

'X-Rated' provides forum for opposites to thrive

BY SARA BENNETT

Oil and water don't mix, the lead characters in "X-Rated" find out but try to ignore

The film, airing Sunday, Feb. 27, on CBC, stars Gordon Michael Woolvett and Stacie Mistysyn in a story about 20-somethings living on their own, trying to get by in uncertain economic and political times.

The film, from the producers of the "Degrassi" series, works because of its slightly eccentric characters. The world (the few people who don't live in the Epitome apartment) thinks they're offbeat. The players themselves, however, are just living life as it comes.

Woolvett portrays Tony Foster, the preppy, conservative, success-oriented son of Louise Foster and Harold Mason (Kate Lynch and Barry Flatman, who give fine performances), owners of an apartment building in desperate need of a face lift. After the superintendent dies, Tony's parents want to sell the old building but can't find a buyer because of its condition (and inhabitants).

Tony, who needs the money to finance another real estate endeavor, steps in to fix up the Pit and sell it, charging his parents a lower commission than a real estate agent would. He teams with an ex-con, Mack (Joel Bissonnette), and convinces the Pit dwellers that helping paint and spruce up the building is actually in their best interests, although it's ultimately Tony who stands to profit.

"You're looking at a lead role that has to be kind of the bad guy," Woolvett says, "but you have to be able to like him, otherwise the movie is shot."

So, how alike are Woolvett and his money-hungry character?

"I'm right now buying a house, buying a triplex," he says. "I'm going to be living there and am in the process of becoming a landlord, so it's hilarious in that respect.

"But in the other respect, I'm actually a lot more like River (Mistysyn's character). I put very little value on money and



Stacie Mistysyn stars as River Owen, a carefree 20-something-year-old living with others like and unlike her in "X-Rated," airing Sunday, Feb. 27, on CBC.

material things. I have a lot of things that are more important to me, things like principles and matters of the heart. I wouldn't say Tony is completely absent of that, but I'd say he leans more the other way."

Viewers follow Tony and other characters on their daily life chores, and when the whole apartment building gets together, egos and opinions usually clash.

River Owen (Mistysyn), Tony's love interest, returns to the Pit after living for a spell in Guatemala. She's carefree and outgoing, simply trying to make a little money so she can hit the road again.

Tony's likable qualities come through in scenes with River, whose charitable, give-something-back-to-the-world attitude tangles nicely with Tony's wheeling and dealing. They become involved without knowing much about each other, leading to humorous arguments because of their differences.

The two actors worked together on the set of the 1990 film "Princes in Exile" (for which Woolvett received a Gemini Award nomination), making scenes in "X-Rated" easier than they might otherwise have been.

"Stacie and I got to be friends then (during "Princes"), and it laid some groundwork for this film. (If) you walk in cold to someone who you don't know, and you try do the scenes, it's gonna take a few days to warm up. But we already had that getting-to-know-each-other period, so it made for a lot of threads and a lot of magic that already existed between us to really help the plot."

Mistysyn says she's not much like her character either. "Our lifestyles are very, very different," she says. "She's much more earthy and into nature, and that really is not me at all, to tell the truth. I'd like to be as environmentally aware as River is, but it hasn't fit into my lifestyle yet."

But she likes the challenge of portraying a character with a different outlook on life.

"It makes it more fun to play someone that you're not like."