

FILM REVIEWS

Louis Del Grande and Lindsay Wagner in **Second Wind**



Maritimes in **Goin' Down the Road**, the schoolkids in **Rip-Off**, the surfing buddies of **Between Friends**, all were trying to improve things and to prosper, but mostly in gently absurd and incidentally criminal ways. Roger Mathieson has his hopes in better focus, that's the important difference which gives **Second Wind** a more sustained optimism than any earlier Shebib film. But he's far from a clear victor in all aspects of his life at the picture's close. His director is too canny and clear-eyed to suggest that.

Clive Denton

Denis Héroux's **Born for Hell**

d. Denis Héroux, sc. F.G. Ranger in collaboration with Denis Héroux and Clem Wood, ph. Denis Héroux, ed. Yves Langlois, l.p. Mathieu Carrière, Debby Berger, Christine Boisson, Myriam Boyer, Eléonora Fani, Ely de Faleani, Carole Laure, Eva Mattes, Andrée Pelletier, Emmy Bessel, Carl Kreinbaum, exec. p. Peter Fink, George Reuther, p.c. Studio Film G.M.B.H. Bemdesdorf - Tit Sinproduktion G.M.B.H. Munchen - Filmel (Paris) - Compagnia Cinematografica Champion Spa Rome (Carlo Ponti) - Cinévidéo (Montreal) - Lea Productions Mutuelles (Montreal), 1975, **East-mancolor**, 35mm, **running time** 97 minutes, **dist.** English version: Ambassador, French version: Les Films Mutuels.

In a German-French-Italian and Canadian co-production, Montreal's Denis Héroux makes a naive attempt at depicting contemporary violence and its distorting effects on individuals. But Americans have gone so far into this sort of despair that Héroux's **Born for Hell**, even with its terrifying holocaust, just isn't upsetting. It's too romantic and unima-

ginatively sexy to have an effect on your social conscience.

But this type of film, even if it doesn't compare to the **Taxi Drivers** that invade our screens, is none the less among those that travel the world and get shown in the most unusual places. These co-productions are money-makers, popular consumer goods, and it's surprising that a Canadian director was invited to direct this one, considering Canada's investments represent a mere 20% of the \$800,000 budget. **Born for Hell** has already been sold to fifteen countries and during its first weekend in Montreal brought in \$40,000. However, the French, who had invested another 20% in its production, now find that the film is being banned from their country altogether. The original English version lasted barely a week at Montreal's Seville theatre because the people just weren't coming. Distributor says that's because most of the audiences for English versions of action films are French-Canadian, so if you have the film in French in other theatres in town, you lose 75% of your normal customers!

The hitch with this type of co-production is that it really doesn't belong to one creative mind or to one social environment. So how does one fairly criticize it?

The script was originally written by a German Hungarian who had set the basic event of a psychopath murdering eight (or was it nine or seven?) nurses in a small German town. With an American writer, Héroux set the carnage in an obviously violent city, Belfast. The killer is a young man who lost his wife to his best friend while he was still fighting for his country in Vietnam. His boat back from Hong Kong drops him off to beg his daily bread and dream about home in the troubled Irish city. Mathieu Carrière, an ambiguous kind of actor who has been working in sophisticated French films as well as presenting transvestite sado-masochistic live shows, plays the role of the young American who flips very well. He's a believable killer, and he doesn't have to over-play it. But somehow, his need for violence is badly built up, and the script fails to make the link between this individual breakdown and the obvious - too obvious - world corruption. Héroux makes big use of television, of newscasts about Vietnam and the IRA, but as with most of the elements in the film, it comes across like a token gesture, or a naive one.

The casting was greatly influenced by the distribution of the investments. The Germans own the biggest piece of the cake, 40% - and the rest was from Carlo Ponti (another 20%). So Carrière, conveniently enough, turns out to be a Franco-German. Most of the film was actually shot in a Hamburg studio.

The nurses, needless to say, had rather passive roles, but many actresses did their best with what they were given. Quebec's Carole Laure has a strong presence, a beauty that hangs on to an irresistible simplicity and charm. She really would be the girl everyone gathers around. Canada's second contribution (except for Héroux and a few technicians), was actress Andrée Pelletier who seemed uneasy about the whole thing.



The killer and a victim in **Born for Hell**

The most remarkable interpretation - and the director agrees - came from Italian stage actress Eva Mattes, who flips at the vision of the murders and reaches the same euphoria as the killer before committing suicide.

Sex is forever present in the film - homosexuality, pimping, or good old romance - but it doesn't breathe the violence one would expect in such a context. There is even a steal from **Emmanuelle**, with actress Christine Boisson who tries to seduce one of the younger nurses.

Born for Hell is a good film given what it aspires to be. It's a competent supermarket type of product - and God knows Canada can use some of those profits if they ever make it back home!

Carmel Dumas