

lived in Los Angeles for a bit, and then I moved to New York. I've been half there and half in France for the last two years. Now, I'm in this sort of edgy position, where I'm almost part of it; there's a lot of things I understand and share, but I'm still an outsider." **Atlantic City, U.S.A.** represents the first contemporary picture he has shot in the last ten years, a particular challenge for Malle, who states that he needs to find "a distance from a subject that's happening right now," and believes he may have worked toward it this time by means of stylization. "Here, it's stylized in the sense that it's making fun of something that's basically serious. It has the plot of a thriller, and it's describing social and economic changes in Atlantic City, but it's done as a comedy, the same way **Murmur Of The Heart** was a comedy about something that's considered immensely serious."

He has been drawn to American subject matter before, and returns to it now because he finds the States "much more interesting than Europe at this point. Europe is just reproducing what's going on in America five or ten years later. Culturally, it's very dead. The impetus for change, the patterns for culture in the Western World; they're all coming from the U.S." Malle readily admits that **Atlan-**

tic City, U.S.A. is "only accidentally a Canadian film. I'm using a number of Canadian actors, whom I'm very pleased with, and a Canadian crew, which is excellent. Our exteriors were shot in Atlantic City, and we're shooting interiors in this studio, but I feel good about this picture — my integrity's not in question. If this type of project enables you to end up with films about Canada, made by Canadians, then the experience will have been justified. The mistake is to make too many commercial compromises — to turn out imitation American pictures. The French did that too, and it didn't work, mostly because the Americans do them better. We did films with American stars, American subject matter, and called it 'Le Cinéma Mid-Atlantic.' Ultimately, it was 'nulle part' — nowhere." He adds emphatically: "But there's nothing worse than stagnation. The technicians and creative people are working here, and that's very important. Hopefully, within the framework of this commercial industry, a really indigenous film business will develop. As a 'guest director' in this country, that's what I'd like to see; then the whole exercise will have been worthwhile."

Barbara Samuels



Susan Sarandon giving Burt Lancaster a hand in **Atlantic City, U.S.A.**

Babe!

d. Rafal Zielinski **asst. d.** Yvon Arsenault, René Chenier **sc.** Edith Rey **ph.** Peter Czerski **ed.** Avde Chiriaeff **sd.** Richard Nichol **a.d.** Real Ouellette **m.** Gino Soccio **cost.** Denis Sperdouklis **choreo.** Lynn Taylor-Corbett **lp.** Buddy Hackett, Yasmine Bleeth **exec. p.** Morden Lazarus **p.** Arthur Voronka, Rafal Zielinski **p. manager.** Gilbert Dinel **p.c.** Rafal Productions Inc.

The most unexpected thing about **Babe!** is how smoothly the shoot seems to be running. While filming an orphanage scene in a condemned university building, the crew members bitch at each other, shots are altered, half the actors are kids and the producers still haven't rounded up all the funds. Yet, the only real setback that has put the film three shots behind schedule has been the exterior shooting, delayed by the weather.

Polish-born Rafal Zielinski, at 25 years of age, is directing his first professional feature. Rafal (he prefers) runs his set in an open and easygoing manner. The shot is a simple dolly and pan of a cafeteria kitchen, where 12-year-old Yasmine Bleeth, scrubs a stone with steel wool, doing penance for an unsuccessful orphanage

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escape. She sneaks a glance at the script as Rafal directs her in repeated dry runs. Changes in the shot are attempted, pros and cons pondered until Rafal takes the final decision. "You have to accept everyone's contribution, mold them together into one viewpoint and put it on the screen," Zielinski says later.

An interview is difficult with this man as he runs around the set, handling the details large and small. He is apologetic, but he has to get the job done. One is impressed by his humility, and his ability to treat everyone on the set in a courteous and affable manner. Though at times he must raise his voice to instruct the not-always-receptive children, generally he is calm and genial. "The first A.D. does the yelling for me," he quips.

Babel, co-authored by Zielinski and Edith Rey, describes streetwise 11-year-old orphan (Yasmine Bleeth) who wants to become a disco star. She meets Sammy (Buddy Hackett) who teaches her the ins and outs of 'show biz'. "It's a very colourful and rich film," Zielinski says of the musical, which is structured on the theme of *A Star is Born*.

The film, scheduled for completion at the end of December, is aimed at a teenage audience, although a wider appeal is expected. According to assistant producer Gilbert Diné, the 1.25 million dollar project may give birth to a TV spin off, a disco special using segments and characters from the film. But this is still a 'maybe'.

All but two of the musical numbers have already been shot. "Music is integral to the film," says Diné. The final edit is planned for March and there are hopes of taking the film to Cannes. Generally, everyone is happy with Zielinski's methods. According to sound engineer Richard Nichol, Rafal is understanding. "He takes feedback from the crew." But not everyone is pleased with the producers. There are complaints that the film suffers from cost-cutting in the wrong places, that the set is understaffed. "They're trying to save nickels and dimes" observed one crewmember.

Co-Producer, Arthur Voronka denies this. It's a low budget film and some crew members are spoiled by over-crowded, expensive productions. Voronka, whose past films include *Loving and Laughing* and *Fortune in Men's Eyes* feels that he can make a film on a low budget. "I'm out to make a commercial, viable film," he says. Does this mean sacrificing the quality of the film? "I think it can have all the artistic elements and still be commercially viable," he states.

Voronka feels that films aimed at Amer-

ican audiences and dependent on big budgets and big stars, are going in the wrong direction. "We should do what we can. We have to take advantage of what we have around us." He concedes that he's taking a chance by using a director new to the commercial feature industry — although Zielinski did walk off with Best Documentary award for *Michel Pellus* at this year's Moscow film festival — and the equally new Peter Czerski, Rafal's laconic cameraman, the bulk of whose experience has been with Zielinski.




The shot is in a makeshift boardroom. Rafal draws his camera plan on a piece of scrap-paper and, alternating between English and Polish, discusses the shot with the cameraman.

There are the usual problems. It's daytime in the script but it's dark outside. The sound man says there's too much echo, the camera can be heard grinding. Rafal consults with his crew, the solution is found.

In a free moment I ask him how he feels about his first feature, and whether he is worried about its success. "All you worry about is keeping on schedule and on budget." Then, excusing himself, he rushes off to solve another problem on the set.

David Arrayet



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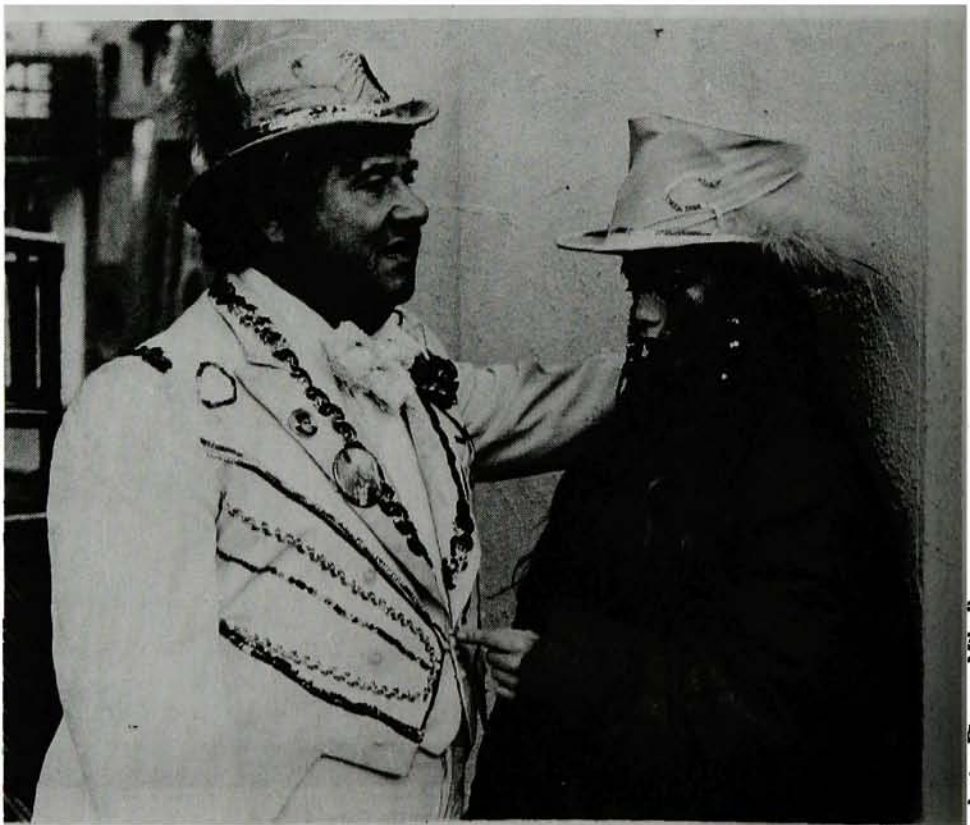
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Babe's Theresa (Yasmine Bleeth) — envious of Sammy's (Buddy Hackett) jacket?

photo: Pirotra Mihalka



With the help of her friend and mentor, this rebellious orphan surmounts a multitude of hardships

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