

Arts

Polanski's true colours revealed in latest bomb



FRANTIC ACROSS THE ATLANTIC: Harrison Ford and Emmanuelle Seigner in Roman Polanski's latest

By MICHAEL REDHILL

Just the plain fact that you're reading a review of *Frantic* already says too much about this film; it's a film that deserves to be ignored. However, unlike the childhood advice given by mothers, ignoring Polanski won't make him go away. In fact, *Frantic* already has its groupies (and, of course, Rex Reed) who gather in cinemas to watch films so bad they're good. A strange criterion to say the least.

Frantic begins promisingly enough. Dr. Richard Walker (Harrison Ford) and his wife Sondra (Betty Buckley) return to Paris, the place where they met 20 years earlier. Dr. Walker is there for a medical conference. They check into a hotel, and while Ford is in the shower, Sondra answers a strange phonecall and goes down to the lobby to meet the caller. When Ford gets out of the shower she is gone. For good. These opening scenes are tight and tense and are reminiscent of Hitchcock without being derivative in their attention to detail and character. But after these opening moments, all

resemblances to Hitchcock end and the film moves steadily and inexorably downhill.

What follows is a brutally drawn-out search and rescue plot that is without a drop of originality. Ford, usually an electrifying actor, gives a competent performance, but he is given almost nothing to work with and becomes as dull as the film. He is required to occupy one emotional level for most of the film and his inability to express fear becomes a true liability in this context. On top of his sodden performance, Ford looks and moves like an ape for much of the picture because, I imagine, Polanski directed him to move as if he were weighted down with fear. Ford's only burden is *Frantic*.

The plot summary is simple. The plot is simple. After Ford spends much of the film's first half getting no help from the authorities, he jimmies open a suitcase his wife had mistaken for theirs at the airport and finds a phone number in a matchbook within it. (Come on!)

He is eventually led to smuggler

Michele (Emmanuelle Seigner, Polanski's current girlfriend) who was meant to deliver that same suitcase to mysterious others. Aha! mistaken identity! They argue. Ford wants his wife, Michele wants the suitcase, the audience wants out. They strike up a deal, he stays with her and the suitcase until they find the mystery men and his wife, and she gets her money, and we get to leave.

There are no plot twists. Polanski's idea of a plot twist is that Michele and Dr. Walker arrange a meeting and it almost goes off, but doesn't. So the movie farts around for another 20 minutes until they arrange another meeting and then it does go off, and that's the end. Except a whole bunch of people get shot up, which does fill a sadistic need for the audience.

Even Polanski's visual motifs are tired old chestnuts that were nearly dead in Hitchcock's time. Michele's contraband is stashed in the base of a replica of the statue of liberty; the final scene takes place under another

(larger) replica that stands in Paris. Shades of *North by Northwest*.

I admit to a certain contempt for the filmmaker, as I can't see any good reason why this cradle-robber is still making films. Polanski, once a wunderkind, is showing his true colours in *Frantic*. A big-name star, a Hitchcock theme, a flaccid script and his girlfriend in a starring role. She can't act, and Hitchcock would have left the theatre.

On top of it all, Polanski can't figure out who he wants to ridicule. Is it the US? Is it authority? The police? Us? He even goes so far as to make Paris look awful. The whole film

appears to have been shot through a thick layer of mud.

Want to see Harrison Ford? Rent *Witness*. A lot of people will love *Frantic* for the same reasons I dislike it. All power. But if you're a fan of plot, originality or ingenuity, stay away from this lemon. There is a trend to interpret positively the goof-ups of the "masters" because they are the "masters." See Norman Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance* or Arthur Penn's *A Winter's Tale* and you'll know what I mean. Hopefully *Frantic* will do its small bit to reverse this distressing trend.

Amateur York comics, here's your big chance

By CHAIM DANGERFIELD

If you find people consistently refer to you as a "funny-looking jack-ass," breaking into hysterics after everything you say, or urging you to consult a psychiatrist to tone down the manifestations of your multitude of neuroses, you might consider capitalizing on your misfortunes with a career in comedy—beginning March 16 as the Labbatt's "Crystal Comedy Quest" returns to the Open End Pub in Vanier College.

Early this year Labbatt's announced the re-launching of the Comedy Quest, a province-wide comedy search for the best, new comic performers in Ontario colleges and universities. In total, twenty-five campuses will be visited during the contest that will take place between February 12 and April

4. At each location each champion will be crowned, with the most outstanding of these performers appearing on a provincial television special that showcases the winners.

"For those of you who are not familiar with the Quest, all types of comedy qualify," says co-ordinator Briane Nasimok. "Solo acts are limited to seven minutes and duos and troupes are allowed a maximum of ten minutes each."

Last year, over 120 performers vied for prizes from Nike, Akai and CBS records and this year, two audience members as well as each television finalist will win a trip to Mexico.

For more information regarding attending or performing in this year's Comedy Quest please contact Pat Chester at the Open End Pub.



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Applications for September 1988 should be received by April 30, 1988.

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