

her in this religious context, bathed in the softest, warmest light imaginable. Would Guy have us perceive her as a martyr? It would seem so.

Reminders are inserted about where these women are in the form of shots from outside the gates and fences. These can be jarring, but eventually become ineffective, because of where they come in, and simply because of overuse. And here again, Guy pushes interpretation upon us, continuously framing things within the wire fence so we have the effect of bars, and at one point even includes a shot of a robin landing on the top of the fence and then flying away.

At one level Guy has effectively created a picture of a particular kind of female society, one that functions, in a sense, outside of normal society. Yet that society has all the trappings of 'normality'; we see the women at the hairdressers, in an arts studio, taking a yoga / relaxation class, playing ball, at a dance, and so on. But this normalcy is only appearance: the society is a forced, and enforced, one, defined by the bars, concrete walls, guards, locked doors and wire fences that are prison. It is when these images are projected toward a broader perspective that the film loses its meaning.

What these women have to say is interesting, often disturbing, and at times, even terrifying. But in her concern, perhaps to make the subject more palatable, or to make a 'different' kind of prison film, Guy softens the impact of their statements to the point of invalidating them. And I think my confusion about the intent of *Les Bleus au coeur* results from its own inherent confusion. In an attempt to make several statements, it makes none very strongly. There is no room in documentary film for subtle inference of the kind it employs, particularly in one that is attempting to deal with such indistinct issues. It is unfortunate, but I think that in her attempt to subvert or destroy preconceptions of women in prison, and to pose more profound questions about women as victims, and as prisoners, of society, Guy ultimately misrepresents prison life, and in the end, gives us nothing much at all.

Jamie Gaetz •

**LES BLEUS AU COEUR** d. Suzanne Guy *idea/research* Michèle Robert, Louise Roy *mus.* Martin Fournier *d. o. p.* René-Bellemare *cam.* Mathieu Décary *sd.* Michel Charron, Yvon Benoit *ed.* André Corriveau *gaff.* Jean-Marc Hébert *asst. gaff.* Jean Berthiaume, René Guillard, Roch Plante *key grip* Jean-Maurice de Ernsted *cont.* Martine Gagné *p. a.* Alain Labrosse *p. dir.* Dominique Parent *postprod.* Daniel Arieé, Anne-Marie Leduc *mix.* Michel Descombes *lab.* Bellevue Pathé *titles* Film Docteur *graphics* Robert Gaboury *del. p.* Danièle Bussy *ex. p.* Aimée Danis *adj. to p.* François Reid *appering* Carole, Brigitte, Linda, Claudie, Madeleine, Brigitte, Josée, Nicole, Chantal *participation* Elsa Lessonnini, Emilie Paul, Pierre Huet, Gerry Boulet, Breen Leboeuf *p. c.* Les Productions du Verseau Inc. *with* Société Radio-Canada, Telefilm Canada, SGCQ *running time* 81 min.

## Vojta Jasny's The Great Land of Small

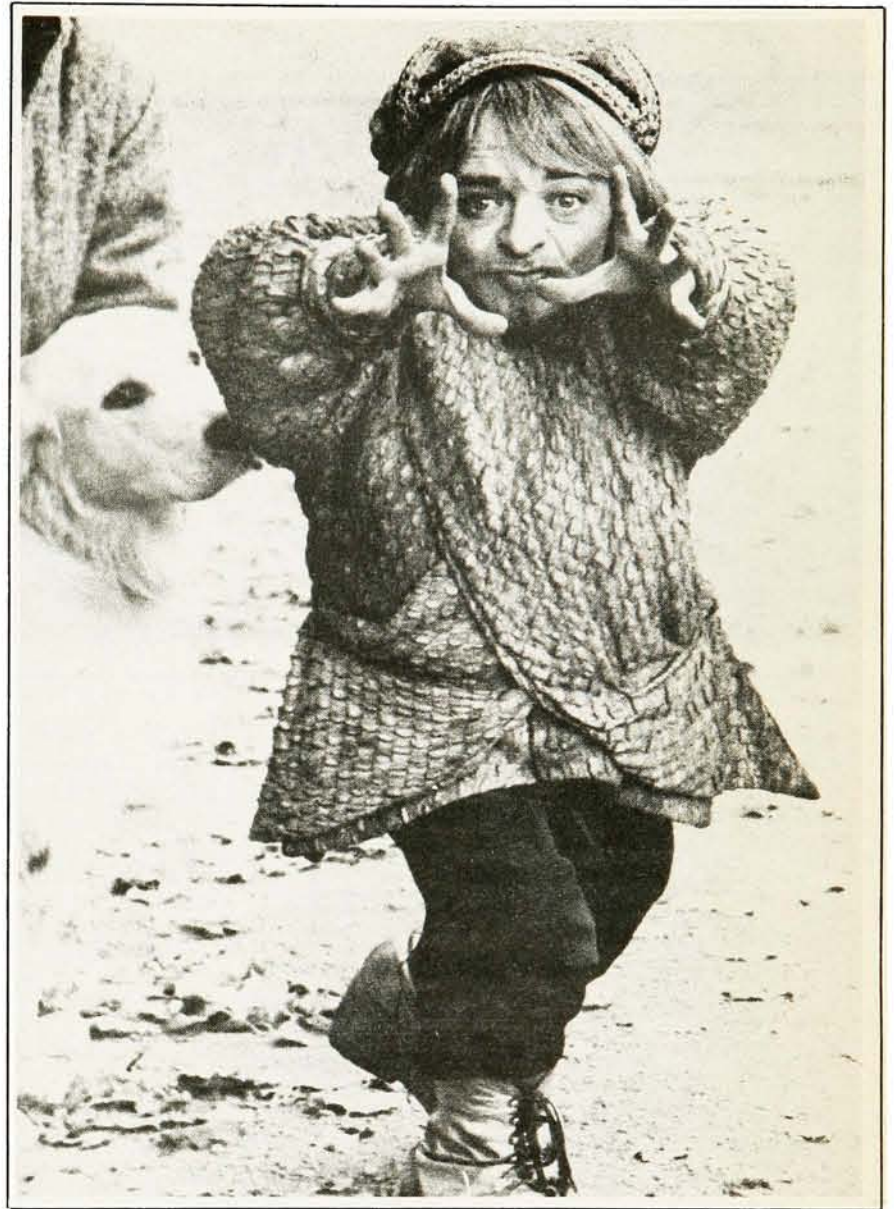
The spell is cast. A ground-level tracking shot catches a glimpse of the invisible and makes it suddenly visible. Fritz the elf is nestled in the leaves. He opens a pouch. Freed from the confines of the bag, sparkles of gold soar in the air, lighting Fritz's face. The director, Czechoslovakia's Vojta Jasny, leads us into the realm of the unknown. What better agent for this exploration than children? Jenny and David, two New Yorkers, come to Quebec's Eastern Townships to visit their grandparents. Full of the stories their grandfather tells them, the children discover an unsuspected world. Together with Fritz, they attempt to recuperate the pouch of gold powder which inadvertently falls into the hands of Flanigan, a bar owner. Born from the "Tales for All" series, *The Great Land of Small* is Rock Demers' fifth effort following films like *Bach and Broccoli* and *The Peanut Butter Solution*. The film leaves everyday life situations behind to capture the world of elves, white horses, and breathtaking rainbows.

Demers unites two different traditions of storytelling. He combines the skills of director Vojta Jasny and cinematographer Michel Brault. A pioneer in Québécois cinema, Brault, known for *Les Raquetteurs* (1958) and *Les Ordres* (1976), lends to *The Great Land of Small* his long history of creative endeavours. Coming from direct cinema, Brault makes the poetic sensibility of Jasny materialize into a tale which escapes the obvious.

The magic inherent in the images springs from the constant attention directed to "the small". High up, perched on a branch, an owl observes the woods. A caribou witnesses Flanigan's illegal hunting. Not moving, it knows it will be killed. But will it? Merlin the horse appears, dreamlike, its white robe glowing like silver. The grandfather's cat watches Jenny and David arrive. Fairy tales command such images.

With a preference for the camera placed close to the ground, Jasny communicates the invisible dimension foreign to our grown-up eyes. It is the cat's point-of-view which leads us into the cozy living room. Crawling underneath the dining room table the camera slowly intrudes on the trio. Jenny and David listen - ears wide open - as the grandfather reveals the secrets of invisible creatures.

Jasny and Brault capture the forest at dusk. This quality of light - rarely seen in films - makes Flanigan and his men appear as undefinable shapes lost in the darkening forest. The blue tinge together with the mystical synthesizer music adds to the bewitching feel that the



Small fantasy figure in *Great Land*

Jasny-Brault duo creates. Colour and texture blend into the images. They outline the schism between our reality and *The Great Land of Small's* domain. The bridge where both worlds meet takes the shape of the rainbow. Dedicated to those who kept their eyes open, *The Great Land of Small* finds its significance in the initial meeting between the children and the elf. Jenny and David enter enthusiastically the green, white, and pink prism of the rainbow. The elf is seated between two trees within the diffused yellow hue. David and Fritz's eyes meet instantly. But Jenny cannot see. Only when she repeats to herself that she believes in invisible creatures is she able to discern the elf. Oscillating from childhood to adolescence, Jenny slowly loses the innocence of youth. Only faith in the powers of imagination restores her ability to view beyond the visible.

From the autumn countryside with its gradation of ochre and amber tones, Jasny projects us into the land of "the small". The futuristic structure of Montreal's Olympic Stadium successfully composes the realm of the invisible. The population is made of the very tall and the very small alike. They sway in their robes tinted by the whole spectrum of the rainbow's colours. Amazed at what they see, Jenny and David, tailed by their dog Willy,

follow Fritz into this world of flying butterflies and skillful jugglers. At the end of a corridor formed by the enthusiastic crowd, the Queen advances solemnly. A colourful procession of acrobats accompanies Her Majesty who looks a lot like the children's mother. With ease, the Queen even executes a trapeze number. But every nice dream has an end. The little group leaves Fritz's land in the company of the keeper Cerber and the half-dog half-human Munch.

*The Great Land of Small* escapes Disney's simplistic division between good and evil. Jasny portrays Flanigan as a regular kind of bar owner who becomes greedy as soon as he takes possession of Fritz's gold powder. The film reaches its peak at the moment Flanigan is closest to dominating the world. At night, the bar owner climbs The Black Mountain. Once he reaches the top he opens the magical pouch. Streams of light swirl around his body as if a malevolent spirit is discharged, Mephisto-like, Flanigan invites the evil forces upon himself. In a flash, a blue electrifying current outlines his figure against the dark sky. Meanwhile, Sarah tries to reach out to her father, but in vain. The rotund fishlike shape of Slimo - the gold powder-maker - appears like a menace in rear projection. Too close to the scene, Sarah, struck by the light, rolls down the mountain. In shock,

*Petra*


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Flanigan finally comes to his senses. He runs to his daughter and seeks forgiveness.

Despite the qualities inherent in the images, *The Great Land of Small* is flawed. As the film unfolds, the motivation behind the dangers of the gold powder remain unfocused. The metaphorical implication of the gold powder as instrument of power are self-evident. Still, flashes of light and rattling objects are just not enough to convince the audience of Flanigan's abuse. The young actors Karen Elkin (Jenny) and Michael Blouin (David) lack the freshness and spontaneity of Mahée Paiement in *Bach and Broccoli* and the group of children in *The Dog Who Stopped the War*. To show them crying when their friends leave is a hazardous venture which detracts from the film. *The Great Land of Small* is the first film of the series shot with Dolby Stereo. But what good does this advanced sound technology do if the French-dubbed version constantly attracts attention to its stiff dialogue? Still, the spirit of the film outweighs its weaknesses. The desire to capture the inner life of the characters makes *The Great Land of Small* a film in which both children and adults find meaning. Rock Demers, the soul behind the "Tales for All" series, manages to blend international ingredients together creating a dynamic melting pot. Vojta Jasny and Michel Brault make it possible for us to believe that on one stroll in the woods we might actually stumble over Fritz.

Marika Csano •

**THE GREAT LAND OF SMALL / C'EST PAS PARCE QU'ON EST PETIT QU'ON PEUT PAS ETRE GRAND** p. Rock Demers d. Vojta Jasny sc/ prod sup. David Sigmund sc. consult Vojta Jasny, Rock Demers d. o. p. Michel Brault line p. Lorraine du Hamel assoc. p. Pierre David 1st. a. d. Jim Kaufman art d. Violette Daneau ed. Helene Girard m. Guy Trepanier, Normand Dube asst. p. Louise Belanger prod. d. Suzanne Roy regie Renee Leclerc 2nd. a. d. Blair Roth 3rd a. d. Tin Analytis prod. co-ord Danielle Boucher acc. Marie-Claude Hebert asst acc. Suzanne Poirier p. a. Pierre Paquette, Jean-Guy Chevette, Denise Langis trainee Sandy McGiffert tutor Françoise Tessier cont. Marie Theberge casting Lucie Robitaille architect Martin Mainguy set dec. Réal Ouellette props Daniel Huysmans animal trainer Jean Cardinal, Ciné Zoo sfx Louis Craig asst. Antonia Vidosa, Réal Baril, Pierre Rivard animation and sfx (optical) Les Productions Pascal Blais Inc. sfx o. Bernard Lajoie, Pascal Blais sfx d. Peter Bromley head anim. Joseph Gilland assts Jean Desrosiers, Luc Chamberland cost. des. Michele Hamel head dresser Hughette Gagne asst. Murielle Blouin dresser John Stone make-up Diane Simard, Line Desmarais head hair-dresser Constant Natale cam. Sylvain Brault 1st asst. cam. Christian Racine 2nd asst cam. Pierre Pelletier stills Jean Demers grip Yves Charbonneau elec. Marcel Breton gaffer Emmanuel Lepine carp. Piere Charpentier gen. op. Jean-Paul Auclair sd. Serge Beauchemin sd. concept Claude Langlois boom Thierry Hoffman Asst. Patricia Tassinari stunts. Jerome Tiberghien sp. sc. co-ord Gilles St. Croix *Slimo* creator Karen Langshaw pub. rel. Kevin Tierney, David Novek Assoc. l. p. Karen Elkin, Michael Blouin, Michael J. Anderson, Rodrigue Tremblay, Ken Roberts, Lorraine Desmarais, Gilles Pelletier, Françoise Graton, André Mélançon, Michelle Elaine Turmel, Michael J. Anderson, Lorraine Desmarais, Jack Langedijk, Gilles Ste-Croix, Nicolas Doclin, Eddie Roy, Michael Gagne, Bayou, Inconnu, Le Chat du producteur, un curieux cheval blanc, Une Chevre, Hoot, Ungrand, Rond, étrange et rustique poisson ballon qui joue son propre role, Ken Roberts running time 93 min.

## Moze Mossanen's Dance for Modern Times

Last year Moze Mossanen directed *The Dancemakers*, a series of six half-hours for television and, at the same time, had a second unit shooting everything that was going on. And this feature, *Dance for Modern Times*, was made from this "everything".

The opening of *Dance for Modern Times* combines crew, clapper board, background voices, and the images of dancers, giving an immediate feeling of how the two arts - modern dance and film - will intertwine. Moze Mossanen's voice from time to time punctuates this personal exploration of four leading dance groups. Five dancers in front of an orange background; the camera pulls back from the stage where they stand, and the square of light seems to resemble a TV screen. Four modern dance groups are presented. Choreographers speak of their creations, rehearsals are observed, and fair-sized excerpts from a major work of each company are seen on-screen.

Christopher House, choreographer for the Toronto Dance Theatre, talks of his concern with structure and craftsmanship, and is at the edge of the stage (here again the TV screen motif) as the five dancers seen in the opening shots of the film form an intricate moving frieze to spare piano accompaniment.

The Danny Grossman Dance Company is next. Grossman's solo - shivering and shaking, rolling and acrobatic, his mobile face and hair extensions of the body movement - is to Bach-ish music. He discusses his choreography for "Endangered Species" and observes, "I am quite good at social commentary," going on to recall family influences, the makeup, and the "horrible images." A lengthy portion of "Endangered Species" conjures up the aftermath of, perhaps, a nuclear war with worn-out survivors pushed around by a military figure. Oppression and misery are heightened by expressionistic music.

James Kudelka, choreographer of "In Paradisum," a 22-minute work for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, gained inspiration from artist Kathe Kollwitz - also cited by Danny Grossman in relation to "Endangered Species". Kudelka's piece chronicles five stages of dying, and he remarks that it "seems to have a lot of Christian images in it." Designed to sometimes have three men in the leads (whole company wear long flowing skirts), the roles are, however, interchangeable. As the troupe dances and whirls to insistent music, David Crone is seen weaving in and out of their movements shooting with his Steadicam and, on screen, appears to blend into the dance.