

# Nikita: stylish sexy French thriller

by Almeida Quim

*La Femme Nikita*  
directed by Luc Besson  
Alliance

*La Femme Nikita* is the latest feature from Frenchman Luc Besson. Although I have not seen his other works, which include the internationally successful *Le Dernier Combat*, the cult hit *Subway*, and *Le Grand Bleu*, I was extremely impressed by his film making talent in *La Femme Nikita*.

*La Femme Nikita* is a stylish, sexy, French thriller. Like the heroine Nikita herself, the film is explosive and violent. The visuals and the style of film are sophisticated and sleek, and it has a glossy French avant-garde look to it.

When we first see Nikita herself, she is a seedy underworld junkie in need of a 'fix'. When her creepy underworld friends get blown away by the police in a failed attempt to steal drugs, Nikita seeks revenge by blowing away a few cops with her deadly aim. After she gets arrested and sentenced for murder, she is declared dead by the authorities.

She is then approached by an agent from an underground government agency (played with '007' coolness by Tcheky Karyo), who would like to use her exceptional talent for killing people for the government's own exploits. After much resistance, Nikita realizes she has no choice but to obey the authorities. The alternative is imprisonment or death.

Nikita is soon programmed and groomed into a sexy feminine killing machine for the government's underworld activities. Although she is allowed to live on her own, Nikita's life becomes a nightmare as she cannot escape the manipulation and



Beautiful and dangerous Nikita (Anne Parillard) leads a double life in the stylish thriller *La Femme Nikita*.

control of the government agency she realizes her life is a living hell, and attempts to struggle for control of her life.

To offset all the violence and coldness in the movie, a counter plot is introduced in which Nikita falls in love with a gentle and likeable man (played by Jean-Hugues Anglade). He is totally blind to her secret iden-

tity, thinking she works late nights at the hospital when she goes on her assassination assignments. Their love for each other represents the struggle of good over evil in the movie.

While the movie is slick and well-done, it nevertheless has its flaws. The movie is not a four-star masterpiece, but it comes close to it. I felt

the ending was unsatisfactory, as the story is not properly resolved and the audience is left wondering about the fate of Nikita.

I also did not like the excessive exploitation of violence in the movie, especially the gruesome scenes at the end. The worst is the scene in which acid is poured over several convulsing undead bodies in a bathtub.

Anne Parillard is stunning and seductive in her portrayal of Nikita. She plays the character with razor edge volatility while also giving her a tender vulnerability and sexiness which makes Nikita so appealing.

Overall, if you are looking for something that will dazzle your senses, with lots of style and fast-paced action, you should not miss this movie.

## Luscious Lush rides into Toronto

by Chris Wodskou

*Lush/Ride*  
R.P.M.  
Mar. 26, 1991

"Manchester's dead already" declaims Chris Acland, drummer for Lush. Lush negotiated their way through a campus media press scrum prior to their Tuesday night show at RPM with Ride.

"So many of those bands like The Charlatans — they're playing all these big venues on the strength of what, one album — are just going to disappear as soon as everybody gets sick of the Manchester scene."

Lush singer-guitarist Miki Berenyi concurred.

"Bands like Happy Mondays and Stone Roses, who've been around for a while to establish themselves and are adaptable will keep going but the rest..." She makes a dismissive gesture with her hand.

This leads us to the question of what does this carping about Happy Mondays' minions and acolytes have to do with Lush?

Nothing much except to point to the reason why Lush have thus far been able to transcend any labels affixed to them or membership to any number of scenes manufactured by the U.K. music press: nearly perfect pop songs, which should always be in fashion.

Over three EPs, compiled in their Canadian debut *Gala*, Lush's music has no pretensions to being anything more than supremely catchy guitar pop erected around foundations of simple chord progression adorned with little more than stunning melodies and starkly beautiful harmonies, but without the edges smoothed over.

The foregrounding of strong melodies and reliance upon part of what Miki describes as "anti-rock attitude", stems in part from Lush's earliest existence.

"When we started, Chris was the only one who could really play, so we had to concentrate on what we were good at, which was writing songs."

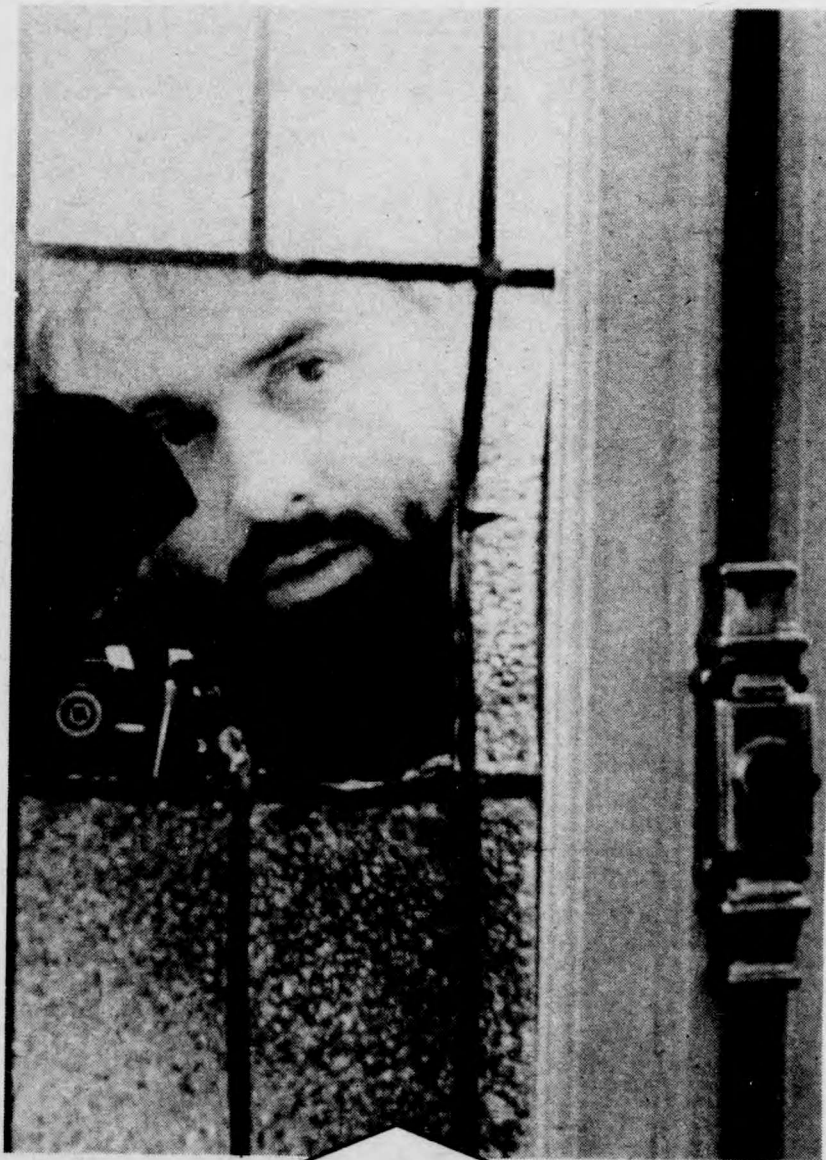
"We've never been good enough

as musicians to be a rock band. We can't play those ridiculous solos to show how good we are, and we can't take requests for covers from the audience... I've never liked that sort of stuff anyway. All that has nothing to do with making good music."

Miki would like to see one thing changed about their promotion. Because Lush is fronted by two attractive women, the press has capitalized on their looks, splashing their faces on the covers of British music magazines, at the expense of serious discussion of their music.

For now, their agenda is the continue to establish their own unique niche in the music world, something which their association with 4AD and Robin Guthrie of the Cocteau Twins works against.

Lush would be better compared to their labelmates the Pale Saints, fellow purveyors of hard-edged, but lilting pop. But the point here, is not to affix a label or compare bands. Lush want to stand on their own.



Director Luc Besson (*Subway*, *Le Dernier Combat*, and *Le Grand Bleu*) films a scene for *La Femme Nikita* from an interesting perspective.