

Two new Canadian films soon opening in London



Atom Egoyan,
Director of *Family Viewing*;
and a scene from the film

This autumn will see the opening in London of two new Canadian films – *Family Viewing* and *Twins*.

Family Viewing is a remarkable film that has been the hit of several recent film festivals. Directed by Canadian Atom Egoyan, it won the Prix Alcan at the Montreal New Cinema Festival of 1987; it was selected for the Forum at the recent Berlin Film Festival; and it won the Toronto City Award at last year's Festival of Festivals.

The film is a provocative, deadpan comedy that takes a dark look at family relationships in the video era. It focuses on the breakdown of a family and the doomed attempts by its members to 'retrieve' or 'wipe out' those aspects of family life which they would either like to recall – or to forget.

The family thread that runs through the film is tied to a particularly Canadian theme – the experience of immigrants coming to a new land. The film's chief character has an Armenian mother and grandmother, both of whom have lost their places in the alienated family structure which they find in Canada. He struggles to bring them back into the family and in the process gains an identity through caring about people.

Using dark comedy and the central metaphor of video, Director Egoyan succeeds in casting a satiric, but fundamentally serious, eye on the effects of technology on the perception of human emotion.

New psychological thriller

Twins is an altogether different film. It is a new psychological thriller – directed by David Cronenberg which explores the bizarre lives of identical twins, Elliot and Beverly Mantle, both of whom are portrayed by English actor Jeremy Irons.

The twins are inseparable as young brothers; they grow up to become famous gynaecologists; and they remain deeply connected in a number of disturbing ways. In particular, they share their medical expertise, and they both fall in love with the same woman, an actress named Kate, portrayed by Canadian Genevieve Bujold.

Eventually, they are lead into a horrifying confrontation, which forces them to face the many ties that bind them.

For David Cronenberg, whose recent works includes *Videodrome* and *The Fly*, *Twins* represents something of a change of pace, since it is less a science fiction or horror film and more a realist drama about life. It probes the relationship between twins in a way that is distinctly different from the usual cliché in which one of the twins embodies good and the other evil.

Jeremy Irons brings off a subtle and effective performance in his dual role, using simple changes in body language to differentiate the twins. In addition, he has the benefit of some special effects whenever the twins appear on the screen together.

These effects involve a state-of-the-art, 'motion control' camera, which achieves a complex mobility of actors and camera, and which lets Irons appear in scenes with his 'twin' without any perceptible split in the screen. This skilful use of sophisticated technology, combined with some fine acting and a strong script, allows Cronenberg to continue his exploration of the darker side of human psychology. 

