

More Hits 'n' Bits

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expertly shot, *Deadly Currents'* cinematic values match the presentation of the subject matter. "When documentary is well made," says Jacobovici, who is going to be present at the screening, "it is the most powerful kind of cinema." Highly recommended (and only \$3!).

— Pedram Fouladian

TELEVISION

Nothing to do Tuesday nights at 10pm? Flick on the telly and catch some documentary action with TVOntario's **Human Edge** series. This year's selection of films promises a broad and eclectic range, both in subject matter and geographically (the majority are first run in Canada, but originate in countries throughout the world). The first, a British documentary, **Rude Women** (which ran yesterday, Oct. 27) irreverently celebrated women who aren't afraid to speak candidly about sex and sexuality. Second week (Nov. 3) offers **Big Al**, a closeup look at New York's most famous Black activist, the Reverend Al Sharpton — also known as Reverend Soundbite for his masterful manipulation of the media. **Big Al** focuses on the events of Jan. 1991, as accused murderers of a Black youth go to trial. — Lilac Caña

Schrader's Sleeper confusing but inspired

by Pedram Fouladian

I picture Paul Schrader as a person talking in a very low voice. Next to him stands an enthusiastic listener, who brings his head closer, trying to understand what Schrader is trying to say. This is how I describe my encounter with the films that Paul Schrader has directed.

Essentially, one should not try to distinguish between Paul Schrader the screenwriter (*Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *The Mosquito Coast*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*) and Schrader the director (*American Gigolo*, *Cat People*, *Mishima*, *The Comfort of the Strangers*). Although, the former has established himself as a leading screenwriter in recent American cinema; the latter's reputation remains somewhat dubious.

Films directed by Paul Schrader is that some kind of statement is trying to burst out of the belly of a quasi-complex plot.

This feeling came back once more after seeing *Light Sleeper*. Paul Schrader has chosen New York for the setting for the incidents happening around John LeTour (Willem Dafoe). A "chic" drug delivery boy, LaTour works for a business run by Ann (Susan Sarandon). He has recently quit drugs and accidentally meets his former girlfriend Marianne (Dana Delaney).

Early in the film, Schrader tries to

film

Light Sleeper
written and directed by Paul Schrader
produced by Linda Reisman
starring Willem Dafoe, Susan Sarandon, Dana Delaney

establish the fact that LaTour is searching for something. However, this is a typical conclusion that one draws upon being exposed to Schraderian symbolism. We are bombed by psychological elements surrounding LeTour; his encounter with customers, with his past and with people he is working with. Most notably, LaTour's entries in his diary are presented in voice-over narration. Obviously, LaTour is on a "spiritual" quest. Words like becoming "a good person", needing some "change" and "direction" are parts of his entries into the diary.

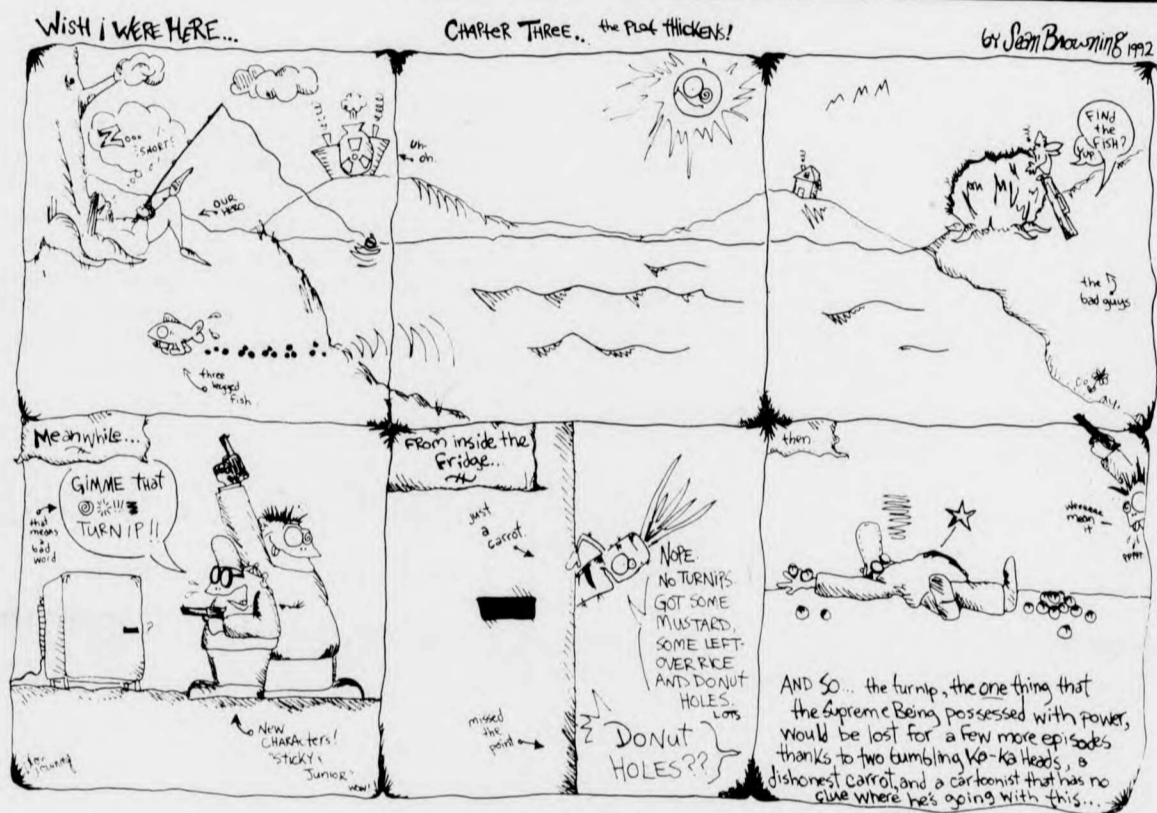
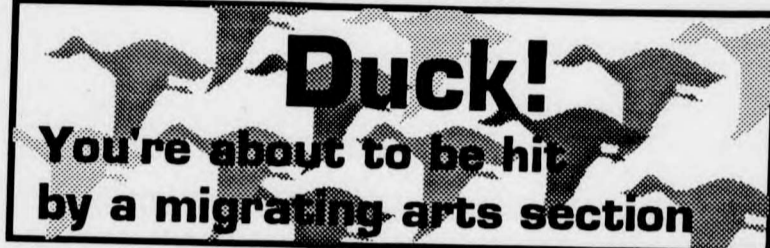
Visually, the film becomes enigmatic. By use of images, Schrader

tries to link his characters with their surroundings. The exterior scenes are, of course, the streets of New York, about which Schrader is very articulate. The interiors are sometimes filled with modern and classical art works. (A love scene takes place in front of a Vermeer painting.)

But the symbolic significance of these artworks loses itself in the ambiguity that Schrader has created around them. Are these paintings and sculptures (the set's most visible inanimate objects) trying to make a statement about the characters? Are they there to express and refer to

something that is "beyond" the characters' being? Is Schrader trying to create his own private "transcendental" style?

The confusion created in the film is furthered by the plot. The account of LaTour's identity crisis and quest suddenly turns into a murder mystery story with a pseudo-cathartic coda. Maybe this dramatic change in the plot is Schrader's way of externalizing LaTour's state of mind. However, one can almost be certain that this is the only method Schrader can use to depict the decadence of his characters.



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