



Lights, Camera, Action!

Maud's good, shows much thought

By LLOYD CHESLEY

In order to understand and especially to enjoy *My Night at Maud's*, we have to return to a frame of reference we haven't thought of in years, but once we do, we are introduced to a very fine film.

The late 60s, which form the greater part of our background in film, have been a period of snappy, psychedelic movies made on the premise that the last thing to leave an audience with is its ability to catch its breath.

This type of dynamic cinema is cinema at its most exciting, but to limit cinema to this style is to cut off a major portion of its potential. The more languid, digestive, yes, even 'talky' films can provide as important a form in the full strata of movie 'types.'

If you look at the ad for this film, you will see that it won the Max Ophuls Award. I don't know the award, but I do know the films of Max Ophuls.

In films like *The Pearls of Madame de . . .*, *Letter To An Unknown Woman* and *Lola Montes*, Ophuls created a distinct style of controlled thought, emotion through intellect. This basis of purpose is the route of all French cinema.

As Truffaut has pointed out, the French are intellectual filmmakers, many, including Truffaut, having started out as film aestheticians.

One of the famous group of *Cahiers du Cinema* critics was Eric Rommer. In the 50s he wrote a book on Hitchcock along with Claude Chabrol, making clear his stand with the other *Cahier* critics on a greater need for the understanding of film style and approach, the investigation of film as art rather than as a symptom of society.

My Night at Maud's is the first Rommer film I know of, but it serves as a strong reminder of the French style we were so well into until Easy Rider took over our major foreign theatre and bottled it up for the past seven months, leaving us to the mercy of American products.

For many reasons, *Maud's* is a film that most people are going to feel uncomfortable throughout, through both their own faults and some of its own.

It is, generally, about a guy in his mid-30s, his friend and a couple of girls he meets, one of whom becomes his wife. There is therefore, not much of a plot in this film.

Back in 1962 Truffaut had had

enough of plotless films and was pining to see a story told well even though he had been one of those who started the movement against plot-heavy films. I'm not sure of his stand today, seeing as how in the past eight years we have gone back and forth from plot to non-plot, but forsaking stories still seems to be the order of the art.

Maud's is a character study and a study of relationships. Of course a story film should indirectly cover these areas in full detail; that is the purpose of the story, as an illustration. But Rommer has no time to advance a plot.

What he is trying to do is reconcile different moralities. The film will make people uncomfortable because it deals with aspects of life and morality we seem to have left behind: mainly the immorality of indiscriminate sleeping around and, if you will forgive me, religion.

Not that these are shocking ideas, but they now seem naive and useless since movies have succeeded in glamorizing indiscriminate sleeping around and atheism.

Maud's is a very adult film, that is not to say that it is safe only in the hands of an adult, but rather that is in consideration of notions and problems that are generally overlooked in the pursuit of youth.

The film is a series of dialogues on philosophy, many times including specific references to philosophers. At times it seems like an essay on Pascal. But, like proper intellectuals, the characters only use the philosophers as vehicles for expression of their own ideas.

To get away from philosophy for a moment, we should look at the film's ability to go beyond discussion and provide many nice human touches of the type of naturalism evident in French films.

At times the characters do stop discussing life and discuss philosophies, but it is French nature to seek a set of rules to live by instead of merely living and letting the rules form themselves the way Americans do (this can be quickly related to gangster films and westerns to show why they are the most intrinsically American films).

Also, Rommer is careful to introduce natural movements, like the way a man reaches for a coffee cup, to make his people more real.

This is, above all, a film about love, which should, in the final analysis, make it interesting to most people. But its dialogue

format will go against the grain carved by the slew of dynamic films we have become accustomed to.

On top of that, Rommer is not a fully skilled dialogue-film-maker. He is unsure of exactly where to place his camera to best cover a line and once having placed his

camera he often fails to color the line by framing it drably in a shot that has little depth or texture.

He has not mastered the way of his prophet, Hitchcock, to counterpoint a line by the position of the camera or the business it reveals. His people talk and they listen, and do little else.

It is a film of words. They are good words, too, expressing interesting thoughts and involving us in the people who speak them. It is this involvement that is the film's success, that makes it worth the sitting through. It shows little panache, but much thought, and that is its purpose.

Nude girl can cause etiquette problems

By DAN MERKUR

"What do you say to a naked lady? What do you say when you barely know her?" asks Allen Funt in his charming, hilarious, witty, touching, candid camera film (opening tomorrow at the Yonge — formerly Loew's).

Well, what would you say? That's Funt's whole point. Consider the situations he sets up. You're in an office building and you push the elevator button. The door opens and out walks a naked lady sporting hat, shoes and a handbag. She then proceeds to ask you for directions.

You're asked to hold a ladder while a short-skirted good-looking chick climbs it to free a kitten from a tree. Where do you look?

You're in a sex education class and the instructress walks in quite stark. Or you're the parents of the kids and the same instructress walks in to explain the course.

You're a motorist stopping to help a naked hitchhiker with engine trouble.

Or you're a preview audience reacting to the preceding footage.

Well, what would you say?

Funt's first candid camera feature film has everything he could never show on TV. It is a surprisingly honest and mature film of the surprisingly deceptive, childish and humorous reactions of the man and woman on the street to nakedness.

Funt didn't miss a trick. He set up his premises of the hitchhiker, the ladder climber, the nude male model, the sex



What do you say to a naked lady? "Cold? Have my coat."

educatrix and the office searcher and got his footage. He then showed the film to preview audiences of varying sorts — women's clubs, middle-aged couples, and college kids — and got varying responses from the different groups.

And as if that weren't enough, he then candidly filmed the auditions of his actresses — just so everyone would know who and how he got to film.

Add in his sex experience surveys — like asking the members of a school basketball team to give up their sex lives until the season was over; the opinion polls on methods and procedures; and the high school morality/experience polls — and you're just beginning to get the picture.

What Do You Say to a Naked Lady? is a must see for anyone looking for light entertainment. After the Damned, Z and They Shoot Horses, Don't They?,

Naked Lady comes as a happy and needed change of pace.

It is to Funt's credit that the film focuses on nakedness and not nudity, which may only be an academic question of semantics, but whose innocence got the film by the censors. Hell, Vixen, and Heironymus Merkin got busted, yet nowhere did they display the genitalia Funt got away with showing.

And of course, the wide-eyed, innocent, honest approach allowed him to slip in the two-year-olds frolicking in the altogether without seeming at all inappropriate, even in the same film with an interview with a prostitute who admits she wants her daughter to be a virgin at marriage.

Some old prude will probably call the Morality squad about the film, I guess, but with little reason. After all, what can the cops say? What do you say to a naked lady?

Film buffs can keep busy in next month

Cinema Lumiere, the revival cinema opened by Bob Huber, whose last attempt, the *Electra*, went broke, is apparently in sad shape already. Bergman's *Shame* played to a house of 17 people.

Perhaps the problem is the choice of material, which tends towards Cinema du Cahiers auteur favorites like Samuel Fuller, Roger Cormon, Arthur Penn, John Boorman, the British Free Cinema and French Nouvelle Vague filmmakers.

At any rate, the prices are certainly the best in town — Monday, \$1; Tuesday to Thursday — \$1.25; and Friday to Sunday, \$1.50. Shows at 7 pm and 9:30 pm, Sunday matinees at 2 pm and 4:30 pm. The theatre is on College Street to the immediate west of Spadina Avenue.

The program: tonight, *Le Voleur*, directed by Louis Malle, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo and Genevieve Bujold; *Rachel, Rachel* (March 20 and 21), directed by Paul Newman, with Joanne Woodward, Estelle Parsons and James Olson; *The Trip* (March 22), directed by Roger Cormon, screenplay by Jack Nicholson, with Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Susan Strasberg; *Catch Us If You Can* (March 23), directed by John Boorman, with Barbara Ferris and Dave Clark; *Repulsion* (March 24), directed by Roman Polanski, with Catherine Deneuve; *The Left Handed Gun* (March 25), a much underrated film about Billy the Kid by Arthur (Bonnie and Clyde) Penn starring Paul Newman; *The Chase* (March 26), also by Penn, from a screenplay by Lillian Hellman, starring Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, Robert Redford, E.G.

Marshall and Angie Dickinson. This is one of the tough brutal films that made Penn's reputation, even though it tastes more of Lillian Hellman's life-long friendship with Dashiell Hammett, king of the hard-boiled writers; *Point Blank* (March 27), directed by John Boorman, starring Lee Marvin, Angie Dickinson and Keenan Wynn. This film introduced John Vernon to Hollywood, and remains one of the toughest crime films of all time; *Cul De Sac* (March 28), by Polanski, with Donald Pleasance, Francoise Dorleac and Jacqueline Bissett; *The Fearless Vampire Killers or Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck* (March 29), a horror comedy by Polanski, starring Jack MacGowan, Polanski, Jessie Robins and Sharon Tate; *Mickey One* (March 30), Arthur Penn's first film with Warren Beatty, about a nightclub entertainer in trouble with the underworld; and *Hell In the Pacific* (March 31), director Boorman's tough microcosm of World War II as seen through Lee Marvin and Toshiro Mifune, two soldiers fighting the war on a personal level on an island somewhere in the Pacific.

If your taste swings to slightly older films, you might try Cinematheque at the Toronto Music Library Auditorium, 559 Avenue Rd. at St. Clair. Shows are Friday nights only at 7:15 pm and 9:30 pm. Tickets are \$1.50 plus 50¢ membership.

Upcoming are *My Man Godfrey* (tomorrow), directed by comedy genius Gregory La Cava, with Carole Lombard and William Powell, one of the greatest screwball

comedies of the 30s; *The Scarlet Empress* (April 3), director Josef von Sternberg's tour de force, starring Marlene Dietrich and Sam Jaffe, in one of the most visually exciting films ever to come out of Hollywood; *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (April 10), Montry Wooley plays in the title role he created on Broadway in Kaufman and Hart's classic comedy. . . Directed by William Keighley, also with Bette Davis, Anne Sheridan and Jimmy Durante; *Ministry of Fear* (April 17), if Hitchcock is the master of suspense, then Director Fritz Lang is the master of paranoia. This is one of his best, starring Ray Milland; and *The Awful Truth* (April 24), a stunning comedy by Leo McCarey about Irene Dunne and Cary Grant, who are divorced, but Grant has visiting rights for the dog.

Also playing are a double bill of a Harold Lloyd silent and Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Junior*, at The Silent Cinema.

The Ontario Film Theatre's upcoming series has not yet been announced, but I was talking to Clive Denton (who plans them) the other day, and he mentioned some titles that were worth looking into. Phone the Science Centre for details. By the way, their current Thursday night revivals will be expanding to Tuesday night Canadian films and films and Sunday night foreign films not otherwise available, but the expansion is not likely to take place until sometime in May or June. — D.M.