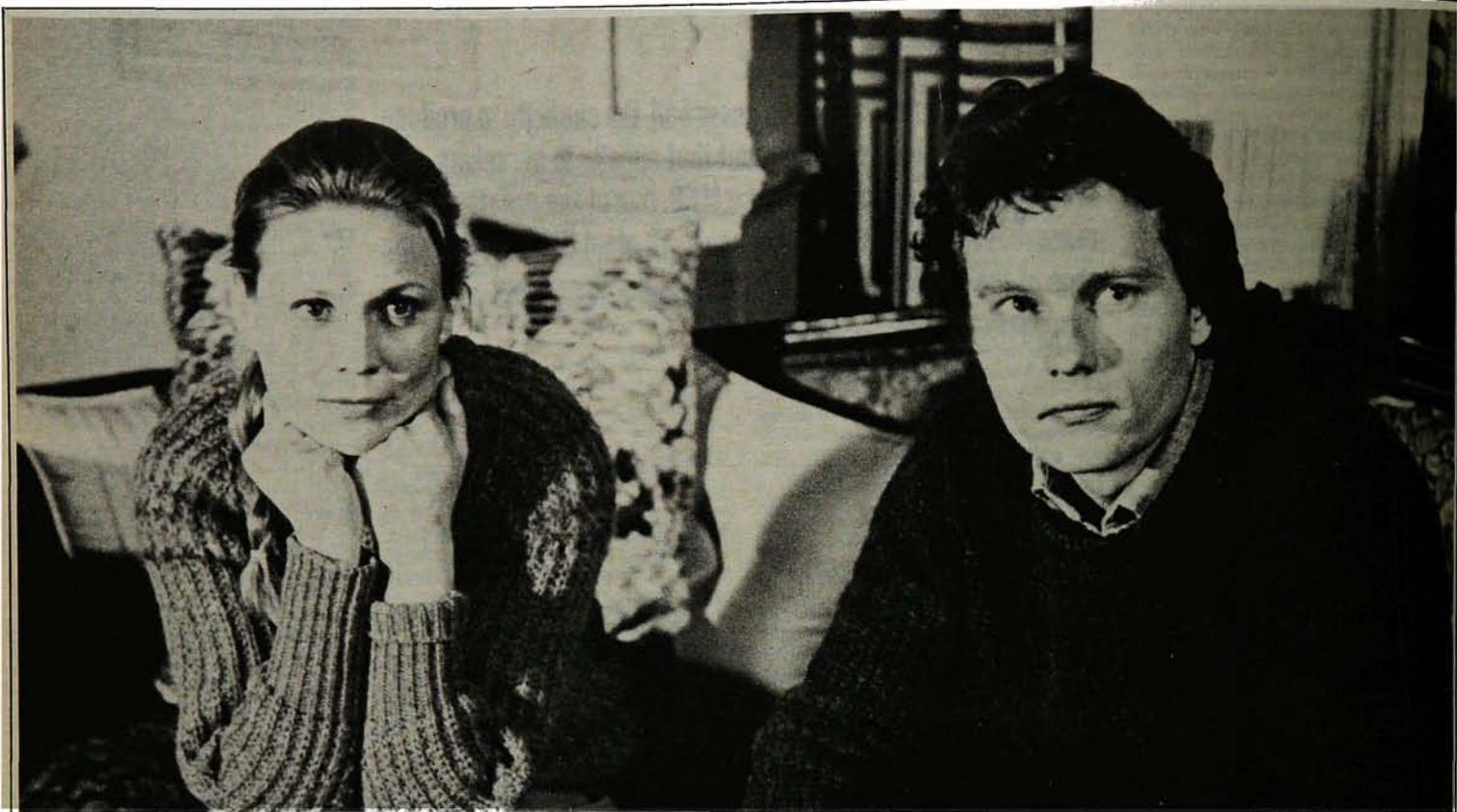


IN PROGRESS



Caught in a web of international intrigue: *The Amateur's* Marthe Keller and John Savage.

The Amateur Action on all fronts

From the last week of December until mid-February, Toronto was transformed into Washington, Prague, and Vienna, during the shooting of Balkan Film Productions' *The Amateur*, produced by Garth Drabinsky and Joel Michaels. Kleinberg Studio sets included everything from Prague apartment interiors to an immense Czech bar complete with underwater pool designed by production designer Trevor Williams.

According to Oxford's Dictionary, an "amateur" is one who is fond of; one who cultivates a thing as a pastime... hence "amateurish." A more popular definition suggests one who is inept or ill-prepared to perform a given function. This better describes the character of Charles Heller as performed by John Savage in the film.

When we meet Charles Heller, he is a harmless nine-to-fiver in the code section of the CIA whose world is that of computers, logs, and paper. Heller's girl friend is murdered in Vienna by a group of ruthless terrorists at the American embassy. Heller demands that the forces of the CIA be used to ensure their destruction. For reasons of its own the "Company" refuses. Via blackmail Heller forces the CIA to train and send him on a

personal mission of revenge. His indoctrination by fire takes him behind the Iron Curtain and into unforeseen dangers. What Heller doesn't realize is that his own side, his own "Company," also plans his demise.

The world of the CIA and the KGB is a mysterious one, populated by true professionals. There are no novices tolerated in this environment. Yet, to the dismay of both sides, Heller is introduced - an outsider, who is inept and ill-prepared to perform his personal function; an amateur, whose sloppy ways could prove an embarrassment to all. In classic form, suggesting *Three Days of the Condor*, Heller winds his way ever closer to the centre of the mystery that surrounds the death of his girl friend.

During the shooting, few local business people who make their living on University Avenue were aware that there was a full-fledged terrorist attack taking place in the old Hydro building. Somehow, the twelfth floor had been transformed to resemble, to the smallest detail, the American embassy in Vienna.

John Marley, Ed Lauter, Marthe Keller, George Coe, Graham Jarvis, and John Savage made up the international side of the cast, but they were nicely matched line for line by the Canadian contingent. Christopher Plummer and Arthur Hill represented the veteran acting school, but it was a regiment of young Canadian talent that seemed to leave the strongest impression. Collectively, their performance and demeanour on set was impeccable.

Under Charles Jarrott's direction the

terrorists - made up of leader Nicholas Campbell, Chappelle Jaffe, George Buzza, and Miguel Fernandes - became so engrossed in their roles that they were overheard to sign out after a fifteen-hour day still using their "coached" German accents. Jan Rubes and Lynn Griffin filled out the principal cast brilliantly.

One week, the Metro Toronto Zoo became a CIA winter training farm. With helicopters taking off in one direction, new recruits (who looked a great deal like part of Metro's finest), were sent through an obstacle course in the other. First assistant director Jon Anderson, doubled more as a drill sergeant than a production leader. The hills of Kleinberg doubled for the Czech frontier, with jeeps, dogs, machine guns, and a panic stricken Charles Heller. When wrap was finally called people were more frightened of being frost bitten than mauled by a guard dog.

Finally, a full-scale invasion was called for, with two dozen armed troops, trucks, jeeps, dogs, and police. Unfortunately, the weather turned, and instead of freezing temperatures, snow and ice, the crew had to adjust to autumn temperatures, fog, rain, mud, and the flu.

The crew was asked to re-enact the Battle of the Somme with buses sliding off into oblivion and stage-built houses melting under a constant deluge of rain. The carpenters had constructed a makeshift bridge over a little stream. The stream turned into a raging river and swept away their work. Somehow, the day's work was filmed, and Chris Plum-

mer didn't catch pneumonia like everyone else.

In mid-February department heads and principal actors flew off to Vienna to complete European exteriors. They left on time, and returned with a bevy of new stories, two days ahead of schedule. **Humphrey Grey** •

THE AMATEUR. p.c. Balkan Film Productions Limited (1981) p. Garth Drabinsky, Joel Michaels d. Charles Jarrott asst. to d. Margot Webb p. man. Marilyn Stonehouse loc. man. Michael Brownstone a.d. Jon Andersen (1st), Otta Hanus (2nd), Bob Wertheimer (3rd) sc. superv. Sandra Marley asst. to p. Margaret Livingston p. co-ord. Suzanne Lore sec. Angela Heald p. asst. Tom Pinteric, Rick Watts, Alan Zweig p. compt. Heather McIntosh p. acct. Lynn Lucibello asst. acct. Joanne Jackson d.o.p. John Coquillon cam. op. James Turrell, Thom Ryan (1st asst.), David A. Makin (2nd asst.) stills Shin Sugino sd. mix. Peter Shewchuk boom Herbert Heritage p. design. Trevor Williams art. d. Richard Wilcox set dec. Steve Shewchuk, Rondi Johnson set dress. Dennis Kirkham set labourer Dave Fleisher draughtsman Richard Harrison superv. ed. Richard Halsey ed. Steve Fanfara, Bruce Lange (asst.), Marta Nielson (2nd asst.) make-up Ken Brooke, Patricia Green (asst.) hair James Keeler, Albert Paradis (asst.) ward. design. Suzanne Grace ward. mistress Aleida Macdonald asst. ward. Nadia Ongaro prop. master John Berger asst. props. John C. (Butch) Rose gaf. Chris Holmes best boy Tony Eldridge elec. John Spurrell, Sam Hughes gen. op. Herbert Reischl key grip Ron Gilham best boy Glen Goodchild grip Wayne Goodchild, John Davidson sp. efx. Michael A. Clifford, R. Taylor, Leland (Bud) Fisher Lp. John Savage, Christopher Plummer, Marthe Keller, Arthur Hill, Nicholas Campbell, George Coe, John Marley, Jan Rubes, Miguel Fernandes, Jan Triska, Graham Jarvis, Jacques Godin, Neil Dainard, Chappelle Jaffe, Ed Lauter, Vladimir Valenta, Lynne Griffin, Deborah Kipp, Glenna Jones, Bobby Hannah, Tedde Moore, Lisa Schrage, Susan Young, Guy Sanvido, Fred F. Culik, Paul Hubbard, Fred Williamson, John Corbett, Maruska Stanikova