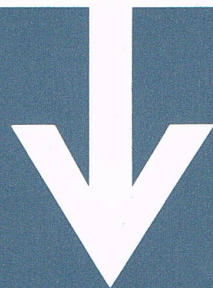


IS THERE  
A PLACE  
FOR  
HORROR FILMS  
IN  
CANADA'S  
FILM INDUSTRY?



YES ☐ ☐ NO

Some critics say 'No'  
Others say 'Yes'

The enclosed material  
may help you form  
**your own opinion**



## **CASE IN POINT :**

### **The Canadian Film Development Corporation and THE PARASITE MURDERS**

"Some of you might have missed a film article by Marshall Delaney in the September issue of SATURDAY NIGHT MAGAZINE. In a seething attack against the CFDC for having invested in THE PARASITE MURDERS Delaney illustrated the typical Canadian critics' syndrome. I think that Mr. Delaney's article is an untrue representation of the facts, shows questionable judgement, is vile and vicious, and most of all very opportunistic.

Personally, I am very proud of THE PARASITE MURDERS. I am glad we made it, and I think it is a very good film. Done on a modest budget, it received a very good reception from both filmmakers and film buyers when shown in Cannes. It was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival at a gala performance, and in October it will be shown at the Sitges Film Festival in Spain. The film has been sold all over the world and will have its premiere next month in Asia, Europe, and North America. It is a thrilling and violent science fiction film, and I don't think I really have to defend it. I am certain that it will find its public in Canada and elsewhere.

I write not so much to defend the film, nor to reply to Mr. Delaney's criticism, but to point out the dangers of trying to hold the CFDC accountable for each and every investment it makes. The CFDC is not the Canada Council of the Arts. Its purpose is to create a Canadian film industry. I think that in the case of THE PARASITE MURDERS it has certainly made not only a wise investment financially but has also come up with a most interesting work. I regret that there are not more films like THE PARASITE MURDERS being made.

I think we have to create an atmosphere for the CFDC wherein it can, once it is adequately funded, intensify filmmaking in Canada. We are not going to achieve anything with senseless criticism of the CFDC.

**André Link**  
Cinepix



“One thing’s got to be clear right from the beginning. The CFDC is not the Canada Council. The Canada Council wasn’t created to develop an industry, whether ballet, theatre, painting, or anything else. Whereas for us it’s different. Right in the law it says first and foremost that the CFDC has the responsibility of creating an industry. I know that doesn’t mean we have to go to the extreme of limiting ourselves strictly to the crassest of commercial films. But just as it takes all kinds to make a world, so it takes all kinds of films to make a film industry. Different genres, different quality.”

— Gratien G  linas, chairman of the Canadian Film Development Corporation, on the role of the CFDC.

**THE PARASITE MURDERS  
WINS GRAND PRIX AT THE SITGES INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL IN SPAIN**

+  
CINEPIX MTL

CINEPIX PARIS

OCT 16

PARASITE MURDERS RECEIVED FIRST PRIZE BEST HORROR FILM SITGES FILM  
FESTIVAL SAN SEBASTIEN.

REGARDS

CINEPIX PARIS

+  
CINEPIX MTL



THE PARASITE MURDERS is a surrealistic horror film, written and directed by Canadian David Cronenberg, financed by the Canadian Film Development Corporation, and produced by Cinepix.

The film was shown at a gala performance of the prestigious Edinburgh Film Festival in August, 1975, and was invited to the Sitges International Film Festival in Spain. In Cannes, it received a good reception from both film-makers and film-buyers.

THE PARASITE MURDERS has been sold for distribution in 52 foreign countries, including the United States, England, Germany, Australia, Spain, Latin America and several countries in the Far East.

As a result, even before THE PARASITE MURDERS premiered in Canada in October, 1975, it paid back its total \$165,000 investment both to its producers and to the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

So, without question, commercially THE PARASITE MURDERS is an unqualified success — and as a money-maker it may end up in the same league as Canada's two box office champions — 'The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz' and 'Black Christmas'.

However, some Canadian critics, notably Marshall Delaney, writing in 'Saturday Night', questioned whether the Canadian taxpayer, through the Crown-owned Canadian Film Development Corporation, should be subsidizing horror films "crammed with blood, violence and depraved sex".

Other critics, including John Hofsess writing in Maclean's Magazine, calls THE PARASITE MURDERS "the niftiest war on nerves since 'Night of the Living Dead'" and compares Cronenberg with the American director Roman Polanski of 'Rosemary's Baby' fame.

Enclosed in this kit, for your examination, are a collection of reviews, criticisms, comments and facts — both pro and con — about THE PARASITE MURDERS, the CFDC, and the place and purpose of genre films as they apply in rounding out Canada's film industry.



# Saturday Night

## Movies

You should know how bad this film is. After all, you paid for it  
by Marshall Delaney

If using public money to produce films like *The Parasite Murders* is the only way that English Canada can have a film industry, then perhaps English Canada should not have a film industry. One should say it straight out: *The Parasite Murders*, written and directed by David Cronenberg and produced by Ivan Reitman, with \$70,000 of the Canadian taxpayers' money, is an atrocity, a disgrace to everyone connected with it—including the taxpayers. The question it raises is an old one now, but *The Parasite Murders* brings it to life again: should we subsidize junk (or worse than junk) in order to create an "industry" that will also, possibly, produce indigenous and valuable feature films?

The argument goes back at least to the day in January, 1967, when Judy LaMarsh, the secretary of state, was defending in the House of Commons the bill to create the Canadian Film Development Corporation. Someone had raised the issue of moral and artistic quality in the films that would be produced, and Ms. LaMarsh wanted to make her position plain:

"This leads me to one last point, namely the question of whether I or members of the board [the CFDC board] will be the ones to judge as to the morality in the plays. I suggest that if any of the vital elements of the passions of human beings are excised completely from any films in which

the Canadian Development Corporation might invest, there really would not be much left in which to invest.

"We have to remember that films which are most popular are those which are a reflection of life. I do not think we should produce licentious films, but we want to produce films which are of good commercial quality and of value. Our purpose is to promote and develop an industry and not to produce one or two art films for which Canada has already become famous."

Fair enough. We were to have commercial films, which would attract audiences—not films for tiny minorities. But did Ms. LaMarsh and her advisers envisage *The Parasite Murders*? Did they, as they laboured to produce a government instrument that would satisfy the needs of both legalistic bureaucrats and free-wheeling filmmakers, envisage a day when the CFDC would provide financial backing for a film crammed with blood, violence, and depraved sex?

There is a school of filmmaking and film connoisseurship that focuses its attention on a chic version of junk filmmaking. A group of young directors and filmgoers in several countries see schlock movies—horror films, porno films, the old biker films—as a vital part of the cinema. They revere especially the work of Roger Corman, whose cheaply but effectively made movies became an international cult about a decade ago. They argue not only that many important stars and directors eventually emerge from these films (Jack Nicholson is one of the most celebrated) but that the movies themselves have intrinsic value. They have energy, originality, flair. They are a pleasure to see, at least on a superficial level; and sometimes, in Corman's case, they are a bit more than that.

This view has great attractions,

especially for the young. It allows you to produce a marketable product while still retaining a certain self-respect and the admiration of your peers. Your work may appeal to audiences on the lowest possible level, yet your own view of it invests the work with a higher value. This is particularly true if you self-consciously inject certain themes borrowed from avant-garde literature into the film script. You and your peers can then enjoy little in-jokes which the mass audience—or whatever part of the mass audience you reach—will entirely miss. A similar rationale will permit you to load your movies with as much perverted sex and violence as the traffic will bear. The theory resembles the old camp doctrine of the 1960s: it's-so-bad-it's-good. If you inject even more violence than the last such movie, your friends, on viewing it, will say "Too much!" or "Far out!" Chuckles will be heard in the screening room. In this process a great deal of shame is avoided and certain satisfactions may be found.

With this theory behind you it is possible to become a commercial movie-maker with very little talent. It may be that your "serious" work attracts no attention because in fact it isn't serious or doesn't show much talent. It may be, in any case, that the world already has enough "serious" films and the distributors you meet and deal with at the Cannes film festival don't ever want to hear about another one. What is needed is a violent film, done with a new twist; or, better still, a horror film with plenty of sex. Given your own artistic rationale, you can provide what the market demands and still believe you are doing more or less what you should be doing. You can satisfy both pressures—the box office and your own "artistic" desires—with the same film. And if the film breaks even or actually makes money—as seems likely with *The Parasite Murders*—then the universe is unfolding as it should.



**I**t would be impossible to convey just how bad *The Parasite Murders* is. It has one good quality: efficiency. It was made in only fifteen days with a very modest budget, about \$165,000, but it gives the physical appearance of having cost something more than that. There its good qualities end. It is "bad" in the conventional sense: mediocre to poor acting, uninspired direction, ordinary scripting. More important, it is bad in what it shows and what it says.

The story's premise is that a mad scientist in Montréal has developed a parasite that embeds itself in the stomach of its victims. The parasite causes the victim a great deal of pain and leads to vomiting of blood—this is shown often, at length—but it also turns the victim into a sex maniac. The parasite is passed from victim to victim sexually, either genitally or orally. The parasite is visible, and in the film we see it often: it looks like a combination of a small snake and a piece of veal that has turned brownish-green. Sometimes we see it as it emerges, covered with blood, from the victim's mouth; sometimes we see it emerge through a bloody opening in the victim's stomach. The special effects, though not great, are not bad either.

A doctor in the movie has a quotation from William Blake on his wall: "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." This is one of Cronenberg's literary touches, but his film suggests it is also his religion. He spares us nothing. We see the mad scientist rip open a young woman's body and then slit his own throat, the blood running down his arm. We see a man crack another man's skull and we watch the blood emerge. We see a man beaten to death, his face turning to red mush. We see a little girl turn into a sex maniac. We see the parasite attack a woman's vagina as she sits in her bath-

tub. Again and again we see bodies swell and blood ooze from mouths.

The mad scientist's theory was that he would set his parasite loose on the human race and create one great global orgy, thereby bringing peace and contentment to the world. At the end something like that seems to be under way. But the effect of the movie would appear to be the opposite. The director/scriptwriter's implied view is of eroticism as some kind of communicable disease; he makes sex and everything connected with it seem repugnant. Far from setting forth "the passions of human beings," as Ms. LaMarsh put it, he describes a nightmare world in which sex becomes a desperate obsession, an experience drenched in blood. His ideal audience, I imagine, would be made up of morbid, thrill-seeking teenagers for whom sex is still a tantalizing but essentially fearsome event of the future. Instead of bringing such an audience closer to sex, *The Parasite Murders* will, I imagine, alienate them further from it. In sum, it's the most repulsive movie I've ever seen.

**J**udy LaMarsh, when her bill was being given its final reading in 1967, said at one point: "Every individual project will have to be considered on the basis of its artistic and commercial quality." That was the intention; not only hers, but that of Maurice Lamontagne, her predecessor, who got the CFDC project going, and the army of civil servants and film industry lobbyists who helped prepare the bill. They all had the idea that Canadian filmmakers, given the financial support of the CFDC, would be able to make films that were both commercial and good. Not one of all those people, I would guess, ever imagined anything remotely like *The Parasite Murders*. Then how did it happen?

Ms. LaMarsh, who left the federal

government in 1968, is this year the head of an Ontario royal commission investigating violence in the media. As such she may find herself investigating *The Parasite Murders*, and perhaps other CFDC-financed films—films she helped, indirectly, to create. She, too, may wonder how it all came about—how good intentions were perverted, hopes drowned, a fine project betrayed and destroyed.

The answer, probably, would fill several books and would provide a case study in what happens when government tries to support the popular arts. In its first years of operation in English Canada—the Québec experience is quite separate—the CFDC discovered several difficult truths. First, there were very few filmmakers capable of producing, directing, and writing features. Second, there were very few investors interested (even with a favourable tax break) in joining the CFDC in backing features. Third, there were almost no theatre owners interested in making a special effort to show Canadian features. Fourth, the CFDC was going into business at a time when movie attendance everywhere was declining sharply.

Given this environment, the CFDC's chances of success were at best slim. But the CFDC compounded its problems by associating itself with the very people who could produce neither successful films nor admirable films. It made a kind of informal alliance with the big American-owned distributors; these corporations were encouraged to invest in Canadian movies, because—the CFDC hoped—they would distribute and promote films in which they were financially interested.

It didn't work that way. Most of the films were hastily conceived and poorly produced; the distributors simply put them on their shelves. During the early 1970s people who followed Canadian movies were always reading or hearing about films in



production that somehow never appeared in the theatres. The distributors made their investments for their own reasons—perhaps for tax purposes, perhaps as a token to protect their commercial positions. Then they forgot about the films. At best they would show them in one or two theatres; if there was no immediate response the films would be forgotten.

At the same time, the CFDC people were finding themselves, year after year, in a hopeless position. They had some difficulties in French Canada, but there they were often given the chance to back substantial movies. In English Canada, on the other hand, they were confronted mainly with film proposals that had no hope of either artistic or commercial success. For political reasons they had to support English as well as French films; but often, at their meetings, they were forced to choose not the best proposal put before them but (as one member of the board has put it privately) “the least awful.” Furthermore, they discovered (and this was true of both French and English producers) that the scripts they approved were sometimes only vaguely related to the movies that resulted. A “clean” script—without gratuitous violence or depraved sex—would be presented and approved; but the movie, finished a year or two later, would in some cases be both excessively violent and perverted. The CFDC, being only a part-owner, would have no control over the finished product. Moreover, as a government agency, it has always hesitated to use whatever power it may have—it has not wanted to appear to be censoring or controlling the films in which it invests public money.

Perhaps the CFDC was also running into a problem of English-Canadian culture that has never been clearly articulated: the lack of a firm desire, among our serious artists, to speak to a wide audience. Artists in English Canada

have for so long been pushed into a cultural ghetto that they no longer believe there is an audience that wants to hear them: certainly you can see this in our literature, and at times you can catch glimpses of it in our theatre. In films, the CFDC learned, there were a good many avant-garde filmmakers making films for coterie audiences (Michael Snow is the most distinguished of these but there are several others of importance). On the other hand, there were filmmakers of little talent and inspiration seeking to pander to mass audiences on the lowest terms. But in between these groups there were only a few artists—people like Peter Pearson, Don Shebib, Allan King—who wanted to speak seriously to audiences of some size. This area of our cultural life was, for historical reasons, underpopulated. And it was in this area that the CFDC wanted to find the filmmakers it would back. For the most part they were simply not there.

Out of this process, over the years, a few interesting films emerged—*Paperback Hero*, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *Wedding in White*. But for every *Paperback Hero* there were six like *The Neptune Factor* or *Face-Off* or *Only God Knows*, films that showed neither the excitement of promise nor the satisfaction of accomplishment. Films that you knew were dead before you’d watched the first ten minutes. Many of them were controlled by Hollywood backers who were only vaguely interested in their success; but even the films controlled in Canada were so imbued with the Hollywood ethos that they seemed like pale imitations of something from Los Angeles. They were not Canadian; they were not artistic; and for the most part they were failures.

Only very desperate people would put public money, and some part of their reputations, behind a film like *The Parasite Murders*. It’s as if the Canada Council, wildly casting about for a way

to get Canadian writers working, were to invest in sadistic pornography. But in the light of the CFDC’s history we can at least understand the roots of that desperation.

There were other ways to go, of course. We can see them now in hindsight (in 1968 I didn’t have any better ideas than the CFDC, and I didn’t anticipate its disasters). The CFDC should have looked for advice not to the Hollywood-oriented distributors and the tiny group of Canadians involved in film within the country but to a much wider group. It should have called in the Canadians who were making films elsewhere and asked for their advice and participation. It should have reached out to the serious writers of the country for scripts. It should have financed films on its own and avoided the distributors. It should have started out modestly, producing films on extremely low budgets, like \$100,000 or \$200,000, until it knew what the business was all about. It should have opened a few small theatres of its own in key cities, so that its films would have had at least a chance to find their audiences.

At this point the CFDC is mired in discredited practices and closely associated with people who should never have been allowed near public money. What is needed now is a high-level inquiry into the CFDC and its future, conducted by the secretary of state. What should emerge from that is a fresh approach to financing films in English Canada. Perhaps, even this late, there’s a way it can be done. And anyway, after *The Parasite Murders*, things can’t get worse.



# cinema canada

## it'll bug you.

by Stephen Chesley

"The true subject of horror films," says David Cronenberg, "is death and anticipation of death, and that leads to the question of man as body as opposed to man as spirit." That's one of the most important aspects underlying Cronenberg's **The Parasite Murders**, and listening to him discuss the ideas behind the film makes it very difficult to place the movie in the context that *Saturday Night* critic Marshall Delaney and *Globe and Mail* critic Martin Knelman have: a cheapie exploitation feature. Delaney went farther; he implied that Canadians should not desire a film industry that would produce such a film, and suggested rather strongly that the Canadian Film Development Corporation should be ashamed of putting money in **The Parasite Murders**.

All of which produces a two-sided reaction in Cronenberg. He wrote a strong letter to the *Globe* chastising Knelman and supporting his argument much as he discusses the film below. Delaney brought a different response: "Delaney's reaction seems perfectly legitimate: that he found the film repellent. I think he just was not capable of handling his own reaction to it and therefore became very hysterical. Unfortunately he had to draw the CFDC into it and get distracted by using my film as a platform for an attack on the CFDC. Delaney's response was fine! I liked it. It was silly but it's too bad he couldn't have had that reaction and understood that it was a valid thing for a film to do to someone, rather than denying it and pushing it away."

"Surely it's obvious that there should be room for every kind of film from every possible country - I mean anything that disturbs you is not Canadian. It should be nice and somewhat serious if it's Canadian; that's the same old bullshit which has produced so many deadly films. Where else but in Canada do you get a critic not attached to a daily newspaper who is more conservative, more reactionary than a government body like the CFDC? Where else do you get a critic who quotes Judy LaMarsh for his definition of art?"

"He doesn't understand catharsis, and that's what the film can do: it's a release of inner tension to get involved with a film like that and have it end the way it does. That was partly my aim, both publicly and personally. During the three years that I wrote the film my father was dying and we were very close. It was a quite horrible death, no reason for it, it was just bad. No consolations, whether

metaphysical or philosophical or whatever. But it's not necessary for people to know about my father. If the film touches some people in the same way, then it's working perfectly relative to their own lives, and that's what the film has done for a lot of people."

"To exist is not necessarily a wonderful thing, and the source of life can certainly be violent and ugly."

It's the old story, really. Whenever you discuss a movie, especially one in the exploitation genres, there are those who will read deeply and those who dismiss quickly. But Cronenberg admits he's made a 'movie', as opposed to his earlier films, **Stereo** and **Crimes of the Future**, and insists that it can operate - must operate to be successful - on both levels. And **The Parasite Murders** has been successful: it's paid back its \$165,000 investment, been sold to countries around the world, and been invited to several film festivals. There's more there than meets the eye, it seems.

"It's not a conscious thing I do - all my films have a strong physical consciousness - but the whole dichotomy of mind and body and the importance of physical existence is really uppermost in my conception of the film. Being a mind in a body is a conundrum, especially if, as happened with my father, the body starts to go and the mind has not."

"A good horror film partakes of art. It's not excluded any more than the paintings of Bosch, which I'm sure Delaney would find disgusting because they also involve violence, depraved sex and anything else he finds in **The Parasite Murders**. A horror film should turn surreal at a certain point. It begins by being normal, and then it should take you along. A sense of madness should be in it; Polanski is in touch with that. The art of horror stories has always existed."

Cronenberg describes **Stereo** and **Crimes of the Future** as horror in part, but more science fiction, i.e. they have a scientific element. So does **The Parasite Murders**, but a dream provided the original inspiration for the film. "I had a dream. My mouth was open and this thing crawled out. I was lying in bed, absolutely neutral atmosphere, and that was the kernel of the film." He designed 'The Bug' himself ("It's not an insect, really. I'm a failed entomologist and so I know. We used 'The Bug' as an affectionate term."). And then he began writing and rewriting. He showed it to Ivan Reitman who turned it down because he thought it was



# cinema canada

too disgusting. Later Cinepix asked Reitman to produce and he consented.

Cronenberg's long-term goal was to make 'movies'. "I knew my earlier films would be inaccessible to many people when I made them; now I wanted to reach a wider audience. I really like movies. It's not a question of selling out. I always wanted to get into the mainstream of moviemaking."

Just before shooting began he had another dream. "I dreamt I was in a theatre with an audience. Certain members of the audience contracted a disease from the screen and then there was a certain amount of antagonism between those who got the disease and those who were immune. The disease caused extremely fast aging; I watched myself growing old. It brought back to me the fact that the film and its theme were important to me. I felt far from what the movie was about just before shooting because of casting, re-writing and so on. You have to know what you're after."

One of the things he was after was professionalism. "Being professional was very important to Ivan and me and we used to talk about it a lot. It's lack of panic in face of pressure. To know what you're doing and what you're after, when to be obscure and when to be clear, how to get an effect.

"There were only two moments in the course of production when I was incredibly depressed. One was when I saw the first day's rushes. For the first time in my life I said 'Gee maybe I can't do this'. I wasn't getting what I wanted, I hadn't yet learned how to get through all the machinery for composition, acting. I loved the big crew on **Parasite Murders**. I've been lucky because my relationship with the crew was pretty good. Partially that's because I've been willing to accept suggestions.

"The other time I was depressed came when I saw the first rough cut. I had taken great care with continuity but I completely lost sight of the pace of the thing. Ivan wasn't involved in the first cut - he's very canny and knows when to be absent - and he's very good at insuring that a narrative line works. He saw what was wrong, and helped us edit. It's not every producer who can do that and not be a nuisance and be effective.

"For the sound and other technical work we used the best equipment in North America; we've got no excuses.

Dan Goldberg did the sound, and we consciously tried to make it very real. We post-synched when we found that relative sound levels weren't right. It's not like other Canadian movies that were influenced by Grierson: the sound is recorded with a shotgun mike and however people do things, for example putting down a glass, then that's how it comes out. Danny had to create ambiance with his special effects. He did all the movement tracks; for example for people putting on coats he used a wet suit. There's a very strong resistance to illusion in Canadian film. You convey physical presence by sound.

"Our special effects man came from L.A., Joe Blasco. He does make-up for the Lawrence Welk show but his real love is horror movies. We used him because no one in Canada could give us what we wanted and we couldn't pay anyone to learn. We did have Suzanne Riou-Garand on the film in order to learn. She's been doing make-up in Montreal and she worked for almost nothing so she could learn. Now we have someone in Canada."

Since **Parasite** is scheduled to open on October 10 in Montreal and later on elsewhere, Cronenberg looks forward to seeing audience reaction. And box office reaction. Meanwhile he's anything but bored. He's just completed a Peep Show for the CBC under its video training programme, and he's been asked to do one more. "Video is a very interesting medium. There's a whole world of directors who are stars in the videotape medium although they're not well known. And the CBC is the only thing we've had in Canada that approaches the atmosphere of the old Hollywood studios, because there are acres of costumes, carpenters, and seamstresses constantly working."

And since we talked it has been officially rumoured that Cronenberg will direct John Hofsess' film **Tenderness**. It's supposed to be soft-core porno; I wonder how the critics will react to that. □



# cinema canada

---

## FILM REVIEWS

**David Cronenberg's**

### The Parasite Murders

A film by: David Cronenberg. **Screenplay:** Cronenberg. **Cinematography:** Robert Saad. **Music:** Ivan Reitman. **Sound:** Dan Goldberg. **Editing:** Patrick Dodd. **Performers:** Paul Hampton, Joe Silver, Lynn Lowry, Alan Migicovsky, Susan Petrie, Barbara Steele and Ronald Mlodzik. **Producer:** Ivan Reitman. **Produced in 1974 by** Cinepix. **Colour:** 35mm. **Running time:** 87 minutes. **Distribution in Canada:** Cinepix.

*"Sex is the invention of a clever venereal disease."*

Well, I really have bad taste. I liked it. I know you're going to say I'm campy and cliquey and queer, but I did like it in my own weird campy way. Because it goes so far, it's so funny-scary awful, so — all those dreams you wouldn't tell anybody, and I mean anybody, about, — all there in front of you, that you've got to be loose, oh yes, very loose indeed, to enjoy this film.

And after all people, what's there to be scared of? Is there really somebody out there who doesn't dream great big colourful eccentric mindboggling blush-making dreams? Once in a while anyway? Ask your favorite psychiatrist. And do you really want Marshall Delaney (I refer to his now famous piece in the back pages of *Saturday Night* entitled "You should know how bad this film is. After all, you paid for it") to tell you your creepo dreams are in bad taste?

I'm sure they are. I hardly ever have a tasteful dream, to be sure. And talking to David Cronenberg, the crazy truthful thing is, this film did come from that special nowhere place where all the wires cross in the back of the mind; from dreamland. True. He sim-

ply dreamt it up.

Interestingly, he had another dream while he was making it — a rather intriguing one in which an audience contracted a disease from a film. In the dream he saw this happening, and realized that those affected were feeling antagonistic to those as yet unaffected. The disease itself made people age exceedingly rapidly. Not horribly, just quickly. Listening to him my flesh began to crawl with the delightful anticipation of yet another creepy ghouly psycho-masochistic squirmy film from out of the back of Cronenberg's head.

So what is the movie about? Well, in a beautifully stated intro we find ourselves in an apartment complex complete unto itself. Called Starliner, it is advertised with all its facilities, as a world of its own, exclusive and separate. Just the kind of place I find frightening, and advertised, as real complexes like this are, with what seems to me the epitome of bad taste. But it takes all kinds.

All the privileged people living there are unaware that a strange, and I mean really *strange*, bug is loose in the building. Cronenberg calls it a 'bug' but in fact it looks like a cross between a slug, a leech and a particularly offensive penis. Don't read on if you're squeamish, because I'm about to tell you it is passed by mouth, as well as creeps, squeezes, slides, plops and oozes toward its various victims.

Now, from all the war films I've seen, and all the bloody bashes and bonks that TV and the action genre movies perpetrate on my frail interior, I have at last been purged. Because this film has blood in such gobs and slatherings, such dribbles, splashes and smears, that *finally*, Peckinpah notwithstanding, I am freed of ever getting zapped by some smart-aleck's catsup bottle drama again. Or maybe, anyhow. If the effect wears off, I may need another dose, Dr. Cronenberg.

Ivan Reitman produced. No doubt

the thought I had when I saw this film, that it would make a good double-bill with his *Cannibal Girls*, was in his mind before the film was ever finished, or maybe before it was even begun? Perhaps. But it might interest you to learn that when Cronenberg first showed him the script he didn't want anything to do with it because he found it so disgusting. And really, *Cannibal Girls*, buzzer-horror warning and manmeat stew and all, is like child's play compared to the depths of depravity *Parasites* discloses.

The narrative flow is reasonably clear, the photography by Robert Saad competent and straightforward, and the acting medium-good to really-ok, with Joe Silver as usual stealing the kudos. But the special effects! Joe Blasco came up for the love of the business from California, where he makes his living doing things like makeup for the Lawrence Welk show (talk about horror...) and he worked some wonders. To dumbfound other special effects men, he even has Alan Migicovsky, while gazing with horror on the portion of his anatomy under which the breeding parasites are visibly squirming, *raise up* his body with a jerk in order to prove he wasn't using the old false-chest head-through-a-hole-in-the-bed gimmick. Keep it in mind when you see the film and it may just help you get by a bad part.

But I'm not going to tell anymore about the bugs, or the people, or the amazing and ghastly things that happen. This is a film for drive-ins, for the young, for the brave, for the silly people who like movies that are in bad taste and don't care what Delaney thinks.

This is popcorn, not fruitcake, and no one ever said it was good for you. So go, but be warned, you may have quite a time.

Natalie Edwards



# Maclean's

## Quick Ma, the penicillin!

THE PARASITE MURDERS

directed by David Cronenberg  
David Cronenberg's schlocker *The Parasite Murders* is the niftiest war on nerves since *Night Of The Living Dead*. It's a film about a new venereal disease that drives people sex-crazy. He is not a shallow sensationalist; the revulsion with bodily processes that characterizes *Parasite Murders* is attracted from Cronenberg watching the projected and horrifying death of his father Polanski, one of his favorite directors, he seeks commercial metaphors to release intensely private feelings.

Four years ago, when the working title for the film was *Orgy Of The Blood Parasites*, the Canadian Film Development Corporation told Cronenberg (then 28 and the director of two highly praised experimental features which didn't earn a cent) that "horror films" were not part of the corporation's mandate. He kept rewriting the script trying to please CFDC officials until finally, with begrudging reluctance, they let him have \$70,000. At this year's Cannes Festival the film was sold to England, Germany, Australia, Spain, Latin America and 10 countries in the Far East. It picked up an advance of \$150,000 from American International Pictures for the U.S. distribution which was almost as great as the film's entire budget. In short, *Parasite Murders* is one Canadian film that didn't cost taxpayers a cent.

"The CFDC still treats me like a hangnail," says Cronenberg, "or worse still, a blood parasite, even though my film is one of very few to earn back its costs, even before it opened." Cronenberg is working on a new film, *Pierce*, as a follow-up. It's about a demented gynecologist with unspeakable bedside manners. A sure sign of probable commercial success—the CFDC hates this one too.

JOHN HOFSESS

any increases (as high as 10 per cent) in labor and trades.

More and more he himself how he could traint and increased his colleagues' crum of voter pressure, concerns with the own focus continuing employment.

Heve in domestic re-anatocism of a late had been one of the ent economic problem of Canada government had supported the of the money supply. Bouey admitted to the members of the Finance Association

es, the federal government out of an economic banks offer ically able to put his tion. In 1973 Bouey their mistake, tried but the banks, ever directives and bid sits while running get hold of cash to having a heyday convertibles and had up.

ote of the obvious was running out of ver for the government stand in the Commons a full six inches asury benches, and thing was okay. All the official government imbalance be-hand, Ottawa was employment as an or all it was the po-

find a guy a job he for you than if you ent. The Trudeau people to work and should have been: peeping costs down, ve Turner had bad ng a speedy schuss trade. Productivity ties were rising at a so far this year: in-

at Pierre Trudeau to his Commons of- runch time for Ca- y. Since then some attributed Turner's once story on page e events can be re- ent way. For some couldn't bean apol- idities that weren't member Turner had signing into effect a nease in the central ated risk. If he proved his move, it il for further hard price controls; if it a continuation of rations he'd had to years.

believe that it was pt a stringent pol- was kept company eluding his former an. The Finance g his cabinet col- money with little tions. (In the first al year, the federal billion more than it red as he watched

the year and unemployment, although it had been the priority item, was running at its highest level since 1961. It became obvious to Bouey's bankers and Turner's civil servants that Canada was primarily a country of goods shipped to the United States. The first quarter slipped to \$5.5 billion, the lowest point in a year. Our trade deficit was estimated at five billion dollars in 1975.

Turner had to stand up in the Commons and tell his fellow Canadians that we were collectively going to owe the world that enormous five-billion-dollar figure unless we could do some quick balance of payments shuffling. The dollar would have fallen off the table save for fast buying and support—to the tune of \$370 million in one month—by Bouey's gnomes in the central bank.

That was when Turner became a believer in restraint at home and battled against the likes of Marc Lalonde (over a guaranteed annual income), Barney Danson (over a \$700-million increase in Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation spending) and Bryce Mackasey (over general economic theory). When Bouey came to him last month and proposed a massive increase in the central bank rate—a three-quarter point hike is akin to paper-training your puppy with the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*—Turner agreed that it was essential.

In taking his leave, John Turner aped another world figure—Charles de Gaulle—and like De Gaulle, he will now stride, head erect, tummy jutting slightly, from the national political scene, leaving lesser men to clear up the mess. But Turner is not likely to join the troupe of fellow expatriates from the Trudeau ministry—once great railiers of thought and action such as Eric Kierans and Paul Hellyer—who have since faded into smoky obscurity. For one thing, he is the only survivor of the 1968 leadership convention who has retained his own constituency within the Liberal Party. More important, the fiery firebrand's ambition will not long be contained by the humdrum litigations that will come his way as a partner in the law firm he chooses as his place of self-appointment. He can comfortably wait to see which successor fouls up by following Trudeau's current policies. John Turner was cocked for the nation's call. If and that call comes, he will again stride, possibly centre stage, untarnished by the dimly unsuccessful policies he created. *Apropos moi, moi.*

Franker and Keyes: what they did do. Murphy and Ackles did—was football games

wouldn't be changes and then do that. That's odd. I can't do it. That doesn't mean I don't do it. (Cali) Murphy and the other just got to be able to believe in life to get by."

Netles was back on the job but only because Keys is coming back. "I had to come back," he returned was to take a team meeting. "We just got something." We got to see everybody but ourselves. The directors, the fans, everybody. Instead of binching at each other, we decided to help each other."

And help they did: the Lions promptly racked up three straight and convincing victories, before succumbing 20-17 to the Grey Cup Montreal Alouettes. "That was unquestionably the hardest-fought, most physical game we've been involved in this year," said Alouettes coach Marv Levy afterward. Netles, however, demurred: "We were due anyway. It was just a matter of getting healthy and all to-

when it came. I might never get the chance again."

The low-key Murphy, also a Vancouver native, is a career assistant who made stops at three American colleges before accepting his first professional posting at Vancouver. "I told my wife, 'If we don't make it here, that's the end of it.'" Judging by his per-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

reception, he's ready to stay. Whatever the Lions' future, Murphy is here to stay. Keyes received a fair dist-

Ontario (the other five are in these under-

developed areas called Vancouver, Ed-

gary and Winnipeg; and the bank's "eth-

nic" content has come down to the pres-

ence of two Jews, an Italian and one

of the bank's ex-

ecutive's ex-

ecutive's ex-

ecutive's ex-

ecutive's ex-

ecutive's ex-

ecutive's ex-

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was

Bank of Montreal's president, who was



## **WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT — THE PARASITE MURDERS**

"THE PARASITE MURDERS is a completely Canadian film shot in Montreal, written and produced by Canadians and featuring an almost all Canadian cast. The male lead is an American, Paul Hampton. But the film is a superior horror film that ranks with any of Hollywood's horror flicks."

Tony Lofaro, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

"Marshall Delaney's indictment of CFDC policies in the September issue of Saturday Night would make even more sense if he'd based his case on the Quadrant Productions (FIND THE LADY and IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME) rather than the comparatively harmless PARASITE MURDERS."

Martin Knelman, THE GLOBE AND MAIL

"CANNES — In terms of marketing, the Canadians did well this year. The most successful film was the yet-to-be released PARASITE MURDERS, by David Cronenberg, produced and distributed by Cinepix. The film was finished one week before the festival opened, and is already in a profit position, due to the successful world sales at the festival."

Connie Tadros, CINÉMA QUÉBEC



## **PERTINENT COMMENTS —**

"It is noticeable that even in circles that are generally sympathetic to the claims of popular art, the 'horror' genre seems to be regarded with more suspicion and scorn than, say, the western or the gangster movie."

British film and TV critic David Pirie

"My biggest complaint about the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) is that it has spent a lot of money making really bad films, projects it knew from the outset would not get anywhere and would not interest anyone. At least BLACK CHRISTMAS and CANNIBAL GIRLS made money. Films should either be artistic or make money or do both. But so many of the CFDC-sponsored films have done neither."

Film Director Don Shebib

N.B. THE PARASITE MURDERS is now distributed throughout Canada under the new title SHIVERS.





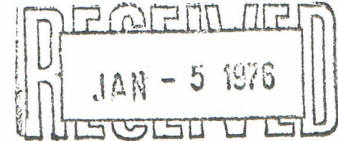
Province of Manitoba

Department of Tourism, Recreation & Cultural Affairs

Manitoba Film Classification Board

667 Ellice Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3G 0A8

December 29, 1975



ORVAL  
Mr. Orville Fruitman,  
Cinepix Inc.,  
696 Yonge Street,  
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Mr. Fruitman:

I have noted by your letter of December 15, that the film which our Board had classified under the title of PARASITE MURDERS has been changed to "SHIVERS". This change has been entered in our records.

Some members of our Board, including our Chairman and myself, read the brochure on the film which you sent us with a request for our opinions.

As you are no doubt aware we on this Board have to look at a large number of the horror type of films so our reaction to a film like "SHIVERS" wouldn't be the same as that of the ordinary movie patron. Horror films have never been my cup of tea even before I came on this Board. Technically I believe "SHIVERS" was well done. But I found much of it rather too revolting for my taste. All of the people who saw the film with me would take the negative side of the views expressed in the brochure you sent me.

However, having won an award, and having aroused some controversy, the film should do well at the box office.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

Sincerely,

  
Chas. Biesick  
Executive Director



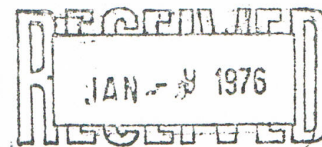


PROVINCE OF  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

MOTION PICTURE CLASSIFICATION  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL

3200 EAST BROADWAY  
VANCOUVER 12, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
TELEPHONE 254-6281

OUR FILE  
YOUR FILE



January 7th, 1976

Cinepix Incorporated,  
#303 - 696 Yonge St.,  
Toronto 285, Ontario.  
M4Y 2A7

Dear Sir:

Some time ago you sent me a brochure on the picture "Shivers" and at your request I read it and I offer you some comments on the same.

The fact that this is a "Canadian" Film is important since there is so much made of attempts to establish a Canadian film industry. The picture comes in for a lot of criticism with regard to its contents but I would like to point out that if it could pay its obligations and be supported by the public to the extent that it can be considered a box office success then most other comments is accademic. I think that one must be pragmatic about this picture and I am cynical enough to say that nothing succeeds like success.

At the same time I must say that personally the picture does not meet my taste, but I am aware that I must take the objective view of any situtation dealing with motion pictures.

I hope that this is the reply for which you are looking.

Yours very truly,

R. W. McDonald,  
Director of Film Classification.

RWMcD:jh



1971 MARKS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTRY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INTO CANADIAN CONFEDERATION ON JULY 20, 1871.

1871  
1971





Ontario

Ministry of  
Consumer and  
Commercial  
Relations

Theatres Branch

416/421-2462

1075 Millwood Rd.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4G 1X6

February 13, 1976.

Mr. Orval Fruitman,  
General Sales Manager,  
Cinepix Inc.,  
696 Yonge Street,  
Toronto, Ontario. M4Y 2A7

Dear Orval:

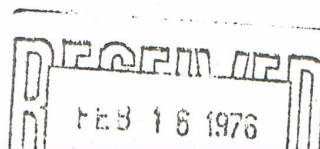
I am very sorry to have been so long in responding to your brochure and letter dated December 15. However I am sure you are aware of some of the increasing pressures because of workload, end of the year problems involving licensing, etc., here at the Branch.

Regarding the film "SHIVERS" I have not seen it as yet and failing that I think any further comment would be unwise. I shall be watching for it in my travels, you may rest assured.

Yours very truly,

D. L. Sims,  
Director.

DLS:ro





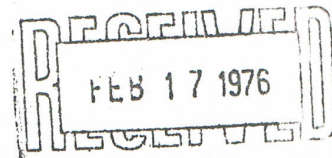
Office of  
The Leader of the Opposition



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Room 222 North Wing  
Queen's Park Toronto  
Telephone 416/965-3311

11 February 1976



Mr. O. Fruitman  
General Sales Manager  
Cinepix Inc.  
696 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4Y 2A7

Dear Mr. Fruitman:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the book "Is there a place for Horror Films in Canada's Film Industry?". Unfortunately, I did not see "The Parasite Murders", so I am unable to comment on the content of the book.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Stephen Lewis'.

Stephen Lewis  
Ontario Leader  
New Democratic Party

opeiu/343

- I'm not, by indication,  
a horror buff; but  
certainly Marshall McLuhan  
appears to be on a  
limb.

SL





MANITOBA

MINISTER OF TOURISM, RECREATION  
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

WINNIPEG  
R3C 0V8

February 18, 1976.

Mr. O. Fruitman,  
General Sales Manager,  
Cinepix Inc.,  
696 Yonge Street,  
Toronto, Ontario.  
M4Y 2A7.

Dear Mr. Fruitman:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 5th and your publication entitled "Is There a Place for Horror Films in Canada's Film Industry?"

Because I have not seen the film I am not qualified to comment on its content. However, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those responsible for what I consider to be an excellent advertising document for the film.

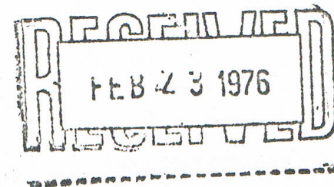
I enjoyed reading the reviews both for and against. My personal opinion is that the Canadian Film Development Corporation was designed to create a film industry which would produce salable films and it would appear from the reviews herein that this has happened to some degree.

Thank you for bringing this publication to my attention.

Yours truly,

RET/EO.

Rene E. Toupin.







OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

February 19, 1976

Dear Mr. Fruitman:

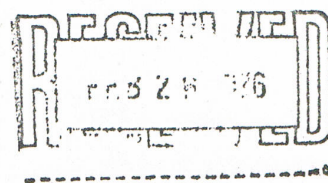
Premier Hatfield has requested that I acknowledge and thank you for sending him the booklet entitled "Is There a Place for Horror Films in Canada's Film Industry?".

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue A. Scott".

Sue Ann Scott  
Correspondence Secretary

Mr. O. Fruitman  
General Sales Manager  
Cinepix Inc.  
696 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4Y 2A7





OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION  
NOVA SCOTIA

Post Office Box 864  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 2V2  
February 10, 1976

Mr. O. Fruitman  
General Sales Manager  
Cinepix Inc.  
696 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4Y 2A7

Dear Mr. Fruitman:

RE: PARASITE MURDERS (SHIVERS)

Thank you for sending me a copy of your compiled material and reviews on "The Parasite Murders".

I agree with Marshall Delaney - it should not have been subsidized with even seven cents worth of taxpayers dollars - let alone \$70,000.

How about turning such creative talent into making a really good film?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Garnet Brown".

A. Garnet Brown

/sp

