



RAY CHARLES and the need for perfection

for people who like to read in bed

Français. La langue d'amour. Even if you don't understand the lingo, you might want to check out *La Lectrice*, a French film billed as a seductive comedy for people who like to read in bed. It also won Best Film at the 1988 Montreal World Film Festival.

It's hard to review most French films without mentioning the word sex, and *La Lectrice* is no different. Despite the fact that the movie is about a young woman who only wants to read to people, there's plenty of sexual presence, which is to say no actual sex but lots of sexual situations lovingly filmed.

The movie contains a dual storyline. In the main plot, Constance, played by Miou-Miou, is reading a novel to her husband/lover. The book, *La Lectrice (The Reader)*, features a young lady who places an ad in the paper advertising her services as a reader.

As Constance reads, the scene dissolves and the movie becomes the book with Constance playing Marie, "la lectrice."

At first, she is determined to be just a reader but she soon finds herself becoming involved in the lives of her clients. There is a lonely teenage boy in a wheelchair who eventually and very politely asks her to lift her skirt up. There is a clutzy businessman, separated from his wife, who confides that he has not made love in six months. He immediately tries to seduce Marie in an endearingly pathetic way. There is also an old client, a retired judge, who requests that she read obscene passages from a book by the Marquis de Sade.

But Marie is not a prostitute. She does not sleep with any of her clients. If she gives in to their sexual needs in certain ways, it is because she understands her clients and

knows that they are lonely and need to be loved. Her compassion and sensitivity overcome any moral prudery. The film consistently refuses to deny the sexual feelings of its characters.

However, the film is by no means pornographic. Sex is always an expression of human caring and tenderness, if not of love.

Miou-Miou, the well-known French actress, is completely charming most of the time and gives the film much of its appeal. In fact, director Michel Deville wrote the part specifically with her in mind. No other actress so convincingly combines the role of the ingenue and the sophisticate. The acting in the film is generally excellent.

An interesting and quirky movie to watch, *La Lectrice* does not dwell on any of its observations and sometimes creates a facile impression, thereby denying the viewer the opportunity to become really involved with the film.

Unlike American films, the cinematography keeps the audience at a distance. There is always an awareness of watching other people's lives. The invitation to make connections with one's own life remains largely unexpressed.

The film seems to be an attempt to combine the intellectual pleasure of reading with physical pleasure without compromising either. How well it succeeds is a matter of individual taste. In any case, it's a pleasing experiment to watch.

Although it is supposed to be a comedy, don't expect any big laughs. The humour is wry, offbeat and usually bittersweet, but, fortunately, not black. If you like charming French movies, this is probably one of the better ones.

La Lectrice opens June 30, and yes, there are subtitles.

The living legend Ray Charles brought his 17-piece stage band to the Ontario Place Forum on June 25 and shared some of his magic with the capacity crowd. He walked on stage — did I say walk? — he bopped on stage to the music of his band and received a standing reception from the crowd.

From the first song, Charles showed his need for perfection. Between words, he admonished the soundman that the microphone was too loud, without missing a beat. He expertly directed the band with various movements, from a subtle nod of the head to a more exaggerated shrug of the shoulders. The band got

all the cues — they had to, they were looking at him so intensely. Consequently, the music was right on time, Ray's time, and it was a joy to listen to.

But the real joy of the show was watching Charles' do his thing. It's a wonder that he kept his balance through all his acrobatics on the piano bench, with his legs going all over the place and the bench's legs trying to follow suit. It was, to say the least, interesting to observe the interaction between himself, the band and the soundman.

On hearing feedback for the first time, he mumbled, "What the hell is that?" The second time, he stopped his band in the middle of "Georgia," and

gave the soundman some advice. There was no third time, fortunately.

He played various songs of which "Georgia" was the most popular. Also, he did a nice arrangement of "Some Enchanted Evening."

Opening for Charles was Molly Johnson, a Toronto native, who performed jazz standards from Gershwin and Ellington. Her smooth vocals, reminiscent of the early jazz singers, and her band Big Sugar, provided an entertaining opening.

But Charles was who the people came to see and he certainly did not disappoint them. He displayed his talent, and showed why he is a living legend.

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• If you find yourself on York campus with a few hours to spare, check out the **LOUISE BOURGEOIS** sculpture exhibit at the Art Gallery of York University (N145 Ross) running until August 20. Bourgeois, a prominent American sculptor, will show 24 major sculptures as well as a new work titled *Hearts* which she is preparing specifically for the AGYU show. The gallery is open Tuesday to Friday from 10 am to 4:30 pm and Wednesdays from 10 am to 8 pm. It's free, just walk right in.

• A Films On Aging Series at the Retirement Consultation Centre (Room 105, Admin. Stud.) runs every Thursday at noon and again at 1 pm. On July 6, it's *A House Divided: Caregiver Stress and Elder Abuse*, on July 13, it's *A Chronic Problem, The Old Person's Friend and George and Rosemary* and on July 20, *The Business of Aging* will be shown. For more info call 736-2100, ext. 6228.

• **Adele Wiseman** will read from her latest book *Crackpot* at the Junior Common Room (Salon Garigue) at Glendon on July 5 at 8 pm. Wiseman is one of Canada's leading fiction writers and recipient of the Governor General's Award.

• **Mary di Michele** will also read from her book *Immune to Gravity* at the Junior Common Room at Glendon on July 19 at 8 pm. She is a poet and writer and has recently been appointed Writer-In-Residence at Concordia University for Spring 1990.



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