

Film within a film

Truffaut's Day for Night shows effortless style

By ZENON RACUNAS

The products of Francois Truffaut's imagination have ranged in past years from his stringent but delicate premier film *The 400 Blows*, through *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Jules and Jim* and *The Bride Wore Black*, to the British version of *Fahrenheit 451* and the recent *A Gorgeous Kid Like Me*.

Reporters work hard for booze

By BRIAN MILNER

The Park Plaza's King Cole room officially re-opened three weeks ago with an evening of free booze for hardworking reporters.

Receptions like these make it difficult to provide a fair appraisal of the room. After all, it's pretty hard to bite the hand pouring the liquor.

Nevertheless, it seems safe to say if you like dancing mixed with your drinks, you'll like this place.

There's no cover charge and the dance floor provides plenty of elbow room. Music ranges from folk-country to soft rock provided at the moment by a personable group known as the Town Criers.

It's the prices that may keep poverty-stricken university students at home, though.

All booze is \$1.10 an ounce and only five kinds are stocked — scotch, rye, rum, gin and vodka in the usual combinations. Draft beer is 66 cents, while a glass of wine is \$1.10.

Food prices range from \$1.20 for a corned beef on rye with french fries to an incredible \$1.65 for a cheeseburger.

These films made frequenting cinema art houses worth suffering the odious experience of sitting in an audience composed of enlightened bourgeoisie and/or students.

In *Day for Night*, Truffaut depicts the massive amount of effort necessary on the director's part to put together a movie, even a New Wave movie. (This film cannot be classified as a New Wave piece, but then the new wave is old now.)

The film's plot is as anomalous as the title. The expression "day for night" (*la nuit americaine*) is technical cinemese for shooting a night scene in daylight — that is, the creation of an illusion. This is Truffaut's way of saying that the film is about making a movie.

At the same time, *Day for Night* is Truffaut's own version of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, but done with cute elan.

The film within a film is a crummy, smutty French menage a trois thriller, which is as it should be, in order not to interfere with the real plot about the people making the movie. Truffaut directs himself as the director, and the star, America's own Jacqueline Bisset, plays the star.

Truffaut's premise is that making a movie in Nice involves fornicating, financing, organizing, adorably drunk, aging stars, neurotic horny starlets, aging sophisticated faggots, youthfully insipid/insecure male leads and a shortage of time.

It's a light-hearted, mocking Universal City-type bus tour through the convoluted process of making a movie.

Truffaut portrays the director as a symphony conductor, complete with the requisite classical music on the sound track (the well-known score

from *Do You Want to Eat My Ragatoni?*). The director arranges, forms and focuses the energies of dozens of individuals, shaping their diverse talents and skills into a rotten movie.

In the beginning the director wants to make a good movie; halfway through, he hopes he can make a movie, period.

The actors, on the other hand, act because they find joy in doing what they do well, which is acting. Unfortunately they don't do so well at living without the help of a director, script

and special effects crew.

The old star at one point explains why actors are sick, weird individuals; it is the cross the actor must bear, the human burden of facing inevitable judgment, compounded many times because the actor is judged continually.

There is also one lovely, lucid comment on the art: a scene is shot and the director exclaims, "Perfect, beautiful, let's do it again."

Sentiment and charm seem to be very big this autumn in Toronto theatres, and *Day for Night* is right up

there with *Paper Moon*, *Fantasia*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *Massacre in Rome*.

So if your escort abhors violence and is too insensitive to see the deeper intra-personal significance of performances such as Brando's butter trick in *Last Tango in Paris*, this neo-satiric quasi-comedy about life in the movies should be ideal.

The movie has English sub-titles, so it is restricted to those who are either literate or French. Now showing at the International cinema, Yonge at Manor Road.

Pain, death in Que. novel

By SHELLEY RABINOVITCH

"My name is David Sterne. I have black hair, blue eyes. I am not your typical thief. . ."

Marie-Claire Blais, born in the St. Pascal district of Quebec City, opens up one of the most powerful novels on the misguided youth of today with the lead character being pursued through back alleys. David Sterne is a nihilist — he is dedicated to absolute chaos.

The novel (translated from the French by David Lobdell) shows a great deal of intuitive depth by virtue of its social criticism.

David and his friend Michael Rameau are theological students who cannot see the usefulness of society and consequently find themselves dying by choice.

Michael commits suicide by jumping off a tower, and David Sterne is shot and eventually dies by the gun of a cop, assumedly about the same age as he.

A poignant commentary on today's society, Prix Medecis winner Marie-Claire Blais brings the reality of

human pain to the reader with a finesse that has been long-missing from the writing medium.

A harpsichord classic

By PAUL CAPLIN

A 1957 recording of J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, played by harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, has been rereleased on RCA and is available at Coles for \$2.99. Yes — in a bookstore.

Landowska, who died in 1959, was in the opinion of many (this writer included) the most outstanding harpsichordist of her day, and this particular performance is considered the best recording ever made of the *Variations*. Because it is an old recording, the re-issue is in mono, but this does not affect the beauty of the sound.

Landowska seems to favour a slower tempo for most of the variations, compared to the recordings of the work by Anthony Newman and Igor Kipnis. But this is not because she can't handle the speed; her album of Vivaldi sonatas, for instance, moves along at a breakneck pace.

Landowska, more than any other person, was responsible for the comeback of the harpsichord, and her playing is legendary among keyboard artists.

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