

Schizophrenic movie needs analysis

Latitude 55
Directed by John Juliani
Carlton Cineplex

By TIM LAW

Latitude 55 is schizophrenic—it appears to be one film but is in reality a mish-mash of several. The film opens with a raging blizzard in Alberta and Wanda, played by Andrée Pelletier, is stranded in a car fighting to keep warm. She finally passes out and is rescued sometime later by Josef (August Schellenberg), who takes her back to his lonely log cabin.

In the next two hours we learn that Wanda is a pampered 30-year-old government employee who is married to a man of God. Josef, on the other hand, is now who he claims he is—an ignorant Polish potato farmer—but is in fact an Indian medicine man, a linguist, and all-round man of culture. The rest of the encounter eventually strips both of their false personas. Or does it? Herein lies the problem—one can never get a clear

picture of what the film is trying to do. It seems to say everything and nothing at all at the same time. Maybe director John Juliani (who also co-wrote the script) wanted to make a 1980s version of those Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald films about blizzards, heros, and heroines in distress. One gets all of this (without the love songs) in *Latitude 55*, but unlike Nelson and Jeanette this film also aspires to be profound. The result is a series of excruciatingly long silences punctuated by cryptic dialogue in umpteen different languages. The dominant question in the viewer's mind is, what is this all in aid of?

Had the writers decided exactly what they wanted to convey they might have been able to save this film. One of the highs is August Schellenberg, whose performance as Josef is both intriguing and graceful. On the other hand, Andrée Pelletier his obviously miscast as Wanda and never really makes us care about her character. With only two characters in the film it is too much to ask Schellenberg to carry the mess. *Latitude 55* tries too hard to be all things to all people—it needs more than a shrink to figure it out.

Dutch film is a bleak study of society

Spetters
directed by Paul Verhoeven
opens Mar. 2 at the Carleton

By CATHERINE ASTLEY SUDDS

The new Dutch film *Spetters* has lots of spirit and passion and, like its lead actress, "guts." It is, however, a depressing film, its brutal cinematic realism strikes home and leaves you feeling bruised and edgy. It lacks the pungent irony and truly shocking quality of such recent German films as *Christiane F* and *The Tin Drum* but, like a huge canvas daubed with loud colors and ungainly figures, conveying all too clearly the possible extent of human anguish.

This story of three boys growing up in a small Dutch town has a universal quality. It concerns their growth to maturity and loss of innocence from adolescence to adulthood. Director Paul Verhoeven relates incidents with uncensored explicitness—a trademark of his work. Many of the film's scenes are scripted from accounts of actual events related to him by young people on the street.



Fientje

The three boys of the film's main action are all keen motocross fans, the arrogant but dashing Gerrit Witcamp (Rutger Hauer)—soon to be the new World Champion—being their ultimate hero. While at the races the three meet high-spirited Fientje (Renee Soutendijk) who they

dub "the French fry girl." She is an opportunistic, saucy blonde, with whom they all become immediately fascinated. Fientje is romantically linked with all three boys in turn. This is a suitably uncompromising study of a head-strong woman determined to raise herself above the French fry grease. She compulsively pores over her horoscope in a magazine, hoping for hints of what she is certain is an impending lucky break. Fientje flaunts and flirts, but she does not present a romantic view of a peroxide blonde; she is also aptly coarse and tough-looking, the tart insensitive to all but her own well-being.

This film deals with such contemporary subjects as adolescent sex and homosexuality, religious fanaticism, and hooliganism without squeamishness, made all the more telling by the believability of the characters and situations. The film gives a bleak view of society but it is not without liveliness, fast action and humor. It is a strange combination. *Spetters* is Paul Verhoeven's fourth major feature, the earlier three including *Turkish Delight* having all gained international acclaim on release.

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