

Louis Malles' mysterious new film

# Black Moon abstract, misses vital message

By IRAMICAY

Unlike his two previous films, Louis Malle's new picture *Black Moon* represents almost a total indulgence on the part of its creator. The release three years ago of *Murmur of the Heart*, and then *Lacombe, Lucien* established Malle's mastery of an exciting narrative cinema style capable of joyful humour as well as powerful moral and intellectual exposition. *Black Moon*, however, views more like a two hour piece of abstract visual art than a feature film distributed through the normal commercial channels.

A young girl, played by Rex Harrison's granddaughter, Kathryn, is driving on a country road one afternoon sometime in the future. Battles rage on around her as she drives in an apparent war between men and women. She comes upon a country estate inhabited by an old woman who never leaves her bed, and her son and daughter who care for the woman as well as a group of children and animals who share the household, but whose origins are never explained. From then on, the world of the *Black Moon* has only a slight basis in our present reality.

The old woman (Therese Ghiese, the laconic grandmother from *Lacombe, Lucien*) displays magical powers that continually annoy the heroine. She speaks in several languages, some of them original, and she converses with unseen contacts via a shortwave radio that sits beside her bed.

Her daughter, (Alexandra Stewart, from *Day for Night* and *Bingo*) breast feeds the old woman and tutors and cares for the children who scamper about nude in the courtyard and have no apparent relationship to the old woman.

The brother, (Joe Dallesandro of Andy Warhol fame) resembles his sister like a twin, and when the two aren't sparring viciously in the yard, he spends his time singing opera and working around the estate. Otherwise he communicates only on a non-verbal basis.

A fifth major character is a unicorn, fluent in English, that stalks the grounds elusively as the young girl tries to converse with it.

*Black Moon* is the collective ex-

ploration of concepts and images, real and surreal, of a very personal nature to Malle himself. "A director is only as good as his latest film" he believes, so with the popularity and credibility given him by his two recent international successes, Malle decided that now was perhaps the only opportunity he'd have to create a very personal vision.

The initial inspiration for the film

came from Therese Ghiese, a German actress whose language problems during *Lacombe, Lucien's* production suggested to Malle that his next film should not rely heavily on dialogue to convey its ideas.

Another concept important to the director is his view of the division of otherwise similar spirits into male and female bodies. The war between men and women need not be

— the look-alike brother and sister symbolize the similarity of all souls are at inception.

The unicorn, a pet fantasy notion of the director's, seems to metamorphosize from being merely controlled by the old woman to annoy the young girl, to actually containing the spirit of the woman herself as she vanishes at the film's end. The idea of kindred souls in men and women is perhaps ex-

tended here to include animal life as well. The film is enjoyable if one is sympathetic to the rather intellectual concepts it contains, but *Black Moon* will find little commercial appeal. It is noteworthy nonetheless; Louis Malle, having proved himself in a more traditional style has made a sincere effort to develop a new form to communicate ideas important to himself.

## Records

By EVAN LEIBOVITCH

### NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND-DREAM

Although I have heard of NGDB for quite some time, this is the first time I have sat down and listened closely to one of their albums. The music is a relaxed type of "down home music"; there's some banjo (even a cut called *Classical Banjo*), but also a little bit of almost everything else, from Leon Russell keyboard on a reggae type cut, to a bagpipe band ending an especially nice version of *The Battle of New Orleans*. It's diverse, competent, and original, with an easygoing mood throughout. Though they'll never appeal to the masses, I'm sure they don't mind taking a back seat to, say, BTO.

### TIM WEISBERG-LISTEN TO THE CITY

Yes, it's a concept album (Weisberg's first) of keyboards, guitar, and flute, but please don't compare it to Jethro Tull. Whereas Tull varies from acoustic ballads to steamroller rock, the music here is comfortably in the middle. In addition, instead of using a couple of hundred words worth of lyrics, this entirely instrumental record uses the mood of the music to tell its story. Just because your parents might like it is no excuse to call it a bland write-off: it's an excellent composition that conveys a firm message in its melody.

### RICHARD PRYOR-... IS IT SOMETHING I SAID?

"This Nigger's Crazy!" proclaims Pryor's last album. The

liberal use of cute little obscenities won him a Grammy award last year for best comedy album. Well, if you missed him before, or if your only experience of him is one of his G rated TV bits, this album is, well, interesting.

### 'NIGGERS'

I stopped counting the number of times he used the word nigger after thirty. What I couldn't conclude for sure was whether or not he abused it. You wonder after a while if some of the humour isn't coming from shock reaction. Anyway, it should be good for some laughs, but be prepared for anything vulgar.

### MURRAY McLAUGHLIN-ONLY THE SILENCE REMAINS

Although I have been a longtime

fan of McLaughlin's, I have just as long been reluctant to purchase any of his vinyl, because of the too perfect production involved in most of his previous works. Well, on this live double album, Murray discards the previous slickness in favour of a folksy style more suited to his type of music.

### HUMOUR

The instrumentation uses plenty of harmonica to supplement the guitar or keyboards. The element of McLaughlin's music that shines is the sense of humour that he injects into the music. Most of the well known stuff is crammed onto side two, but there is not a badly done song here. You may agree that this is one of True North's best efforts, but it's definitely McLaughlin's best yet.

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