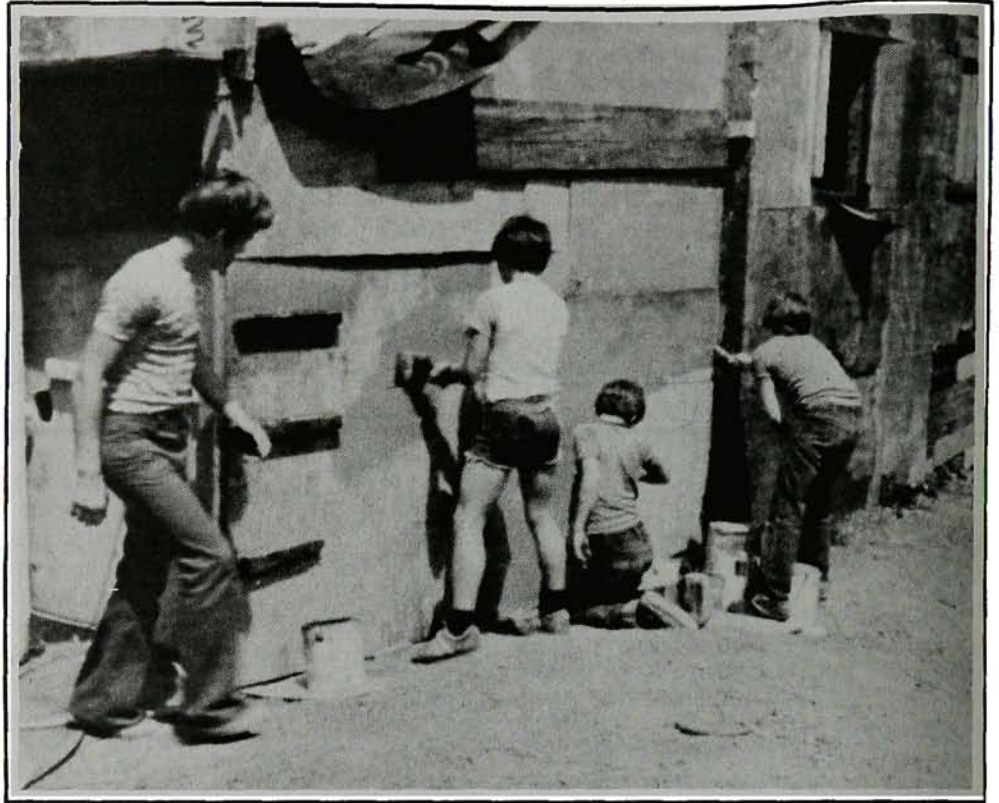


FILM REVIEWS

André Melançon's *L'Espace d'un été*

d. André Melançon p. Craig Graham exec.p. François Champagne orig.idea & research Marie-Thérèse Ribeyron d.o.p. Pierre Mignot, Jean Lepine (assist.) sd. Claude Beaugrand songs & orig.music Michel Rivard sd.mix Michel Descombes ed. France Pilon p.man. Marie-Andrée Brouillard 2nd unit Jean-Charles Tremblay, Robert Martel, Dominique Chartrand l.p. Stéphane Morin, Jacques Primeau, Normand Primeau p.c. Les Productions SDA Ltd. (1979), with the participation of the CFDC, Radio-Québec, and OECA col. 16mm running time 116 min.

There may have been more or less green space where you grew up. Your language may have been different. But the real communication here is on an emotional level: *L'espace d'un été* is a flashback to every adult's childhood, and a direct line to the thoughts, conflicts and special sense of community that children share. With this evocative, lyrical documentary, director André Melançon plugs us back into the unique perspective that the passage of years has stolen, and the



Putting the finishing touches on their cabin, the "bewitching trio" of André Melançon's *L'espace d'un été*

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connection he forges between the audience and his three captivating subjects is a binding one.

This portrait of an urban summer in Montreal draws its amazing spirit from the characters who populate it. Jacques, Normand and Stephan are a triumvirate of wonders: within their ranks, we soon find the classical pecking order. Jacques reveals himself as a rather overbearing leader, Normand as the quintessential fall guy — a victim of both others and fate — and Stephen as the quiet diplomat who must negotiate a path between his buddies. The boys' dependence upon one another, as well as their connection to the community, is revealed in a leisurely, episodic fashion. Amazingly self-motivated, they speed from one ambitious project to another; the bad blood created by the construction of a "cabane" in Jacques' back yard is partially dispelled by an on-camera group encounter session, and the boys get busy with the building of a go-cart. The film swims alongside its subjects as their summer unfolds, never once forcing a hand or charting the course. Indeed, the real marvel of *L'espace d'un été* is the unobtrusiveness of the adults: Melançon has filled his frame with the three children, neither patronizing nor manipulating them. They are the measure of the movie,

their concerns and interactions its primary interest. The filmmaker's inherent respect for his subjects draws us irresistibly into their sphere.

With its glittering, poetic images, *L'espace d'un été* is almost defiant of its setting. Melançon's camera transforms the inner city into a world of sparkle and vitality; rarely in evidence are the associated greys of decay one anticipates. The colours of the children's clothing, the outrageously brilliant orange and purple of the cabin, the sparkle of water and those sudden, binding bursts of sunlight are inspiring shocks to the system. A girl framed in a tenement window recalls the colours and textures of a Renoir canvas, and there is equal beauty in a rain-spattered pool and a neighbourhood celebration, where faces painted in violent hues and masses of coloured balloons make the screen shimmer with light.

As particulars unto themselves, or as metaphors for the children we were and knew, the three boys are a bewitching trio. *L'espace d'un été* documents their world with the kind of unstudied elegance that captures hearts; the film is like an open-armed embrace that draws you in and holds you close to a moment in time you were dangerously close to forgetting.

Barbara Samuels