

# Macleans

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## Films

### 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* stems from Cronenberg watching the protracted and horrifying death of his father from cancer three years ago. Like Roman 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