

## Document Citation

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# NEW YORKER FILMS

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"...MORAL AND ARTISTIC ELEGANCE..."

'THE DEVIL PROBABLY' EXPRESS THE MALASIE OF OUR TIME  
MORE PROFOUNDLY AND MORE MAGNIFICENTLY THAN ANY  
WORK OF ART IN ANY MEDIUM."

—Andrew Sarris, VILLAGE VOICE

"EXALTING!"

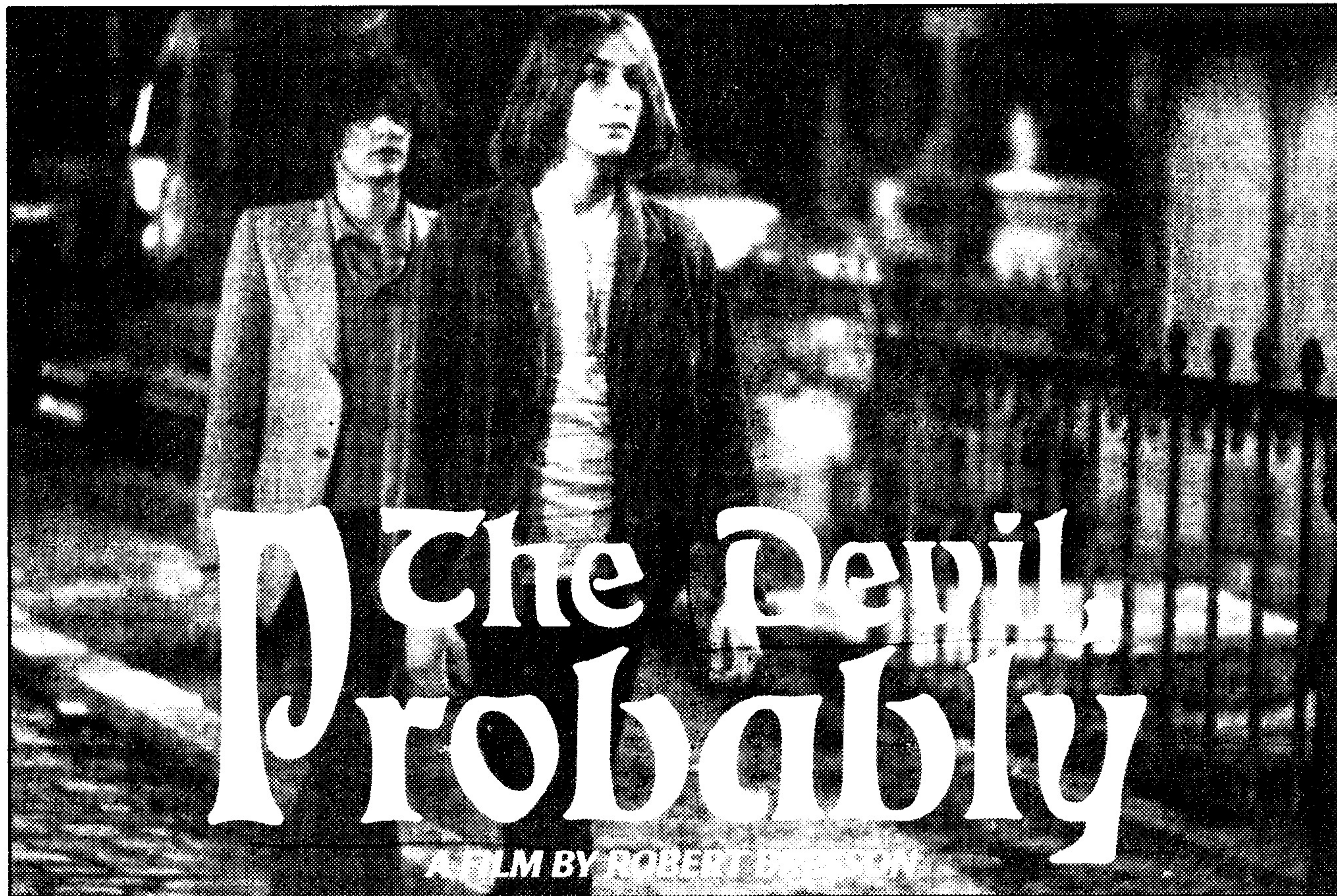
—Richard Roud, FILM COMMENT

"★★★★"

...POWERFUL...EXTRAORDINARILY BEAUTIFUL...

'THE DEVIL PROBABLY' IS A LATE MASTERWORK  
BY ONE OF THE GREAT ORIGINALS OF THE MOVIES."

—Dave Kerr, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS



*The body of a twenty year old with a bullet in his head is found in a Paris cemetery. The press account for this death in different ways: some say it is suicide, others call it a political gesture, or even murder.*

*To examine the events leading to this death, the film spirals backwards where we meet four adolescents all in revolt against industrialized consumer society and desperately searching for meaning in contemporary France. Our focus is pollution in its various forms and the refusal of one of these adolescents, a modern-day fallen angel, to accept the usual French solutions: the Revolution, the New Church, psychoanalysis, or love.*

*Made when he was 70 years old, THE DEVIL, PROBABLY is Robert Bresson's twelfth feature and his only film to boast a wholly original script. Although it was hailed when screened at the 15th New York Film Festival in 1977, THE DEVIL, PROBABLY has been unavailable in the U.S. since then.*

RUNNING TIME: 95 MINS. COLOR. IN FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES. UNRATED.



Made in 1977 but never acquired for American distribution, Robert Bresson's "The Devil, Probably" is a late masterpiece by one of the great originals of the movies.

Born in central France in 1907, Bresson made his first film, "Les Affaires Publiques," in 1933 and his most recent, "L'Argent," in 1983. In his 50 years of activity, he evolved a style unlike any other in the cinema, a system of rigorous minimalism that avoided all overt plays for emotion.

Bresson favored a sparse, clean line of narration, stripped of climaxes and subplots, meant to suggest the presence of the spiritual in everyday life. His greatest achievements—"Diary of a Country Priest" (1950), "Pickpocket" (1959), "Au Hasard Balthazar" (1966)—chart the journey of conflicted souls toward enlightenment.

Though obviously not for everyone, Bresson's work can be extraor-



Troubled youths enjoy a moment together in a scene from Robert Bresson's THE DEVIL PROBABLY

The film opens with a news report—a teenager has killed himself in Paris' historic Pere Lachaise cemetery—and then flashes back to tell his story. Charles (Antoine Monnier, a nonprofessional as were all of Bresson's performers) is a 20-year-old

the increasingly needy, self-destructive Charles. But Charles seems to prefer Edwige (Laetitia Carcano), a rich girl who offers affection of a more physical kind.

The film is full of disturbing interventions by unseen forces. A theological debate in a church is interrupted by discordant organ blasts (the instrument is being tuned, but seems to have a mind of its own). The passengers on a crowded bus spontaneously express their deepest fears and apprehensions, and just as someone is wondering "Who's the one in command? Who's the one making fun of us?" there is an accident.

Bresson supplies his answer to those questions with his title, and it is not an encouraging one. "The Devil, Probably" was widely accused of nihilism when it was first released in France, and was in fact forbidden to under-18-year-olds on the grounds that it was an encouragement to suicide. This does seem to be a world abandoned by God, where nature is dying and the old covenants no longer hold. What hope there is, Bresson suggests, lies in man's lingering ability to create. The stern beauties of "The Devil, Probably" are the best refutation of its despairing content.



Alberte (Tina Irissari) enjoys a moment alone in a scene from Robert Bresson's THE DEVIL PROBABLY

dinarily beautiful, as is "The Devil, Probably." An attempt to come to grips with the cultural upheavals of the late '60s and—early '70s, the film finds him engaged with environmentalism, psychoanalysis and radical politics—movements that promised a response to an increasingly chaotic, materialistic society.

student who has become disenchanted with the radical activism of his friends, preferring to sit and drink on the bank of the Seine or visit the city's ancient churches.

Michel (Henri de Maublanc) is a committed environmentalist, who feels betrayed when his lover, Alberte (Tina Irissari), leaves him to care for

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