

• Kevin J. O'Connor watches dream candy get scorched

an updated version of a '60s road picture. Yet although many elements of the Beat vision of '50s and '60s America are firmly in place, there is a real attempt to reconcile the idealism of the past with the realities of the present.

Candy Mountain begins in New York City as Julius overhears a conversation about the 'legendary' Elmore Silk, one of the greatest acoustic guitar makers in the country who hasn't been seen or heard from in more than a decade. If Silk can be found, think the city schemers, his new guitars could be leaked onto the market and profits in the thousands could be made. For \$2,000 and a cut of profits, Julius volunteers to track down the longlost Elmore Silk.

And so the adventure begins. Changing cars in virtually every scene, Julius works his way up through New York State and across the border into Nova Scotia. Along the way, he comes face-to-face with the threads that make up the past of the elusive Elmore Silk. Silk's brother, played with tacky flair by Tom Waits, tells our young hero: "You're young, you should be playing lots of golf." Dr. John appears as Silk's less-than-fraternal, wheelchair-bound brother-in-law; Leon Redbone pops up in the most unlikely role of a Nova Scotian justice of the peace; and Tantoo Cardinal puts a great deal of spunk into her role as a local native who breaks into the cottages of summering Americans to keep warm while stalking deer.

This is a film that depends almost entirely on the strength of its cameo appearances. It is, after all, a road movie; a road movie with a beginning, an end, and a string of cameos in between. The cameo turns are often a bit too quirky to be entirely successful, but none of them are way off the mark. In the true spirit of the road movie, every performance

keeps things moving, and the forward momentum is never lost.

All of this, however, would have been for naught if the film's ending didn't deliver the goods. The true spirit of the film (and of the road as well) materializes at the end when Julius finally catches up with Elmore Silk, played with restraint, ease and humour by Harris Yulin. Silk is no Kurtz, but his presence envelops **Candy Mountain** in much the same way that the most vivid of Conrad characters hangs over the jungle in **Heart of Darkness**. If Julius' ambition in trekking to Nova Scotia is seeking fame and fortune, Silk's only ambition is to keep moving. Silk has no interest in Julius' schemes and is preparing to leave once again. As Elmore tells Julius, "I'll go somewhere I haven't been before. Maybe out West."

Candy Mountain is by no means a perfect film. It runs a bit too long at times, the segments which make up the film are not joined together as fluidly as they might have been, and there's not nearly enough local flavour in the Nova Scotian portion of the film — a rather serious criticism when one considers the insight and detail that Robert Frank was able to capture in his photographs of the American South and West.

It's been 30 years since Kerouac wrote *On the Road*, but that road has as much of an engrossing mystique as it did in 1955. And though it may be at odds with the 'make it' ethic of the '80s, there's something still strangely appealing about a voyage of discovery through the unknown roadways of North America. As Kerouac himself wrote: "What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? — it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-by. But we lean for-

ward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies." With **Candy Mountain**, Kerouac himself couldn't have asked for a better tribute, and the familiar material of the road movie couldn't have been better served.

Greg Clarke •

CANDY MOUNTAIN. A Xanadu Film, Rudy Waldburger presentation in association with Les Films Plain-Chant (Philippe Diaz) and Les Films Vision 4 Inc (Claude Bonin, Suzanne Hénault). sc. Rudy Wurlitzer, d. Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer d.o.p. Pio Corradi sd. David Joliat art d. (N.Y.) Brad Ricker art d. Canada Keith Currie ward/ styling Carol Wood casting USA Risa Braemon/ Billy Hopkins, Heidi Lewitt casting Canada Gail Carr asst. d. Richard Garber, Alain Klarer, Lydie Mahias sc. sup. Brigitte Germain asst. cam. Patrick Lindernmaier gaffer Andre Pinkus grip/ elec. Richard Ludwig key grip. N.Y. Chris Ingvordsen key grip Canada Michael Periard spfx Jacques Godbout prod. man. N.Y. Philippe D'Arbanville prod. man. Canada Marcelle Gibson loc. unit man. K.C. Schulberg asst. to the d. Jerry Poynton ed. Jennifer Auge asst. ed. Camille Côté sd. ed. François Gedigier asst. sd. ed. Karen Logan mix. Dominique Dalmasso m. sup. Hal Wilner p. Ruth Waldburger, Philippe Diaz, Claude Bonin, Suzanne Hénault exec. p. Gerald Dearing assoc. p. Tom Rothman. A co-production of Canada, Switzerland, France, Canada, Xanadu Film, Films Plain Chant, Films Vision 4 Inc. Produced with the participation of Department of the Interior, Bern; Ministry of Culture (CNC), Paris; Telefilm Canada, First Choice (Canada) in co-production with George Reinhart, Zurich; T.S. Production, Milena Poylo, Paris, Television Suisse (SSR) and Films A2 Ip. Kevin J. O'Connor, Harris Yulin, Tom Waits, Bulle Ogier, Roberts Blossom, Leon Redbone, Dr. John, Rita MacNeil, Joe Strummer, Laurie Metcalf, Jayne Eastwood, Kazuko Oshima, Eric Mitchell, Mary Joy, Bob Joy, Arto Lindsay, Mary Margaret O'Hara, David Johansen, David Margulies, Tony "Machine" Krasinski, Susan H. Kirschner, Dee de Antonio, Jose Soto, Bob Maroff, Rockets Redglare, Nancy Fish, Liz Porrazzo, Harry Fox, Roy Maceachern, Wayne Robson, Eric House, Rosalee Larade, John Simon Beaton, Norman Rankin, Stanley MacNeil, Tantoo Cardinal, Jo-Ann Rolls, Ralph Dillon musicians Dr. John, David Johansen, Leon Redbone, Rita MacNeil, Tom Waits, Joey Barron, Mark Bingham, Michael Blair, Ralph Carney, Crispin Cioe, Greg Cohen, Joe de Lia, Ralph Dillon, Bob Funk, Tony Garnier, Arno Hecht, Brian Koonan, Arto Lindsay, Paul Litteral, Tony Machine, Magic Dick, Steve Morrell, Parc Ribot, Fernando Saunders, John Saunders, John Scofield, Chris Spedding, Peter Stammel, Kevin Tooley. colour 35 mm Running time 91 min.

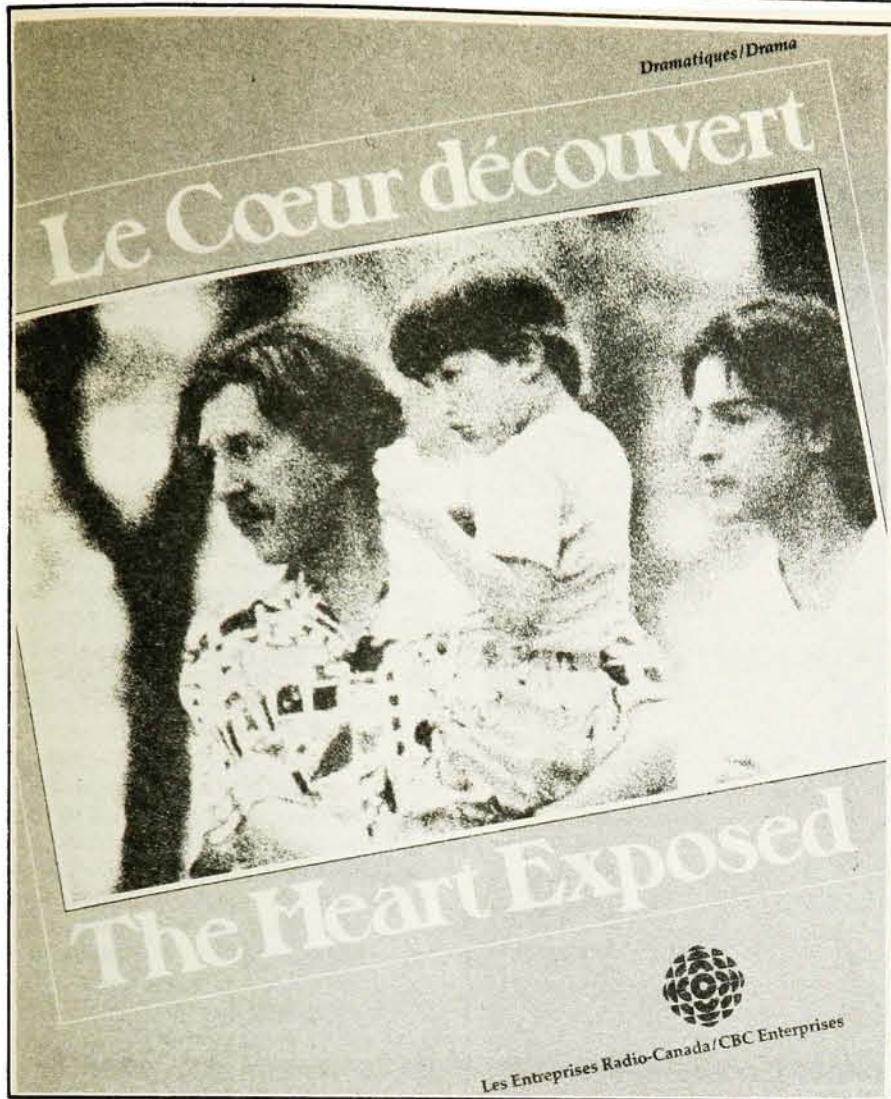
Jean-Yves Laforce's **Le Coeur découvert**

Playwright and novelist Michel Tremblay, Quebec's literary superstar, is no stranger to the Quebec cinema. During the '70s he scripted **Il Était une fois dans l'est** and **Le Soleil se lève en retard** for director André Brassard, his longstanding collaborator, as well as **Parlez-nous d'amour** for Jean-Claude Lord. All three films are among the underrated treasures of that decade. But the neglect of the brilliant, ferocious **Il Était une fois**, which assembled Tremblay's menagerie from the momentous **Les Belles-soeurs** play cycle plus a breathtaking ensemble of the leading acting talent of the day, is especially unfair (today it is recycled only in gay film festivals around the world). More recently, the movies have profited less from Tremblay's gifts, perhaps because his plays are so self-consciously theatrical with their direct-address monologues, and perhaps because the novels would be very expensive to adapt with their period urban sets.

All the same, I don't understand why Tremblay got the cold shoulder everywhere when he approached producers with a script called **Le Coeur découvert**. It was a low-budget, present-day project with clear commercial potential, a kind of gay comic instalment in the series of family melodramas that have done rather well commercially over the last decade in Quebec, from **Les Bons débarras** to **Mario** to **Bach et bottine**, with the focus shifted somewhat towards the grownups. Not one to be easily discouraged, Tremblay brought out a novel version of the property last year and at the same time succeeded in hooking Radio-Canada into a commitment for a TV-movie version.

Hearing this background made everything come into place since my first impression had been that the film adaptation was a refreshing improvement on the novel. In fact **Le Coeur**, which premiered at the Montreal World Film Festival (where some of it was actually photographed as well, since one of the principals belongs to that particular Montreal breed, the festival glutton), is a delightful *tour de force*. Directed by Jean-Yves Laforce and masterfully shot in 16mm by none other than Jean Pierre Lefebvre, the film will hopefully make the shortsighted private producers a little bit more openminded in the future.

Since Tremblay moved to Outremont at the peak of his success, some of his work, I think, had lacked the punch of the earlier plays situated in the Plateau Mont-Royal, the *quartier populaire* of



his childhood. Although his memoir-inspired novels appearing between 1978 and 1984 returned to the Plateau and to his earlier pizzazz, I found that his 1981 play, *Les anciennes odeurs*, a melancholy portrait of a gay Cegep professor, felt stiff and contrived. With **Le Coeur découvert**, the professor has reappeared, reincarnated this time as Jean-Marc, a 39-year-old Outremont French teacher, and it is clear that Tremblay has now found a much surer footing in the new neighbourhood. The narrative is an upbeat and sympathetic account of Jean-Marc's encounter, courtship and nestling with Mathieu, a 25-year-old would-be actor. The only hitch in this ideal May-August romance is that our hero must now welcome Mathieu's five-year-old son Sébastien into his life and co-op for the same price.

Director Laforce and a likeable cast have created life-and-blood characterizations to add colour and warmth to Tremblay's scintillating dialogue. The players, composed both of old Tremblay hands, Gilles Renaud and Amulette Garneau, and of newcomers, Michel Poirier and Louise Dussault, recruited from the world of children's television, are uniformly first-rate. Renaud, the butch leather biker Cuirette of *Il Était une fois* and later the gloomy hero of *Anciennes odeurs*, has now considerably filled in the character of Jean-Marc, showing every nuance of a too-settled life being stirred up. It's not easy to steal the show from such a veteran, but the diminutive and charismatic Poirier almost gets away with it as the new lover Mathieu, defensive, tender and charming.

Their primary relationship, the core of the film, is skilfully textured as it evolves, from the currently fashionable courtship through all the ups and downs and insec-

urities to its final domestication. My only reservation was that Laforce apparently let the constraints of television (self-) censorship hold back the physical dimension of their interaction: the two go to bed, not like passionate newlyweds, but like the chaste Hollywood couples of the '50s, complete with dry peck on the cheek on parting. On other counts, however, Laforce doesn't falter: straight critics were terribly nervous about the novel's fine exploration of adult-child relationships and focused on a bathtub scene between Jean-Marc and the little boy. Life imitates art: in *Coeur*, the child has a macho uncle who harasses the new couple with his homophobic terror of touching. Laforce goes one better, giving two adult-child bathtub scenes, not one, and confronting the issue of gay parenting with humour, subtlety and defiance.

The women characters, too often assigned to supportive and decorative roles in the genre of the gay male melodrama, come across in *Coeur* as strong, interesting individuals in their own right: Jean-Marc's hesitant new mother-in-law, played by Garneau with spellbinding technique; his worldly-wise lesbian *co-propriétaire* played by Dussault with just the right twinkle in her eye; his new ex-wife-in-law, played by Louise Rinfret. Not only do we get a sensitive picture of the network of new bonds created by alternative families (Sébastien brags to his classmates about how many fathers he has), but Tremblay is pursuing what has always been his favorite theme, the natural alliance of all the others squeezed out by the patriarchy. This was what brought together within the frame of *Il Était une fois* the waitress dying of her botched illegal abortion and the drag queen suffering her daily humiliation, the sisterhood of oppression. Now, even if Tremblay's co-

alition of the suffering of the balconies and the streets has migrated upscale, the complicity of his gay men with his women is still operative. Even in the cops of Outremont, they are still the salt of the earth, and there is only a single minor representative of the law of the Father, Sébastien's macho and uptight new "Monday-to-Friday co-step-father"

Perhaps the reason this migration, Tremblay's gentrification, is artistically so successful, is that the old world of the streets left behind is still present, hovering around the edges of the frame. In one of the film's funniest scenes, Jean-Marc's solicitous lesbian neighbours ask with a note of snobbish prurience whether his St-Denis Street rendezvous with his new flame will be above Sherbrooke Street (chic) or below (sleaze). The audience I saw the film with couldn't contain themselves as the scene cut to a long shot of the lovers slowly descending the slope below Sherbrooke, pausing indecisively to look back towards Chic, and then continuing their downward direction.

The cast is well rounded out, it must be mentioned, by child actor Olivier Chasse, with whom Laforce has shaped a strong understated performance, only occasionally marred by the cuteness that seems endemic in Quebec film these days. The minor characters are also superb miniatures without exception: Tremblay's works always seem to bring out the best in ensemble performances.

The only other criticism I have is of the design which has a little too much of that boutique-y Radio-Canada flavour for my liking, the Outremont setting notwithstanding. Although it may be a bit excessive to go on and on as some of my friends did about how no self-respecting lesbian would go walking in Parc Outremont in a little yellow straw hat, the general look of the cultural milieu in question is slightly off. On the other hand, the location shooting provides an authentic, even romantic backdrop in the milieu: my archivist friend is ecstatic that the oldest gay bar in Montreal, the Café Lincoln, dating from the '30s, has now been documented on film, coloured glass globes and all.

But I digress. It is a fine pleasure to see this warmhearted little gem, not only because of positive representation of gays in this year when everyone's gushing about *Night Zoo*, a violent misogynist derivative film that exults in queer-baiting and queer-smashing, but because one of our finest writers has made another all-too-rare visit to the screen.

Thomas Waugh •

LE COEUR DECOUVERT (THE HEART EXPOSED) d. Jean-Yves Laforce sc. Michel Tremblay a.d. Marie-Josée Boudrias sets Francine Denault orig. m. Michel-Charles Therrien d.o.p. Jean Pierre Lefebvre ed. André Daigneault l.p. Gilles Renaud, Michel Poirier, Olivier Chasse, Louise Dussault, Amulette Garneau, Louise Rinfret, Pierre Houle, Robert Lalonde, Diane Miljours, Mona Cyr, Han Masson. Produced by La Société Radio-Canada. Special Thanks to City of Montreal, City of Outremont, Montreal Harbor Cruises Inc. World Film Festival, MUCTC. colour 16mm running time 107 min.

Jean-Claude Labrecque's

Le Frère André

Le Frère André continues the good news of the last few years: the Canadian cinema is alive and well, showing more signs of maturity and vigour. The fragile, iconoclastic, new-wave days of the '60s are, in so many ways, a thing of the past; the succeeding booms and busts are also long gone, to be replaced by a more professional industry that is fully capable of producing, with modest regularity, what are artistically solid films of popular appeal.

There is something especially gratifying in the fact that one who has experienced it all, first a cameraman in the '60s, and then as his own director, is still very much part of the creative scene. Jean-Claude Labrecque will very soon be 50 years old. For a film director, that is generally not old; and indeed, his very best work may still lie ahead. Interesting projects are in the works. If the Quebec film scene continues in its benign cycle, Labrecque may continue to be a major force for years to come.

Le Frère André continues Labrecque's chronicling of Quebec's cultural history. In all of his features (*Les Smattes* - 1971; *Les Vautours* - 1975; *L'Affaire Coffin* - 1980; *Les Années de rêve* - 1984), Labrecque has chosen particular moments, particular stories, purely fictional or based in actual fact, to communicate his understanding of our recent past. What emerges is sometimes a critique, sometimes poetry, but always seen through one man's experience of the past, his feelings and his visions of his own human condition.

With **Le Frère André**, Jean-Claude Labrecque chose a subject fraught with difficulty. How do you bring to the screen the life of 'a humble little man', a Holy Cross Brother who died in 1938 at the age of 91 - and who was the occasion for a multitude of alleged miraculous cures, for an enormous outpouring of religious devotion reaching out well beyond the regions of Quebec, and for the building of St. Joseph's Oratory, whose towering dome has become Montreal's dominant landmark?

Bringing **Le Frère André** to the screen was indeed walking into areas that angels might prefer to avoid; and the very manner in which Labrecque treats his subject matter might be seen as revelatory of Quebec's culture today and the film director's own evolution. Brother André was a sign of contradiction in his own dominant Roman Catholic culture, and even in his own religious order. The appeal of the man, difficult to explain, and the thaumaturgic powers ascribed to him by so many people - but