

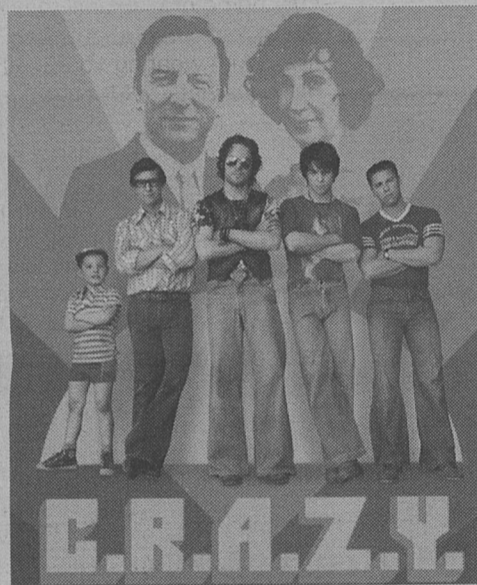
FILM

Quebec Family Madness

BY CHRISTOPHER BYRNE

C.R.A.Z.Y.
 Directed by
Jean-Marc Vallée
 2005, 127 minutes,
 French with English
 subtitles
 TVA Films

“I want to be like everyone else,” says Zachary Beaulieu (Marc-André Grondin) to his neighbor, the mystic-cum-Tupperware saleslady Madame Chose (Helène Grégoire). “Thank God, you’re not” is her reply. *C.R.A.Z.Y.*



Zachary doesn't like being different. He isn't a brain like his brother Christian or a jock like his brother Antoine. He has asthma. He's musical. He wets the bed. As he grows older, the animosity between him and Raymond, a biker and a small-time criminal, erupts violently.

Zachary fights his sexuality. He beats up the class fag (and then has sex with him). He dates a neighborhood girl, thus pleasing his father. He becomes infatuated with his cousin's boyfriend, who is a professional mambo dancer. Biker brother Raymond, meanwhile, becomes a heavy drug user and is always broke. At Zachary's 20th birthday party, they come to blows with their father stuck in the middle. (The scene is dubbed over with opera, which was both funny and quite apt.) Fed up, Zachary runs away to Israel where he faces his healing gift, his sexuality and his asthma.

C.R.A.Z.Y. is in French and for that reason will not receive a wide release outside of Quebec and the film festival circuit. This is unfortunate because it is an important film on many levels. It is a film about a gay man and his family produced for a mainstream audience. It is important as a Quebec film because it has universal appeal. Many Quebec films deal with aspects of culture that are unfamiliar to outsiders. *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, because of its theme, as well as its basis in North American popular culture, is accessible by a wide audience. In fact,

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C.R.A.Z.Y. was selected as Canada's entry for the upcoming Academy Awards. It is significant that *C.R.A.Z.Y.* earned \$5 million at the box office by mid-September. This is nothing by Hollywood standards, but a major milestone for Quebec film.

I overheard a couple leaving the theater saying, “I wanted something uplifting. This wasn't fun.” It isn't a fun movie, no. Both times I saw it, I

was moved to tears, as were others. Uplifting, though, is another matter. A constant theme of the movie is something like the Golden Rule, namely, if you do the right thing, others will do the right thing, too. For the characters in this movie, that lesson takes a while to learn, but eventually they do.

C.R.A.Z.Y. is a film about love and acceptance, with some fantasy

and a killer soundtrack (Patsy Cline, Charles Aznavour, David Bowie, The Rolling Stones) thrown in. Director Jean-Marc Vallée told the CBC “it's really about anyone who's different.” For this reason

C.R.A.Z.Y. deserves a wider audience: If viewers who perceive themselves as different, but not gay, can relate to and identify with the characters, the queer community can gain new allies. ▼

Christopher Byrne is self-employed and splits his time between Vermont and Montreal.

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is a film about struggling with change and accepting the truth: about wanting to change the way things are to the way things we think they should be. A father doesn't want his son to be gay. The son doesn't want to have asthma. His mother wants him to accept that he has a healing gift. Acceptance takes time, and along the way, the parents and the five brothers of the Beaulieu family resist what is happening to them.

Zachary is the fourth of the five brothers; the movie opens with his birth on Christmas Day in 1960. The rest of the movie follows Zachary to just past his 20th birthday and traces how he and his family grow and change, while also giving the audience a pop-culture lesson about life in Montreal in the 1960s and 1970s.

Zachary narrates a story that focuses on his relationship with his parents, Gervais (a superb Michel Côté) and Laurianne (Danielle Proulx), and one of his older brothers, Raymond (Pierre-Luc Brillant). Early on, Laurianne determines, with the help of Madame Chose, that Zachary has a healing gift and is able to heal burns and staunch bleeding just by thinking about it.

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