

Entertainment

"Lana Turner has collapsed!"
- Frank O'Hara -

Godard: tempers clash

"Hollywood is finished."
Jean-Luc Godard

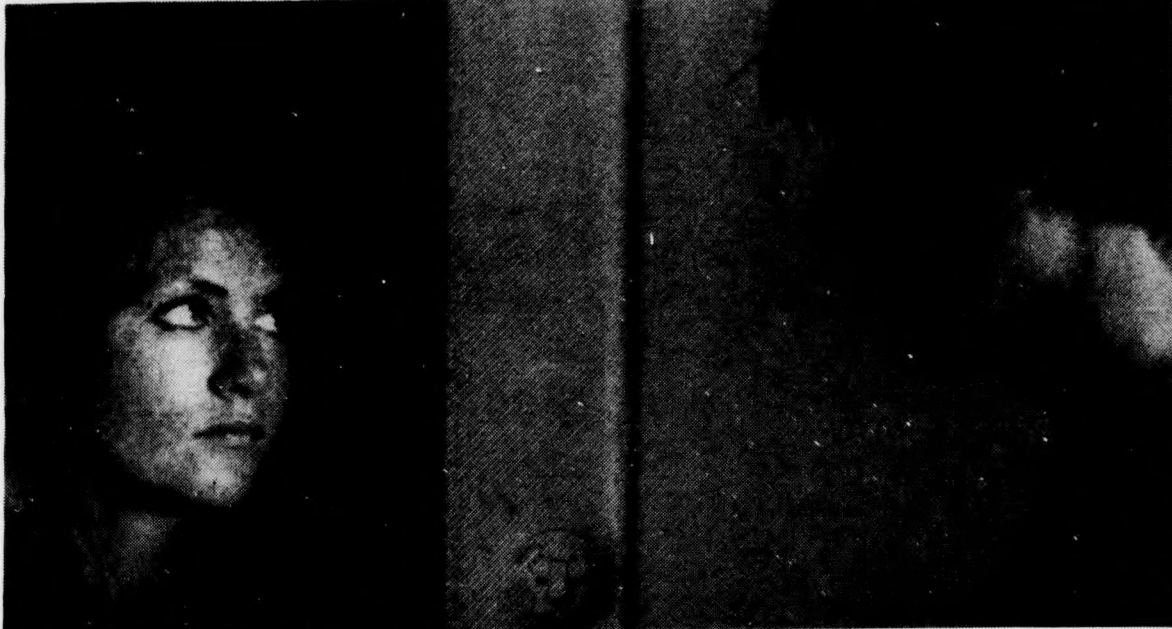
Salem Alaton

Toronto has probably never seen a film series with the critical coherence and comprehensive-ness of "The Godard Phenomenon", this year's most exciting section in the fifth annual Festival of Festivals.

In a task which Festival director Wayne Clarkson has described as "awesome", Canadian cineaste Peter Harcourt has assembled a retrospective of 44 films which will trace the development of Godard's oeuvre through the films which influenced him, all his own features, and the work of filmmakers who have in turn been influenced by him.

It all started with Bogart, so to speak, so the series commences on Friday, Sept. 5 at 9:30 a.m. with **The Big Sleep**. Howard Hawks' classic from 1946 features Humphrey Bogart as detective Philip Marlowe, quintessential American tough guy and seminal Hollywood anti-hero, who keeps resurfacing with nihilistic convolutions in Godard's work. Other diverse sources of Godard's inspiration are seen in Dreyer's **Passion de Jeanne d'Arc** from the '20s, Busby Berkeley's **For Me and My Gal** from '42, on to the offbeat cynics of Hollywood's '50s and '60s with Nicholas Ray's **Johnny Guitar** and Sam Fuller's **Underworld U.S.A.** There's plenty in between as well.

Virtually all of Godard's own work will be seen, except for some half-dozen short films he made at the beginning of his career as a writer-director in 1954, and the several episodes he



Isabelle Hupert and Gerard Depardieu in *Sauve qui Peut la Vie*.

contributed to combined-effort films intermittently through his career.

The series will screen Godard's feature films from **Breathless** in 1959 (considered an inaugural film of the French New Wave) through **Une Femme Est Une Femme**, **Les Carabiniers**, **Alphaville**, **Pierrot Le Fou**, **Masculin-Feminin**, **Made in USA**, **La Chinoise**, **Weekend**, **One Plus One**, etc, up to a premier of his newest film, **Sauve qui Peut la Vie**.

Godard's effect on others will be seen in a number of French avant-garde films, as well as in Quebec's own J.P. Lefebvre with his **The Old Country Where Rimbaud Died**. On Friday, Sept. 4 at 4 p.m. will be a panel discussion on Godard's work.

Not everyone will greet the retrospective as unmitigated glad tidings, of course. The French auteur who proclaimed "Hollywood is finished" in 1963 has excited high tempers and conflicting passions since the appearance of **Breathless** in 1959. In breaking down cinema's grammar—especially through his disintegration of the formerly deified role of editing—Godard made himself the most revered and reviled of contemporary filmmakers.

The one thing about Godard upon which most critics agree is that his films have created the most significant cleft in film criticism today. Whether empathetic or hostile, everyone has been compelled to respond

to Godard and their adjectives for him are seldom moderate.

Perhaps the reason for this is best summarized by Raymond Durnat (who, incidentally, considers most of Godard's films "ludicrously bad") when he says, "Godard works on the spectator's awareness that his film is a film...grey ascetic images reduce the world to a concept of itself."

As Brecht did with theatre, Godard relentlessly shatters the conventions of distance between audience and art form, constantly exposes the backdrops and mechanisms of the filmmaking and filmviewing processes. Godard creates caricatures from the romantic figures of cinema (often imbuing them with a wry, political

cynicism): the private eye, the western hero, the soldier. Then he draws attention to this process, as if to say, "See. They're all just caricatures anyway" as in **Alphaville**: finally he has made a literal reduction of the world to a collection of images as in **Les Carabiniers**, where the spoils of war are a stack of coloured postcards.

There is a point to all this which has become growingly inescapable—film is responding not only to the cinematic illusions that were created by the first generations of filmmakers (as did Ray, Fuller) but also to the reality which has itself actually been shaped by those illusions. Virtually every major director of the present generation, from de Palma to Wenders, compulsively addresses himself to this dialectic.

Nowhere is it more cogently expressed than in the works of Godard and it is unlikely that such a thorough retrospective will surface again in this city. In other words, this Festival of Festivals offering is not to be missed, even by Godard detractors.

All screenings will be at the Bloor Cinema (Bloor and Bathurst) between 9:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m., except for a repeat screening at 7 p.m. on Sept. 8. Five films from the series will be screened daily between Sept. 5 and Sept. 13. A \$30 pass (at 68¢ per film) may be obtained from the Festival of Festivals (964-0333) for the entire series or individual tickets can be purchased for \$3 per film.

All that stong



Cast member of *Seduced*.

Their calling cards are up and the phantom-like *Despite Straight Lines* are back with their second Sam Shepard play, **Seduced**. Beginning tomorrow at 8, with shows Saturday at 2, next Thursday at 8, and a licensed midnight show on Saturday, the players will attack the meaty Shepard play with the savagery of a demented cannibal. Last year's

Cowboy Mouth featured many surprises—including the arrival of the grotesque Lobster Man. If you've an extra hour and a half, grab your favourite lobster and crawl to the Sam Beckett Theatre in Lower Stong. No charge—it's on the lobster.

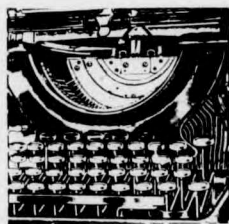
The Fan Man

Nifty, not hefty

Stuart Ross

Pleasant Days with Joe and Sam by John R. Kordosh, 1979, 24 pp., \$1.25 American (includes postage and handling).

Soon, baby, you're going to want to trade in your massive stack of essay assignments for an assumed name and a new set of fingerprints. Unless maybe you have something tucked under a thumbnail to restore your faith in humanity. Like John Kordosh's self-published collection of short vignettes, **Pleasant Days with Joe and Sam**. While not exactly a hefty volume at 24 pages, this obscure collector's item has enough stuff to split your guts at the seams



You may recognize the name of Kordosh from *Creem*, the organ of imperialist America (which cannot be obtained in Central Square, though even *Tiger Beat* is there!). *Creem*, the only honest rock mag in the U.S., is infamous for its excesses.

Pleasant Days is a product of this school of excessiveness. I mean, these stories are incredibly stupid. But, at the same time, stupidity meets honesty, and Kordosh is almost unbelievable funny.

In this case, excerpts are pretty futile since the work must be taken as a whole, but then, I do love futility. So, here's "College Memories":

Joe and Sam, who were good friends, were remembering college.

"In a lot of ways, college was fun," remarked Joe.

"I had fun too," agreed Sam. "There was sports and girls. There was always something."

"Once, at college, I smoked a cigarette," Joe revealed.

"You were really something back then. Did you go fishing then, too?" asked Sam.

"No, but I remember that once I wanted to."

"Someday, let's think about college again," said Sam.

"OK. In a way, it was fun," said Joe.

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In addition to that, the two inseparable neighbours look at cows, see an airplane, take a walk, and together and separately do

many other wonderful things. We like to read about these things.

What you should do, then, is stuff \$1.25 yankee into an envelope along with your love, and send it to John R. Kordosh, 6853 Mansfield, Garden City, MI, 48135, U.S.A.

I'll give the last words to nifty John: "*Pleasant Days with Joe and Sam* was written...when I was really hot. For years, I've despaired of ever seeing it in print. After reading it, you'll understand why."

We Agreed You Would...

We agreed you would come today and paint colours across my eyes in rooms where broken men watch legless girls setting tables.

Lillian Necakov