for Robert, Rose explains.

"Robert finds himself in a hot situation" he says, as the passive pink shades of the southern motel rooms are replaced by darkening shades of blue in the north.

A third character by the name of Norman J. Simpson (Gerald Parks), a photographer dying of cancer, has a strong cathartic influence on Robert, throwing an additional twist into the storyline.

There is no definitive resolution to the story, says Rose. *La Ligne de chaleur* is a thinker's film in which the subtleties of the filmmakers' craft in rendering a complex script lead to one's own conclusion.

Now the cast and crew gather again: lunchbreak is finished. Time to re-enter the blue motel room at the Drama Motel...somewhere in South Carolina.

John Timmins •

GO EAST, GO NABET

All film and videotape crafts *including* camera.
A Call us at 416/536-4827. We're negotiable.

NABET 700 Association of Film Craftsmen
National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians

1179A King Street West, Studio 102, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 3C5