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CANADIAN FLICK VIEWS MARITIMES

THE first thing to be said about the extraordinary new Canadian film "Goin' Down the Road" is that it is not a "road picture" in the genre of "Easy Rider," "Five Easy Pieces" or any other slick, sentimental take-off on the rootless life. The operative word in the title is not "road," it's "down," a frankly depressing, clinically

realistic study of two luckless high school drop-outs from Nova Scotia running foul of life in Toronto. "Goin' Down the Road" is both a sad little human story and a surgical exposé, all the more mordant because uncannily restrained, of social squalor.

It achieves its double status by steering a middle course between fiction and

documentary with such modesty and clarity of purpose that one might almost miss noting, while absorbed in its characters and its portrayal of indigent working class life, its considerable artistic originality. This deft little movie, the first by director Don Shebib, is surely the most impressive new work of realist cinema in years.

Perhaps among the most admirable aspects of "Goin' Down the Road's" perfection are instances of what it isn't, of clichés resisted and modish tricks eschewed. Particularly striking is Shebib's avoidance of "cinéma vérité," the inevitable recourse of directors these days when "real life" is to be invoked. Cinéma vérité, as it happens, is often scarcely more realistic than "Gold Diggers of 1933". Purporting to serve up reality raw and unadorned, it invariably projects a blurry, noisy dream-world through which people galvanized by the presence of whirring cameras move like somnambulists. Shebib (like William Fruet, who wrote the no-nonsense screenplay) was obviously interested less in aping "reality" than in shaping a work of art that reflected the reality of his vision. And that it does.

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