

Claude Jutra



KAMOURASKA



Director. Born, Montreal, 1930. Died, 1986. Trained as a doctor, Jutra emerged as a prominent filmmaker during the early stages of the 1960s counter-culture movement. In

Montreal, this meant a network of hangouts ranging from poets' coffee houses to nightclubs where black R&B bands jived for wannabe hipsters and their soulful chicks. This milieu is the world of Jutra's autobiographical debut feature *À tout prendre*, made in 1963. In it, he plays himself as a discontented rambler, who, while in the process of terminating an interracial affair with Johanne, a lanky Haitian model, reveals that he's gay.

À TOUT PRENDRE



Shot in an improvised style, reminiscent of the French New Wave, *À tout prendre* displayed Jutra's fascination with free-spirited, poetry-over-narrative moviemaking. However, at the height of his career his work became more traditional in both form and content. *Mon oncle Antoine* (71), still regarded by many critics as the best Canadian film ever made, is an archetypal, serio-comic initiation

story set in a small town during the 1940s. His next feature, the lavish period-piece *Kamouraska*, based on a novel by Anne Hébert, is constructed around its 19th century heroine's memories of a tempestuous love affair.

After a difficult shoot, *Kamouraska* was radically cut for its initial release, and then lambasted as a disappointing follow-up to *Mon oncle Antoine*. Following another debacle, *Pour le*

meilleur et pour le pire, Jutra fell out of favour in Quebec and accepted TV and theatrical film assignments in English-speaking Canada.

Like many of his Quebec pictures, Jutra's English-language films are concerned with turbulent emotions and even breakdowns, especially in the young. In *Ada* and *Dreamspeaker*, both made in 1977, he successfully conveys his mistrust of healing institutions. Moving back to a bigger budget production, Jutra and producer Beryl Fox attempted to film the probably unfilmable Margaret Atwood novel, *Surfacing*; this failure hurt both of their careers. Jutra returned to form with *By Design*, a screwball comedy about a lesbian couple determined to become parents. This film won over many fans, including New York critic Pauline Kael, who called it a "Lubitsch sex comedy stripped of the glamor but not the fun."

During the early 1980s, Jutra discovered he had Alzheimer's disease, and as a former doctor, his awareness of its effects was acute. He directed his last film *Les dames en couleurs*—one that is both admired and dismissed for its nightmarish storyline—while contending with symptoms of the disease. In 1986, Jutra drowned himself in the St. Lawrence, a suicide anticipated in *À tout prendre's* final shot of him stepping off a pier into the glistening river.



MON ONCLE ANTOINE

Since Jutra's death, no one has questioned his successes, and his failures have been reconsidered. In 1995, a restored director's cut of *Kamouraska* has led some critics to compare it to pictures such as *Dr. Zhivago* and *Gone with the Wind*. Since 1993, the Director's Guild of Canada has awarded the Claude Jutra Award at the Genies to the best director of a first feature. Jutra lives on as a benevolent and influential guiding spirit of quality Canadian feature filmmaking. Whether or not *Mon oncle Antoine* is the best Canadian movie ever made, Jutra worked with absolute sincerity and a passion for cinema.

■ Maurie Alioff

TimeLines

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1934

Events:

- "Mitch" Hepburn and his Liberals come to power in Ontario. Hepburn closes down the OMPB, and the Trenton studios are donated to the City of Trenton for a community hall, a sad end for one of Canada's earliest and busiest film studios.

FILMS

Rhapsody in Two Languages (Gordon Sparling)

1936

Events:

- The production of "quota quickies" for the British market hits a peak. Columbia Pictures establishes Central Films of Victoria, B.C., and makes 14 B-movies, with such rising stars as Rita Hayworth.
- ASN builds Canada's largest sound studio in Montreal.
- Vancouver's Richard Day wins his first of seven Oscars for Art Direction in *The Dark Angel*.

FILMS

From Nine to Nine (Edgar G. Ulmer)

1938

Events:

- At the invitation of the Canadian government, noted documentary filmmaker John Grierson is brought to Canada to study government film production. His report leads to the most important event in the history of Canadian cinema, the creation of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB).
- Winnipeg-born Deanna Durbin shares an Oscar with Mickey Rooney for "bringing to the screen the spirit and personification of youth."

1939

Events:

- The NFB is created by an Act of Parliament. The Act states that the

purpose of the NFB is: "to make and distribute films designated to help Canadians in all parts of Canada to understand the ways of living and the problems of Canadians in other parts."

- Grierson becomes Canada's first Film Commissioner and the NFB concludes distribution agreements with FPCC and *The March of Time* in the U.S., as Grierson opts for cooperation with American interests.
- Frank "Budge" Crawley and his wife Judith shoot their first sponsored film, *Canadian Power*, for the Canadian Geographical Society.

1940

Events:

- The NFB launches its first, and longest, continuing theatrical series, *Canada Carries On/En avant Canada*. The series evolves after the war and continues until 1959.

1941

Events:

- The NFB wins its first Academy Award for *Churchill's Island* in the newly created documentary category.
- The CGMPB is absorbed by the NFB.
- Quebec establishes a central organization to coordinate film activity in the province, Le service de ciné-photo-graphie du Québec.
- N.L. Nathanson, a founding board member of FPCC, leaves to form Odeon Theatres, with his son, Paul, as the titular head of the company.
- Exhibitor Nat Taylor and publisher Hye Bosen launch the *Canadian Film Weekly*.

FILMS

Churchill's Island (Stuart Legg)

1942

Events:

- The NFB launches its second wartime series, *World in Action*, and creates a Department of Animation under the direction of Norman McLaren. It organizes travelling film circuits intended to bring film to rural areas, factories and town halls.

FILMS

Hen Hop (Norman McLaren)

In 1941, the fledgling Board won its first Academy Award for *Churchill's Island* in the newly created documentary category. Grierson left the NFB in 1945 to form the film production team for UNESCO. His career stalled after the revelations of the Gouzenko spy scandal made him appear to be a Communist sympathizer and Grierson eventually moved back to Scotland where he hosted and produced his own TV program. He spent his final years teaching film at McGill University.

Gilles Groulx

Director, writer and editor. Born, Montreal, 1931. Died, 1994. Groulx never settled into the relatively mainstream film-making pursued by some of his colleagues. Committed to a splintering, questioning approach, he became known for his socially committed documentaries. *Les raquetteurs*, shot in 1958 with Michel Brault, pioneered direct cinema and had a profound influence on modern Quebec film. His 1964 landmark feature *Le chat dans le sac* explores Quebec's emerging identity and the relationship between the québécois and *les autres* through the hero's affair with a young Jewish woman. In 1981, Groulx was severely brain-damaged in an auto crash. He lived out the rest of his life painting; active, but forgotten.

Arthur Hiller



Director. Born, Edmonton, 1923. Like his contemporary, Norman Jewison, Hiller graduated from CBC-TV in the early 1950s in Toronto to mainstream American feature film-making. After a series of forgettable films, like *Popi* and *The Tiger Makes Out*, Hiller had a

huge hit with *Love Story*, the Ryan O'Neal - Ali MacGraw weepie which became one of the top grossing films of the 1970s, and earned him an Academy award nomination for Best Director in 1971. In a long and efficient career, Hiller has shown talent as a director of light comedy—*The In-Laws* and *Outrageous Fortune*—but he is most memorable as the collaborator with Paddy Chayefsky on the sardonic *The Hospital*.

Andrew and George Holland

Exhibitors. Andrew: Born, Ottawa, 1844. Died, 1929. George: Born, Nepean, Ontario, 1846. Died, 19???. On July 21, 1896, the *Ottawa Daily Citizen*, announcing the first ever Canadian public film screening outside Quebec, reported that, "The Holland Bros. have the Canadian control of this wonderful invention." That invention was the Vitascope, an early Edison projection system marketed by the two brothers from Ottawa. Unlike Edison himself, these two entrepreneurs recognized immediately the potential of moving image technology. In 1894, as agents for Edison equipment, they had opened the world's first Kinetoscope parlour in New York City; their expansion to Ottawa marked the beginning of Canada's now 100-year-old fascination with cinematographic devices.

Walter Huston

Actor. Born Walter Houghston, Toronto, 1884. Died, 1950. This distinguished character actor of stage and screen, has been called "possibly the best American actor ever"; ironically, Huston was brought up in Victorian Toronto. His busy film career began in 1928 when he was already a seasoned veteran of the stage. Huston quickly rose through the ranks and played the lead in D.W. Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln*, William Wyler's *Dodsworth*, William Dieterle's *The Devil and Daniel Webster* and René Clair's *And Then There Were None*. Although not noted as a singer, Kurt Weill and Maxwell

Anderson composed "September Song" for him to perform on Broadway in *Knickerbocker Holiday*. On four occasions, he was nominated for Oscars, finally winning for Best Supporting Actor as the grizzled prospector in his son John's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* in 1948.

Norman Jewison

Director. Born, Toronto, 1926. CBC-TV trained, Jewison left for the world of Hollywood in 1960 and made a remarkable series of successful films, making him one of America's hottest directors in the 1960s. *The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming, In the Heat of the Night, The Thomas Crown Affair* and *Fiddler on the Roof* generated a total of 15 Oscar nominations, including two for Best Picture and Best Director. Jewison's career slipped badly in the 1970s but he regained his footing with *Moonstruck* (87), a film which again generated Oscar nominations for Best Picture and Best Director. Jewison returned to Toronto to establish the Canadian Film Centre in 1987 and has been active in the Canadian film scene, producing Bruce McDonald's *Dance Me Outside* in 1994.

Humphrey Bogart, left, with Walter Huston who won an Oscar for the Best Supporting Actor in son John's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* in 1948.



Margot Kidder



Actor. Born, Yellowknife, N.W.T., 1948. One of the 1970's most interesting leading ladies, Kidder toiled on the TV assembly line before making audiences sit up

and take notice with an eerie interpretation of separated Siamese twins in Brian De Palma's 1973 *Sisters*. She is best known as Lois Lane to Christopher Reeve's Superman in four films from 1978-87. In 1975, Kidder directed a medium length film, *And Again*, which did not gain commercial success; 15 years later she studied directing at the Canadian Film Centre. In 1981, she starred in *Heartaches*, Don Shebib's best film since *Between Friends*. Her career since the *Superman* films has been plagued with uneven performances and a near-fatal car accident in 1990 has left her with permanent injuries.

Allan King

Director and producer. Born, Vancouver, 1930. An award-winning filmmaker in both documentary and fiction, and one who has blurred the distinction between the two, King was educated at UBC and pursued his interest in cinema at the Vancouver Film Society. In 1954, he joined the Vancouver Film Unit of the CBC and produced a

number of significant direct cinema documentaries, including *Skid Row*. After six years in England, King returned to Canada in 1967 and settled in Toronto, directing three genre-busting, ethically unsettling fly-on-the-wall observational films he called "actuality dramas": *Warrendale, A Married Couple* and *Come On Children*. Since the mid-1970s, King has worked largely in the fictional mode, directing the popular *Who Has Seen the Wind* in 1977.

Wolf Koenig

Director, animator and producer. Born, Dresden, Germany, 1927. As an animator, cinematographer, editor, producer and director, Koenig is the type of "complete" filmmaker that the NFB traditionally relied on to create its key works. In the early 1950s, Koenig filmed McLaren's Oscar-winning *Neighbours*, animated Colin Low's *The Romance of Transportation in Canada*, and was the cinematographer on Low's *Corral*. Koenig was one of the principals associated with direct cinema at the NFB's Unit B, co-directing such non-fiction gems as *City of Gold* with Low, and *Glenn Gould—Off the Record, Glenn Gould—On the Record and Lonely Boy* with Roman Kroitor. He was the executive producer of the Board's Animation Unit during some of its finest years. A canny veteran, Koenig retired from the NFB in 1995, and remains active in the independent sector.

Allan King's *A Married Couple*



Ted Kotcheff

Director. Born, Toronto, 1931. Best known in Canada for his solid screen adaptations of the work of his close friend Mordecai Richler, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Joshua Then and Now*, Ted Kotcheff started as a stage hand at CBC-TV in Toronto in the early 1950s. He moved to England in 1959 to work on television dramas with producer and future NFB Commissioner Sydney Newman. While in England, Kotcheff directed his first features, including *Life at the Top*, written by Richler and starring Laurence Harvey. He directed a feature in Australia, *Outback*, before arriving in Hollywood in the 1970s where he directed Sylvester Stallone in *First Blood*, the first in the *Rambo* series.

Roman Kroitor

Director and producer. Born, Yorkton, Sask., 1926. A technical innovator, Kroitor has pioneered new cinematographic approaches for decades. In the 1950s, he was one of the first filmmakers to use new light-weight cameras; his *Labyrinth* the project was one of the most brilliant multi-screen efforts

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