

The Boy Inside

By Andrew Ryan (The Globe and Mail -10/24/2006)

In other forthright viewing tonight: **The Boy Inside** (*The Lens, CBC Newsworld, 10p.m.*) is a heartfelt documentary from Vancouver filmmaker Marianne Kaplan.

Airing in consort with Autism Awareness Month, the film documents a school year in the life of Kaplan's son, Adam, who has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. Adam seems like a decent enough kid, but he's unnaturally fearful of his new school long before the first day of classes. He knows the bullying will come. Adam was forced to leave his previous school after a student put a knife to his neck.

Although regarded as a high-functioning form of autism, Asperger's often manifest itself in socially and emotionally unacceptable behaviour. Kaplan films Adam interacting at home and in the schoolyard, where he has considerable difficulty making new friends. Adam's actions do not endear him to his classmates, who speak in interview segments of his tendency to blurt out inappropriate comments.

Much of the film involves Adam revealing his inner feelings and you can see the frustration mounting as the school year progresses. "I don't like being considered different," he tells the camera.

But Adam's mother never loses hope or stops trying to make her son's life better. Kaplan has lensed a compelling film diary in **The Boy Inside**, which demonstrates that life's biggest problems never come with an easy solution. It's a remarkable, very personal story, with a mother's love at its core.