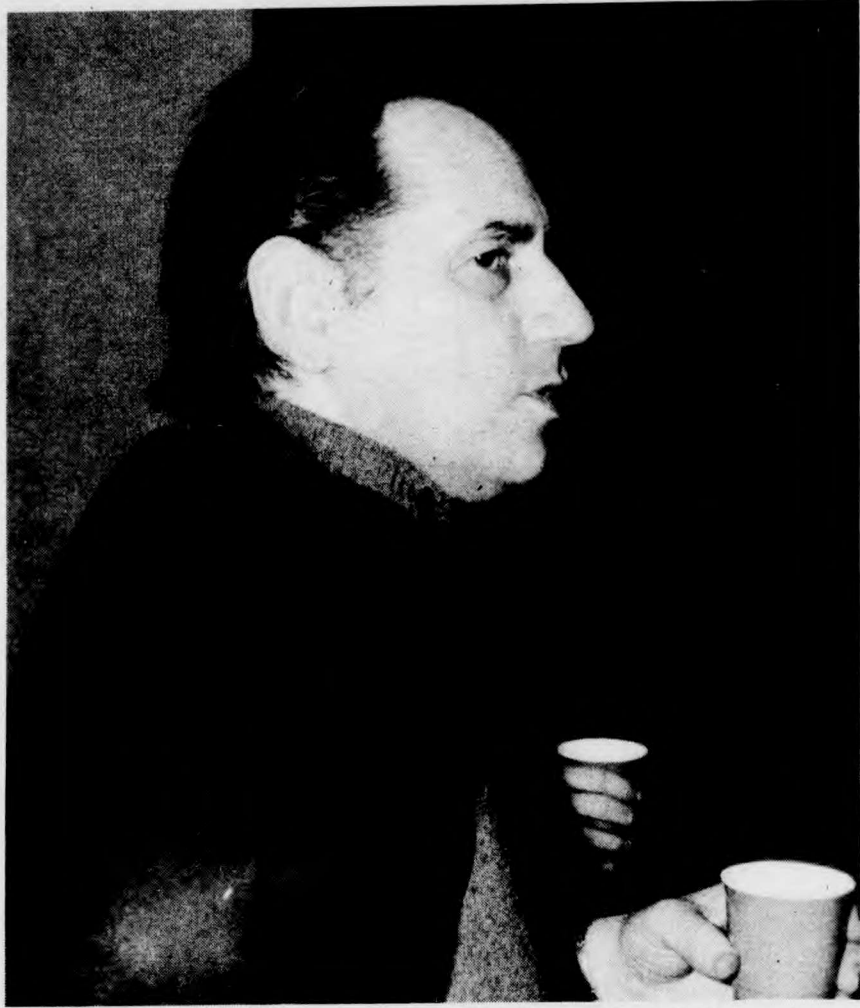


Lonely vigil in apocalypse film

Superb soundtrack hurt by ponderous script



Director Daniel Bourla after screening The Noah

Director needs stupid man, Strauss fits bill perfectly

Daniel Bourla, director of *The Noah*, was "looking for a stupid man" to play the movie's central part, "and I found him in Robert Strauss."

At a reception following the premiere of *The Noah* last week, Bourla described the numerous difficulties the production had run into, a production originally conceived in 1967. He reacted to a comment that the photography seemed to have improved as the film progressed, climaxed by a powerful night scene on the eve of Noah's death.

"We had trouble with our camerawork," said Bourla, "particularly after the head camera man quit in the middle of the shooting. He and his wife were in a middle of a nasty divorce and he left us. After that, I promoted his assistant to head cameraman."

The film was shot in reverse sequence, from end to beginning, because of the beard Strauss had to grow for the production. As the filming progressed, Strauss's beard was continually trimmed back, until he became a bare-faced babe in the film's opening sequence.

Bourla was candid in his disap-

pointment with Strauss as a working companion. "He became increasingly difficult to direct as the film progressed. I think the man was insecure, because as he slowly lost his beard to hide behind, his acting regressed."

"But I wanted a stupid man and I got one, so maybe I have no right to complain."

The film's producer, Louis de Rochemont III, agreed with Bourla's assessment of Strauss. "He was a very difficult actor to work with, but I still think Strauss was the best man for the part."

Familiar to students in the film department, de Rochemont has been a resident professor in the faculty for two years. He expressed excitement before the film's screening, saying that *The Noah* would have major impact on the film world.

At the reception following the film, de Rochemont remained keen on the film, calling it "the kind of feature film I think my father would have liked to make, if he had the chance."

Louis de Rochemont senior is famous in the film world for his memorable *March of Time* documentary series.

By MICHAEL FORMAN

After seven years in the making, *The Noah* premiered at York last week.

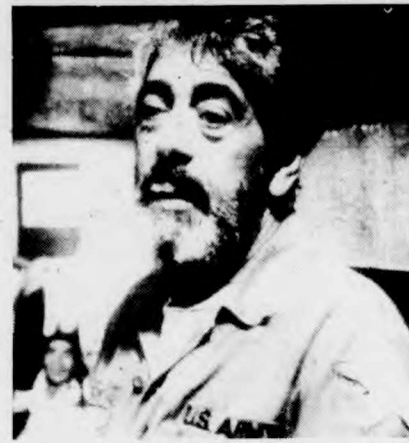
The story, one of desolation and loneliness, left many in the audience as bored as the film's modern Robinson Crusoe, played by Robert Strauss.

The Noah, set some time in the near future, depicts the last few months of a survivor of some recent atomic holocaust, washed ashore onto a deserted island somewhere in the South Pacific. The film depicts the slow disintegration of a man dependent on the company and order given to him by a now extinct society.

Robert Strauss plays *The Noah*, a title he chooses to rationalize his survival in a world now devoid of other living beings. Strauss's loneliness soon leads to his invention of invisible companions in this Garden of Eden, imaginary beings created in the old soldier's "own image."

His first creation, an Adam he so adroitly calls Friday, soon tires of Noah's company and code of Army discipline, and begs his creator to supply him with some imaginary mate. Noah consents, creating a modern Eve, only to be infuriated at the behaviour of his two beings, who begin to take full advantage of their newly discovered carnal knowledge.

The biblical images, and there are many, are intentional in this last chapter of the *Apocalypse*. Noah banishes Friday and his mate from the garden of his mind, replacing them with a flock of small children. Now playing the part of some neo-Moses, Noah acts as teacher and wise man to these naive ones, culminating in his



Robert Strauss (Noah)

delivery of *The Noah* version of the Ten Commandments, concluding with "Thou Shall Not Screw Around With the Colonel's Wife (or Girl)".

The film's dazzling end displays the horrific montage of the dying Noah's last thoughts. Noah, his mind on the brink of collapse and his body finally poisoned by radioactive contamination, replays an unending recording of final thoughts, an audio stream of one man's reaction to culture shock. The voices of Roosevelt, the blast and flash of Hiroshima, the gasps of dying children, Martin Luther King; these and other sounds come screaming together to spell the death throes of Noah.

The Noah succeeds too well in communicating the weariness of a hermit's vigil. Many in the audience complained that the film was too long at 107 minutes, an average length for a feature film. *The Noah* could do well with some 20 minutes clipping, a move that would improve its pace but one

which would almost disqualify it length-wise for the commercial market.

Both the photography and sound recording are superb, and *The Noah* is extremely demanding to the normal cinema ear because of the major part its soundtrack plays. Interweavings of voice and sound reveal the true character of Noah to the audience.

The photography holds its own, particularly towards the end of the film. The impressive capture of Noah's final minutes along a midnight storm-swept beach reminds the viewer of the "black cinema" technique, a fascination with the mix of darkness and wetness first made popular in the 1940's.

Robert Strauss as Noah turns in a sturdy enough performance as *The Noah* but fails at the almost impossible task of carrying a one-character script. When Noah discovers his radioactive tag has turned black, a sign that he has received a deadly dose of contamination, the audience is almost relieved that his end is near.

Though the concept is admirable enough "in the beginning", it appears that *The Noah* may have bitten off more than its audience could swallow.



Producer Louis de Rochemont

Dreyfuss as Kravitz kid carries fast-paced comedy

By WARREN CLEMENTS

Duddy Kravitz is less of a schmuck in the movie than he is in the book.

In Mordecai Richler's 1959 novel *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the fanatically ambitious Duddy trampled the feelings of his girlfriend Yvette, the epileptic Virgil, his Uncle Benji and even his beloved grandfather like so much cabbage.

The movie, Canadian-made and due to open April 12 at the Towne Cinema, doesn't soften Duddy's actions, but of necessity (there's only so much you can cram in two hours) removes much of the book's biting narrative description and many of the incidents (teacher MacPherson, Auntie Ida), that build up the character of the boy who believes that "a man without land is nobody."

Shot last fall in Montreal and the Laurentians, groomed to look like Richler's home town of the 40s, Dud-

dy Kravitz is a movie with everything going for it. As Duddy, Richard Dreyfuss (Curt in *American Graffiti*) steals the film with his nervously defensive laughter and the sweating bravado of a six-inch chicken hawk attacking a rooster pen.

Micheline Lanctot as Yvette has little to do but act stoic, and Randy Quaid as the naggingly naive and nauseatingly cheerful Virgil revives the slow-witted character he played in *The Last Detail*.

But the bit characters, two in particular, almost steal the film from Dreyfuss: Joe Silver as the scrap merchant Farber (Cohen in the book), his face a perpetual squint as he solemnly rationalizes the slitting of his best customer's throat, and Denholm Elliott as Peter John Friar, the lush director who listens to Duddy's plan to film bar mitzvahs while choking on a shot glass of gin.

The film has its minor flaws, like sound recording which makes occasional speeches without background noise sound like they were spoken in a vacuum, and director Ted Kotcheff's penchant for tricky and useless optical scene changes; but *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* is above all else a fine, witty and emotionally involving film.

Addendum: McLelland and Stewart has released an impressive gala 377-page edition of Richler's novel with 69 stills from the film for \$2.95.



Richard Dreyfuss as Duddy

McBride succeeds despite poor mixing

By CHRIS KEEN

A few years ago a number of Toronto promoters tried to turn the old Masonic Temple into the Fillmore East/West of the North.

The Rock Pile, as it came to be known, had a late 60s psychedelic house band called Transfusion, with a lead guitarist named Danny McBride. And McBride, through his gigs including a stint with Luke Gibson in the nth incarnation of Luke and the Apostles acquired a reputation as one of Toronto's finest rock guitarists.

Morningside (Epic), his first solo album suffers somewhat from a producer trying to create a "package" for the record label.

On his debut album, a musician is pretty well forced to go along with the "more experienced" producer's concept of his "image/sound". First albums, then, reveal potential and at the same time require listener patience.

On the track *Belive in Me*, for in-

stance, the slow song builds nicely through some beautiful chord changes. Strings are added in the second verse and then flashes of guitar. As the solo begins, an incredible tension has developed between the guitar and the rhythm section. But the rhythm section has no guts and, as a result, the tension in the song is never resolved.

In spite of the producer's frustrating

mixing tendencies — the guitar solo in *Goodbye Blues*, for example, is much too indistinct — in other instances, such as the horn ensemble break in *Standing Alone* or the beautiful vocal harmonies (all McBride's), are mixed just fine.

If you listen carefully, with patience, the mixing can be beaten, and at a good volume the solos seem suitably raunchy.

Queen of soul still swings

By DYNAMITE C. STRANGE

Still the reigning queen of soul, Aretha Franklin hasn't lost her touch yet. Combining tasteful arrangements with her still incomparable voicings, Aretha really delivers the goods on her latest outing, *Let Me In Your Life* (Atlantic).

Only a couple of numbers on *Let Me In* are originals but on cuts like *Oh Baby*, *I'm in Love*, and *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing*, Aretha really shines. The funky numbers swing, and the ballads are treated with an almost anguished tenderness which confirms Miss Franklin's superior sense of timing and her ability to carry even the most mundane lyrics.

Although it isn't likely that Aretha Franklin will ever return to the frantic popularity which was hers six or seven years ago, and while *Let Me In Your Life* may seem a little low-keyed at points, Aretha's readings are interesting, persuasive and gutsy in a way that only she knows how to convey.

Grossa Fuga Ballet debuts

By INGRID ASBOTH

Richard Gibson, ballet master of the Netherlands Dance Theatre and a man whose sincerity and imaginative analogies turn even the most basic of ballet classes into a trip beyond the "looking glass", is visiting York's dance programme until April 11.

The Netherlands Dance Theatre has recently gained considerable notoriety in Europe and North America with a ballet called *Mutations*, an hour-long piece in which the last five minutes are performed in the nude.

As Gibson says, "It became rather like the company Frankenstein, as people started thinking of us as 'that nude dance company'." They have since decided to drop the ballet from their repertoire.

As well as teaching technique classes, Gibson is also rehearsing a ballet with York students entitled *Grossa Fuga*, choreographed by Hans van Manen. One movement of this ballet will be performed for the dance department's free spring concert on April 9, 10 and 11 at 8 p.m. in Burton Auditorium.

The ballet, is a mixture of the classical and modern styles, with Beethoven providing musical inspiration for the sensitive yet earthy encounter between four couples. In Gibson's words, "It is a paradox in many ways, both in its sensuousness and its purity, in its coolness and its earthiness."

The visual beauty of the ballet is analogous to Beethoven's deeply moving music. Hans van Manen has captured the tenderness and sensuality that so clearly establishes itself in the choreography.

This will mark the first time that any part of *Grossa Fuga* has been shown in Canada.