

T H E
P O S T M I S T R E S S
(L A P O S T I E R E)

BY GILLES CARLE

WITH

**CHLOÉ SAINTE-MARIE,
STEVE GENDRON,
NICOLAS-FRANÇOIS RIVES
MICHELE RICHARD
ROGER GIGUERE, MICHEL BARRETTE,
MARZIA BARTOLUCCI, ALAIN OLIVIER LAPOINTE
JÉRÔME LEMAY, LOUISE FORESTIER**

**UNE PRODUCTION
ASKA FILM PRODUCTIONS**

FESTIVALS

FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT

12th INTL. COMEDY
FILM FEST

VEVEY, SWITZERLAND (July 24-29)

Carlo Verdone's "Curse the Day I Met You" won the grand prize — the Golden Cane — at the Intl. Comedy Film Festival, held each year in Vevey in honor of the late Charlie Chaplin.

Robert Downey Jr., who plays the title role in Richard Attenborough's Chaplin biopic "Charlie," sat on the jury, which was headed by French cabaret star Line Renaud.

Margherita Buy won the best actress prize for her performance in "Curse the Day." The Italian film also gleaned top honors from the visiting youth jury from Bellinzona, site of a young people's film fest in October.

James Le Gros won the best actor prize for his role in American Stacy Cochran's "My New Gun." "Menialy" (The Big Exchange), by Russian director Georgui Shengelia, earned the Special Jury Prize.

The SSR (Swiss Radio & TV) Prize went to Nicolas Hayek's "Family Express," a Swiss pic. Swiss festgoers voted the Prix du Public to "La Postière" by Canadian director Gilles Carle.

Despite large budget cuts, the fest surmounted most of its difficulties, thanks to 120 volunteer workers and a tireless core staff. The town, with just 15,000 inhabitants, boasts four movie screens.

On closing night, a sell-out crowd enjoyed a spanking new print of "City Lights," accompanied by Chaplin's original score performed by the Nouvel Orchestre de Montreux.

FANTASY FILM FEST

GERMANY (July 30-Aug. 16)

Germany's youngest film festival is also its oddest: no prizes, no municipal support, few stars. And it takes place in three different cities.

The 6-year-old Fantasy Film Festival is basically a roadshow of fantasy, horror, slasher and thriller films. It visits Munich from July 30 to Aug. 8, Berlin from Aug. 5 to 9, and Frankfurt from Aug. 11 to 16. Next year, the festival also will make a stop in Hamburg.

The films range from world premieres ("Hell Raiser III," "Children of the Corn II"), to European premieres ("Cool World") to German premieres ("Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me"). Some films may go straight to video in Europe, although some, like "Brain Dead" or Spain's "Murky Water," may not even enjoy that honor. Thus, a large part of the festival has a "best of the worst" reputation.

Operating on a budget of \$200,000, the Fantasy Film Festival's busiest employees are the truck driver and the person in charge of getting each film from one city to the next in time.

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THE POSTMISTRESS
(LA POSTIÈRE)
SYNOPSIS

Rachel Plamondon: **POSTMISTRESS**. She reigns over the town of Val Jacob with all the panache of a Madame de Pompadour. From behind her throne, the post office counter in the general store, Rachel Plamondon calls on all the feminine talent she can muster to plot the destiny of this small town

THE POSTMISTRESS wryly examines the tensions and fissures of a pre-war community being drawn inexorably toward modern life. Rich in both history and humour, the film turns the spotlight on the proverbial motifs of love, sex and money.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Gilles Carle, director

Gilles Carle has gained international recognition as one of Québec's best-known directors. During his extensive career he has received 25 Genies and Canadian Film Awards. And on the international scene his films have won awards at such prestigious international film festivals as Cannes, Venice, and Berlin.

Among his prize-winning films are *Le viol d'une jeune fille douce* (Berlin 1968); *La vraie nature de Bernadette* (Official Selection, Cannes 1972); *La mort d'un bûcheron* (Official Selection, Cannes 1973); *La tête de Normande St-Onge* (Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 1975); *Fantastica* (Official Selection, Cannes 1980); and *Les Plouffe* (Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 1981). In 1989 Gilles Carle won the Gold Palm at Cannes for his short film *50 Years (NFB)*. He introduced Carole Laure to audiences with the films *L'ange et la femme* (European Critics' Award, Avoriaz 1977) and the remarkable *Maria Chapdelaine* (Official Selection, Venice 1983).

Along with Jean Pierre Lefebvre and Claude Jutra, Carle was one of the leading young fiction directors in Québec during the early 1970s. His fiction films, particularly those made between 1968 (*Le viol d'une jeune fille douce*) and 1980 (*Fantastica*), are marked by paradox. Although his films vary widely in the choice of stories and actors, they all gravitate around the one central theme of conflict — conflict which in most instances results from exploitation. A master of the wry study of social mores, Carle has also made excursion into comedy (*Les corps célestes*, 1973), musicals (*Fantastica*, 1980) — and even the fantastic (*L'ange et la femme*, 1977).⁽¹⁾ *Les Plouffe*, adapted from the novel by Roger Lemelin, was a major hit among audiences in Québec, and won the Critics' Prize at the Montréal World Film Festival in 1981.

Gilles Carle is a gifted man whose curiosity and sensitivity have drawn him, quite naturally, to explore several film genres, from documentary (*Cinéma, cinéma*, 1985; *Ô Picasso*, 1985; *Vive Québec*, 1988; *Le diable d'Amérique*, 1990; *Montréal off*, 1991) to television series (*Le crime d'Ovide Plouffe*, 1984), to fiction (*La guêpe*, 1986, Best Actress, Festival international des films de Pau, France; *Miss Moscou*, 1991). His talents have also taken him outside directing; Gilles Carle writes a regular column on film for the magazine *l'Actualité*.

(1) *Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois*, edited by Michel Coulombe and Marcel Jean, les Éditions du Boréal, 1991.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Rachel Plamondon

What happens when a woman decides to use every power in her possession to get a man? You need look no further than to Rachel Plamondon to find out. Despite her sweet air of innocence, she manages the Val Jacob general store and its small post office with great panache, doling out stamps and lecturing all who step into her domain, while pursuing her one ambition: to conquer her man with all the flair of a Don Juan.

Rachel Plamondon is the perfect example of those remarkable pre-war women whose creativity and fortitude far surpass those of the men around them. The blood of the *coureur des bois* runs in her veins; she is inspired by the great women of history, by Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, to put an end to the monotony of daily life.

Born not only with a talent for grand gestures but also with a taste for the hunt, Rachel Plamondon uses all her formidable talents to flush out her prey. She will stoop to anything...

CHLOÉ SAINTE-MARIE

The role of Rachel Plamondon is a natural for the actress and singer Chloé Saint-Marie. **THE POSTMISTRESS** marks her seventh feature film with Gilles Carle, after *Cinéma, cinéma* (Carle, Nold, 1985), *Ô Picasso* (1984), *La guêpe* 1986, Best Actress, Festival international des films de Pau, France), *Vive Québec* (1987), *Le diable d'Amérique* (1990) and *Miss Moscou* (1991). **THE POSTMISTRESS** represents the synthesis of her exceptional talent.

In 1989 she played in Gille Carle's one-act play, *La terre est une pizza*, which won rave reviews at the Festival international de théâtre d'Avignon. Taking the play from there to the Le Lurcenaire theatre in Paris, where she gave over 100 performances, Chloé Sainte-Marie captured the hearts of both audiences and critics. She now spends her time between Montréal and Paris.

In 1990 Chloé Sainte-Marie played a leading role in the three-episode TV movie, *La milliardaire*, by Jacques Ertaud, which was aired on Antenne 2 in France. She is currently working on a record tentatively titled *Crisis 'Tween the Sexes*, in which she sings in French, English and Montagnais poems by Arrabal to a score by Claude Engel. Between her singing lessons and auditions, she has no shortage of future projects, including two plays with the celebrated director Jacques Seiler.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Amédée

This morning the doctor came to the general store. He hung a sign on the wall and told me, Amédée, to say a word with the letters printed on it: **R**, for **Rachel Plamondon**, my big sister, the postmistress, who plays at Don Juan with the panache of Madame de Pompadour. **A**, for **Amélie Deschamps**, the court clerk. **M**, for **Mr Mayor**, who can't stand Indians or that handsome French engineer **Fernand**, who's here to inspect the dam. And **V**, for **Val Jacob**, our lovely village.

The doctor naturally concluded I'd go blind within a few weeks 'cause my retinas were detaching. He told me I should start preparing for this heavy blow of fate. So now I'm a blind man in training, and I'm taking advantage of it to learn everything I can about the secret lives of the men and women of Val Jacob.

My sister Rachel is very pretty, and extremely smart. She's got more than one trick up her sleeve, and ever since he arrived, she's stopped at nothing to try to conquer this exotic Adonis. Her post office has become the high command for these seductive stratagems.

Believe you me, in 1935 no one had ever seen a woman take over a town like this. Good thing I'm her little brother. Because I'm blind, I see all and hear all. I've become Rachel's trusty foot soldier. I'm the one sent to carry out those crazy schemes that are turning Val Jacob upside down. *Amédée.*

STEVE GENDRON

As Rachel Plamondon's little brother, nothing perturbs him, not even his first encounter with the *Kama Sutra* or getting mixed up in his sister's grand schemes. The real Steve Gendron is very much like Amédée: an impish, humorous, dedicated and lively 11-year-old. When Gilles Carle first met this bundle of talent, he was so taken aback that he nicknamed him The Extraterrestrial.

Steve Gendron has appeared in commercials (The Dairy Association/ Pharmacies Uniprix), and he had a supporting role in Jeannette Bertrand's TV series *l'Amour avec un grand A*, (Radio-Québec), which dealt with violence in the home, but this is Steve's first film role. A star in the making!

THE POSTMISTRESS

Fernand, the handsome French engineer

Fernand, the handsome engineer from France, sent to Val Jacob on a government-sponsored mission to test the safety of the nearby dam, is in spite of himself the man of the hour: He mounts fierce opposition to the town's mayor, and rallies others against the commercial interests that threaten the environment as well as the treaty with the local Indians.

By his mere presence, Fernand sets a whole series of events in motion. He is impervious to the lust he arouses around him, and to the praise both the postmistress and the court clerk, the mayor's mistress, are showering on him — much to the mayor's chagrin.

For the problem is Fernand has multiple talents that bring women swarming around him, like bees to honey. He is French, therefore, exotic; he has known misery as well as luxury; he prefers the bohemian life and painting watercolours to the trappings of luxury; he is handsome, strong, valiant...in short, he is every woman's dream. To Rachel's great dismay he willingly lays aside his classics to take up Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and the images of the *Kama Sutra*. He is so spiritual...

But Fernand resists long enough to bring an end to the internal battle that has been tearing the town apart. Only then does he allow himself to be caught in Rachel Plamondon's net...

NICOLAS-FRANÇOIS RIVES

Born in Morocco, to French parents, Nicolas-François Rives came to Québec in 1978. For the past several years he has divided his professional life between the Valleyfield theatre, La Belle Époque, which he recently purchased; commercials for MacDonal'd's, Coca Cola, and Loto Québec; and auditions and coaching sessions with director Yanick Auer.

THE POSTMISTRESS marks his first major screen role, after many years honing his considerable talents as a singer, dancer and actor. Last fall he played in Monique Champagne's feature film, *La fenêtre*.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Amélie Deschamps, Court Clerk

Amélie Deschamps, the court clerk of the town of Val Jacob, has a pronounced sense of both business and love — which explains why the mayor is infatuated with her. Amélie not only leads him on during his adulterous escapades, she also helps him in his other affairs, notably, in keeping peace with the Indians. Multilingual (fine French, a smattering of English, the odd Indian word), she'll whip up a treaty if and when it suits her. In short, she has her man wrapped around her little finger and he doesn't even notice.

Thus, she is well-placed to help Rachel Plamondon when she requests that Amélie use her "powers" with the mayor to free Fernand from jail (the mayor put him there in a fit of anger). In the events that are shaking Val Jacob, Amélie seems to be Rachel Plamondon's loyal accomplice. But although her friend succumbs to the passion burning in her for the handsome Fernand, Amélie proves that imagination is the source of happiness...

MICHÈLE RICHARD

Say the name Michèle Richard, and a rush of images from the history of show business in Québec flashes before us. Born to a musical family — her father, Ti-Blanc Richard was a much-loved performer — from her earliest years a life in the world of music, song and dreams seemed inevitable.

By the age of 10 she was already on stage, letting loose with all the passion born to her. Today, with 35 years as a performer behind her, this popular singer has a vast and dedicated following. Proof, if ever it were needed, lies in her impressive discography — she has recorded over forty LPs and a hundred 45s — as well as the shows of all sorts (musicals, one-woman shows, talk shows, soap operas) she has been a part of from Montréal to as far away as Caracas.

In the role of Amélie, Michèle Richard makes a triumphant return to the screen after a long absence (she appeared in *Explosion*, the 1972 film by French director Marc Simenon). Firmly rooted in the present, the multi-talented Richard counts among upcoming projects a record, produced by Bernard Estardy and with lyrics by Franck Olivier and Didier Barbelivien, to be released next September.

THE POSTMISTRESS

The Mayor

The mayor of Val Jacob has one ambition: to have his name go down in the annals of history. His latest attempt at ensuring this is linked to power production at the dam; he must overcome a tide of opposition and have the water level raised. And there will be hell to pay if he fails!

Everyone in town is perplexed by the force of the mayor's convictions about the dam and the need for a bell tower on the church. And why is he, a man whose love life is far from exemplary, so interested in making sure that the town gets a priest? The equation of the dam, the bell tower and the priest just doesn't seem to make sense.

And now the mayor has a new foe — that French engineer who arrived recently in town. The mere thought of Fernand, who has all the girls trailing after him and has the normally apathetic men of the town fired up, makes his blood pressure rise. So much so that the next time the mayor is out stalking his amorous prey, he runs completely out of steam.

ROGER GIGUÈRE

One would need several albums to chronicle Roger Giguère's show biz career. He has done everything, known everyone. At age 20, after finishing college, he ventured into radio, working as a sound-effects man on the soap operas that were so popular at the time. Drawn into acting, he became a regular in Télé-Metropole's radio plays.

For a period after his radio work, and before launching into pictures, Roger Giguère became a puppeteer, stepping into the role of the famous *Monsieur Tranquille*, who for five years fired the imaginations of a generation of children. From there he went on to host, with Pierre Marcotte, *Les Tannants*, a show that appealed to the kid in everyone.

Always on the forefront of show business, he later produced, wrote and acted in numerous stage shows. He played the Théâtre des Variétés, and created the successful One-Man Show, which toured the province after its Montréal run. Roger Giguère is a man of his times; not one to sit about, his adventures in *THE POSTMISTRESS* reveal, once again, that Roger Giguère belongs in the spotlight.

THE POSTMISTRESS

The Mayor's Wife

She is amazed to see her husband in such good health, such fine form, so cockproud that he has become the laughing-stock of the town. But why should she stand by the braggart's side when life has so many other subtle pleasures to offer?

Impeccably dressed and tailored, she makes numerous excursions to the general store: to seek the advice of the postmistress, who always knows exactly what to say when the happiness of others is at stake, and later to buy the poison that will help her dislodge the rat she so despises.

She has thought it all out, looked at it from all sides, and has decided she must put an end to the deadly dull cycle of domestic routine. It is high time for her to taste the good things in life that have eluded her...

LOUISE FORESTIER

After studying at the National Theatre School, Louise Forestier took part in the creative upsurge that swept the musical scene in Québec during the late 1960s. Certainly the highlight of this period was *l'Osstidcho*, the album she recorded in 1968 with Robert Charlebois, in which her voice soars through such haunting songs as "California" and "Lindbergh".

An exceptional singer, and talented composer in her own right, Forestier has not often ventured into film, though one should not forget her comic performance (an homage to *Les parapluies de Cherbourg*) in Jacques Godbout's *IXE-13*, her solid performance as an imprisoned social worker in Michel Brault's *Les ordres* (1974); and her appearances in *Tiens-toi bien après les oreilles à papa* (J. Bissonnette, 1971), *Vie d'ange* (P. Harel, 1979) and *Ti-Cul Tougas* (J.-G. Noël, 1976).⁽¹⁾

In 1992 Louise Forestier released a new album *De bouche à oreille*. **THE POSTMISTRESS**, and her superb rendition of the Mayor's Wife, heralds her return to cinema.

(1) *Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois*, edited by Michel Coulombe and Marcel Jean, les Éditions du Boréal, 1991.

THE POSTMISTRESS

René Verzier, Director of Photography

The man behind the camera is the "little blondie", as he was dubbed by the king of Morocco, Mohammed V, who employed Verzier as his official photographer and cameraman, as did his successor, Hussein II. Then, after 12 years in their service, Verzier signed up as a guide and cameraman on an expedition into the Sahara with a team from the National Film Board of Canada.

There followed several documentaries and two fiction films, on which he served as director of photography. Then, in 1966 René Verzier came to Canada; the following year he shot *Gros-Morne* (J. Giraldeau, 1967), a film that mixes documentary and fiction, for the National Film Board.

A man of many talents, Verzier has applied them unstintingly to the films of Denis Héroux (*Valérie*, 1968; *L'initiation*, 1969), and to the breakthrough films of Gilles Carle (*Les mâles*, 1970; *La vraie nature de Bernadette*, 1972; *La mort d'un bûcheron*, 1973). In these films he shows his great ability to work with natural lighting, one of the foremost aesthetic qualities of Carle's films.

Since 1975 René Verzier's career has expanded in many different directions, but he is known especially for his work on English-language films featuring name American actors — thrillers, melodramas, and horror movies, as well as soft porno flicks. Among the over 50 feature films he has shot are those directed by Jean-Claude Lord (*Visiting Hours*, 1981; *Covergirl*, 1984; *The Vindicator*, 1985; *Toby McTeague*, 1985; *Eddie and the Cruisers II: Eddie Lives*, 1988).⁽¹⁾

(1) *Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois*, edited by Michel Coulombe and Marcel Jean, Les Éditions du Boréal, 1991.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Jocelyn Joly, Visual Designer

Jocelyn Joly, art director and interior decorator, was born in Sorel. After graduating from Montréal's Academy of Fine Arts, he decided to become an actor. Then, after spending a year at the Actor's Studio in New York, he changed direction and became a stage director.

In film, he began his career as assistant to Anne Pritchard on *Act of the Heart* (P. Almond, 1970), and later he worked with the directors Hubert-Yves Rose (*La ligne de chaleur*, 1987), Jean-Claude Lord (*Toby McTeague*, 1987), and Johanne Prigent (*La peau et les os*, 1988). He has contributed to numerous television series in Québec (*La feuille d'érable*) and the United States, as well as to several co-productions, notably, *Sweet Movie*, by Yugoslavian director Dusan Makavejev.

Jocelyn Joly has a particular interest in, and gift for, period films. He collaborated on the set design for *Kamouraska* (Claude Jutra, 1973) and assumed the post of art director on the TV series *Les filles de Caleb* (Jean Beaudin, 1991), for which he won the 1991 Gemini for Best Art Direction. Mr Joly is currently acting as art director on the second season of this phenomenally successful series.

But his work is linked in particular to the films of Gilles Carle, from *Red* (1969) to *THE POSTMISTRESS* (1992), although perhaps some of his best work is seen in *Fantastica* (1980), in which nature becomes a masterpiece of allegory. Jocelyn Joly has a fine eye for the details that bring life to a set and give it lyricism and poetry, allowing it to transcend mere period reconstruction.⁽¹⁾

On *THE POSTMISTRESS* Jocelyn Joly pulled every trick he knew out of the hat to build, just five weeks before the start of shooting, the 18 sets of the growing industrial town of Val Jacob. There, out of the sand dunes along the Batiscan River near Trois-Rivières, arose his general store, and its post office counter, the bordello, the church, Napoli's boarding house and the town hall. Joly's vision coincided perfectly with that of Gilles Carle, who wanted above all to describe the reality of a small town in transformation, in constant motion. Realizing that he had to capture the town's freshness, Jocelyn Joly went about the task keeping in mind the phrase: "A town whose prince is a child".

(1) *Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois*, edited by Michel Coulombe and Marcel Jean, les Éditions du Boréal, 1991.

THE POSTMISTRESS

Yuri Yoshimura-Gagnon

Claude Gagnon

Producers and distributors

Yuri Yoshimura-Gagnon, the president of Aska Film International, has been producing films for over 15 years. It was in Japan that she met Claude Gagnon, the director from Québec, and produced his first short film, *Essai filmique sur musique japonaise*. It marked the beginning of their long and fruitful association during which she produced all his films from *Keiko* to *The Pianist*.

They left Japan in 1979 to establish their home in Montréal and to found the film production and distribution house then called Yoshimura-Gagnon, which, in 1987, became Aska Film. Among the films the company has produced are *Rafales*, by André Melançon, and Gilles Carle's most recent feature **THE POSTMISTRESS**.

The company's distribution mandate is two-fold: to promote the distribution in Canada of Québec films (*Les matins infidèles* by François Bouvier, *How to Make Love to a Negro* by Jacques W. Benoît, *La Sarrasine* by Paul Tana, *La demoiselle sauvage* by Léa Pool, *Nelligan*, by Robert Favreau, and **THE POSTMISTRESS** by Gilles Carl) and foreign films (*Volere Volare* by Maurizio Nichetti, *Amoureuse* by Jacques Doillon, *J'embrasse pas* by Téchiné, *Till the End of the World* by Wim Wenders, *The Suspended Stride of the Stork* by Theo Angelopoulos, and *Voie publique*, by Bertrand Tavernier). Aska Film International continues to pursue, at home and abroad, its goal of acquiring for distribution films of exceptional quality and originality.
