

# Last Tango

Take a man; a man crushed by tragedy, and set him loose, equip him with a body to hold his mind; a mind that has one desperate task, the task of escaping from the overburdening world of reality to a world of fantasy where reassertion of a manhood is not a difficult task. Add a girl who accidentally steps in the whirlpool of his fantasy, and soon finds herself unable to escape. This is the skeleton of Bernardo Bertolucci's fine film *Last Tango in Paris*, currently playing at the Odeon 2.

It is a rather unfortunate fact that archaic censorship views on cinematic sexuality have led to a flood of box office business in which the audience basically comes to see some sex and skin, and often does not try to appreciate the depth of Bertolucci's work. The man, Paul, and the girl, Jeanne, have come to rent the same Parisian apartment, which is eventually to become the setting for Paul's fantasy world, and after a few banal exchanges of conversation, they take each other in an animalistic act of passion.

This introduces the strong sexual element to the film, by showing that sex is the main device Paul uses to try and regain some semblance of his former manhood. Paul's problems stem from the fact that his wife has committed a gory wrist-slashing ritualistic suicide, for which he blames himself. It is certainly no help when he discovers that his wife had taken a lover, which again reflects on him poorly as a man. Bertolucci uses these events as a basis for the sexual nature of several sequences, that Paul has been offered the ultimate insult and wants to discover if he really was to blame for his wife's death, through failure in many forms on his part. Paul later has a talk with his wife's lover, and finds that his wife had outfitted the lover with a bathrobe identical to Paul's, a room identical to Paul's, even liquor identical to Paul's tastes.

He obviously needs a place to escape, and the little apartment, where he and the girl meet to make brutal, unrestrained, love is a perfect release. The girl, once having been caught in the fantasy world, keeps on coming back. On the outside, she makes preparations to marry her film maker boyfriend, a few minutes later she is back in Paul's apartment. Eventually, Jeanne wants to escape, and comes to tell Paul that it's over. However, he thinks he has his head together, and asks Jeanne to marry him. The only way she can escape is to kill him.

As Paul, Marlon Brando gives a fine, fine, reading. From the moment he creates the fantasy world ("Don't tell me your name. Names are for the outside. We have no names here.") he bares the soul of that twisted, tormented, half man called Paul. There is a particularly poignant scene in which he sees his wife's corpse, bedecked in flowers, readied for a "decent" burial. He berates her, curses her, screams at her, takes out all his aggressions until he breaks down completely in tears and starts blaming himself, admitting that his faults had driven her to her death. That slow transition from angry whirlwind to a broken docile dejection in the space of a brief minute or so was brilliantly handled. That, apart from any other single scene, made Brando's performance what it was.

Maria Schneider as Jeanne exhibited a fluent bilinguality, a fine body, and a pretty fair acting ability. Her performance did not come close to Brando's but it was rather solid. Then again, Bertolucci's screenplay provided for a dominant male lead.

Schneider's finest scene was the final one, perhaps the only one in which she put it all together and stood bathed with emotion. Then, and only then did the full blast of her torment make its impact. And when the impact came, it sent one home with a load of thought to sift through.

Bertolucci wrote the screenplay from a story by himself, as well as directing the film, so a heavy branch of laurels rests on his head. He has handled his coordination with the eye of a master, building the dramatic impact yet keeping the film from being boring introspection by throwing in ironic dashes here and there.

Some humour is evident too, with the irony. The scene for the confrontation where Jeanne comes to tell Paul that she is getting married and where Paul tells Jeanne that he wants to marry her is in a ballroom where the contestants are dancing the tango. When the judge calls the dancers together for the last tango, Schneider and Brando drift out onto the floor, swing their bodies to the music, and when an outraged judge starts to protest, Brando calmly hangs a moon by dropping his trousers.

Bertolucci uses almost every scene to add to the overall effect, from little vignettes like the country house where Jeanne grew up to a scene like Paul's polite confrontation with his

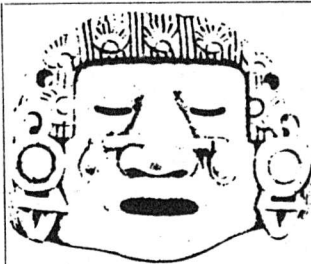


Bruce Cockburn impressed his music on 1200 fortunate people Sunday night at two fine concerts in SUB theatre' The mellow performer will be awaited eagerly for a return visit'

wife's lover. He has written a screenplay perfect for his overall scheme and managed to wring out the last drop of sweat from his players.

Brando hasn't been motivated to turn in a performance of this calibre in years. He opens the floodgate of his emotions and lets them churn out in a seething stream. There are little touches, bits where he shows Paul regaining the trappings of a "civilized" person. The most dramatic of these is at the very end, after Paul has been shot, he calmly prepares to face death by removing a piece of chewing gum from his mouth, sticking it under a railing, and crumpling to the ground in a graceful heap. The film really went deeper than I have been able to describe, I would recommend it very highly to anyone seeking a very poignant insight into the turbulent world of human emotions.

Satya Das



## ORACLES

### theatre lives

*That Championship Season* by Oscar nominee Jason Miller. Next at the Citadel. Directed by Tibor Feheregyhazi and featuring Richard Kuss, Douglas Chamberlain, Michael Donaghue, Edward Rudney and Peter Rogan. Previews are available on Thursday and Friday night at 8:30 p.m. for the cheap, cheap price of \$1.50 for students. Warning: In all fairness, the language used may be objectionable to some.

Keep your eyes peeled for Walterdale's next opening in the very near future.

### poetry

David McFadden will be reading from his works at the Centennial Library on Friday night.

### the eyes have it

Walter Jule is having an exhibit of his recent drawings at Latitude 53 at 10048-101 A Ave. Until March 22.

The Edmonton Art Gallery is featuring an exhibition of recent drawings and paintings by Doug D. Barry until March 26.

### easy on the ears

*Badfinger* from England at the Jubilee, Tuesday night. With Yellowhead and Molly. Tickets are available at Mike's.

The University of Alberta String Quartet plays Bartok's Quartets No. 1 and No. 2. Humanities Centre Lecture Theatre 1. Wednesday, March 13 at 4:30 p.m.

There will be a graduate student recital by M.Mus. student, Barbara Ellis on piano. Thursday, March 14 at 8:00 p.m. in Con Hall. Free.

The University of Alberta String Quartet (they do get around, don't they) will play Bartok again in Con Hall, Friday, March 15 at 8:00 p.m.

# Gateway

Staff meeting

Thursday 7:30p.m.

sub

room 282