

# Leolo: the surreal and the sublime

by Walter Forsyth

Jean-Claude Lauzon's second feature film has been causing a stir from Cannes to Vancouver and is returning to Halifax after filling the house at the Atlantic Film Festival. Not since *Jesus Of Montreal* has a Canadian film caused such vibrations in

**FILM**  
**LEOLO**

Director: Jean-Claude Lauzon  
Wormwoods Cinema  
Nov. 27 to Dec. 3.

and out of the theatre (Denis Arcand is an actor in this film). It is a rich dark fantasy rooted in the tough reality of coming of age; of a boy on the verge of manhood in the poverty of lower class urban Canada. The power of the production lies here, in its ability to scream at you with its harsh realism while at the same time lulling you into the dream-like fantasy of its softly textured surrealism.

*Leolo* is about a boy, Leo, growing up in Montreal and his struggle to comprehend the world. He tries to understand the world by writ-

ing down his ideas of it. What he doesn't like or doesn't get he invents. Like any child trying to discover what is real, he injects his inventions into his own reality. For example, Leo believes a tomato injected with the sperm of a Sicilian farmer is his real lineage, and so, demands he be called Leolo. And living in a world where his father is obsessed with everybody's bowel movements, his two sisters spending ever increasing time in the psychiatric ward, a big brother who hides his fear of people through his obsession with body building, and perhaps a faulty gene trying to rewrite his own brain, he has no choice but to live an imaginative existence flowing between dreams, fantasy and the cold hard truth.

Lauzon tells this story through the thoughts of an old man who finds Leo's writings in the garbage. The director has said that this is a very autobiographical work and as a grown man looking back at his childhood it seems a logical conjecture to play out the story in this manner. This is where the magic occurs. Told through flowing dream-like vignettes which

overlap past with present and past again, your mind is forced to work to understand as events unfold. At the same time you are mesmerized by the grainy cinematography and stellar soundtrack (Tom Waitsetc.). Where do dreams end and days start? No more is this line obscured then in Leo's romantic obsession with his beautiful first-love and Italian neighbour, Bianca.

If I have painted a picture too cloudy to comprehend don't be alarmed. Trying to describe this masterpiece is like standing too close to a Monet, or maybe it is my admiration for this piece that prevents me from objectively conveying it to you. If you need more assurance, check the credits. *Leolo* just took home 3 Geminsis, the second biggest haul behind *Naked Lunch* at this year's Genie Awards. It won best original screenplay by creator Lauzon, best editing by Michel Arcand and best costume design. It received a standing ovation at this years Cannes film festival. Who cares about the awards and their politics, if you can get those snobs off their seats then you have a winner. Still in



doubt? Watch *Un Zoo La Nuit*, Lauzon's first feature which won him Canadian film of the year in 1987. The CBC is showing it Thursday night, Nov. 26. It is a great film of crime, drugs and love but that is another story.

Warning: Some of the clamour from this production is from its intensity. Some people can't take the vulgarity and have walked out (the Toronto Film Festival, surprise, surprise). Perhaps this movie is not for the squeamish or those not in touch with what goes on around them. Then again, we are accustomed to seeing people kill each other on the screen but the most natural acts of sexual interaction are forbidden. You

really have to wonder about our society and after departing from this film you will probably be doing just that.

Superbly photographed, it is like strolling through the Salvador Dali Exhibition at the Musée Des Beaux Arts. With black humour that makes you fidget and laugh at the same time, memories of *Brazil*, *Cold Comfort* or even the *Fisher King* flood back. There are moving emotions throughout, like the sadness in his brother's defeat, the anger of how unfair life can be, and the elation in knowing the power of the imagination. *Leolo* is a surreal movie adapted from the brutality of Canadian life in the manner of Alice Munro or David Adams Richard. Those are the reasons I loved this film. What are yours?

## Playing Fourth

by Bruce Gilchrist

If you were hip enough to be at the Deuce about a month and a half ago you would have seen one of the better indie bands available in Canada: The Tea Party. They played a wild and literally acid-tinged set that brought the feel of authentic 1971 psychedelia indoors. Too bad if you missed them - they were pretty different.

Well now there is an opportunity to capture a different angle, but similar in design: Halifax's own The Fourth Wall. Continuing in the 1970's feel, but this time more Doorsy than Led Zeppy, The Fourth Wall is a threesome that write old-style songs with a new-style radio friendly attitude. It's hard to walk that line of distinction without falling in the traps of either "selling out" or getting "too weird" but The Fourth Wall looks like a good bet to try and stay original. All of the songs on their new 13 cut album are penned by either drummer Bruce Thompson or guitarist and lead singer John Rosborough.

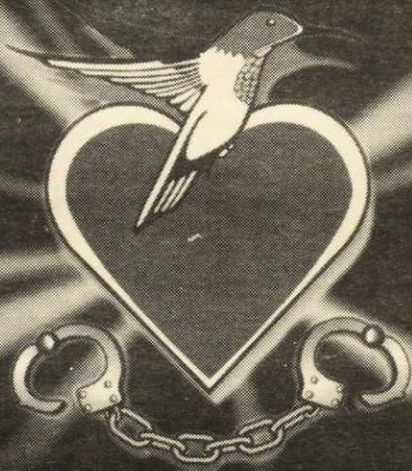
There is a fair variation of tracks on the new album *Beltane Born*, recently recorded at Adinsound Studios here in Halifax. The tracks range from very bluesy slow Doors stuff (*Exit Thread*) to faster more radio-friendly straight ahead rock tunes

(*Tied By Your Love* and *Purpose Radio*). But the best songs on the album are those that rely on composition ability, rather than the more typical formula of chorus/solo/chorus approach. For instance, the song *Casual Indifference* enters with an acoustic atmosphere and what sounds like synth strings. This is the most original feel on the album, and the soliloquy in the song comes off great.

While they're not going to blow anyone out of their seats with a massive alternative assault, The Fourth Wall have the tools to sound good with competent playing and intelligent interesting lyrics. The lead singer can actually sing, which is the most important thing in a radio directed band, and the guitar solos show an interest in being unprogrammed and point to the ability to play live. The bass is steady and understated, and while the drumming needs to become more responsive it too does alright. The only thing not coming off is the intensity on the faster songs. While they are able to create a good feel for the naturalism and spiritualism themed slow songs, they need to pick up the intensity and belt out their louder tunes. For anything an edge is necessary.

*The Fourth Wall* plays the *Double Deuce* Wed. Dec. 2.

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