



## **EROTIC DIARY OF A LUMBERJACK (1974)**

**Director: Jean-Marie Pallardy**  
**Le Chat qui fume/MVD**

The early 1970s saw the French cinematic landscape dominated by erotic film. The international success of films such as Just Jaeckin's *EMMANUELLE*, threw open a door that allowed for the exploration of more risqué artistic visions, such as Walerian Borowczyk's *LA BÊTE (THE BEAST)* and produced numerous titillating titles that all but dared to be sought out, such as *SPERMULA* and *PUSSY TALK (Le sexe qui parle)*. Common fare on the Champs-Élysées, many such films would eventually find their way stateside, as America was itself in the throws of a porno chic movement following the success of *DEEP THROAT*. One of the many directors who found a niche in the sexual cinema of the 1970s, Jean-Marie Pallardy is probably most often associated in cult circles for his trash tour de force *WHITE FIRE*, starring Robert Ginty and Fred Williamson, as well as a handful of collaborations with Brigitte Lahaie. While a number of his films have recently become available on DVD through Halo Park (distributed by Ryko), now thanks to *Le Chat qui Fume*, which roughly translates to "The Cat that Smokes", many of Pallardy's best, bounciest and arguably best films will finally be readily available to tempt and tantalize American audiences.

Upon notification that he is to be the latest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, a professor (Georges Guéret) turns his back on the hustle and bustle of city life for the fresh air and open spaces of the French countryside. Procuring several thousand acres of land, the professor trades in his beakers for broads to become a pimp, nicknamed the Lumberjack. The promise of the small town's lascivious activities and the candidness of its acceptance of every sexual desire and perversity, leads several well-to-do senators and statesmen to find residence at the Lumberjacks open air brothel, bringing with them unwanted attention in the form of the authorities. Keeping a watchful eye on his clientele, the Lumberjack entertains his visiting son Jean-Mark (Jean-Marie Pallardy), who initially disapproves of his father's new vocation but begins to come around when introduced to the feisty redhead, Isabelle (Willeke van Ammelrooy). As the two become closer, several of the town's elders begin to suspect that there is a spy in their midst, a troublesome notion as none are about to give up their current lustful lifestyle without a fight. Between maintaining surveillance with his old man and feathering his hair, Jean-Mark is shocked to discover that Isabelle is an undercover police



officer sent to shut down his father's township of ill repute. Thankfully however, it doesn't take much to persuade Isabelle into switching sides, but getting the town's residences to believe her is another matter.



Meant to be a bawdy comedy, **EROTIC DIARY OF A LUMBERJACK** (Le Journal érotique d'un bûcheron) is relatively light on laughs but its cast of buxom young ladies is tre magnifique! Lesbianism, threesomes, orgies, role playing, sex on horseback, sex with skeletons (?); the picture supplies a steady procession of sexual encounters to survey. Don't see a gal or sexual technique

that fits your particular tastes? Then wait five minutes, as a seemingly endless rotation of trim parades around in their birthday suits, providing a buffet of eye candy. Yes, the men are for the most part old and hairy and can be off-putting when placed naked next to such tender counterparts, but the ladies more than make up for such a distraction. Willeke van Ammelrooy, who would work with Pallardy on a number of other films, makes for sultry female lead as the redheaded Isabelle. Willeke stands out from the crowd, in that she is the only females not portrayed as anything less than a sexual object, but she's not the youngest chicken in the coop and is often up staged by her younger costars, such as Joëlle Coeur, star attraction of Jean Rollin's **DEMONIACS**, who has a brief topless scene on horseback.

In an interview found on this release, director Pallardy makes his intentions quite clear about LUMBERJACK. Tired of his life as a male model, Jean-Marie longed for a simpler life in the country, as such he picked up a camera and decided to film just such an inclination. Gathering a group of friends, Pallardy traveled to the Chateau du Planet to eat well, make love and if time permitted,



shoot a film. Such a relaxed atmosphere shines through, as everyone on screen appears to be having the time of their life, oblivious to the fact that the plot is seemingly being written on the spot. For a sexploitation picture, foreign or domestic, the acting is stronger than one might think, but getting a 70 year old man to portray an industrialist letting loose his sexual inhibitions can't be that hard to capture when you have a bevy of 20-



something year old boobies to throw in his face. Despite the plot falling apart, concluding with a ridiculous anticlimactic climax, the cast is clearly having fun and the raucous yet lighthearted nature of the production is infectious, if not envious.

Touted as unrated, the film is presented in a non-anamorphic 1.66:1 aspect ratio that has its flaws and raises a number of questions as to its origins. An English dub cut, the print is listed on the disc's back cover as being restored from elements provided by the director. Given the computer generated titles and a persistent pair of parallel lines that run horizontally for the first half, it would be safe to assume that the transfer has been taken from a video, probably digibeta source tape. Colors tend to lean toward the yellow end of the spectrum and the film jumps slightly at least twice, but debris is minimal, with only a few instances of significant artifacts to distract from the great quantity of nudity. Mono audio is fair with a soundtrack that ranges from wah wah guitar fuzz to soft sounds of the pan flute, at times overpowering the English dubbed dialogue and at others becoming faint and distant. While an original French language print, properly subtitled, would have been an ideal route in presenting LUMBERJACK to the perverted masses, the more that I think about it, delving further into the complexities of the film's narrative would just distract from the ogling of young French flesh.

As to its "unrated" status, it's hard to tell. Many French films shot in the early 1970s were sold with additional hardcore footage as inserts that could be used to spice up the film based on its show time and audience



expectations. No hardcore footage is present in this release but several extended scenes, available as supplementary material, do acknowledge that several scenes were allowed to play out, shall we say, to completion. Particularly puzzling are several stretches in which it appears that English dialogue was simply never dubbed. One such scene, in which Jean-Marie and Willeke are having a discussion by the side of a lake, is quite bewildering, as the scene stretches out for several minutes with only dramatic music in which to gather information from. Given the uproarious score, it would be just as easy to assume that they were planning a bank heist as it is that they were discussing Isabelle's conflict in not reporting her findings to her superiors.



Extras include "The Erotic Journal of Jean-Marie Pallardy", an hour long interview in which the director opens up about his life and his films. Jean-Marie is quite candid throughout the video, when he is not berating his interviewer, and offers numerous insights into his career and the film's cast, such as the claim that Willeke van Ammelrooy was the survivor of a suicide pact with her previous husband. The onscreen interview is intercut with clips from several Pallardy features including UNSATISFIED, MY BODY BURNS and BODY GAMES. Three extended scenes, mentioned earlier, feature additional copulation, most taking place in small wooded cabins, adorned with animal skins, backed by an unexpected soundtrack of "Polly Waddle Doodle All the Day." All three scenes are presented in their original French with no English subtitles, not that any would be necessary, as heavy panting knows no language barrier. A stills gallery featuring numerous photographs from Jean-Marie's private collection and trailers for MY BODY BURNS, LUCKY LUCKY & THE DALTINES, GUNFIGHT AT OQ CORRAL, TRUCK STOP and LUMBERJACK tie up the featured supplements. *(Jason McElreath)*