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## Denys Arcand, le rebelle avec une cause

In the late sixties and early seventies the National Film Board was shaken by the determination of its French filmmakers to break with what they regarded as the NFB's stodgy impersonal style.

The most conspicuous rebel was Denys Arcand, who left in 1966 and returned in 1969 to make *On est au coton* (*We Are in the Cotton Business*), an idiomatic pun meaning "we are fed up." It was a study of workers in the textile industry, and it was meant to be political.

The Quebec textile industry took vigorous exception, and *Coton* was shelved by the board, though bootlegged copies were shown on college campuses. Arcand's next film, *Québec: Duplessis et après*, which strongly implied that the level of political behaviour in Quebec had not changed much despite the Quiet Revolution, was rejected by the CBC (though it was released by the NFB), and Arcand, the radical film hero of Quebec politics, left the board.

His privately produced *Réjeanne Padovani* created a sensation at the 1973 Cannes Film Festival (although Gilles Carle's *La mort d'un bûcheron* was the official entry).

*Padovani* is a harsh satire of the ruling class. The opening of a new highway is celebrated with a dinner party at the home of the construction tycoon, and the guests include the officeholders with whom he is in alliance. It is a comedy of corrupt manners, in the vein of Bunuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*.

Martin Knelman, in *This Is Where We Came In — The Career and Character of Canadian Film*, says *Padovani* is much more than political satire. "Arcand's movie is a kind of parlor game that teaches the audience how to crack the code — [it] is an inside view of corruption. There have been movies before that tried to capture the stench of political depravity, but this may be the first one that portrays the *odourlessness* of an operation so efficiently antiseptic that no meal was ruined by talk of nasty deeds: the machine runs so smoothly that the bosses are protected from hearing the screams of their victims or seeing their blood stains."

## L'office national du film n'est pas sans honneurs

The NFB has been doing quite well in recent years. Last year two of its animated shorts, *The Sand Castle* and *I'll Find A Way*, won Academy Awards. This year *Special Delivery*, directed by John Weldon and Eunice Macaulay, won another in the best animated short category.

*The National Film Board's The Sand Castle won last year's Academy Award.*

