

It's Not Me, I Swear!

By Hannah Stadler

It is unusual to find a film that captures emotions with such ferocity as this French-Canadian drama directed by Philippe Falardeau.

The title, *It's Not Me, I Swear!*, is taken from one of the lies Leon (Antoine L'Écuyer) tells to get himself out of trouble. The use of this phrase alludes to the film's theme of growing up and accepting responsibility.

When Leon's mother leaves her family to start again in Greece, Leon, his brother Jerome, and their father must learn to move on with their lives. The two brothers try to deal with their sense of abandonment, each boy confronting his feelings in different ways. Already thought of as a nuisance, a rebel, and a liar, ten-year-old Leon tries to prove himself to anyone paying attention. Leon is a boy with a vivid imagination and no understanding of boundaries; his attempts to raise enough money to fly to Greece are fruitless, until he joins forces with his neighbour Lea. What begins as a necessary alliance becomes a sincere and innocent friendship.

The unique aspect of this film is the balance between the exploration of issues such as abuse and suicide and the comic moments between two little children, whose relationship is almost too ideal to be realistic.

A striking musical score featuring the protagonists playing the piano and cinematography capturing the atmosphere of Canada in the late 1960s make *It's Not Me, I Swear!* an utterly believable film. What starts out as a depiction of a boy's attention-seeking antics develops intricacy as each subplot in the course of Leon's adventures reveals more about the characters.

The film's target audience is adolescents; however, adults will find this film equally appealing because the story is strong, the young actors are easy to relate to, and the dialogue is witty and moving. Younger audiences may not fully understand the implications of the film, but they will still be able to appreciate its engaging characters.