
Princesses' lives marred by blood, violence

REVIEW

TROIS PRINCESSES POUR ROLAND

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ½

Playing in French at Ex-Centris.
Parents' guide: tough adult matters.

GENEVIÈVE ROYER

Special to The Gazette

Thirty-two-year-old Nathalie, her 16-year-old daughter, Caroline, and Nathalie's mother, Madeleine, form a tragic trio bound by blood – through lineage and otherwise – and by violence featured in the Quebec documentary *Trois Princesses Pour Roland*.

The film's title resounds harshly, suggesting the blame for three broken lives lies solely with Roland, Nathalie's father and Madeleine's ex-husband.

Roland was an undiagnosed schizophrenic. Over the years, he had been carried out in a stretcher into ambulances so many times that after his suicide, Nathalie could identify his badly burned body by his elbows alone, having seen them sticking out of stretchers so often.

Trois Princesses is the first film directed by André-Line Beauparlant, the art director of such local films as *La Femme Qui Boit* and *Mariages*. Beauparlant gained notoriety last month when she was awarded the prize for best new documentary film-maker at the 20th *Rendez-Vous du Cinéma Québécois*, a retrospective of Quebec films from the last year.

Beauparlant has known Nathalie all her life: they are first cousins.

"My home is my security," Nathalie explains early on in the film. But over the course of the 10 months it chronicles, she moves a handful of times. Yet there are steady elements in her life: the beatings from her boyfriend and the ones she inflicts on him; the wall- and furniture-bashing; the alcohol and drug abuse; the suicide attempts.

Nathalie wants to help people and save the world. It all started with trying to save Roland, her reckless, alcoholic father. While she was busy trying to rescue him, to no avail, she let her own child Caroline all but perish. Caroline is years behind in school, which she barely attends. She cannot hold down a job at McDonald's or Dunkin' Donuts, because she is stoned or drunk most of the time.

As for Madeleine, she reveals how she married and later had to divorce Roland to protect her family. She now suffers from an aimless life and the financial troubles of her new man, a jailbird.

Beauparlant delves into these women's hearts, exposing their wounds and their humanity. Their documented journey ends over the song *I'm Gonna to Make You Love Me*, a desperate cry for the one intangible commodity without which mankind – or womankind in this instance – withers.

As much as it would be preposterous to omit Roland from the list of culprits, it seems unfair and incomplete to single him out.

The trouble started before he came into the picture, at least with Madeleine's very own father, himself a carbon copy of her ex-husband Roland.

This tragic heritage is so broad it cannot rest on the shoulders of one single man.