

FOR THOSE WHO DON'T READ ME / À TOUS CEUX QUI NE ME LISENT PAS

(dir. YAN CIRIOUX, 2018 – 107 mins)

Freely inspired by the life and work of Quebec poet Yves Boisvert, a cult figure and the author of more than twenty published works, *For Those Who Don't Read Me* tells the story of a man's quest for the absolute. Boisvert's work was incantatory, energetic, ribald and plainspoken and he similarly lived his life with a combination of anger, hope and a scepticism born of intellect for the conventions of society.

All his life, Yves (Martin Dubreuil) has dedicated himself to poetry, eschewing conventional employment and carrying his suitcase to any couch that would have him after being evicted from his shabby apartment. When he breezes into Dyane's (Céline Bonnier) life, a graphic designer who falls for his charms, her son Marc (Henri Richer-Picard) immediately disapproves of this eccentric and somewhat bedraggled stranger in his mother's bed. But the studious teenager soon finds Yves' rebel counter-culture ways contagious and begins to explore his own artistic side.

Meanwhile, Yves feels increasingly trapped in his new life and decides to sabotage everything by hooking up with an old flame after a booze-fuelled binge. Once again utterly alone, he finds himself considering the essential nature of meaning.

Yan Giroux's debut feature is a compelling, intelligent and artfully realised portrait of a difficult and contrary figure living in fear of compromise; "A hard core clown of an ordinary life." Frequently selfish, boorish and frankly dislikeable – as evidenced in a distinctly uncomfortable bourgeois dinner party sequence – in Dubreuil's performance there is something of the Bukowski about him.

Giroux is to be applauded for his willingness to commit to screen his subject's rougher edges but it makes for a film that feels honest and refreshing in its depiction of the act of creating and the value placed on art above commerce. Taking its title from a comment made by Marc regarding the relative futility of being a poet if it brings neither fame nor financial reward ("I write for those who don't read me", Yves responds), Yves cites death as a preference to teaching and quits steady employment providing subtitles for hard-core pornography and TV cookery programmes. There is something quietly heroic about his refusal to bend.

The fluid photography of cinematographer Ian Lagarde (who made his own assured feature debut with *All You Can Eat Buddha* (2017), featured in last year's CANADA NOW programme) captures the brio of poetry slams and the neon-lit bars in which they are held. Similarly, Jocelyn Tellier's score injects a suitable undercurrent of melancholy.

As befitting a film about a poet, *For Those Who Don't Read Me* contains a number of transcendent moments evocative of Artist cinema, including glass shattering against a brick wall and a swirling stream buffeting a fallen log. These come together in the final sequences where Yves is stunned into silence by the incredible short film Marc has made as a college project. Created against the advice of his more conservative tutor, the film feels like a victory for Yves, and a triumph for art.

– **Jason Wood**