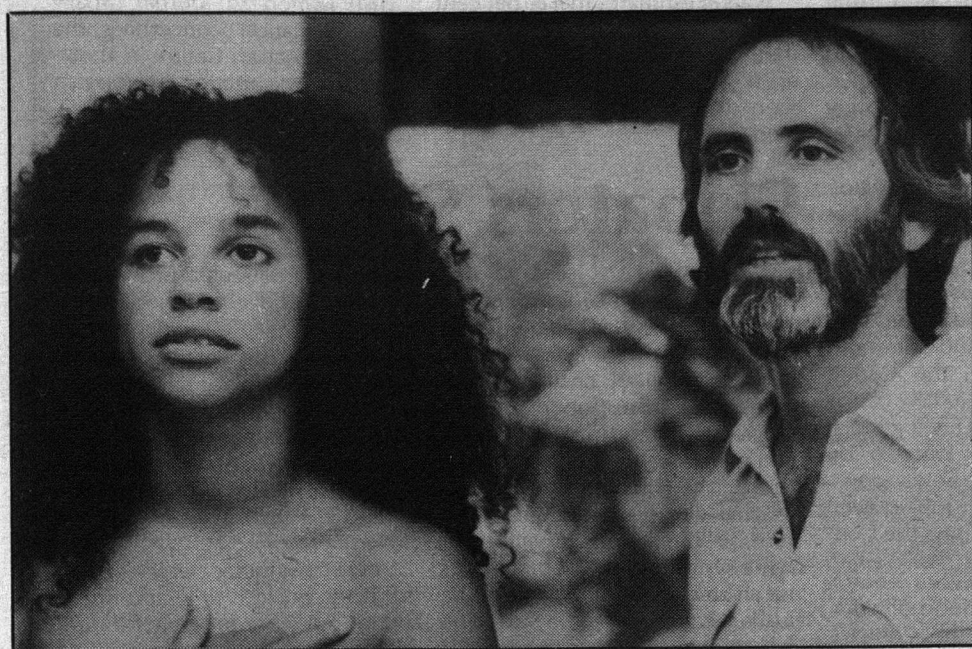


Im-going with a purpose



Alan Rudolph directs Rae Dawn Chong in *Choose Me*

Choose Me

Alan Rudolph was a protege of Robert Altman, working closely with him on *Nashville* and other projects. Rudolph's first feature, *Welcome to L.A.*, which continued the experiments with narrative that Altman had conducted in *Nashville*, was considered brilliant by many critics. Rudolph's latest film, *Choose Me*, voted "Best Film" by the international critic's poll in Toronto, is a neurotic tragi-comedy that weaves together seemingly-divergent narrative strands to create a tightly-structured and complex world unto itself.

Mickey (Keith Carradine), apparently an escapee from a mental hospital, wanders into the rather-seedy Eve's Lounge where he encounters a number of quirky and screwed-up characters. There's Eve, the voluptuous and unhappy owner of the lounge (Lesley Ann Warren); Eve's prospective roommate (Genevieve Bujold) who is, secretly, popular radio psychologist "Dr. Love"; a ditsy and unhappily-married barfly (Rae Dawn Chong) and her rich and violent husband (Patrick Bauchau) who's having an affair with Eve (still following?). Over the course of a few days Mickey becomes more and more tangled-up in the lives of the others as chance meetings, unfulfilled affairs and sexual frustration change all the characters' lives (and probably

not for the better).

As in Altman's *Nashville*, well-conceived characters are the foundations upon which the skilful storyline rests. Characters connect, disconnect, and re-connect until a kind of lunatic order arises out of this complex crossing-of-paths. It's impossible to guess what is going to happen next as Mickey moves from encounter to encounter. Yet every surprise, upon consideration, relates perfectly to the grandly-conceived whole. In fact, it wouldn't be out of line to say that Rudolph's screenplay is more orchestrated than written — like a piece of music written for a symphony. And like a symphonic score the themes of *Choose Me* go through many variations, down many seemingly-blind alleys before returning and forcing the viewer to slap himself/herself on the side of the head and marvel at the film's virtuoso structure.

Rudolph has always had trouble obtaining financing for his films because of the very personal and unique (a dirty word in Hollywood) worlds he creates. However, *Choose Me's* humor, great acting and grand design should give it commercial potential. A success would mean more Alan Rudolph films — a thought to warm one's heart on a cold and dreary day.

Metropolis

It's becoming more and more common to find former rock-video makers directing major motion pictures (Steven Barron and his *Electric Dreams* spring immediately to mind). But never before has someone thought, by way of some inconceivably twisted and vile logic, to make a big rock-video of an already-existing movie. Never before now, that is, because Giorgio Moroder succeeds in doing just that. And what's worse he's chosen to desecrate one of the classics of the silent cinema, Fritz Lang's futuristic sci-fi film *Metropolis*, made in 1926.

Metropolis, a visual experience unparalleled in it's time, is still impressive today. The story — a huge city of the future controlled and enjoyed by the elite but built and maintained by an increasingly unhappy army of exploited workers living and toiling underground — is really secondary to the architecture, special effects and expressionistic visual style. What makes the film valuable is not the simplistic message about how there must be a mediator — the heart — between the head (those who control) and the hands (those who do the work), but rather the place *Metropolis* holds in cinematic history as one of

the prime examples of a major cinematic movement — German expressionism. Moroder — who introduced the film in Toronto by telling us how privileged he felt to have worked on the soundtrack with "such great artists as Pat Benatar, Billy Squier and Loverboy" (Uh-huh) — trivializes everything about the film by tinting many of the scenes (thereby ruining Karl Freund's very expressive cinematography), adding grammatically poor sub-titles to replace the original inter-titles, using pop songs to explain away some of the more embarrassingly-sentimental moments in the film (moments that are intrinsic to the film's charm), and then trying to rationalize the whole venture by prefacing the movie with a title card quoting Fritz Lang as having said something like "I always had a good eye, but one of my biggest disappointments has been my terrible ear for music." Sheesh!

The only positive thing one can say about Moroder's version of *Metropolis* is that Fritz Lang's direction is still discernible underneath all the "chic" garbage. Maybe some people viewing *Metropolis* for the first time will manage to recognize Lang's talent and go see more of his films.

Swann in Love — Directed by Volker Schlöndorff (*The Tin Drum*) and starring Jeremy Irons, *Swann in Love* attempts to deal with the upper-class Swann's obsessive love for the demi-mondaine, Odette. Proust's eye for detail is reflected in the lavish and minutely-detailed sets, but unfortunately set design does not a movie make. Schlöndorff treats Swann's obsessive love from far too great a distance, making the film unemotional and uninvolved. The characters walk about groaning about how boring 19th C. Parisian high society is and I can only agree.

The Ruins

Quite simply, the best film of the festival (although other critics chose to disagree). Directed by Mrinal Sen (*In Search of Famine*), *The Ruins* concerns three modern Indian men who journey to a run-down villa and come face to face with the past in the form of a young woman and her invalid mother living on the estate. Tradition vs. progress, family loyalty vs. individual happiness, the class-system and much more are given detailed consideration in this slowly-building emotion-filled film. And what's

more, Sen utilizes a visual style that pinpoints and accentuates the themes: compositions reflect the gulf between the old and the new and the ruins serve as a perfect visual metaphor for the state of Indian tradition. *The Ruins* is a perfect film that deserves Universal distribution and viewing.

Boy Meets Girl

Retitled (perhaps facetiously) as *The Night is Young* by 23 year-old director Leos Carax at the Toronto premiere, this film is an amazing debut worthy of comparison with Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* and Godard's *Breathless*. Shot in beautiful black and white, *Boy Meets Girl* follows Alex (a thinly-disguised version of director Carax) as he wanders, despondent, through the Parisian night pining for his ex-girlfriend who's left him for his (former) best friend. Alex is a loner, alternately overbearing and sensitive, articulate and naive, and above-all funny. Carax (who completed the film when he was 21!) directs with an assuredness that belies his years and, although there are moments of self-indulgence, the result is a poignant, funny and stylish ode to disaffected youth.

story and reviews

by Jack Vermeë

Where the Green Ants Dream

Werner Herzog's latest focusses on a tribe of Australian Aborigines who try to stop a mining company from exploiting the land "where the green ants dream." The film is peopled by Herzog's usual assortment of crazies but it doesn't have the obsessed narrative, the lunatic quest, that make his other films so engrossing. Herzog's preoccupation with striking images is present but his story devolves into a basic social-issue conflict complete with the stereotyped (and clumsily directed) courtroom scene. A major disappointment.

Stop Making Sense

The concert film of Talking Heads directed by Jonathan Demme ranks as one of the best concert films ever, thanks more to the song selection, high-energy performances and striking visual gymnastics of David Byrne and company than to Demme's close-up laden,

wildly-mobile direction. Despite the fact that Demme's direction belies his perceived role as a "discrete interpreter", it's still the Talking Heads on stage which makes it a must-see.

Stranger Than Paradise

Winner of the "Camera d'Or" for best first feature at Cannes, directed by underground New Yorker Jim Jarmusch and featuring ex "Lounge Lizard" John Lurie (who also has a bit part in *Paris, Texas*), *Stranger than Paradise* is the kind of film that makes a festival worthwhile. Focussing on a disaffected New York low-life, who's coerced by his aunt into putting-up his cousin Eva Brom Budapest, *Stranger than Paradise* is dead-pan humour at its best. Low-budget production values are soon overcome by a steadily-accumulating wealth of character details and situational humour that result in a hilarious and original movie. The ironic climax provides a pay-off untypical of today's conservative films. Director Jarmusch makes very few mistakes in this gem.



A scene from *The Ruins* - best film of the festival