

THE SHELTERING SKY

Talk about contrasts. Bernardo Bertolucci's last film was an epic with a cast of thousands. His latest is an intimate portrayal of the lives of three complicated individuals.

Bertolucci's 1987 hit *The Last Emperor* won every Oscar for which it was nominated — nine in all, including best picture, best director and best screenplay. For his new film, **The Sheltering Sky**, he has managed to reunite seven of the nine key people who worked on *The Last Emperor*.

The team includes the dynamic trio of Bertolucci as director, producer Jeremy Thomas and screenwriter Mark Peploe, along with the director of photography, costume designer, editor and sound recordist. It was important to Bertolucci to get that creative team, because he wanted to achieve the same kind of film that is rich in setting and story.

This time the on-location filming took the team to Algeria, Morocco and Niger to shoot a story set in postwar North Africa. Producer Thomas says, "This is an intimate,

sensual film. It will be a complete change from *The Last Emperor*."

The star of **The Sheltering Sky** is no stranger to sensuality. John Malkovich, who had previously thrilled audiences with his performances in *Places in the Heart* and *The Glass Menagerie*, truly shocked his fans with his sensual portrayal of Valmont in *Dangerous Liaisons*.

Malkovich was rather surprised by how much everyone talked about his sexiness. He says, "First, I don't think very much about whether I even have fans, and second, every character you play has various challenges, and various personality traits that you may enjoy playing. So, yes, sexuality is fun, but I had as much fun playing blind and playing retarded as I did playing sexy."

Based on the novel by Paul Bowles published 41 years ago,

the story is built around a couple coming to the end of their time together, in North Africa in 1947. The three in the triangle are Malkovich, Debra Winger and Campbell Scott, making his big-screen debut.

Scott is the son of George C. Scott and Colleen Dewhurst. You may have seen him on *L.A. Law* or as Joe Kennedy Jr. in the ABC-TV production of *The Kennedys and the Fitzgeralds*, but **The Sheltering Sky** is the film that will introduce him to millions. Scott felt so strongly about the project that he gave up a leading role in *White Palace* to work with Bertolucci.

By all accounts, **The Sheltering Sky** held a similar fascination for Debra Winger. At first Bertolucci

thought she was too intense to play the part of Kit Moresby. Apparently he wanted a less aggressive actress, someone like Melanie Griffith. Griffith was pregnant and not available, so Winger campaigned for the chance to audition. She had loved the book and was convinced the character of Kit was really Jane Bowles, the author's late wife, and she set out to become her. She even arrived in North Africa, after winning the role, with a similar short haircut.

Paul Bowles, now 79, was entranced with Winger and vice versa. Winger told *Vanity Fair* magazine, "I thought I'd be able to stand back and have an impression; instead, I fell in love on sight. We spent every nonworking moment together."

With pomp and grandeur, Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* earned \$44 million at the box office. The director hopes **The Sheltering Sky** will earn the same, but this time with love and passion.

— Jane Hawtin



Kit and Port Moresby (Debra Winger, below left, and John Malkovich) share an intimate moment. Completing the relationship triangle is Campbell Scott (inset).

