

structure, direction, and image enhance this familiar story and its characters.

If the term "fragmentation" can be used to describe Esther's psychological state, it can also be seen as inherent in the montage and visual style of *Onzième Spéciale*, a collection of images and experiences from Esther's life and art. This is truly an episodic film (ah, television), and the insights are sporadic, for Esther as well as the viewer. Lancôt's subtle images (she worked with cinematographer Pierre Mignot and art director Louise Jobin) capture Esther in her own opacity; we see her in and through other materials: faceted and distorted in mirrors, silhouetted through patterned glass, windows.

Esther is one against the world - her family, the organized art community, her high school alumni - and is often filmed in perspective with the physical space around her. Perhaps most importantly, we see her against a blank canvas, unable to execute a self-portrait. The overall visual approach emerges as a metaphor for Esther's confusion, questioning the notion of images and who creates them. Although unable to "see" herself, Esther paints images of other women, and renders them disrobed, disfigured, non-human. The art work we see is poignant, full of the questions "what is woman?" and "of what is her self-image made?"

A character film. A *mise-en-scène* film. A theme film. An editor's film. Surprising for "made-for-television." Not surprising considering the creative team. A look behind the camera reveals quite a constellation, so much so that it is difficult to say whether *auteurist critique* is appropriate here. *Équipe-ist*?

What are the drawbacks of *Onzième Spéciale*? Lancôt offers no answers for Esther's human drama - only windows. And surely the characters are stereotypical, and the criticism of the art world has been heard before. Yet the

humour, creativity, and freshness with which the story is told merit the re-telling.

Harriet Wichin •

ONZIÈME SPECIALE p. Roger Frappier d. Micheline Lanctôt sc. Marie Perreault, Louise Roy d. o. p. Pierre Mignot art d. Louise Jobin ed. Michel Arcand org. mus. Lorraine Desmarais p. mgr. JeanMarie Comeau st. Yvon Benoit 1st. a. d. Jacques LaBerge cont. Thérèse Bérubé 1st. asst. cam. Christianne Guernon unit mgr. Michèle St-Arnaud hd. elect. Daniel Chretien key grip Michel Périard set des. Blanche Boileau props master Pierre Fournier boom Claude Lahaye asst. props Louis Gascon asst. cost. Josée Boisvert makeup Micheline Foisy-Trépanier 2nd cam. asst. Martin Dubois 1st. elect. Manal Hassib grip Jean-Maurice de Ernsted p. a. Maité Sarthou, Pierre Jasmin sd. ed. Paul Dion mix. Shelley Craig acct. Daniel Demers p. coord. Hélène Ross asst. to p. Lyne Lemieux still photo Pierre Drury pub. Christianne Ducassee l. p. Sylvie-Catherine Beaudoin, Robert Toupin, Lorraine Pintal, Jean Beaudry, Colin Caroit, Markita Boies, André Melancon, Pierre Collin, Marie-Lou Dion, Ann Caron, Julie Vincent, Lucie Saint-Cyr, Roger Baulu, Johanne Seymour, Andrée Pelletier, Suzanne Champagne, Louise Rinfret, Josée Cusson, Louise Bombardier, Clément Schreiber, Jean-Gabriel Lambert. A co-production of Les Producteurs TV-Films Associés and the NFB, with the financial participation of SOGIC, Téléfilm and Radio Québec.

TOP SECRET

TO: Department of Puerile Entertainment Surveillance (DOPES)
FROM: Agent 008½

Jon Hess'

Watchers

Disguised as a FREAK (Film Reviewer, Exploitation / Actioners / Kitsch) I observed another Canadian attempt to penetrate U.S. drive-in circuits and video-networks camouflaged as a *bona fide* American operation.

If this observer is permitted an opinion, these Canadian undercover activities represent a clear



Corey Haim and a nice doggie foil the nasties in *Watchers*

and present danger to our balance of terror and threaten the cornerstone of U.S. policy in this hemisphere, namely the Marilyn Monroe Doctrine, according to which no other power is allowed to make American movies.

The danger comes from two sources: (a) the similarity of terrain permits the Canadians to substitute fraudulently their Northwest for ours, and (b) their actors, writers and directors have managed, through years of painstaking imitation, to pass for one of U.S.

Watchers, were it not a dangerous and near-successful attempt to penetrate our defences, could be dismissed as *Lassie Meets Godzilla*, *Three Days of the Oxcom* or *Grizzly and the War Games*. The hybrid titles are a natural outgrowth of the CIA-operation-gone-wrong-and-danger-stalks-the-land-as-a-consequence plot, another cloning achievement of that all-powerful multinational conglomerate, Industrial Plot and Action.

Specifically, *Watchers* deals with the escape of the "ultimate predator", a.k.a. Outside Experimental Combat Mammal or Oxcom. Oxcom Must Be Stopped, not only because it keeps on killing everything in its way with predictable regularity and not only because it is telepathically linked to a nice doggie, but because the CIA team that created and trained it has a Hidden Agenda, wouldn't you know.

Oxcom's M.O. seems to be mostly ripping out esophagi and defenestration, and he (she? it?) leaves a bloody trail until he Meets Its Match in

the person of a clean-cut teenager and his rather cute Mom.

As indicated at the beginning of this report, *Watchers* is a force to be reckoned with. It is professionally scripted with a 0.9/beat cliché-ratio, with fully computerized scenario and diesel-powered sequencing, featuring a Syd Field-tested structure with turgid-driven dramatics and characterization.

For the most part, the direction and cinematography demonstrate schlock-proof trade-craft. Actors, with the exception of Oxcom, turn in a performance perfectly matching the exigencies of the project. Clean Teen, Spunky Mom and Sneering Villain being possibly more memorable than the script called for, but this could have been caused by an error in wiring. Oxcom's efficacy is difficult to determine; possibly for budgetary reasons, he, she, it, is never fully visible. Not even its status as a mammal can be certified on the basis of visual sighting.

However, we must bite the bullet: the Canadians nearly got away with successfully launching across the border a near-perfect pod, a deceptively well-made and commercially feasible replicate of a U.S. B-'89 Bomb.

Almost, but not quite. Fortunately, *Watchers* has been intercepted by the undersigned before it could become part of American culture. This, thanks to the vigilance of this operative and some minor, but telltale flaws in the film's concept and execution.



Sylvie Catherine Beaudoin as Esther in *Onzième Spéciale*

The first clue indicating subversive activity was the deliberate withholding of an adequate amount of gore in the first two acts: while the perpetrators may have wished to establish a sense of rising action, the poorly planned time-release mechanism of gore, gristle and gutbucket indicates typical Canadian restraint. A dead giveaway!

The second clue also belongs in this category: the first time the film made an attempt at real gore, the butchered face and torn-out eyeballs of the victim looked so phoney, even a moderately splatter-happy six-year-old could tell. Was it deliberate sabotage? Is one of them working for us? Further investigation may be required.

But the fatal blow was struck by the dialogue. Quote the villain, speaking to some suspicious local citizens: "We are Washington, we're the good guys. We are your government, we are in this together."

Only a Canadian would deem it necessary to reassure the American public that their institutions work for and not against them. This lack of patriotic understanding, or understanding of patriotism, is what finally exposes *Watchers* as a snowbird behind eagle feathers. However, we have no reason to be smug. *Watchers* came this close! The next time, they could make it all the way. We better watch the *Watchers*!

The price of liquidity is eternal violence.
Agent 008½/Code name:

Paul Gottlieb •

WATCHERS *exec. p.* Roger Corman *p.* Damian Lee, David Mitchell *co. p.* Mary Eilts *d.* Jon Hess *sc.* Bill Freed, Damian Lee; based on the novel by Dean R. Koontz *d. o. p.* Richard Leiterman *addnl. cam.* Curtis Petersen *ed.* Bill Freda, Carole Alain, Rick Fields *mus.* Joel Goldsmith *p. mgr.* George Grieve *1st. a. d.* Lee Knippelberg *2nd a. d.* Rachel Leiterman *loc. mgr.* Christine Haebler *p. exec.* (Carolco) Carl Borack, Robert Misiorowski *cast. d.* Trish Robinson *extras cast.* Zahn Douglas *p. des.* Richard Wilcox *art d.* Tom Duquette *graphics* Gary Myers *set dec.* Marti Wright *asst. set dec.* Mary Lou Storey *set buyer* David Birdsall *set dresser* Lin MacDonald *props master* Chris Wright *asst. props master* Bob Levesque *props buyer* Bryan Korenberg *cost. des.* Monique Stranan *cost. sup.* Christina McQuarrie *makeup* Linda A. Brown *hair* Janet Sala *cam op.* Harvey LaRocque, Robert McLachlan *1st. asst. cam.* Andy Wilson, Ian Preston, William Waring *2nd asst. cam.* Tim Moynihan *stills photog.* Phil Hersee *sd. mix.* Frank Griffiths *boom op.* Bill Skinner *gaffer* John Scott *best boy* A. W. Davidson *genny op.* Steve Vincent *key grip* Nick Kuchera *matching keys* R. K. Hill, Ron MacLeay, *best boy grip* Robin Jobin *dolly grip* Tom Wallace *grip* Dave Riopel, Rob Bojeck *craft serv.* Gerri Kuhn *cont.* Candice Field *3rd a. d.* Robert Lee *a. d. trainee* Lisa Weinstein *asst. loc. mgr.* James Sallis *p. coord.* Linda Sheehy *p. a.* Lynn Barr, Caroline Hardon, Kevin Parks, Michelle Futerman, Monique Savin, Pauline Crawford, Jeff Faiyn *sp. fx coord.* Dean Lockwood *const. coord.* Rick Stranan *foreman* Bob Nicholson *carpenters* Gary York, Al Rourke, Glenna Ewing, Rob Maier, Lou Bollo, Peter McGregor *2nd unit d.* Damian Lee *1st. a. d.* Brett Dowler *loc. mgr.* James Sallis *p. coord.* Jeanne Grundi *steadicam op.* John Clothier *1st asst. cam.* Joel Ransom, David Pelletier *gaffer* Einar Hansen *best boy* Wayne Robinson. *l. p.* Corey Haim, Barbara Williams, Michael Ironside, Lala, Christopher Carey, Graeme Campbell, Dan O'Dowd, Dale Wilson, Blu Mankuma, Colleen Winton, Duncan Fraser, Lou Bollo, Sandy the dog. A Rose and Ruby Films Production.

SKIN

Three "visible minority" teenagers talk about their backgrounds. Phiroza was born in Bombay and came to Toronto at age four. Jennifer's roots are Jamaican, but she was born in Toronto. Tuan is Chinese from Hanoi, North Vietnam, and he and his older brother were "boat people". When their frail craft sank, 60 people drowned, including Tuan's brother.

Based on actual incidents, interviews and interracial workshops, the trio talk of prejudice and race relations, and fantasy and reality is cleverly combined to reveal their feelings. Phiroza loves school and never has any problems because she is black, but then admits that she's not sure what's worse - being called names or just being invisible... a boy and girl sit each side of her, safe behind masks, and carry on an animated conversation across Phiroza who's just a space to them. Phiroza has to deal with dating Tom, a white boy who asks if she comes from Italy, but she says she's from Persia. Eventually Phiroza tells Tom she lied, that she really comes from Bombay. In the end, Phiroza admits that it wasn't all that hard and Tom didn't reject her.

Tuan came to his sponsor from a camp in Hong Kong. The first day at school was difficult and his English was bad. He meets Lo, a friend from home who says, "It is all war here too - they push and so I push," but Tuan disagrees. Tuan cleans an office building after school and on weekends, as he wants his parents join him. But he is fired by an embarrassed employer who admits he is an excellent cleaner, but says that people working in the building have complained. But Tuan is a survivor...

Jennifer is loathe to admit prejudice exists, but her teacher, Mr. Lizard - complete with heavy, scaly mask and long red fingernails - is always putting her down. He nags on - she has an atrocious attitude towards the learning process; she's lazy; she's a smart-ass. Jennifer wants to try for university. "You don't have what it takes," Mr. Lizard snarls. When Jennifer does get into an academic program, Mr. Lizard is all delight. "I always knew you had it in you!" But

Mishu Vellani (Phiroza Mehta), Robert Lee (Wong Tuan Hung), and Karen Johnson (Jennifer Malcolm).



Jennifer hits back, "Don't congratulate me. You made me feel like a fool."

A smart, sensible and humorous look at the hurt and suffering caused by thoughtless racial prejudice. The use of masks is particularly effective in conveying the blind, blank attitudes often encountered in school and in the world at large. The three leads are personable, convincing achievers who forcefully convey the message of, and some solutions to, this pervasive problem. This is undoubtedly a useful film for stirring up discussion and confrontation. However, one wonders how less educated and less fortunate minority youth copes with the same questions, and do they succeed in the end?

prod. Gilbert W. Taylor/Glenn Frost. *d.* Gilbert W. Taylor. *sc.* Dennis Foon. *cam.* Robert Brooks *cs. sd.* Peter Clements. *l. p.* Mishu Vellani (Phiroza Mehta), Robert Lee (Wong Tuan Hung), Karen Johnson (Jennifer Malcolm). 29 mins. Videotape - all formats. Distributor: International Tele-Film/Toronto (416) 241-4483. Produced by Intercom Films Ltd./Toronto in association with TVOntario, and with the participation of Telefilm Canada, Ontario Film Development Corp., and Secretary of State/Multiculturalism.

SPECIAL OF THE DAY

A special dinner party for a surprise guest, designed specifically for this film - and what a vision for the eye and, surprisingly, the taste buds! Jamie Kennedy and Michael Stadlander, two of the leading young chefs in Canada, take us through all the steps leading to the creation of this superb banquet.

Throughout the planning of the menu (left somewhat loose to accommodate the current availability of produce), the day's marketing, the preparations, and the actual cooking and serving, the chefs' comments and observations enliven and illuminate. The drama of the cooking, the knowledge and love that flows into the beauty of the presentations, reveal artistry of a high level.

Kennedy's and Stadlander's disarming personalities add great charm to a witty film where the various courses are announced on hand-held cards and chanted by a vocal group; where the chefs move calmly but firmly between

high flame and the creation of edible works of art; and where appreciative consumers are seen murmuring their delight (the audience joined in too...). A truly delectable film which should not be missed when CBC shows it soon. (By the way, the invited audience, following the premiere of this little epic, were treated to *hors d'oeuvres* from the master hands of Jamie Kennedy...)

exec. p. Ronn Mann, Don Haig *p.* Sue Len Quon, Susan Hayes *d.* Robert Kennedy *cam.* Robert Fresco *sd.* Valentin Pricop 24 mins. 16mm. Sphinx Productions/Toronto (416) 971-9131 With financial participation of: Ontario Film Development Corp., City of Toronto/Toronto Arts Council, CBC, City-TV.

THE DINGLES

Doris Dingle and her three cats - Donna, Deedee and Dale - live in perfect harmony, in a tiny house with a pocket-handkerchief garden. Donna is an aristocratic Siamese, Deedee's the quiet one, and Dale is "an all-round good guy" who's digging a hole to China... Breakfast is their favourite meal, and together they enjoy cereal and eggs and toast and delicious catmint tea.

The day the storm came - somewhat reminiscent of the *Wizard of Oz* tornado - the cats were flung against the fence by the wind, and Doris had a hard time rescuing them. But her iron will triumphed as she ripped up her pinafore and literally tied the felines to her apron strings and dragged them to safety in the house. As in the best of fairytales, all ended happily with hot baths, warm drinks and everyone snuggled under a feather comforter.

A delightfully gentle little animated tale that's a pleasure to look at. Doris and her cats have distinct personalities, and the voice-over of the storyteller is just right.

Anim. id. Les Drew. *Storyteller:* Emma Levine. 7 mins. National Film Board.

THE WANDERER

The devil comes to a small village in the guise of a personable traveller. He buys drinks at the local tavern, produces tables of food by magic, and hands out money and goods. The villagers are entranced, and dance and sing, and drink and make merry... and eventually begin to covet their neighbours' possessions. The devil nudges things along by turning the pot boy's broom into a rifle, and the killing and pillaging starts. The devil contemplates his work, changes into a huge bird of prey and flies over the village.

The heavy black-and-white drawings give a specially brooding, menacing quality to this age-old story of the poor being tempted by the devil with material possessions and money.

Design/anim. id. George Ungar. *orig. mus./sp. fx.* Normand Roger. 11 mins. National Film Board.