

an old friend. Rob McGregor (Brown), and leaves her guitar with King's Cross prostitute Lou (Judy Davis). Later, when Rob, proprietor of an alternative bookshop, learns of Lisa's suicide, he decides to write an article about the fate of the "protest generation", to which he and Lisa belonged.

His investigations lead to a meeting with Lou, and their relationship develops around recollections of Lisa. Rob looks back regretfully, but with something less than anguish, at the radical-activist past when he knew the dead girl.

Two things about Rob flabbergast Lou — his uncritical acceptance of her, and his own open marriage. Rather unrealistically, she sees in him a savior from her drug-ridden, desperate life — not that he gives her much encouragement, apart from a few laconically friendly gestures, which she misinterprets. When Lou attempts to deepen their rapport with a few spicy confidences about her trade, Rob cuts her short. Later, he, not unkindly, declines her sexual advances. "It's hopeless, isn't it?" she finally concedes.

These events occur against a terrain and within a milieu that are unmistakably Sydney, to those who know it, but matter not at all to those who don't. Much the same might be said about the leading roles. Lou is a pretty universal type, but I very quickly decided that Rob is based on a well-known Sydney personality. Whether this Phrygian cap fits or not is unimportant, however.

The unblinking scrutiny to which Duigan subjects his characters is largely functional. Their backgrounds are sketched only lightly (in the case of Lou not at all) but their present strains, regrets and anxieties are wart-plain. The biggest difference between *Winter* and *Mouth to Mouth* lies in Duigan's developing capacity for this sort of naturalistic observation... and having actors of the calibre of Judy Davis and Bryan Brown, both of whom can convey so much with an economy of gesture matching the writer-director's style.

The character of Rob is more complex and psychologically interesting, but a good deal less sympathetic, than that of Lou (though she is by no means a conventional floosie-with-a-heart-of-gold). He is a detached, rather than disillusioned, not-so-old Leftie, in student days a red-hot activist, now materially comfortable but given to moments of self-reproach. Rob lives in a trendy Balmain home (which he is renovating) with Gretel (Cathy Downes), his sexually-liberated academic wife. (One suspects that Gretel's middle-class parents, heard only off-camera, have contributed to the couple's affluent lifestyle.)

Brown plays Rob with the quizzically troubled air of semi-doubt that lent conviction to somewhat similar roles in *Newfront* and *Fast Person Plural*. As the passions of Moratorium days recede further into the past, Rob has little better to do than contemplate his own emotional and spiritual inadequacy.

The only challenge confronting him now is from his computer chess set. But, if Rob is no longer politically active, his sentiments can be aroused — as when he tartly assures Lou that "of course" the anti-uranium movement is "important". He feels guilt about the dead girl, Lisa (it transpires that he had once been her less-than-infatuated lover), and is warily sympathetic to Lou. But he certainly doesn't con-

template a romantic liaison, though his wife urges him to find "something else", as she has.

Brown nicely furthers the script's suggestion of self-protective ambivalence in Rob's attitude to both women (perhaps he does it *too* subtly; what other explanation could there be for his failure to win an Australian Film Awards' best-actor nomination?)

Rob realizes that his relationship with Lou is immeasurably more significant to the unhappy girl than it is to him. When he softly repulses Lou's sexual advances, he reassures her that he finds her attractive. Later, he unthinkingly deals her tattered ego another blow by off-handedly postponing a date upon which she had clearly placed much store, in favor of a soccer match. He makes it worse by the admission that the match is "just an excuse for a booze-up".

Other flaws in Rob's facade are revealed in his encouragement of Gretel's affair with a former student. The impression here is that, as with politics, Rob is adhering to an attitude he no longer deeply feels, but is stuck with. There is also a suggestion of vicarious titillation: "How's it going?" he repeatedly asks Gretel, with a slightly sheepish grin.

Lou is all up-front, or nearly all. Judy Davis portrays beautifully her easily-cracked bravado, her tremulous aspirations, her gawkiness, her pathetic mixture of ignorance and insouciance. It is, in short, a peach of a part for any young actress and Ms Davis does it more than proud. Her hair in tight blonde ringlets, she portrays Lou as someone twitchily vulnerable, yearning for something better, but unsure of what.

The diary of her dead friend increasingly obsesses Lou, particularly passages recounting Lisa's association with Rob. Lou's dislocation is heightened, too, by glimpses of Gretel and Rob's culturally (and materially) rich lifestyle — insights that undermine her ability to go on with her own ugly existence. So she takes the plunge, putting the McGregors' professed liberalism to the test by cold-turkeying out of heroin addiction while staying in their house. Not altogether happily, they look after her.

The ordeal reinforces Lou's resolve to make a fresh start. She rejects the guileless attempt of young pusher Pete (Baz Luhrman) to revive her addiction, then moves into Lisa's old room. But she is laying herself open to further hurt.

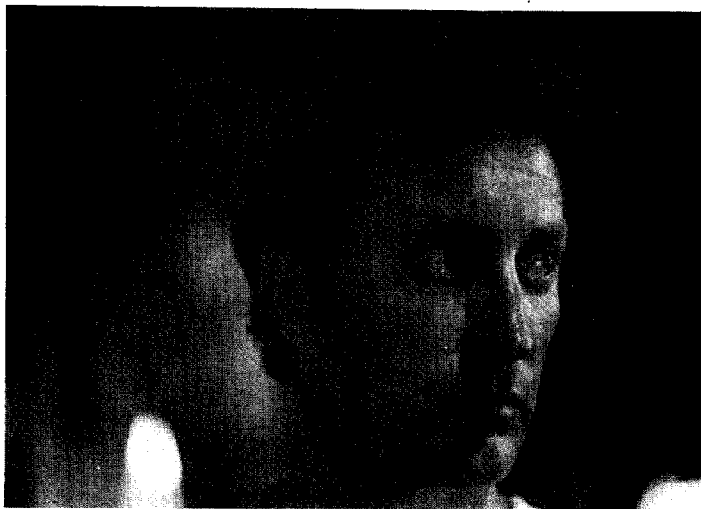
The more Lou identifies with Lisa, the more she believes herself in love with Rob. She precipitately flees the McGregor household when it is brought home to her just how far apart they are, then tries to create an environment in which she and Rob can meet on more equal terms. But this, too, is only wishful thinking and Lou finally realizes it.

There have been few more quietly moving scenes in an Australian film than the final sequence of *Winter*. Duigan craftily arouses one's fears that Lou's about to take her identification with Lisa to its ultimate conclusion. He is carefully subtle about it, though. A number of people I questioned after a preview were almost equally divided between those who drew a pessimistic conclusion from the final shot and those who found it emotionally uplifting.

Duigan maintains an unflurried pace throughout, in keeping with the tenor of his naturalistic purpose. If some of his characters behave just a little too sweet-

ly (as when the McGregors look after Lou, and in the "come-and-join-us" bonhomie of the uranium demonstrators) such behaviour is not inconsistent with such people, or at least with their self-image.

This is due, in part, to the tension Duigan induces between two realities: the radical-chic "haves", with their dinner parties, book launchings, patio barbecues and permissive sexuality, and the shapeless sleaze, the drug and sexual merchandising of Lou and Pete.



Rob (Bryan Brown), the "detached... not-so-old Leftie", now "materially comfortable". *Winter of our Dreams*.

film wryly suggests that the lucky country doesn't need to go to the extremes of some other places in dealing with intellectual firebrands who challenge the status quo.

Further, more importantly (and only indirectly related to this theme), is an equally-wry contemplation of the disturbing nexus between self-expression and personal responsibility in social relationships. In examining this by means of two unusual, but by no means unique, Australians, Duigan is beating

the bounds of the naturalism that has been his metier. One wonders where he goes from there.

These King's Cross kids are something less than apolitical. Life simply hasn't given them any external consciousness. After Lou has been reading Lisa's diary about the Moratorium days, Pete, in his hole-in-corner pad, turns from the television with the words: "It's about some war or other!" (The film is Tom Jeffreys' *The Odd Angry Shot!*) Lou and Pete, like the young people in *Mouth to Mouth*, are among the post-Vietnam kids who have missed out on just about everything our affluent society should offer them — including a sense of personal value.

As in their previous films, Duigan's rapport with cinematographer Tom Cowan is obvious, matching unobtrusive verismo to delicate imagery. There are one or two bolder strokes, like the shaft of evening sunlight on the Harbor that suggests Lou's broadening horizons. A similar incidental visual metaphor involves a seabound freighter (another reminder of *Il deserto rosso*).

Duigan pokes some unmalicious fun, too, at a few stock characters: the effusive lady author reading her work at a book launching, the cheery radicals whose activism has come down to turning out for the Balmain Trots soccer team (no, Joyce, it is a reference to their political affiliations), the stylish young academic who has learnt to ask "Are you WORKING?" rather than "What do YOU do?"

Finally (and by way of reply to a couple of objectors to my recent enthusiastic reception of *Winter* in a daily newspaper review), one must ask: What is this delicate little film "about"? The answer neither leaps from the screen nor onto the page, but it needs to be framed, if only to satisfy those intransigent souls who demand the kind of certainty from the cinema that they have come to expect from *Cop Shop*.

Obviously, in its portrait of Rob, the

Winter of our Dreams: Directed by: John Duigan. Producer: Richard Mason. Screenplay: John Duigan. Director of photography: Tom Cowan. Editor: Henry Danger. Production designer: Lee Whitmore. Music: Sharon Calcraft, Graham Lowndes. Sound: Lloyd Carrick. Cast: Judy Davis (Lou), Bryan Brown (Rob), Cathy Downes (Gretel), Baz Luhrman, Peter Mochrie, Mervyn Drake, Zoe Lake, Kim Deacon, Mercia Deane-Johns, Marion Johns. Production company: Vega Film Productions. Distributor: GUO. 35mm. 89 mins. Australia, 1981.

Sauve qui peut (la vie)

Adrian Martin

The name of Jean-Luc Godard carries a historical weight far too heavy for *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* to bear. One has to believe Godard when he describes it as his "second first film": one needs absolutely to forget *Pierrot le fou*, *Weekend* or *Tout va bien* to see where *Sauve qui peut* is working, and what pleasures and insights it offers.

For those whose most recent experience of Godard dates back to the "Dziga Vertov" films of the late 1960s and early '70s — and that is most of us — *Sauve qui peut* can seem like a monstrous regression: no Marx, no Brecht, no level of argument that would conventionally be designated "political". But there is a politics in the film, a deeply felt and richly expressive politics of desire, experience and subjectivity. *Sauve qui peut* is politics from the inside, an attempt to constitute and create the flux of "la vie" in a material world.

1. Probably the greatest influence on Godard since 1972 has not been Brecht, but the French "philosopher of desire" Gilles Deleuze. One of the finest commentaries on Godard (specifically his television work) is Deleuze's "On and Under Communication: Godard/Mieville's *Six Fois Deux*" in *Aferimage* No. 7, Summer 1978, pp. 110-119.

For Godard now, there is no distance between speaking and showing, between a form and a content. *Sauve qui peut* is constructed as a "desiring machine", a space in which a great assemblage of elements — narrative, discursive, descriptive — are taken up in a game of interrelation and combination, in which all divisions are blurred, all systems decentred. The frequent use of stop-motion, for instance, isn't just there in the film to make significant points about the characters — the level on which it has been almost exclusively taken by reviewers — it registers as a tangible, and beautiful, gesture of a personalized "writing" of the film as it unfolds: a will to slow down, stretch, look closely.

Sauve qui peut explores minutely the cracks, the interstices in daily life where something escapes and resists the alienation imposed by work situations and monogamous heterosexual relations. It is, at one level, a rather nihilistic observation on how simply to stay alive and persevere.

For the prostitute Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert), for instance, the appropriate response to the economic exploitation of her pimps is to likewise exploit her own sister by pressing her into the business.

But, at a more profound level, Godard is focusing on where both political and personal revolutions begin, those moments in which relations are shifted and displaced, when a "line of flight" offers a move in a new direction. The film literally decomposes the world into the heterogeneous human gestures and perceptions where, as is said on the soundtrack, "things can still happen".

Both the French and the English title — *Every Man for Himself* — signal, in an ironic fashion, the principal concern of the film. It would be a mistake, I think, to interpret Godard as championing a withdrawal into humanist individualism, an acquiescence in the survival of the fittest in a capitalist society. For, at every level, the film sets about undermining the notion of the "self" as a centre, an origin, a unique point of human perception and feeling.

The characters in *Sauve qui peut* have no consistency, no ego; they are constantly splintering off into multiplicities of states and orientations. That, above all, is the "meaning" of the stop-motion sequences: to mark the sudden, subtle changes in people's actions and behaviour.

There is a breathtaking scene in which, in stop-motion, Paul Godard (Jacques Dutronc) is greeted by his lover, Denise (Natalie Baye). She gives him a warm, almost ecstatic embrace, the still frames conveying the bodily force of this contact. Over this, the soundtrack proceeds in continuous time; she asks him, "Will you love me much longer?" When the image returns to 24 frames per second, they are immediately in the throes of a heated argument.

Their hatred for one another is no less intense or authentic than their love, and one doesn't follow the other in a definite chronological sequence: the point is precisely in the flux, the movement between one state and another.

Similarly, the film creates a pervasive sense of an interchangeability between characters, of words and emotions that belong to no one but spring collectively from many. Particularly with the women in the film, Godard shows an image of one person

while another, mysteriously, in a different time and place, seems to speak the first person's thoughts — even when, for instance, it is a shot of Isabelle faking orgasm during working hours. The most "private" moments in the film are the ones that are shown to be shared, experienced collectively. And banal, conversational phrases circulate, too — "What's that music?", "You can't call that passion."

A particularly moving sequence in the film exemplifies the way Godard distributes and complicates the personal transactions that occur on screen. Denise waits on a train platform. Nearby an ugly scene is going on between two men and a woman; one of the men slaps the woman while demanding that she choose which man she will go with.

As Denise looks, and the moments of violent exchange are frozen, one comprehends that she is projecting herself into that scene — that she is subject to a different, psychic kind of violence from Paul, a violence symbolized by the rush of a train which blows her hair and causes her eyelids to flutter wildly. At the same time, she does not have to involve herself directly in the problem of this other woman, and, like so often happens in the film, she disengages herself, refuses the connection, and turns inward once again, while the woman decides to give in and choose a particular man.



family, a bicycle team) are moved in and out of scenes to deliberately distract our attention.

Godard's *mise-en-scene* rigorously denies any kind of spatial orientation, either within or between the various locations of the film — visual information regarding a room, for example, is reduced to a single close-up of a face, plus various sound effects. One is invited thus to speculate, to bring "the imaginary" (a title of one of the film's sub-sections) into play.

Godard's manipulation of the soundtrack in this film has baffled many. It depends, I suspect, on a distinction made in French film terminology between sound "in" and sound "off" (or "over", as one would say in English) — in other words, sound motivated directly by the fictional image as opposed to additional commentary or music added to the image.

The film systematically blurs and confuses this in/off metaphor, calling into question again Godard's own place as narrator. There is sound referred to as "in" the image ("What's that music?") which we cannot hear, and there is sound "off" suddenly materialized in the image (the orchestra in the final shot) to which the characters are oblivious, as well as the "nearby" sound of an opera singer which follows Paul through a succession of different shots and spaces. It is as if Godard has opened a pathway between the world of

Jean-Luc Godard's "second first film", *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*.

the fiction and the "real" world of his creative activity as a filmmaker.

There are thematic threads in *Sauve qui peut* I have not begun to touch in this review: the use and abuse of sexuality, the relation between work and personal life, the slightly melancholy and self-pitying gesturing of Godard towards a feminist "sisterhood" which he and his fictional namesake cannot share in — but it is necessary to insist they spring from, and are not merely illustrated by, the "machine" of the film itself as an act of language and thought.

Sauve qui peut is a response to the statement much spoken in the film that

2. In a remarkably silly review of *Sauve qui peut* (*Filmnews*, April 1981, p.9), Laleen Jayamanne "celebrates" the film solely in terms of its male director who "seems to be aware of his inability, as man, to construct the space/time which may be called the feminine".

anything less than erotic love "can't be called passion" — it is itself a passionate gesture, a film of desire.

Sauve qui peut (la vie): Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. Producers: Alain Sarde, Jean-Luc Godard. Associate producer: Martin Karmutz. Screenplay: Anne-Marie Mieville, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jean-Luc Godard. Directors of photography: William Lubchansky, Renato Berta, Jean-Bernard Menoud. Editors: Anne-Marie Mieville, Jean-Luc Godard. Music: Gabriel Yared. Sound: Jacques Maumont, Luc Yersin, Oscar Stellavox. Cast: Isabelle Huppert (Isabelle), Jacques Dutronc (Paul), Natalie Baye (Denise), Roland Amstutz (2nd client), Anna Baldaccini (Isabelle's sister), Fred Personne (1st client), Nicole Jacquet (Woman), Dore de Rosa (lift attendant), Monique Barscha (opera singer). Production company: Sonimage/Sara Films/Sage Productions. Distributor: Valhalla. 35mm. 89 mins. Switzerland, 1980.

Hoodwink

Dave Sargent

Hoodwink quickly, deliberately, and in an often-exaggerated fashion, attempts to convey a certain friendliness to an intended international audience. It does this by using a simply-constructed, romantic-crime narrative that is greatly enhanced by splendidly-seductive cinematography, competent direction and some very noteworthy performances. As a result, the film intermittently gleams.

But, most significantly, *Hoodwink* flashes some signals that point to areas for discussion in which some important issues emerge that relate to the prevailing conjuncture in a continually developing — though not necessarily progressing — Australian film industry and film culture.

One galaxy that a flashing signal points to is the ever-expanding and increasingly lustrous "star system". Whether it is desirable, or can be resisted in the present social/economic/political situation, is highly debatable. But it seems that the star-making machinery has forged on regardless of the debate (or mostly lack of it); and in the case of this film the stars have two obvious functions. First, they have an economic function, in that they are commodities and they will attract audiences to this film, which in terms of subject matter might be described as "slight". Secondly, and in relation to the story's slightness, they encode a great deal of meaning into the film by the strength of their performances.

Hoodwink features John Hargreaves and other actors such as Judy Davis, Wendy Hughes, Dennis Miller, Kim Deacon and Colin Friels. They take a great deal of their off-screen image (basically constructed through surrounding media texts, most of which are designed to dazzle readers by polishing the surfaces of "Oz's own" stars) into their roles, and build from there.

Hargreaves plays Martin Stang, a convicted man who bluffs a number of people to gain a reduced prison sentence. It is a role that would be a challenge to any actor, and Hargreaves' success (for what it's worth) is reflected in being awarded the 1981 Sammy Award for Best Film Actor for his performance in this film. His rough-diamond physical presence, and the experience that he has gained playing major roles in such films as *Don's Party*, *Long Weekend* and *The Odd Angry Shot*, helps him to bring an ocker quality to his "likeable larrikin"