

Chomsky's stabs at US policy an illusion

Necessary Illusions
Noam Chomsky
CBC Enterprises

review by John Staples

Noam Chomsky's reputation as a political radical is only exceeded by his high opinion of himself. Unfortunately, in *Necessary Illusions* he allows his timely and thought-provoking observations to be obscured by hyperbole which renders the work virtually unreadable.

Based on his five-part 1988 Massey Lectures series of the same name, which were broadcast as part of CBC Radio's "Ideas" series, and published by the CBC, *Illusions* purports to

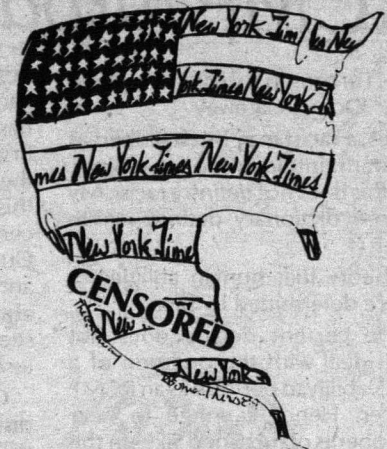
be an inquiry into the "ways in which thought and understandings are shaped in the interest of domestic privilege" in "the most advanced democratic systems of the modern era."

Chomsky suggests that in a democracy the "population cannot be disciplined by force, and thus must be subject to more subtle forms of ideological control." This control, says Chomsky, is exercised through the media. Given the almost universal corporate control of the media and the undeniable predominance of the economically privileged in legislative bodies, this is a plausible premise. Unfortunately, it is a premise which is not addressed in any substantive fashion, for *Illusion* rapidly dissolves into a bewildering collage of quotations and bitter sarcasm

which leaves the reader wondering if Chomsky has some personal axe to grind.

The reader quickly realizes that the only "advanced democratic system" Chomsky is concerned with is the U.S.A. and, token references aside, the only media he is concerned with is the *New York Times*. The latter, by this reviewer's quite unofficial account, at one point receives 17 separate mentions within five pages.

Chomsky's technique seems to have two major thrusts. By far the most annoying of these is the manipulation of quotes. Quotations so litter the pages of *Illusions* that it is sometimes difficult to keep track of which part of a sentence is inside the quotation marks, and which part is not. Often the



statements quoted are either insensitive or outright stupid, and are taken out of context in an effort to ridicule the "quotee."

At other times, editorial comment from reputable non-American sources — in one case the *Globe & Mail* — are cited as representing a "world opinion" critical of American positions. Also extremely annoying is Chomsky's penchant for quoting himself — no less than 80 self-citations in a 136 page work.

Beyond the confusion caused by Chomsky's style, a more fundamental problem with the book is that it simply fails to address its alleged subject. Page after page is dedicated to rehashing the failings of American policy in Central America. Occasionally Chomsky seems to recall the "thought control" angle long enough to point out the *New York Times'* failure to adequately report occurrences — in Nicaragua in particular — but he never adequately attempts to show active coercion of the press by the powerful.

More importantly, Chomsky so pedantically refers to the *Times* that the reader is lead to suspect some kind of personal hostility towards the *Times* by Chomsky. Furthermore, one suspects that Chomsky's case is built upon a less-than-representative sampling, even from that one source.

Necessary Illusions displays such focussed vitriol that it is difficult not to dismiss it as a personal vendetta. Its credibility is further eroded by Chomsky's ongoing assumption that a discussion of thought control in democratic societies can be adequately addressed within the framework of the U.S.' Central American policy, and the *New York Times'* coverage of it. In all, this is a poor excuse for a scholarly work, and the CBC should be ashamed for attempting to publish it as such.

La Lectrice dishes up delicious sensuality

La Lectrice
Princess Theatre
November 3-7

review by Chris Helmers

If you've had trouble with foreign films, do yourself a favour and take in *La Lectrice*. This movie is satisfying at all levels of your being—cerebral, emotional, physical and spiritual.

Constance (Miou-Miou) begins reading the book *La Lectrice* (The Reader) to her boyfriend. As she reads, we travel with Constance in her imagination of herself as the book's main character, Marie.

La Lectrice (the book) tells the story of Marie who, having a beautiful voice, wants to find some kind of meaningful employment that will take advantage of this attribute. Striking on the idea of being a personal reader, she places an ad in the paper. Although her intention is to simply provide a service for the infirmed, the blind, and the lonely, she anticipates adventure in this 'profession.'

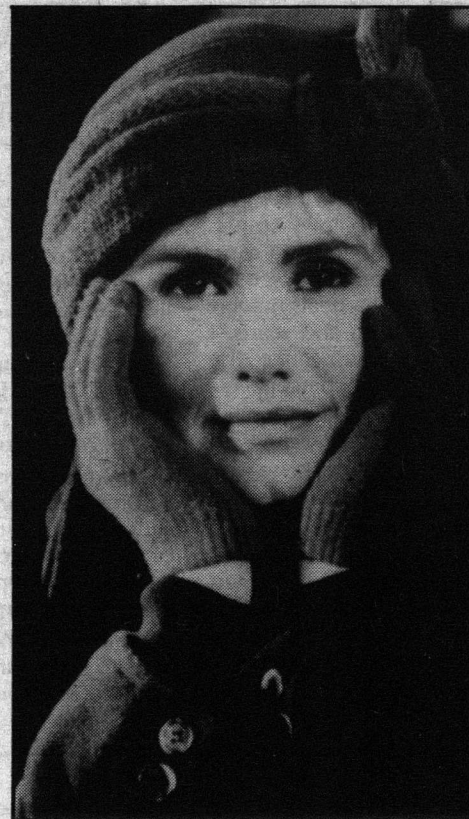
Sure enough, she discovers that unaccountable things happen with each of the clients that she gets. What could possibly happen reading for a paralytic teenager, or an old Hungarian widow, or a precocious six year old? The answer is delicious sensuality, political demonstrations, mistaken crime and more.

To label *La Lectrice* (the film) a comedy would be to denigrate this fine film. There is plenty of humour, but its presence is not primary and is apportioned in the same artful

fashion as are all of the movie's elements. There is art in the cinematography as Marie is shot against the backdrop of a beautiful European town; in the script (especially if you can understand a bit of French) as Marie's readings reach into and affect the lives of Marie and each of her respective clients; in the soft but powerful sensuality that permeates several of Marie's "adventures"; and even in Marie herself with her colourful, innovative clothing and wisely innocent, vital personality.

The choice of readings, combined with director Michel Deville's superlative mastery of bringing them alive on film, evokes the desire to pursue these literary works further. Besides the obvious work, *La Lectrice* by Raymond Jean, Deville includes: excerpts from Jean's collection of short stories *Bella B.'s Fantasy and Other Stories*; Maupassant's short story "The Hair" and texts from other of his short stories; poetry by Baudelaire, including "The Flowers of Evil" and "The Jewels"; political works by Marx, Lenin, Gorky, Prevert; Tolstoy's *War and Peace*; Marguerite Duras' *The Lover*; Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*; and Marquis de Sade's *120 Days*.

I thoroughly enjoyed this film and plan on seeing it again. By the way, please let me know if you can figure out what's going on with the Hungarian widow's maid who is, it seems, being bitten by spiders at progressively higher points on her body throughout the film. As the bites get higher, she changes until they have reached her head, and then... ???



MIOU-MIOU

Deville's playfully sophisticated comedy about the liberating pleasures of literature.

FM 88 kicks off drive for five

by Ron Kuipers

After participating in the NCRA's successful boycott of Polygram records, FM 88 CJSR is now moving on to tackle their next major assignment. Starting November 1st, and continuing until the 11th, U of A's campus/community radio station will be having a fund drive in order to raise \$15,000 for a new 500

watt transmitter.

CJSR volunteers have been quite busy in the recent past. They have already raised \$22,000 of the \$37,000 dollars needed for the new transmitter through such fundraising efforts as bingos and the like.

CJSR is now requesting the support of

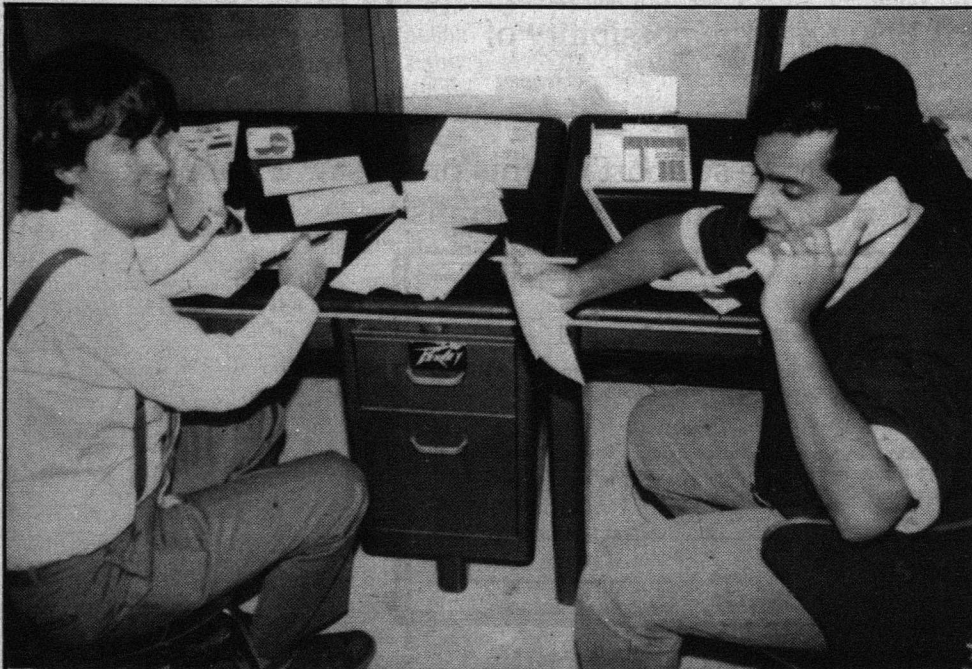
their listeners on campus and in the community. Because campus and community radio's mandate inhibits them from pulling in large amounts of commercial revenue, they rely on this kind of support from their listeners.

Getting the 500 watt transmitter is very important to CJSR. It will eliminate most of the signal's dead spots in the city, serving to blanket the Edmonton area effectively. If you have trouble picking up CJSR's signal, a donation will serve to eliminate the problem.

Fund drive organizers have "many surprises" planned for this ten-day event. Besides numerous record and tape giveaways throughout the week, two lucky donors will receive grand prizes that include a Phillips CD player and a 100-record library.

Drive organizers are also planning two concerts for Nov. 10th and 11th. The concert on the 10th will be held at the Bronx featuring Jr. Gone Wild, Killing Time, Nowhere Blossoms, and Marshall Tully and Roustabouts. The concert on the 11th will be held at the Sunset Club in the Ambassador Hotel featuring local groups Wickerman, Things That Wouldn't Leave, Pop Crisis, and The Foes of Respiration.

All these bands are donating their time and energy to CJSR's fund drive, realizing the services and opportunities CJSR has provided and continues to provide for local talent. Gig lineups are still subject to confirmation.



Two FM88 volunteers man the phones as CJSR kicks off its fund drive for a new 500-watt transmitter.

Fan Profile:



Name: Ron Sears

Age: 21

Title: Gateway photo editor

Eye Color: Brown

Height: 5'7" (in the morning)

When and why he began his idolization of the Stones: In grade 8, he and a friend obtained a six-pack of beer, and enjoyed it and the Stones' *Tattoo You* at the same time.

Why he likes Stone's music: He likes it because it is about sex, drugs, and is socially conscious. He also likes Mick Jagger's imperfect voice.

Favorite Stones' song: *Salt of the Earth*, but he really likes them all.

Extreme to which he has gone in order to be a Stones' fan: He paid \$489 (out of his meager SU wage) to go see the Stones in Vancouver.

Bigger extreme to which he went in order to be a Stones' fan: He spent three weeks on the phone begging for a photo pass for the concert. After he actually obtained it, he went running up and down the halls of second floor SUB, screaming and yelling. Then he went and spent the rest of his meager SU wage on film and beer.

Ideal photo which he feels could be taken: He just wants to take 50 rolls of film and get a wide variety of pics.

Personal traits liked about the Rolling Stones: They are still rocking after almost 30 years in the business. Also, Bill Wyman, 52, just married a 19 year-old girl. Also, Mick Jagger is smart. (He attended the prestigious London School of Economics.)