

three years, it took me a year-and-a-half. The first year I did two films for six or seven months, the third year I worked for eight to eight-and-a-half months. Now I work all the time — non-stop. I didn't give up. . . No credit to me, but the fact is, I decided I wanted to do it, and when I saw that there was nothing else in life I wanted to do, I went for it.

"I don't do a show just to make money. I do it because I believe in the script first of all, and I believe in the director, second. What makes it exciting is that every film you work on is different. You could go to the Arctic to do a wildlife show, where you would learn about certain kinds of animals and certain people; or you could work on a film like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and you'd learn all about

those institutions — then probably turn around and do a film about high school football! You learn about life and you get paid for it."

Home base is Montreal and there's a strategy in that. Harold Greenberg, André Link, Denis Héroux, Claude Léger are based in Montreal: ". . . the most established and prolific producers in Canada. All these guys were around before the Capital Cost Allowance. They were making movies before any tax breaks came along. They'll always be making movies."

For now, Roger Vadim's *Art of Deceit* is keeping Jim busy. . . perhaps a documentary or a TV series later — and always the search for the right script. As director.

Krystyna Hunt

## ceil gruessing

# head over heels

From the Babylon of Hollywood to the Main in Montreal, Ceil Gruessing has choreographed her way across a continent. And the new kid in town is making a hit.

In her native Los Angeles, Ceil has choreographed talents such as Jane Fonda, Cher, Robin Williams, Sally Kellerman, Susan St. James, Marvin Gaye, Valerie Harper, Tina Louise and Susan Strasberg, to mention only a few.

Here in Montreal, she is sitting in her dance studio on the Main trying to decide which leg warmers she will wear. It is a bleak January morning in the midst of a so far snowless but very cold winter. Why would anyone leave Southern California's chronic warmth for *this*?

"Movie stars are just furniture that need ego-petting until you are on their financial level. You get no energy from them whatsoever. Besides, I came here to visit a few years back, and loved it. When I was offered a teaching job here I grabbed the opportunity for a change of scenery. Montreal's so much like Europe in so many ways, and there seemed to be something very exciting and inspiring about the scene here."

The first film she choreographed was Bill Ritchards' *The American Success Company* with Belinda Bauer, Jeff Bridges and Bianca Jagger. (Shot in Munich, the film is yet to be released.) In it she created a ballet for the lead Belinda Bauer, eventually incorporated a waltz not originally in the script, and worked off

the set with Bianca Jagger. "Bianca likes to work alone as much as she can; I think she felt a little strange about making a film. We were trying to choreograph a scene where she is supposed to turn on her bedside radio and do a striptease, the idea being to seduce Jeff Bridges. . . She isn't the bitch the media makes her out to be at all. Instead, I'd have to say that she's an intensely private person, trying very hard to keep to herself. She dresses impeccably, carries herself with an awful

lot of dignity (belying her short stature) and has this inborn air of aristocratic chic. You have to work hard to pry her open."

Not long after arriving in Montreal, Ceil choreographed her first Canadian picture; the Robert Lantos production of *Suzanne*, where she worked with Jennifer Dale and Winston Reckert. *Your Ticket is No Longer Valid*, another Lantos film, followed. This time she worked again with Reckert and Dale, as well as with Mandy Halson and Leslie Rae. "You have to remember, when you're working in film, that actors are not necessarily dancers. The first thing you must do is work with the director. He lets you know how the dance sequences are supposed to move the plot along." Here a common misconception emerges; "Actors may not be trained dancers, but you can teach anyone to dance. I create a dance both with, and around, the actor (actress). I like to find out how they would do the dance, and then I help them along from there. The only rule within the dance itself, is to stick to the theme of the film, then find just the right music that's consistent with that mood."

In effect, both she and the actor create the dance together.

Of her own musical preferences she remarks, "I like to dance to horizontal jazz. My earliest influence was the *early* Motown sound, like Marvin Gaye, Junior Walker, that sort of thing. Another one of my favorites is Gato Barbieri (who did the soundtrack for *Last Tango in Paris*). As far as dancers themselves go, my favorites are still Liza Minelli and Tony Basil (who choreographed *The Rose*).



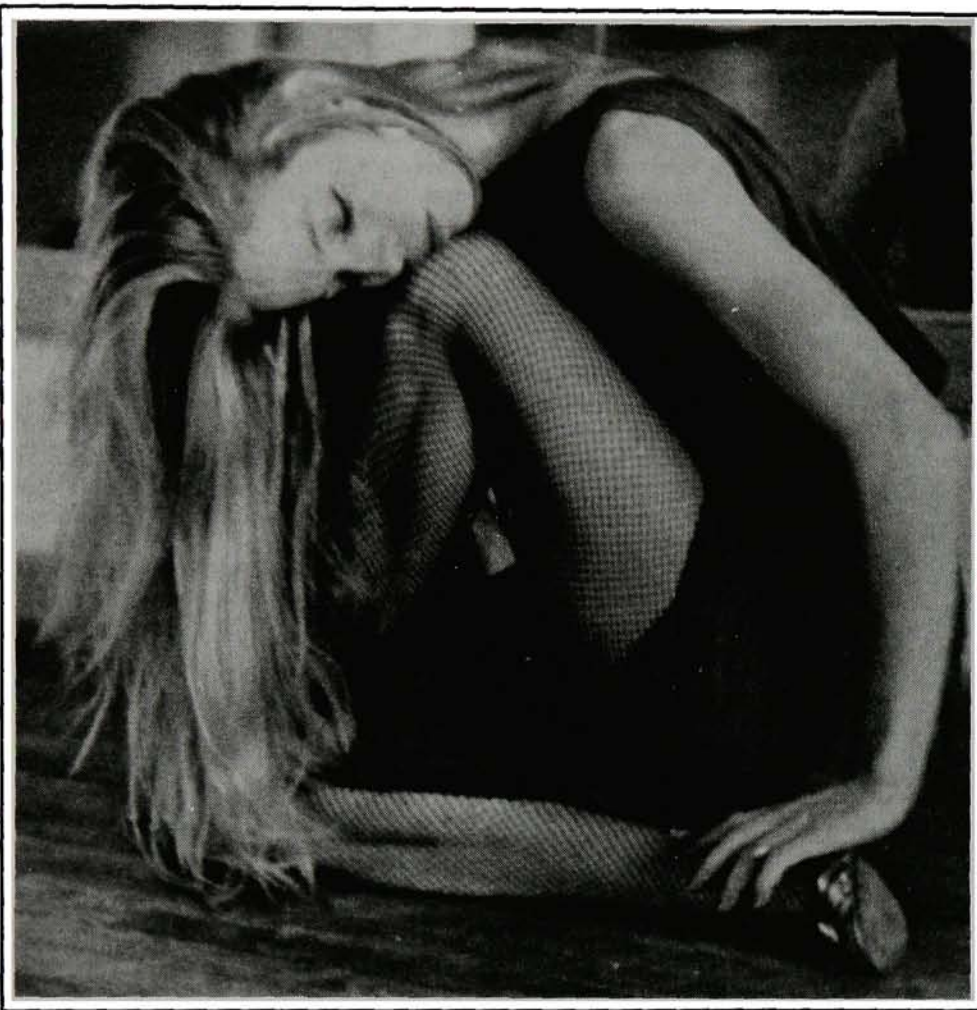
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Ceil Grvessing — a cool choreographer waiting for the right cabaret

For Ceil, time is of the essence. "My time is divided between working out in the studio, teaching three classes a day, choreographing films, theatre and fashion shows. On the average I work out six to eight hours a day. With that kind of regimen there isn't much time for a social life."

As we take a break for coffee — Ceil is anxious to show off one of her little finds — a delightful café on Duluth Street — all the while displaying that enthus-

iasm one finds only in newcomers to a city.

The final surprise comes when mention is made of the *unusual* sweater she is wearing over her proverbial skin-tight black pants. Knitted in every conceivable colour, it is flashy, yes, but fun; and knitted into the sweater are gold tinsel garlands and bright satin ribbons that fall from the neckline and the cuffs. "Oh," comments Ceil, with characteristic candor, "I used to make these and sell them

in California when I was really broke. My best customer was Mrs. Jeff Bridges. In fact, I just got a call from her and she wants a coat and leg warmers in exactly the same pattern. A little loud don't ya think?"

Knitting aside, Ceil's present ambition is to choreograph a live cabaret. "Something to do with the madness of the eighties, and maybe incorporating the pedestals people put each other on; that's been on my mind a lot lately. What I'm looking for is a great composer. I'm awfully impressed with the Quebec music sound; in particular, Walter Rossi, Angelo Finaldi, Nannette Workman, and Pagliaro. And I think it would be great fun to choreograph their stage shows. But insofar as a cabaret sound is concerned, Lewis Furey seems to come closest to what I'm looking for. Yes, he's *very* cabaret.

The talk turns to the pros and cons of artists living here versus living in the USA. "The thing is, if you leave Canada, for say, New York, you *have* to arrive with a package. There's just so much more competition down there."

For the moment though, Ceil has made Montreal her home. And the lady has definitely arrived.

P.M. Connolly

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