

Women vs. Cannes

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

Cher Monsieur,

Si vous n'êtes pas misogyne, j'aimerais attirer votre attention sur la projection de Vivre Ensemble, le premier film écrit et réalisé par Anna Karina.

Il a, à notre avis cette particularité d'être non seulement mis en scène par une "femme-actrice", mais Vivre Ensemble est probablement un des rares films écrit, senti et réalisé au féminin. Est-ce la raison peut-être pour laquelle la Censure a interdit ce film aux personnes âgées de moins de 18 ans?

Press notice, Cannes, 12 May 1973

Dear Sir,

If you are not a misogynist, I would like to draw your attention to the screening of Living Together, the first film to be written and directed by Anna Karina.

Not only is this film noteworthy because it is directed by an actress, but Living Together is probably one of the rare films written, acted, and directed by a woman. Is this the reason why the Censor has forbidden the film to persons under 18 years of age?

The film industry doesn't just exploit women: the film industry depends on exploitation of women. Sexism plus capitalism plus imperialism equals ISM, International Sex Market equals Cannes.

Everyone who's been there knows that Cannes is a rowdy marketplace, a mob scene for the idly rapacious rich, where the naked billfold calls the tune to which we women are expected to dance, seductively and lightly clothed. Does anyone even pretend that qualities other than slickness, sophistication and star appeal are considered in the selection of entries for the Big Show, the Palais des Festivals Screenings in the Grande Salle, where in the evenings men must wear black ties and all that goes with that vestigial bow, and women can get in with anything, including slacks and sandals, providing they obviously cost enough?

The interests of those who run Cannes and for whom Cannes runs are best served by the wide dissemination of glossy entertainment films which bring in money, amuse the masses, and don't rock the boat. It's fine if they "deal with" controversial questions, so long as no loose ends are left for the public to ponder. This accounts for most of the films shown in competition at the Grande Salle, and more interesting films that slip past for one reason or another are ignored. So the screening of Truffaut's extravaganza, *La Nuit Americaine*, attended by T himself flanked by Jean-Pierre Léaud and the requisite female stars, was a BIG event — the film was an inward turned and outdated revelry about Truffaut's film making, including a fast little scene where a greasy ethnic promoter inquires offensively why the director doesn't make a film about politics, or a sex film? He has a good anti-pollution script on hand . . . But a more appropriate question might be why the director doesn't make films politically.

On the other hand, Lina Wertmuller's *Film of Love and Anarchy*, the only film by a woman shown in competition this year, was very badly received. This film obviously got into the festival because: 1) Wertmuller's last film, *Mimi Metallurgico*, did well at Cannes last year and we might as well string along with the same token woman; 2) It had big stars (in Italy, anyway) — Giancarlo Giannini and Mariangela Melato; 3) It is set in a brothel and it's full of bawdy brothel humour. That's also why, or so they said, it failed. Too vulgar. I have another theory. It was the mixture of bawdiness and political asperity in a film so potentially subversive which offended the critics. *A Film of Love and Anarchy* celebrates the tenets of anarchist libertarianism while knocking the fascists and male idealism. It

creates a "female" iconography of humourous resilience and love amidst the sensuous statues and paintings of the brothel, and a "male" iconography of power amongst the monuments of imperial Rome, and there are men and women on both sides. I first saw the film in Milan, where it played to packed houses and roars of laughter, macho Milan, where the fascists parade openly in the streets.

There was much more attention paid at Cannes to films about women by men. That's easier, the old, comfortable story. So Losey's *A Doll House* did pretty well under the guise of "Women's Lib," and a more admirable director, Bergman, picked up quite well-deserved praise for *Cries and Whispers*, (both films shown out of competition). A very nice film, *Cries and Whispers*, but not a woman's film. Bergman uses woman as metaphor for a range of human experience . . . admirably . . . but the only woman's feature shown in the Grande Salle was Wertmuller's.

As a feminist film critic, what options did I have at Cannes? The overwhelming majority of films shown were produced directed controlled by men, and the image of women was either absent, subsumed under some area of male fantasy, or manipulated to show women as victims unwilling or unable to take control of their lives. The only clear exception (No, there was another, the Roumanian *Nunta da Pietra* or *Stone Wedding*, by Mircea Veroiu and Dan Pita. It too is simple and deep and hard, showing strong women and men and the poverty and cultural pressure that grind them like the stones they themselves grind for bare living.) was a simple film from Algeria, *El Faham*, or *The Charcoal Burner*, by Mohamed Bouamari, shown as part of International Critics' Week. *El Faham* raised the issue, problematic for me, of how far a man can go in exploring specific political problems of women without becoming part of those problems. Here it works because we see that the women's oppression, shown dramatically by her veiled seclusion, directly intensifies the man's sufferings as well as her own. Her unveiling (at her husband's insistence) so that she can join the work force (her idea) is illustrated (perhaps only in the man's fantasy) as a liberation for both man and woman. And perhaps when women are so shut out to begin with, it is the men who must speak first. You know, it's not that I mind men thinking about women's problems, it's just that articulation of our own problems, and solutions, is a first major step towards a more general unveiling. And I don't mean belly dancing.

There were hundreds of films shown at Cannes during the two-week festival: apart from the showy Grande Salle screenings there was, in the Palais, the rarefied atmosphere of the small Salle Jean Cocteau, where only press and "professionals" were admitted to see, mainly, films about revolution. *Kashima Paradise*, a documentary by Yann le Masson and Benie Deswarte, added one half a woman's film to the meagre list. Anna Karina's film was also shown here. And ten minutes' walk away, in the Cinéma le Français, one could see films which attempted to be revolutionary by challenging assumptions about what films are and ought to be. That was the home of the Director's Fortnight and of Perspectives '73, easygoing and friendly in atmosphere, with films ranging from barely competent self-indulgence to the most interesting level of controversial film-making. (The Director's Fortnight was intended to solve the "problem" posed by the "disruption" of Cannes Film Festival during the "events" of 1968 in France; when, that is, a revolution tried to happen and didn't.) There were no films by women shown at the Director's Fortnight this year. Perspectives '73, introducing new French directors,



Eros Pagni, Mariangela Melato and Giancarlo Giannini in "Film of Love and Anarchy"



Scene from "Anna and the Wolves"

showed three films by women: **Home Sweet Home** by Liliane de Kermadec, **George Qui** by Michèle Rosier, and **Sambizanga**, by Sarah Maldoror. There was a final programme of shorts including some by women, which I missed.

In addition to these more or less "Cultural" events, there was the notorious Marché du Film, home of Cheri and her friends, where the highest recommendation a film could get



Giannini, Melato and Lina Wertmuller at their press conference

Photo: Henri Bresso

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was to be banned in Sweden. I don't think any films by women were screened there, and I checked the listings daily. Then there were theatres showing films of one country: the Swiss delegation had one theatre, so did the Swedish, and the Canadians. No women's films *chez* Switzerland or Sweden it seems. I counted twenty-two Canadian films shown at the Vox; of these one was by a woman, Mireille Dansereau's fine

La Vie Revée. Don't tell me there weren't any others, tell me *why* there weren't any others.

Well, to complete the list of women's films at Cannes, apart from the six feature films and one-half documentary, there was Mai Zetterling's section of **Visions of Eight**, an eight-director coverage of last year's Olympic Games, also a documentary by Denise Tual, **Oliver Messiaen et ses Oiseaux**. These were shown at the 5:30 screenings of "Etudes et Documents" in the Grande Salle.

So seeing all the women's films at Cannes didn't exactly take all of my time. Of those films, Michèle Rosier's **George Qui** and Sarah Maldoror's **Sambizanga** were the most interesting for me. **George Qui** uses methods developed by Godard to bring history into the present, taking the life of Georges Sand as a model or "set piece" for contemporary interrogation. Insofar as the film uses Godardian (also of course Brechtian) methods to bring life to concepts otherwise frozen into clichés I found it exciting. But there was a touch too much of Godard, and like and unlike G. himself, times when mere beauty of image drowned significance and understanding.

Sambizanga like **El Faham** is power in simplicity. Using non-actors to tell the story of an Angolan rebel, Domingo Xavier, who was tortured to death by colonial police, and his wife, who didn't know of her husband's political involvement and walks from village to village carrying her child and seeking her husband, Sarah Maldoror's film builds straight to an amazingly double-edged climax of release and frustration, as the widow mourns and the people celebrate a new martyr.

Kashima Paradise was co-directed by Yann le Masson, who has made films before, and Benie Deswarte, a sociology student who speaks Japanese and was therefore doubly qualified to study the effects on a small Japanese village of a huge industrial takeover. Her feminism was less a third qualification than another whole dimension of the film. **Kashima Paradise**, a two-person effort with le Masson doing camera and Deswarte doing sound, shows how industrial capitalism and traditional Japanese culture worked together to destroy the lives of the villagers. Deswarte said there had been difficulties for her in making the film with a man, and I saw evidence of tension in the film itself, which aspires on the one hand to be a new **Alexander Nevsky**, and is fascinated on the other hand with exploring the sources of cultural oppression, both traditional and modern, and most evident in the treatment of women.

Mai Zetterling's section of **Visions of Eight** was a witty comment on weightlifting, citing figures on the costs and amounts of food consumed at the Games. I liked Milos Forman's section the best, with its wry vision of officialdom and its intercutting of a performance of the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the final event of the Decathlon. The film as a whole interested me in comparison with Leni Riefenstahl's 1936 **Olympiad**. Riefenstahl's film is still evidently a model of how to photograph athletic events, and it should have been a model of equal coverage for men and women's participation. But **Visions of Eight** chose the way of tokenism, using one woman director out of eight and then devoting one section out of eight to "the women." Riefenstahl, though, too readily accepted the body-worship of the "master-race," and it's boringly evident in her **Olympiad**. I would have expected **Visions of Eight** to be a searing contrast in view of what happened at München last year, but it was disappointingly mild, with the most minimal commentary on the assassinations and with Zetterling and Forman providing the only satirical notes.

And that was the overall tone of Cannes, really, given the basic market structure of exploitation, the surface was simply boring. I was more bored at Cannes than I've ever been before with films. (I've even begun to construct an aesthetics of boredom, based on Cannes and a recent viewing of Riefenstahl's **Triumph of the Will**.) I really like movies, from popcorn palace stuff to the arty circuit to home screenings. I like movies that carefully show people getting on with it all; and I like movies that have cracks in their surfaces, so that I have to look carefully at what caused the crack, what source for the tension; and I like movies that enjoy being movies, all that is standard film-buff taste; and best of all I like movies by women that do any of those things because I am a woman and I'm interested in the work women do and how they see people and things and talk about them. (All this is useful art, helps us survive.) But those kinds of movies weren't much in evidence at Cannes, apart from the handful of women's films, a few at the Director's Fortnight, notably Denys Arcand's **Rejeanne Padovani** and the shorter of Jean-Marie Straub's two films, **Introduction to 'Music to Accompany a Film Scene,'** by **Arnold Schoenberg**, and a couple at the Palais, which also happened to be working out rather misogynist feelings namely **La Planete Sauvage** by Laloux and Topor and **Ana y los lobos** by Carlos Saura. Much more in evidence than interesting films at Cannes were interesting directors looking for backing and not finding it. Dusan Makavejev for instance, and Agnes Varda, and Nelly Kaplan, to mention only a sample few with women in the majority. The money's there all right but the wrong people have it. There was so much champagne and lobster flowing and crawling for those who could prove they didn't need any, and such difficulties in making human contacts because of the press of inhuman contact that the clearest impression I retained of the best people and events at Cannes was that they would all have been much better away from Cannes.

Towards the end of the festival a woman I know suggested that a delegation of well-known women should approach the Director's Fortnight and ask that a Woman's Week of films be organized for next year. I am entirely opposed to that suggestion. We don't need any pieces of molding pie. We will do better to avoid cooptation. There's no point in trying to reform a rotting, vampiric institution. Since the failure of the 1968 bid for power by the French left the market orientation of Cannes has been made, in good Nixonian style, perfectly clear.

I don't think a women's film festival should be part of a men's film festival. People's film festivals of which Cannes is certainly not one should include the work of women children men from all over and don't exist and can't yet — the revolution hasn't happened.

In the next issue I will discuss the women's film festivals that have taken place in Edinburgh, London, and Toronto during the past year.

"The political arena leaves one no alternative, one must either be a dunce or a rogue."

Emma Goldman, "Anarchism," from *Anarchism and Other Essays*, first published 1910, reprinted by Dover Publications 1969.

Barbara Halpern Martineau has spent the past year travelling amongst women's film festivals, with the aberrational exception of Cannes, and preparing a book about women directors and writers. She will return to Toronto in the fall, to resume teaching feminist courses in literature and cinema at the University of Toronto. ●



Ingmar Bergman's press conference

Photo: Henri Bresso

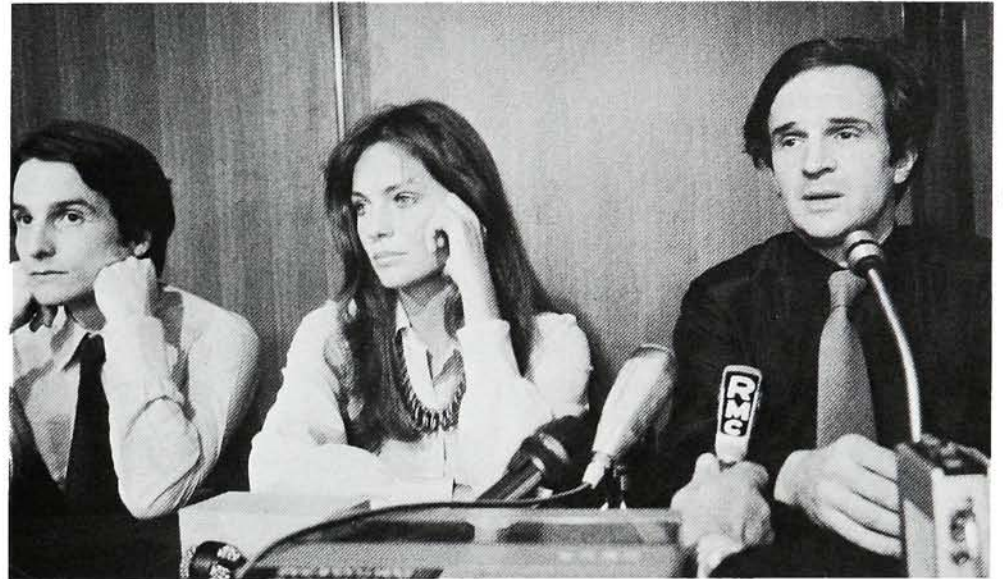
Gervais on CANNES 73

— by Marc Gervais

It may seem strange to start a report on the Cannes Film Festival with enthusiastic concentration on Ingmar Bergman. But after this year's Cannes experience, one is more than ever convinced that at the moment there are two classes of film directors: Ingmar Bergman and the others. Cannes, always a superb sampling of what is happening in film all over the world, has just confirmed this fact decisively (and sadly).

Ten years ago say, one could divide the film directors into two classes, too; and Bergman was only one of an illustrious group. But not today. When one thinks back to festivals of the recent past and compares them with Cannes 73, there is reason for disappointment and nostalgia. The early sixties, with so many directors at their peak, artists such as Fellini, Antonioni, Visconti, Olmi, Pasolini, Resnais, Bresson, Truffaut, Godard, Tati; the Czech Wave, headed by Kadar, Forman, Nemeč, Jasný; and then the surprises from Hungary and Yugoslavia — all these, along with Bergman, the Japanese, the angry young British and Richard Lester made of the cinema the art form of our century, took the leadership in film art away from the Americans, and made of Cannes and the other major world film festivals heady, exciting events.

Well, now, Bergman stands almost alone. The above mentioned names?



Jean-Pierre Leaud, Jacqueline Bisset and François Truffaut

Photo: Henri Bresso

Some of them can no longer find financial backing or are political exiles, others have gone decadent with showy pastiches of their best work. Truffaut and Chabrol work steadily in France, the transplanted Americans, Losey and Kubrick, in England; promising directors like Sweden's Jan Troel (*The Emigrants*) and Italy's Bernardo Bertolucci (*Last Tango in Paris*) may emerge; and then there was the heart-warming return to form last year of Hitchcock, Huston, and De Sica. Add to that Bunuel's perpetual second spring — not bad at all, but slim pickings indeed when compared to the feast of riches of the immediate past.

Ingmar Bergman alone seems capable of remaining at the very top of his form, ever fresh, ever renewing himself as an artist, year in year out. And now, after the success of *Cries and Whispers*, even the Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians join the rest of the world in acclaiming him openly as a master. But more—Bergman's mastery in theatre and film has been extended to television, where his six-part series of one-hour T.V. dramas has become the greatest event in the T.V. history of those countries. Bergman, in other words, is now popular with the mass audience, something hitherto unheard of. And his television films seem destined to become a landmark in world television history as well,

as the various networks are now bidding for his series.

In any case, wealthy, now happily married again, at peace with the world and with most of his shyness overcome, Ingmar Bergman did the impossible: for the first time in his life he dared attend a film festival. The occasion, of course, was the showing of *Cries and Whispers*, which was not officially in competition, but which was almost universally rated a masterpiece, and by far the best film shown at Cannes. And then it came, a moment that would warm the hearts of the old film magazines: Ingmar Bergman, hand in hand with another super Bergman, a Hollywood goddess of the past but who was now this year's President of the Cannes Jury. Yes, Ingrid Bergman. Needless to say, Cannes 73 was the year of the Swedes. And Ingmar Bergman enjoyed a triumph reserved for the likes of Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock.

If I have spent so much time on Bergman it is because there were no other films at Cannes worth celebrating to any great degree. No other film, that is, except François Truffaut's *La Nuit Américaine*, a tiny gem of a creation — and Truffaut at his best. While Bergman explores the sometimes terrifying mysteries of his own psyche, Truffaut communicates his own world, with its enchantment, the wry awareness, the

smiling tenderness. The film is about a film director named Truffaut, and played by Truffaut, making a movie. And Truffaut gets away with it, a master of his medium, communicating exactly what he wants to communicate to his audience — and all with the freshness and that elusive quality called artistic truth.

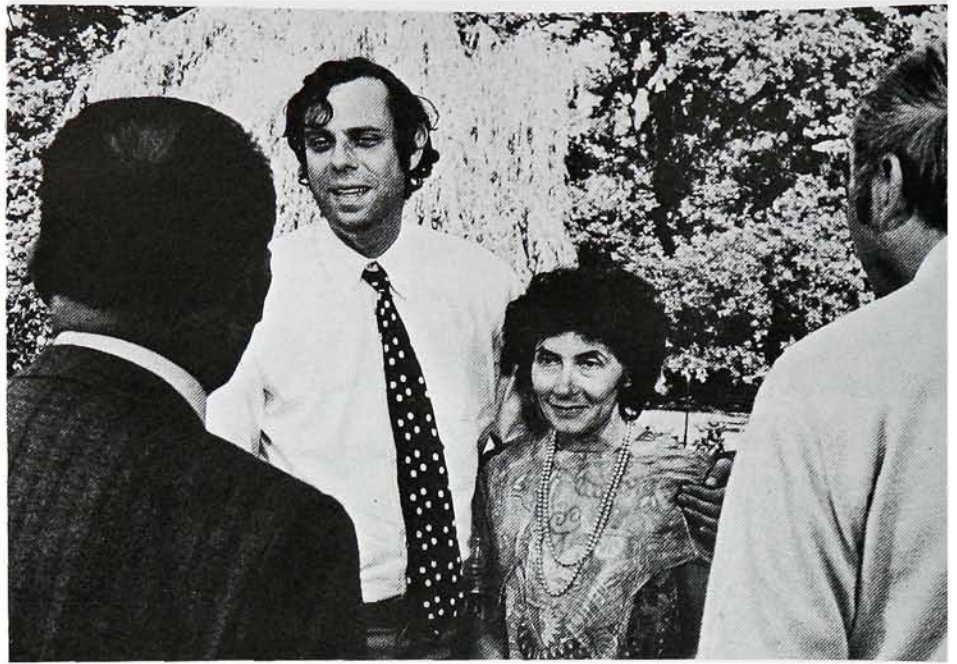
Precisely that quality — call it what you will — the burning passion and conviction, the ability to shape film material into a challenging communication that entralls — which was missing to some degree in the four hundred-and-some other films shown at Cannes. The pestilence of porno films raged unabated (some say one third of the films merited this dainty label); but even the films worth talking about, those with some kind of artistic ambition and a desire to communicate some aspect of the human condition failed, almost without exception, to have real impact.

Even the two prestigious side festivals ("The Directors' Fortnight" and "The Critics Week"), usually the centre of innovation, political involvement, excitement—and an answer to the gross "commercialism" of the other aspects of the Cannes Festival—played to reduced and less enthusiastic houses. There were a few bright spots, to be sure: e.g., a mad Brazillian comedy-tragedy, *Toda Nudez Sera Castigada*; a West German film by Werner Herzog, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, recounting in dream fashion, the horrors perpetrated by the Spanish Conquistadors; and two intelligent political films, one, *La Villeggiatura*, by Marco Leto, recounting the conversion of a University professor to activist opposition to Mussolini, and the other, *Ya No Basta con Rezar* (Praying Isn't Enough Anymore) showing how a young priest in present day Chile comes to the conclusion that his priesthood demands that he, too, become activist in the struggle for social justice, the film indeed, ends with a plea to all Christians in Chile to take up the political struggle.

But even if there were such films, and others, such as Denys Arcand's *Rejeanne Padovani* which can be interpreted as stinging denunciations of society as it exists in Québec or in our Western World, still, one definitely got the feeling that the political film is out, or at least on the wane. And the counter-culture is all but dead. The fervour and excitement of the past few years in those areas is gone. And in that Cannes 73 was very different to Cannes 72.

Bird's-Eye View.

The Africans now have their own film festivals; and this, surely, is symbolic of the fact that film-making is now a universal national pursuit. And so one sees films from countries not known especially for their film history. A big, commercial producer is, for example, Hong Kong, which is now making a



"The Invitati



"O Lucky Ma



Pauline Julien and Carole Laure in "La Mort d'Un Bûcher

major effort to export its action-violence products. But nothing here of major artistic interest. One small country, however, that now enjoys a fine reputation is Switzerland. This year's official big entry was Claude Goretta's *L'Invitation*, probably the best film in Cannes after Bergman's and Truffaut's.

But the over-all picture, as previously mentioned, is dispiriting. For years, now, experience has taught us that most films coming out of, say, Spain, Portugal, or Germany, are dreadful. But when recently film-rich countries go artistically bankrupt (in film), there is cause for wailing. With the exception of Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* and of Andrzej Wajda's Polish film, *Wedding*, there was nothing notable in evidence from such countries as Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, Japan.

And as for France and Italy, who, along with Britain and the U.S., dominate every major festival, the situation is a far cry from the good days not long ago. Truffaut's film saved French prestige (it was out of competition), for of the three official French entries, one was really an Italian endeavour, Marco Ferreri's wretched *La Grande Bouffe*, a second was a feature-length animation done mostly by the Czechs, and the third, a three-and-a-half hour sufferer by Jean Eustache (*La Maman et la Putain*) that intrigued a number of people but bored most by its pretentiousness and long-winded communication of futility.

And as for Italy—words almost fail me. What a waste of enormous talent! Supremely talented in technique, in acting bravura, the Italians go on pursuing decadence: endless posturing in empty display, often coarse and stupid, usually full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing. When will the human spirit pierce through the decadence and find life again?

The reasons why world cinema is thus impoverished at the artistic-cultural level are multiple, intertwined, and varying from one situation to the next. Tight government control may be inhibiting the Eastern European countries, for example. Elsewhere, the political cinema is growing weak as film directors become discouraged, feeling unable further to challenge the ruling technocrats. One thing for sure, the producers have regained control from the directors. Everywhere, "saleability" seems to be the top priority: is it safe, will it make money? Hence the mediocrity. The free-wheeling *auterist* cinema of ideas and experimentation in vogue a few years ago is no longer in favour.

But I would add another reason: the fault (if fault it is) may well rest within the film makers themselves. The *auterist* cinema made us sophisticated, and *genre* films (those westerns, gangsters, musicals, etc., which Hollywood had done so

brilliantly in the 30's and 40's) went out of style, to end up, much watered down, in the television wasteland. So the film makers have fewer choices today. And alas, sinking in uncertainty and doubt, they don't seem to have any ideas left . . . or perhaps they do not wish to repeat the ideas and experiences of the personalist, *auteur* cinema of the late fifties and early and mid sixties.

Two countries, however, seem better able to cope with the problems besetting the cinema today. Britain, to all intents and purposes, goes on quietly evolving, turning out quality film as it has been doing since the fifties. Every year, one has to write the same thing of the British: high craftsmanship, good taste, keen psychological and social insight, superb acting—and nothing terribly new or exciting (with the exception, to be sure, of Stanley Kubrick). And so, two beautifully made period pieces were in evidence at Cannes this May, one of them, Alan Bridges' *The Hireling*, and the other, Joseph Losey's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* Lindsay Anderson's *O Lucky Man* had the misfortune of coming out after *Clockwork Orange*, of which it is a less nihilistic, less vicious, and paler version, starring the same gifted, wide-eyed, smart alec victim, Malcolm McDowell. Anyway, *The Hireling* won half the Grand Prix, and considering the official opposition, the film deserved the award.

But it is the US that is creating by far the most vital cinema of the last few years. Most of the directors are fairly young and new to the game, and their films best reflect contemporary society as we know it. Good films, these, but lacking the brilliance, creativity, technical wizardry, and maturity of the best Hollywood films of thirty and forty years ago. But a certain dash, vigour, and humour are there. And of late an extraordinary shift is taking place. If Cannes is any indication, a long absent hope and joy may well be returning to the American cinema.

The intellectual stance of these films is interesting. Like American films of the last five years, they totally reject the *System*, America's materialistic prosperous life and everything represented by a Richard Nixon. But the counter-culture and anarchism of a few years ago, with its strident violence, drug cult, and inherent (at times) despair is equally rejected. It's all vague, it's all undefined; but unmistakably these films (at Cannes) were saying, "Let's get on with it. Let's save America. Love is possible. Life can be good." A bit unsophisticated, to be sure; but a welcome relief from the sentimental futility that has so dominated American screens.

And so, the list: James Guercio's *Electra Glide in Blue*, a sort of anti-*Easy Rider*; *Scarecrow*, brilliantly acted by Gene Hackman and Al Pacino and

sharing the Grand Prix with *The Hireling*; *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*; *Godspell*—all of them face the tough side of life, but end in some sort of spiritual victory. It may not always be convincing, but American films in Cannes were sending out that message of love and hope.

Canada, we are well aware, is not a major power in feature films. But Canada did win the Grand Prix for short films, for a fine, witty animation film by Bretislav Pojar of the NFB. Pojar is definitely Czechoslovakia's loss and Canada's gain, and his *Balablok* easily outclassed the weak opposition in Cannes.

And as for features, where the major effort is now expended, one cannot help being optimistic, in spite of the fact that no Canadian feature, I feel, really deserved to be in the major Festival as part of the official competition. As it was, the official entry, Gilles Carle's *La Mort d'un Bûcheron*, did score with a few French critics, but was a disappointment for most. The Canadian film that aroused by far the most enthusiastic response was Denys Arcand's *Rejeanne Padovani*, a hard-hitting expose of Québec corruption. William Fruet's *Wedding in White* would be next in line. Don Shebib's *Get Back*, so recently completed, also drew a very favourable comment. Rex Reed, for example, felt it to be "a superb film". Add to that *The Pyx*, *Kamouraska*, the comedy hit *J'ai Mon Voyage*, and some fifteen other features, and one has to say that Canada has never looked so strong. It takes time, of course, since feature filming is a complex operation, requiring a network of highly developed skills at many levels, many of them new to our film industry. But one senses that the network is beginning to exist, even if last year produced no "great" film.

And as for the Canadian presence at Cannes, let's say that the image was good. Canadians were out in force, and for the first time, it wasn't only the Québécois, as hardly souls from Toronto and elsewhere made the anglophone presence felt. It is encouraging too, that a new breed of much needed film producers, such as Chalmers Adams, John Vidette, and Maxine Samuels were there, the counterparts of Pierre Lamy, the Héroux brothers, etc.. Canada eschewed last year's razzle-dazzle heavy-sell approach, replacing it with what was probably the best run, most courteous, and most efficient organization in Cannes.

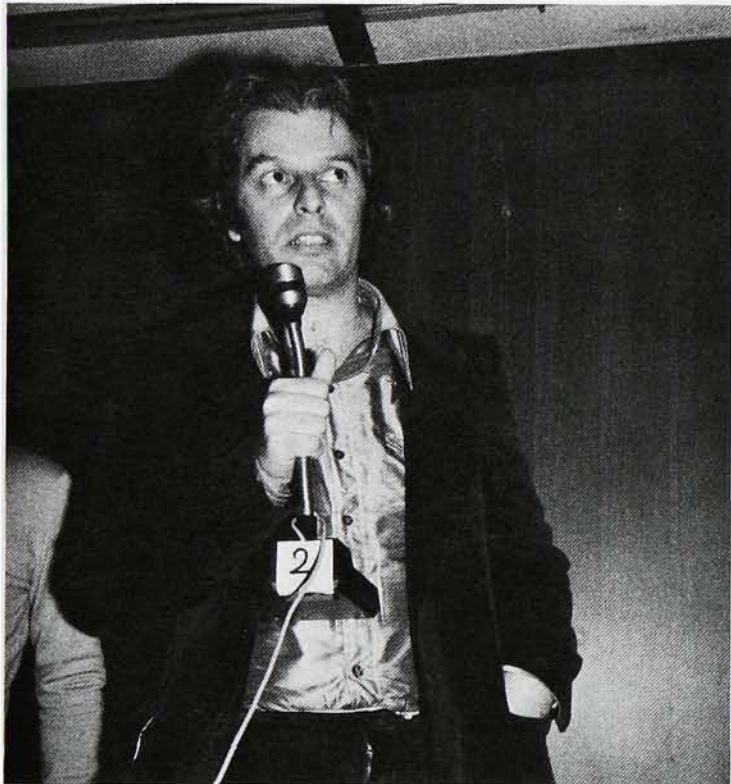
We may have already reached the point of sufficient maturity to be able to start making serious professional demands of our films. No Bergman yet, it is true. But in a world film situation that is far from dazzling, Canada is catching up. And the film world outside Canada knows it. ●

CANNES 1973

A. Ibrányi-Kiss



Jean-Pierre Leaud and Françoise Lebrun



Alexandro Jodorowsky



Anna Karina

Cannes is totally unreal.

Arriving in the too-beautiful city, you discover your press pass isn't ready because your papers haven't arrived but this discovery comes only after standing in line for two and a half hours with disgruntled journalists who become far more disgruntled when Rex Reed slithers past them to emerge in two minutes with his press card.

You panic and call the Canadian Delegation to intercede. They do and voilà! – after dispensing half a dozen 4 for 1 franc photos of yourself to all necessary authorities (the French love photos) you receive a legitimate press card.

You naively ask for the film list only to be informed there is no such thing BUT you can compile your own by getting *Le Bulletin* every day (which is in French) since it's far better than the English *Cinema TV Today*, as long as you get up at dawn to push your way through the throngs at the Carlton or the Palais . . .

That's when you realize that six films are screened simultaneously at one of twenty theatres scattered all over Cannes! By this time, you're ready to give up and work only on a Mediterranean tan (as the scores of Beautiful People do) when a Québécoise friend who has been through it all calmly smiles and tells you to get fifteen hours' sleep and then get used to the chaos. Good advice.

You settle into a small hotel run by a Franco-Jewess who fought in the Six Day War and get used to two weeks of running from press conferences to screenings. Fifteen hundred journalists are registered, the Press Room holds two hundred, but even if you squeeze in you can't see through the photographers hogging the front table. All through this tickertapes are whirring with news of Watergate and kidnappings and murders and famine while everyone in Cannes looks healthy, wealthy, happy and suntanned. So you end each day in the Petit Carlton amidst red wine, Gauloises smoke and Canadians/Norwegians/Germans/French/Swedes talking about fifty-odd feature films in twelve days and you wonder what the hell you're going to write?

(Cannes is institutionalized insanity.)

You're disappointed at having seen only two excellent films out of fifty. You expected brilliant works to be shown daily – masterpieces from all over the world! Forget it. The great majority of films at Cannes were skin-flics screened in the marché; after which came a slew of mediocre films (great for much-needed sleep); commercial films consumed and forgotten; the odd film which flirts with your imagination; and films which are interesting for other, strange reasons.

Skin-flics had grade five dirty jokes for titles (i.e. *Secrets of a Door-to-door Salesman*) and sold better than anything else. Sad, but true. The mediocre films were just embarrassing and most of the hoopla centered around the good commercial movies.

These had the stars, publicity budgets, and Superior Brand directors. Films like *Jeremy*, *Scarecrow*, and *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon-Marigolds* from the States; *O Lucky Man*, *Doll's House*, and *The Hireling* from Great Britain; *La Nuit Américaine* from France; *The Invitation* from Switzerland; *The White Mafia* and *Film of Love and Anarchy* from Italy; and *Visions of Eight* with an international cast of directors. None of these films were very innovative in style, content or technique but some are more outstanding than others.

One fine film was *Scarecrow* by Jerry Schatzberg starring Al Pacino and Gene Hackman with Vilmos Zsigmond on camera. Both actors were splendid – Hackman performing one of the best stripteases ever. Reminiscent of *Midnight Cowboy* but with strong touches of humanity and hope, the film follows two drifters who befriend each other on the road.

Another 'up with humanity' film was documentary-director Arthur Barron's *Jeremy* – a sentimental look at first love, well portrayed by teenagers Robby Benson and Glynis O'Connor. Although brinking on saccharine and lacking deep messages or new insights, *Jeremy* is palatable and technically one of the

best blow-ups from Super 16 to 35mm. That, in itself, is an achievement!

Man-in-the-Moon-Marigolds did quite well at Cannes – having the necessary touch of glamour with Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward sharing the limelight. Her strong portrayal of a neurotic woman trying to ‘cope’ won her the award for Best Actress.

England won more prestige with **O Lucky Man** than with either **A Doll’s House** or **The Hireling** (even though the latter split the Grand Prix with **Scarecrow**). Though well constructed, for anyone familiar with Kurt Vonnegut, **Mash**, **Dr. Strangelove**, **Clockwork Orange** or **Hail!** – **O Lucky Man** has little novelty. Perhaps what Lindsay Anderson has best achieved is a tapestry of 60’s social and political criticism woven into an energetic, lively, thought-provoking 70’s film. Anderson, well-known for the ability to make big features on little budgets, used the same actors in different parts and as strangely recurring characters – a method which doubtless helped the budget but also managed to become an intrinsic part of the plot. At the subsequent conference Anderson cleverly manipulated the arrogant press by being even more arrogant! He hailed his work as an ‘epic’ of Biblical proportions – brilliantly executed, as was his film.

Truffaut again met expectations with **La Nuit Américaine** – a love ode to Cinema. He takes an affectionate look behind the scenes of feature filmmaking and at the people involved, yet it seems as if you’ve seen it all before – the vignettes, betrayals, failings of love . . . Definitely nice work, but hailed as a masterpiece mainly by devout fans.

One of the most ambitious projects, **Visions of Eight**, was pieced together from the work of eight different directors. The most enjoyable sequence was Milos Forman’s, the most irritating – Michael Pfleghar’s section on **The Women**. Condescending and insulting, it deserved every hiss and boo it received.

Mai Zetterling provoked criticism from sports-lovers who felt she was making fun of weight-lifting. She reminded them of her voice-over introduction in which she explained, “I am not interested in sports – I am interested in obsessions.” Which is exactly what she captured. **Visions of Eight** was, however, disappointing in its unevenness and maddening disinterest in the political events triggered by the Olympic Games Massacre of 1972.

Lina Wertmuller’s **Film of Love and Anarchy** was one of the few political films shown, (see *Women vs. Cannes* in this issue for a detailed write-up). Perhaps the Western world is no longer interested in politics?

There were two films interesting for political reasons only, Carlos Saure’s **Anna and the Wolves** (Spain) and Carmelo Bene’s **Amleto** (Italy). One director is struggling as an artist in a fascist state, the other in a neo-capitalist state. Saure resubmitted his script three times before being allowed to shoot, and Bene’s script was refused outright by the state.

Anna and the Wolves is insulting in its simplistic symbolism. For example: an epileptic matriarch representing aristocracy; three brothers representing militarism/fascism, sexual frustration/obsession, and maniacal Christianity; with Anna (Geraldine Chaplin) as the innocent destroyed by powers she thought manageable.

As cinema, **Amleto** is impossible – over two hours’ hysterical screaming and yelling while the camera keeps whirling (no shot is over 30 seconds). A totally painful experience.

Nonetheless, the premise that art and politics are interdependent livened up both press conferences. Saure intensely related his tribulations and Bene – proclaiming himself a living protest – pleaded the case of young filmmakers not allowed to make films by nepotistic capitalism (i.e. it’s not what you know but who you know).

Highly political exciting cinema came from the Third World. Leaving behind scratched, shaky 16mm prints screened only at leftist meetings, Third World cinema has now become a strong, technically excellent, and artistically serious presence.



Scene from Marco Ferreri’s “La Grande Bouffe”



Jean Eustache, director of “La Maman et la Putain”

Photo: Henri Bresso



Françoise Lebrun, Jean-Pierre Leaud and Bernadette Lafont

Leading this emergence is **Touki-Bouki** (Senegal) by Djibril Diop Mambety. His first scene establishes the painful theme of colonialism and cultural annihilation. While portentous red credits are rolling, the slow and easy rhythm of a young boy driving steer through grassy plains is established. The boy’s movements bring him ever closer – his rhythm in tune with the land’s. Suddenly, the scene cuts to the steer swiftly being slaughtered by sweating men ankle-deep in blood working under a boss’ stare. Blood fills the screen as George Bacher’s dynamic camerawork zooms in on death and angrily thrusts glistening Black bodies on screen. Thereafter, the story shifts to two young Senegalese trekking towards a ship for Marseilles and the Beautiful Life of the colonisers. Fast-paced editing

cuts from their own world to ludicrous (in that context) *chansons* and fantasies of 'making it'. The lessons learned are bitter, the visions strong, and *Touki-Bouki* has tremendous impact.

This excellence has more relevance when contrasted to films attempting to create an African Hollywood. *Al Ousfour* (Egypt) could have been a fascinating film of the Arab view of the Six Day War, were it not for the Hollywood-type light-skinned actors with Colgate smiles chosen to play the leads — all so painfully 'different' from everyone else, especially in crowd scenes. The only authenticity maintained is in the folk music score. That's when you realize how basic is the need for cultural identity!

One of the best moves in this direction is *Ganja and Hesse* (USA). Bill Gunn, who previously directed *Blackula*, is emerging from the wave of exploitation films towards a unique Black American Cinema. Although there are still elements of horror/mystery, *Ganja and Hesse* emphasizes racial alienation and resulting cultural schizophrenia. The film is technically uneven (noticeably on indoor shoots) but with well-depicted psychological struggles and remnants of archetypal memories, while the raw strength of Black American music scores the characters' agonies.

Although there were no films questioning the boundaries of celluloid as much as the average short in the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, there were a few experimental ones — especially when contrasted to the overwhelming number of 'conventional' films. *Bel Ordure* (Beautiful Garbage — France), *La Sourire Vertical* (The Vertical Smile-France), *Sanatorium* (Poland), *La Planète Sauvage* (France) and *Holy Mountain* (Independent) were all experimental; but only by employing surrealism and interesting editing techniques.

Bel Ordure splintered time to play with levels of reality. Jean Marboeuf directed this feature which jumped back and forth between the story of a fairly bourgeois couple and the unrelated narration of a clown/minstrel.

Far more experimental, *La Sourire Vertical* filmed a middle-aged historian's psyche. Most of the film consisted of his nightmares, daydreams, dominating fears of castration and of being cuckolded. Catholicism and French History battled for power in the man's thoughts resulting in visions of the Church and the Plague toying with crawling masses, and an hilarious rewrite of the story of Joan of Arc. Director Robert Lapoujade even brought Hieronymus Bosch paintings to life to make this one of the best non-linear surrealist works in years. (It is interesting to note, that *La Sourire Vertical* has since been turned down by France's Censor Board for both export and domestic runs. Lapoujade rightly claims that his film is nowhere near being pornographic, and that the Board probably rejected the film's unorthodox and heretical look at the Church and history.)

Wojciech Has based *Sanatorium* on the writings and paintings of Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jew killed by the Nazis. He recreates a long-gone world seeped in Judaic tradition and cultural memories. Has masterfully proves his thesis that one cannot journey back in Time since the Future constantly changes the Past — a fitting and beautiful tribute to Schulz' memory.

Set entirely in a distant future, *La Planète Sauvage* was the only feature-length animation film. It was listed as a French production but most of the animators were Czechoslovakian. A beautiful work done in subtle, muted colors, it is imaginative and deals with basic truths concerning freedom and knowledge.

Also surrealist with powerful imagery, *Holy Mountain* is a "Gospel according to Jodorowsky". Famous for *El Topo* and the rejection of established ways of financing films (this was also paid by Allan Klein's coffers with a neat \$4 million) director/actor Jodorowsky portrays a spiritual Master-Teacher. He collects ten powerful people corrupted to the *n*th degree in various ways and takes them and the audience on a soul-purifying journey ultimately leading to the secrets of know-

ledge and power. *Holy Mountain* is a modern pilgrimage weaving all the major philosophies and teachings of mankind with Jodorowsky's personal visions. Classical visions of hell in contemporary settings are lucidly depicted and masterfully handled to depict inner journeys.

The subsequent press conference was the the most unique at Cannes. Realizing he had no need for a translator, Jodorowsky answered all questions in English, French, Spanish and Esperanto. The Man In Charge, feeling rebuked (after a futile attempt to beckon all 'real journalists' to leave in protest) turned off the entire microphone system! The conference proceeded regardless with Jodorowsky animatedly talking about film, the film industry, himself, and his hopes for changing existing structures through the use of celluloid. Recounting numerous attempts on his life made by Mexicans outraged at 'heretical' sequences, he strongly projected the image of a twentieth century prophet-crusader. One was reminded of another Allan Klein alliance — George Harrison's Bangla Desh Concert — for both men feel that money can lead to power in this world. If the right people get their hands on it, they can change the course of history. A very controversial and dynamic figure — Jodorowsky.

The honor of directing the Most Debated Film belongs to Marco Ferreri for *La Grande Bouffe* (France). The plot is simple: four men, all past forty and respected members of society — 1 pilot, 1 restaurant owner, 1 radio announcer and 1 judge — lock themselves into an elegant mansion and eat themselves to death. (They succeed.) The film graphically illustrates all four grotesque deaths in nauseating color. Well directed and acted (with Marcello Mastroianni among others) but — WHAT DOES IT MEAN? True to form, Ferreri refused to explain. It was fascinating to see the divisions on this one: the French were totally disgusted, the Germans loved it, half the Italian journalists tried to convince everyone that Ferreri wasn't Italian and the other half hailed him as a great master with *the* definitive work on decadence. I, for one, don't know what to write about *La Grande Bouffe* except that nobody could bring themselves to eat anything for hours after the screening . . .

By far the most underrated film was Anna Karina's *Vivre Ensemble* (Living Together — France). Most of the initial excitement was due to Godard's still-mythical stature, and it seemed that the greatest criticism of Ms. Karina's first attempt at directing was that it was not Godard-ian enough. The film is no masterpiece, but it was never intended as one. It is a loving film of a couple living together. What is most refreshing about *Vivre Ensemble* is that the characters are real, living in contemporary situations, and their story is simple, human, and understated. Besides directing, Anna Karina wrote the screenplay and played the lead — thus the highly personal subjectivity. It is a gem in the best tradition of the humanism East Europe brought to cinema in the early sixties.

Unfortunately, the East European presence was weak this year. There were good films — *Sanatorium* (mentioned earlier) *Petőfi 73* and *Photograph* (Hungary), and *The Sun Rises Once a Day* (Poland) — but only two hinted at freshness and clarity.

Drustvena Igra (Society Games — Yugoslavia) was an 'innocent' film with a strong Godard influence. Director Srdya Karanovic placed an ad in a newspaper asking people what roles they would like to play in the movies. The beginning documents those who responded, who they are and what they'd like to play: a spy, an unhappy youth, a dancer, a jealous husband, etc. Then they act out these roles simultaneously providing some hilarious footage — couples waltzing while spies chase jealous husbands attempting to kill unfaithful wives and so on. As the film progresses, it turns very serious and the presence of East European fatalism takes over. Although the color stock was nothing worth noting, *Drustvena Igra's* free form vivacity was wonderful.

Far more sophisticated and carefully structured is Márta Mészáros' *Szabad Lélegzet* (Free Breathing — Hungary). Written and directed by Mészáros, the film follows a young woman

working in a textile factory and her affair with a University student. His parents, of course, break up the impending marriage – but not before the subjugation of women and sharp class distinctions are clearly unveiled. Beautiful black and white visuals and strong, clear music underline the criticism in each understated scene. A marvelous film!

It was difficult not to be awestruck by Bergman's press conference. Seated on the stage of the great Palais (the Press Room was much too small for this one) were Ingrid Thulin, Harriet Andersson, Kari Sylwan and Ingmar Bergman. This conference was nothing like the others. It was hushed, very dramatic; and Bergman was noticeably nervous – he rarely does this kind of thing. But when the questions started, he became at ease and calmly answered. For example, he was asked why red, black and white were the dominating colors of *Cries and Whispers*. He replied, "As a child, I had always pictured the soul as being hard and black outside and moist red inside. I realize it's very silly, and probably Freudian, but directors are influenced by silly childhood visions . . ." And so on.

Four magnificent actresses, Bergman's sensitive timing and understanding of the power of color all contributed to making *Cries and Whispers* one of the few films to be placed alongside great art and literature.

Bergman explained in a press release, "Would you mind listening to me for a little while? Only a moment. I just want to tell you that I have made a film for you. Perhaps just for you . . . If you ask me whether it's a good film or a bad film, I don't know. All I know is that it is a film dear to my heart. That is why I ask you to see it. I want you to like it."

I've left *La Maman et la Putain* (The Mother and the Whore – France) for the last because it was my favorite film, and because it is very difficult to write about. It is a three-hour black and white film that must be seen. Jean Eustache has written and directed a work which achieves in cinema what

Henry Miller did in literature – an intense look at life as we live it in this century.

La Maman et la Putain probes three levels – political realities, societal interaction, and basic individual needs and desires. While the political developments of 20th century France (i.e. Western world) are scrutinized, three people are searching for better ways of living/loving together and throughout, each individual human being desperately tries to crawl out of their lonely voids. Most of the film consists of long, intricately structured monologues with life's contradictions weaving in and around the two women (Bernadette Lafont and Françoise Lebrun) and a man (Jean-Pierre Leaud). The film brilliantly and honestly questions the sexual morés of our 'liberated generation'.

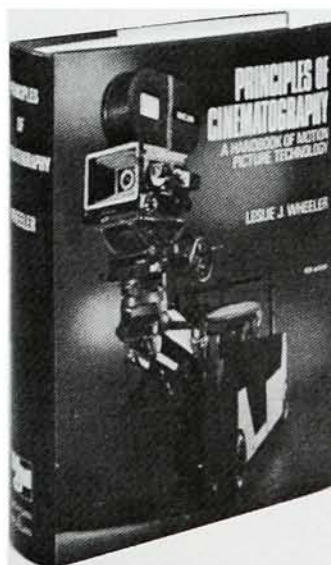
At the press conference, Leaud was asked how he felt about the character he so beautifully portrayed in this film. He answered, "In most films I was always playing an adolescent. In *La Maman et la Putain* I am not yet a complete man, but I am getting very close . . ."

The film does not end. It has an ending, yes. But you leave knowing that nothing is really resolved and maybe nothing was even learned. A unique and troubling film – and one that will be studied for years yet.

Epilogue: After seeing fifty-odd films from all over the world, the most exhilarating feeling was due to the realization that Canadian films are definitely on par with international standards! (See Issue no. 8 for the report on how Canadian films fared.)

This year, the NFB's *Balablok* easily won the award for Best Short Film; and Denys Arcand received rave reviews for *Rejeanne Padovani*. Doubtless, by next year Canada will be in a far better position to compete on every level, but for such a young industry we are doing very well. For myself, it was simply exciting to be part of Canada's presence at Cannes and there are only 39 weeks left until next year's Festival. . . •

cinematography, principles of a major guide to the technical processes by Leslie Wheeler



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