

Opening scenes confused

Face Off doesn't score

By ROB ROWLAND

With John F. Bassett's production of *Face Off* which premiered at the Carleton last week the Canadian film industry has become a diamond in the rough. The skin flicks previously supported by the Canadian Film Development Corporation were simply dull pieces of rock. *Face Off* has taken the jump to becoming a good film, but like a raw diamond, the Canadian productions still need to be shaped into a gem.

Despite its theme, jock meets hippie, jock falls in love with hippie, it is no exploitive Strawberry Statement or mushy Love Story. Instead *Face Off* attempts to put in some perspective the conflict between the two cultures of a hockey player and a hippie. It succeeds in the end but after a lot of trouble. It is the first third of *Face Off* that leaves the viewer rather confused. In the latter two thirds of the picture the plot and characters do fill out.

The lack of character development in the first portion of *Face Off* is very evident. Art Hindle as superstar Billy Duke is a jock, a cocky kid coming into the National Hockey league; Trudy Young as Sherri Lee Nelson, a folk singer, is a groovy, hippy chick, John Vernon is an uptight professional coach, Austin Willis as Leaf's owner Graydon Hunter is mercenary — all are stereotypes. The characters do change from types to people later in the film but in the case of the two lead characters it is almost too late before the audience finds out that Sherri's neurotic behaviour comes from childhood problems and begins to suspect that Billy's anger came from the loss of his father at age eleven. John Vernon turns coach Fred Wares from a typical Knut Rockne into a desperate man trying to hold on to his job and his alcoholic wife. Most representative of the change in the film is the performance of George Armstrong. In the beginning the "George Armstrong" character comes on as a phony, talking like a philosopher; at the conclusion

"George Armstrong" is different and more believable as Billy Duke's older roommate who tried to help the kid.

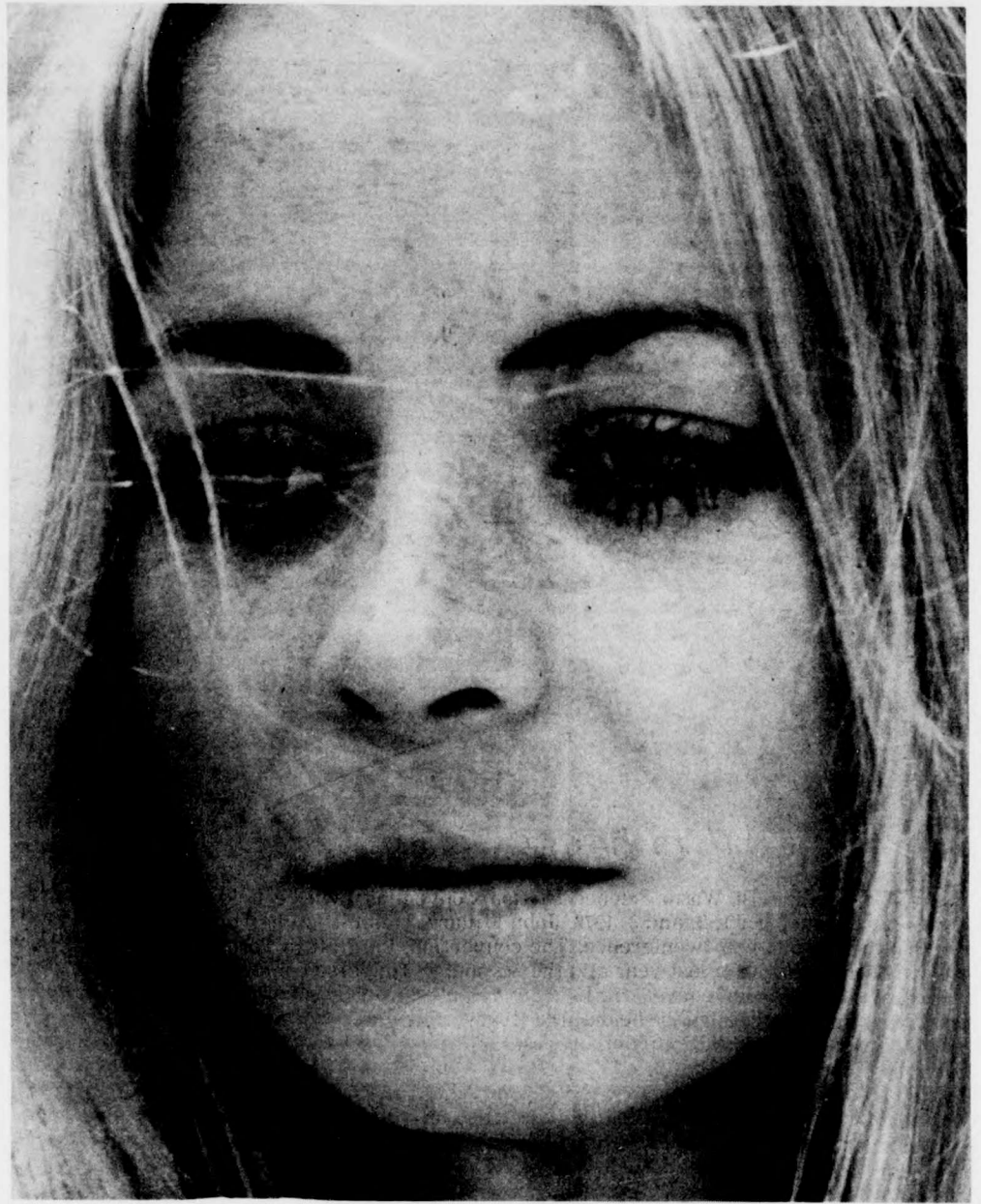
The main theme, the conflict between the two life-styles, one the professional hockey player; the other the hippie folksinger does not succeed in its message. There is still a trace of the stereotype. That Billy Duke has had no contact with hippie philosophy and that Sherri knows nothing of hockey seems unlikely.

A film examining the conflict between the authoritarian athletic life and the peace and love hippie philosophy is very pertinent today. It would have come off better if writers George Robertson and Scott Young had been able to fill out the characters in the beginning and make them a little more believable as boy who chose the athletic style or a girl who chose the life of a folksinger rather than trapped types. The choice is there today, and athletes know it. Few are being trapped into their life style.

Technically the film is almost flawless in camera and sound work, it is beside the best European or Hollywood movie. Bassett made the film with an all Canadian crew and this speaks well for the future of the Canadian film making. The symbolic technique of showing such arenas as the Detroit Olympia or the Los Angeles Forum in the twilight bring them magnificently out as temples of the sport and make the early philosophizing of the characters next to useless. The familiar Carleton and Yorkville scenes are done well.

All in all *Face Off* is a very good and very enjoyable film. Once the stilted beginning is over the audience can sit back, relax and enjoy it.

John F. Bassett has six more pictures waiting in the wings. If *Face Off* was a diamond in the rough, then the future ones, given the experience gained from this one will be gems and give Canada a movie industry it can be proud of.



Trudy Young, as Sherri Lee Nelson, makes her singing debut in *Face Off*.

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