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Candy Mountain

(SWISS-CANADIAN-FRENCH-COLOR)

A Metropolis Film presentation of a Xanadu Films, Zurich production, coproduced with Les Films du Plain-Chant, Les Films Vision 4 Inc., George Reinhart, Zurich, TS Prods., Milena Poylo, Paris, Swiss TV (SSR), Film A2. Produced by Ruth Waldburger. Executive producer, Gerald Dearing. Directed by Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer. Stars Kevin J. O'Connor. Screenplay, Wurlitzer; camera (color), Pio Corradi; editor, Jennifer Auge; music, Dr. John, David Johansen, Leon Redbone, Rita MacNeil, Tom Waits; music supervision, Hal Wilner; sound, David Joliat; art direction, Brad Ricker (N.Y.), Keith Currie (Canada); costumes, Carol Wood; casting, Risa Braemon, Billy Hopkins, Heidi Lewitt (U.S.), Gail Carr (Canada). Reviewed at the Locarno Film Festival (non-competing), Aug. 10, 1987. Running time: 91 MINS.

Julius Kevin J. O'Connor
Elmore Harris Yulin
Al Silk Tom Waits
Cornelia Bulle Ogier

Also with: Roberts Blossom (Archie), Leon Redbone (Huey), Dr. John (Henry), Rita MacNeil (Winnie), Joe Strummer (Mario), Laurie Metcalf (Alice), Jayne Eastwood (Lucille), Kazuko Oshima (Koko).

Locarno — A road movie which definitely improves in the second half, "Candy Mountain" is an outsider's vision of America, critical and disenchanted.

Julius Boone is a failed rock star who dreams of rekindling his sagging career. He pretends to know intimately a famous guitar builder. Elmore Silk, and to be able to bring him out of his seclusion. A \$2,000 advance and the promise of a substantial bonus send Julius wandering from New York to the north, into Canada, on the tracks of the elusive Elmore whom in reality he has never met.

The plot is built on a series of brief encounters along the road, short sketches reflecting a certain image of America's underbelly. Julius is outsmarted at every turn, each new step in his search leaving him a little poorer. He is even thrown into a strange sort of improvised jail in Canada, before he reaches his goal:

The American sketches south of the border, including that of Tom Waits who plays Elmore's brother, are closer to caricature than they are to human observation, but once the border is crossed, Robert Frank and Rudy Wurlitzer seem to be more inclined to take their time and learn to like their characters better. Harris Yulin, as the drop-out guitar building genius running away from civilization and trying to achieve perfect freedom, offers a nice cameo as the object of the film is to show a selfish innocent discovering what life is really all about.

The glamorless scenery of Julius' trip pretends at no time towards esthetic values, for that too would have been against the grain of the picture, as visualized by Frank and Wurlitzer, both of them familiar with the genre and not willing to compromise. If neither one equals their originality in past achievements and do not produce another cult movie (Frank had directed "Pull My Daisy" and Wurlitzer wrote "Two-Lane Blacktop"), they still manage to deliver a personal, if limited, portrait of the American continent.

Kevin J. O'Connor has the right forlorn quality in the lead even if a whole picture is a bit too much of a load on his shoulders. The score offers several memorable moments, thanks to Waits, Rita MacNeil and David Johansen, and there are some good performances by Roberts Blossom as a self-appointed Canadian justice of the peace and

Bulle Ogier as a French woman lost in the barren Canadian landscape.

As road movies go, this may not be at the top of the list, but is certainly a respectable contender.

—Edna.