

## Présent à la création

The National Film Board, which began as a wartime propaganda agency in 1939, is the nest in which most of Canada's filmmakers have been hatched. This has been particularly true of French Canada's directors, script writers and editors, and it may be said that one NFB protégé created the Quebec film industry and another has set new limits for social and political satire.

### Claude Jutra, fondateur

In 1948 Claude Jutra, then 18, won a Canadian Film Award for *Perpetual Motion*, an experimental short, and went to work for the board. In 1963, working privately, he made *À tout prendre*, the first feature-length French-language Canadian film of note. In 1971 his NFB film, *Mon Oncle Antoine*, won eight Canadian Film Awards, and for the first time English-speaking North American audiences became rather vaguely aware that films were being made in Quebec. *Mon Oncle*, the story of a boy coming of age in back country Quebec, is delicate, compelling and, in its understatement, rather old fashioned. It is a critical commentary on life in the old, repressed Quebec, but it is low-key, with no suggestion of agitprop.

In 1973 Jutra finished *Kamouraska* from the period novel by Anne Hébert. Geneviève Bujold performed brilliantly as Elizabeth, the narrator, a misused wife who takes a lover (who kills the tyrannical husband) and who herself becomes a household monster. At the time, *Kamouraska* was the most expensive film ever made in Canada, and though it is both a costume piece and a morality play, its substance of life, love, hate and death

In Claude Jutra's *Kamouraska*, Geneviève Bujold, below, gave perhaps her best performance. Philippe Léotard and Richard Jordan, right, played the husband and the doctor.

among the Quebec haute bourgeoisie in the 1830s is more important than the spectacle.

The full sweep of Jutra's imagination is suggested by his latest French-language film, *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire*. A remarkable study of marriage, it slips with subtle ease from the real to the surreal (as do many marriages) confounding time and exaggerating the ephemera of domesticity while maintaining an air of earthy reality. It is very funny. Jutra is its star as well as its creator and is an actor of gentle nuances who would delight any director.

Recently Jutra has made several English-language films for the CBC, and he is now directing a film based on Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*.

