

T.O. hosts 10th annual film festival

Festival of Festivals offers mind openers and eye closers

By ALEX PATTERSON

Dance With A Stranger

Dance With A Stranger is a new film from Britain with a forgettable title and an even worse publicity campaign. This only proves the old adage about not judging a book by its cover: it is one of the pleasanter surprises of the Festival... although pleasant may not be the right word.

Ostensibly the story of Mrs. Ruth Ellis, a nightclub singer/manageress who in 1955 became the last woman to be hanged in Britain, the film is really an examination of what happens to sexual impulses in a stifling society. *Dance With A Stranger* (the title is from a popular song of that year) has Britain's archaic class system on its mind, and its destructive effects not only on the lower echelons but on the upper as well.

Much more than a dramatization of the events leading up to a crime of passion, *Dance With A Stranger* provides an in-depth character study of Ruth, the uneducated, social-climbing tart. Although she is a working girl in every sense of the term, her bitchy repartee, quick wit and naked ambition indicate that she is not all peroxide, lipstick and fizzy drinks. Despite the fact that she is still married to her estranged husband, and is a mother of two, Ruth (played, or rather inhabited by impressive newcomer Miranda Richardson) chooses not to deny her sensuality in the prescribed manner. This brings her society's contempt and plenty of male admirers. When her personal magnetism attracts David (Rupert Everett, who played Guy Burgess in *Another Country*), a young toff who has just graduated from polo ponies to racing cars, trouble follows.

David is a rich idler whose privileged birth permits him to trifle with LeMans cars the way some boys trifle with ham radio sets. He is an automotive dilettante who is having his own entry built for him—a Jaguar which he has significantly named "The Emperor." The car's progress falls apart when David neglects to pay his mechanic during several weeks when he is too busy fighting and fornicating with Ruth. And, as if their obsessive lust across class barriers wasn't problematic enough, Ruth also carries on with Des (Ian Holm), a repressed older man who introduced David to the nightclub

then lived to regret it. This combination of the phlegmatic Des, the selfish David and the irresponsible Ruth, at a time when the only proper attitude towards sex was *shame*, could only have disastrous consequences.

At 46, screenwriter Shelagh Delaney (*A Taste of Honey*) is still an Angry Young Woman, and her script for *Dance With A Stranger* is so sharp you could cut yourself on it. Mike Newell has directed in an appropriately unobtrusive fashion, while allowing Delaney's dialogue to shine. Newell's shots of David mounting Ruth beside the gas fire on the floor of Des' claustrophobic front room are evocative of the oppressiveness of most of the film's interiors.

Each line, each frame, is suffused with a sense of doom such that the audience knows that this infatuation is going to put *somebody* on the fatality list. The makers of this film have been fortunate in finding a cast sensitive to their intentions, and who can convey the meaning of the script even when it instructs them to be silent. They have been especially fortunate in finding Miranda Richardson, who is a major discovery and who should be pleasing and startling moviegoers for a long time to come.

By KEVIN CONNOLLY

Seduction: The Cruel Woman

In Elfi Milkesch and Monika Treut's *Seduction: The Cruel Woman*, everything that excites interest in the opening moments eventually adds to the overriding boredom of the film as a whole. The landscape and rich cinematography are ultimately lost with the script; an overt attempt to "challenge" the ideas of the audience quickly bogs down in its own pretense. The film follows a series of episodes in the life of Wanda, a paid dominatrix who operates what she calls a 'gallery' on the docks to cater to the fantasies and perversions of a hand-picked group of people. The opening shots (a half-clad man crawling on and licking a bathroom floor) and the direction of the early subject matter leads the viewer to expect something visually shocking, but when that something does not arrive, the technique is annoyingly obvious rather than thought provoking.

Indeed the film's major flaw is that it leaves the viewer with no ideas of lasting interest, only skewed photography and some rather hackneyed

attempts at artistic theory. "Art is really just doing something surprising," announces Wanda with a knowing look; "perversion is just misunderstanding." The tedious and trite statements about art, masochism, and human nature are endless

and they are made all the more empty by the strained, sarcastic persona put forth by Wanda. The "burden of the master" and "the pride of the slave" provide a final contrived allegory for the relationship between the film and the

audience. The obvious manipulation of the viewer is clumsy and annoying, and the film resolves itself into little more than a series of dull, leather-clad posturings, none of which is the least bit original, or for that matter, interesting.

Argentinian Version becomes Official at gala celebration

By ADRIAN IWACHIW

The Official Version

The *Official Version* is one of the Festival galas exploring the South American political climate, albeit elliptically. Both it and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* are brilliantly executed, moving films that feature outstanding performances by Norma Aleandro here and Raul Julia and William Hurt in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

This is the first Argentinian film to deal with the *desaparecidos* (the 'missing ones,' victims of the military regime's 'dirty war' against political dissidents and 'undesirables') since

the demise of military rule in that country.

The Official Version tells the story of the wife of a successful businessman, herself a high school teacher, who suspects her five-year-old adopted girl may be the daughter of a *desaparecido*. Spurred on by her questioning students Alicia (Norma Aleandro) begins to investigate the matter herself. She meets the child's supposed grandmother, who rallies daily with other mothers and grandmothers demanding to know the fate of their loved ones at the Plaza de Mayo. Aleandro's sensitive portrayal of the middle-class mother is worth every vote which won her the

Best Actress prize at Cannes this year.

Politically the film explores current events with open eyes—nothing is covered up—and this, for Argentina, is a major step. But it draws no battle lines. Rather, it builds connections between the women on either side of the affair. Between the grandmother fighting to retrieve her grandchild and the middle-class mother who has always accepted the 'official version' of events and is only now awakening to the country's past. Don't let all the media attention for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* prevent you from seeing *The Official Version*, for it is not to be missed.

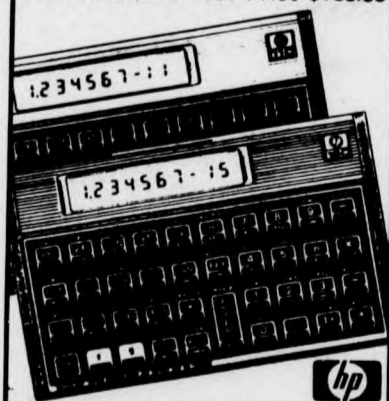


The Official Version, the first Argentinian film dealing with the *desaparecidos*.

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Fall Schedule '85!



SEPTEMBER	Festival Theatre	Avon Theatre
Tues. 10	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Wed. 11	2:00 8:00 12N (S) GOV (D)	GLA (R) SHE (D)
Thurs. 12	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Tues. 17	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Wed. 18	2:00 8:00 12N (S) GOV (D)	GLA (R) SHE (D)
Thurs. 19	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Tues. 24	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Wed. 25	2:00 8:00 12N (S) GOV (D)	GLA (R) SHE (D)
Thurs. 26	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
OCTOBER	Festival Theatre	Avon Theatre
Tues. 1	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Wed. 2	2:00 8:00 12N (S) GOV (D)	GLA (R) SHE (D)
Thurs. 3	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)
Tues. 8	2:00 8:00 GOV (S)	SHE (D)
Wed. 9	2:00 8:00 12N (S) GOV (D)	GLA (R) SHE (D)
Thurs. 10	2:00 8:00 KLR (S)	GLA (D)