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On connaît la chanson (Same old song), Resnais, Alain, 1997

L'amour à mort (Love unto death), Resnais, Alain, 1984

Nuit et brouillard (Night and fog), Resnais, Alain, 1955

L'année dernière à marienbad (Last year at marienbad), Resnais, Alain, 1961

Je t'aime, je t'aime (I love you, I love you), Resnais, Alain, 1968

La guerre est finie (The war is over), Resnais, Alain, 1966

Guernica, Resnais, Alain, 1950

Gauguin, Resnais, Alain, 1950

Le chant du styrene, Resnais, Alain, 1958

Mon oncle d'Amérique (My American uncle), Resnais, Alain, 1980

La vie est un roman (Life is a bed of roses), Resnais, Alain, 1983

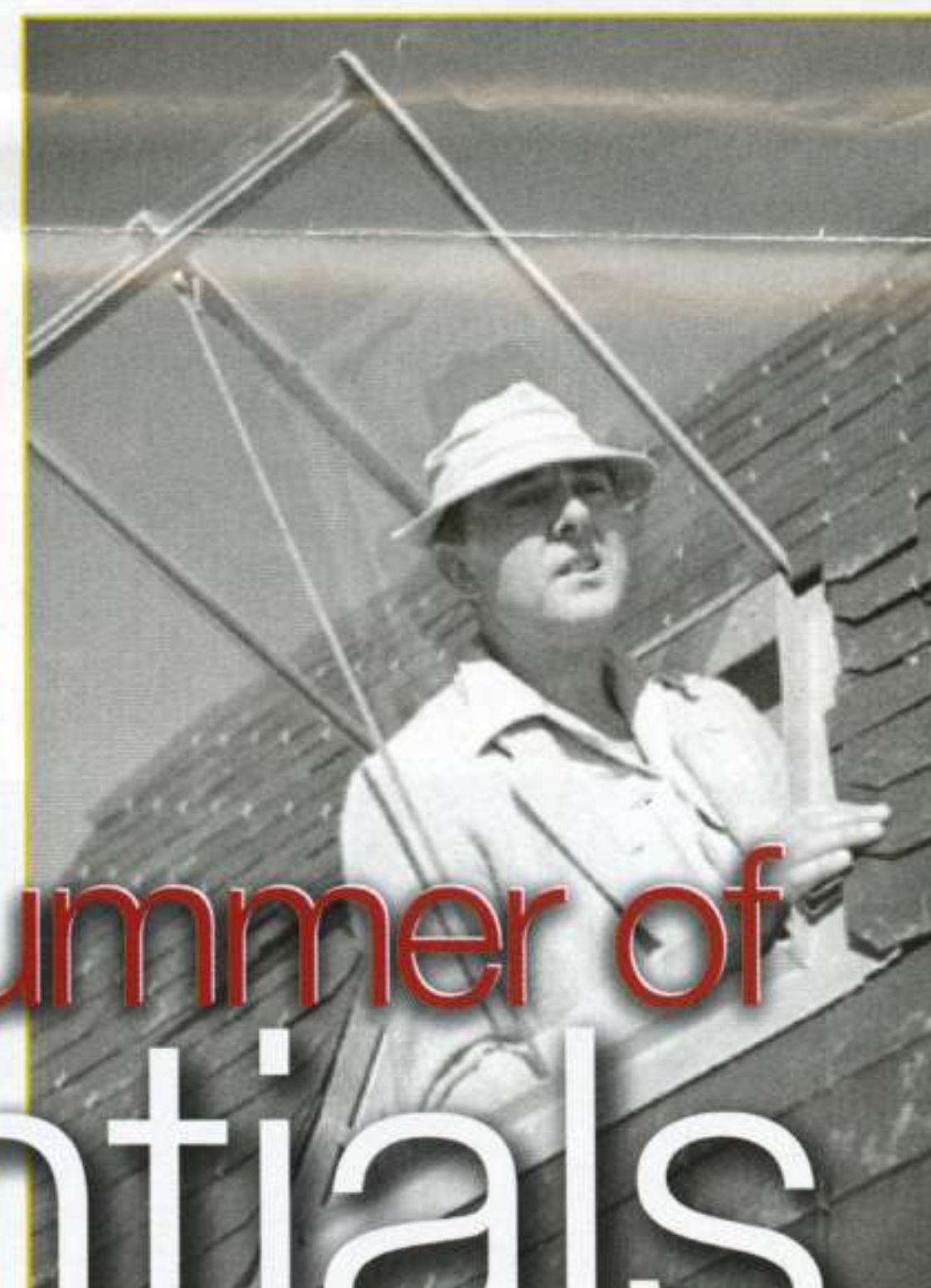
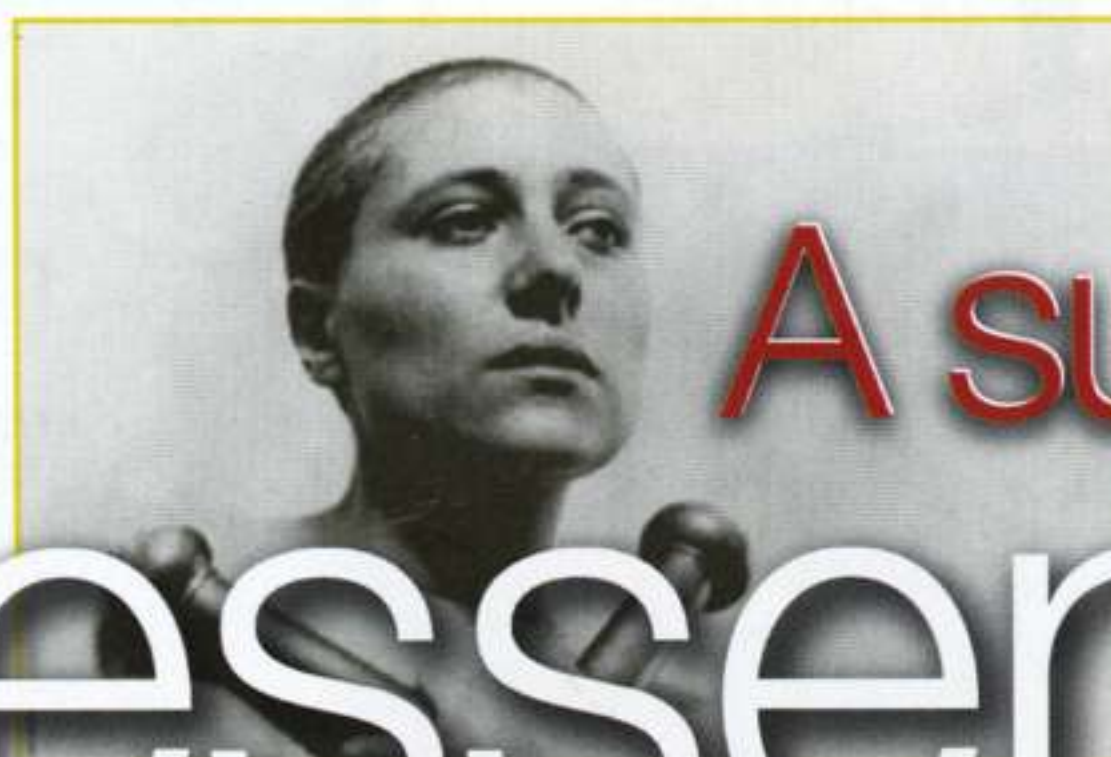
Hiroshima mon amour (Hiroshima, my love), Resnais, Alain, 1959

JULY 2000 PROGRAMME GUIDE
JULY 4 TO AUGUST 5

CINEMATHEQUE O N T A R I O

A DIVISION OF THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GROUP

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 5



A summer of essentials

36 Classics of World Cinema

alain RESNAIS

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JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME



LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD



MURIEL

MEMORYMONTAGEMODERNISM

the films of alain RESNAIS

"Probably the greatest living French filmmaker . . .
From Resnais's first three features, all masterpieces . . .
to dazzling later works . . . he's remained a master."

– Jonathan Rosenbaum

"The cinema's most profound meditator on
the human mind." – Andrew Sarris

Like Michelangelo Antonioni, Alain Resnais radically transformed our sense of the possibilities of film. After making a series of short documentaries, including the influential meditation on the Holocaust, NIGHT AND FOG (1955), Resnais produced one of the key works of modernist cinema: HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (1959). Addressing themes that were to become his preoccupations – memory and willed forgetfulness, the subjective nature of time, the imminence of death – Resnais established in HIROSHIMA a narrative structure and editing style which were acclaimed for their ability to represent interior states. Some attributed the film's radical interiority to Marguerite Duras, who wrote the script. However, HIROSHIMA's combination of documentary realism and formal abstraction, its conflation of public history and private memory, past and present, fact and artifice, "objective" images and "subjective" monologue, and its unconventional use of montage to replicate the obscure workings of consciousness, defined the style for which Resnais subsequently became renowned.

Resnais's next film, the epochal LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD (1961), extended this exploration of time and memory into a purely psychic terrain, seemingly emptied of history, politics, and psychology. The script, by *nouveau romancier* Alain Robbe-Grillet, became legendary for its labyrinthine narrative and temporal mazes, and for the baroque balustrades, rococo hallways and formal gardens of the Marienbad château, shot in Dyaliscope by the great cinematographer Sacha Vierny, which became an iconic landscape of the cinema, instantly recognizable even to those who had not seen the film.

Though MARIENBAD propelled Resnais into the European art house pantheon, along with Fellini, Antonioni, and Bergman, it had the unfortunate effect of earning him a reputation as a purveyor of chic enigma. This opinion quickly congealed into cliché. Resnais was accused of subjugating character to formal concerns, emotion to cerebral abstraction, political engagement to existential despair. But is there a more wrenching (and political) film than MURIEL, a more tender and affecting work about the irretrievable than JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME? Which French director, other than Marker and Godard, so reflected the vicissitudes of the intellectual left during the sixties (FAR FROM VIETNAM, LA GUERRE EST FINIE)? And who other than

Truffaut was such a sentimentalist that he employed the actor Jean Dasté in several films as both a kind of *memento mori* and an evocation of the golden age of French cinema, particularly of Renoir and Vigo?

Similarly, critics such as David Thomson characterized Resnais's work as "High Vogue solemnity," which all but denies the humour, caprice, drollery, and outright strangeness of much of his cinema. Think of the crisp Brit wit of PROVIDENCE, the louche elegance of STAVISKY..., the bizarre whimsy of LA VIE EST UN ROMAN, the playfulness and poignancy of MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE, the high concept conceits of SMOKING and NO SMOKING, the blithe reliance on lip-synched French pop tunes in ON CONNAÎT LA CHANSON. (Resnais's love of science fiction, manifest in LA VIE EST UN ROMAN and JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME, comic strips [I WANT TO GO HOME], and American popular music [GERSHWIN] have also gone largely unexamined.) That Resnais's cinema is characterized by much more than exquisite anguish is also evident in the extraordinary influence his work has exerted, in films as diverse as Nicholas Roeg's BAD TIMING, McGehee/Siegel's SUTURE, Peter Greenaway's THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT, David Cronenberg's THE FLY, and Dennis Potter's THE SINGING DETECTIVE. (Resnais repays the Potter homage in ON CONNAÎT LA CHANSON.)

Eager to taxonomize, some critics have mistakenly situated Resnais within the *nouvelle vague* – Ephraim Katz says "Resnais is probably the single most important director to emerge from the ranks of the French New Wave" in his encyclopedia of film – much as they had initially grouped Antonioni with the Italian neorealists. Rather, Resnais was a central figure of the "Left Bank Group," as Richard Roud helpfully labelled it. Raymond Durgnat has succinctly characterized this group, which included Chris Marker, Agnès Varda, William Klein, and, more peripherally, Marguerite Duras and Georges Franju, and their differences from the *nouvelle vague*: "Harbingers of the New Wave, their tightly integrated socialism, humanism, high culture and poetic formalism contrasted with a) the 'modern bourgeois' ethos of the *Cahiers [du cinéma]* group and b) post-New Wave formalisms, anti-humanisms and agit-propisms."

Similar misunderstandings have plagued Resnais, the reluctant auteur, into the latter half of his career. Again like late Antonioni (and late Godard!), recent Resnais has often been ignored, unexplored or reproved, perhaps because of its unsettling diversity of tone: from the theatrical artifice of MÉLO to the brooding spirituality of L'AMOUR À MORTI, the off-kilter satire of I WANT TO GO HOME, and the mannered (some would say precious) ploys of SMOKING/NO SMOKING and ON CONNAÎT LA CHANSON. Indeed, Raymond Durgnat has suggested that "Resnais's early films, steeped in resistance stoicism and 50s left-pessimism, are elegantly harsh, like Tarkovsky's. His later films have been slighter, sweeter. Too gently radical, perhaps? Or akin to Renoir's remark: 'I'm getting old, now I play Mozart'?" – James Quandt

The Resnais retrospective and tour was organized by Gwen Deglise of American Cinematheque, Los Angeles. We express our profound gratitude to her, and to the various rightsholders, distributors, and archives who made the retrospective possible. We also thank the Bureau du Cinéma, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris (Janine Deunf, Martine Boutrolle); and the Cultural Service of the Consulate General of France, Toronto (Jean-Mel Oubechou, Antoine Monpert).



HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

RECENTLY STRUCK 35MM PRINT!

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

Director: Alain Resnais

France/Japan 1959 91 minutes • Cast: Emmanuelle Riva, Eiji Okada

Resnais's feature debut, from a screenplay by Marguerite Duras (whose INDIA SONG screens August 1), was "the most startling film to emerge from France since the war" (Peter Cowie). A French actress visiting Hiroshima has an affair with a Japanese architect, but the setting evokes painful memories of her first lover, a German soldier who was shot on Liberation Day. Addressing themes that were to become his preoccupations – memory and willed forgetfulness, the subjective nature of time, and the imminence of death – Resnais developed an editing style and narrative structure which was recognized for its ability to represent interior states. "Perhaps the most imperishable quality of HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR is that, within all the staggering audacity and beauty of its composition, it remains a plaintive and very moving love story" (Cowie). "HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR has been as important in the development of film art as CITIZEN KANE" (James Monaco). A recently struck 35mm print has been imported from France for this screening.

Tuesday, July 4 6:30 p.m.

LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD

(L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD)

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1961 100 minutes • Cast: Delphine Seyrig, Sacha Pitéoff

"One of the most enigmatic films in cinema history . . . a visually rapturous experience" (Peter Keough), LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD centres on a mystery: Did X really meet A last year at Marienbad, or is he merely trying to seduce A away from her sinister husband M with a false story (and is M really A's husband anyway)? Robbe-Grillet's script is legendary for its ingenious play with time and memory, and Delphine Seyrig became an instant icon as A, impossibly chic in her Chanel and sleek chignon. The formal gardens, baroque balustrades, and rococo hallways of the Marienbad château constitute one of cinema's most instantly recognizable landscapes. Scored with eerie organ music, and shot in elegant widescreen black-and-white by the great cinematographer Sacha Vierny, MARIENBAD is enduringly enigmatic. Peter Greenaway recently wrote: "I have been trying to re-make this film ever since."

Tuesday, July 4 8:45 p.m.

LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD



Programme Guide



NEW 35MM PRINT!

MURIEL (OU LE TEMPS D'UN RETOUR)

Director: Alain Resnais
France/Italy 1963 115 minutes
Cast: Delphine Seyrig, Jean-Pierre Kérien

Many critics (correctly!) single out *MURIEL* as Resnais's masterpiece; Jean-Louis Comolli called it "Resnais's most beautiful film" when it was released. Here is the purest expression of Resnais's central theme: how the present is held captive by the past. A middle-aged widow living in an antique-stuffed apartment in Boulogne summons her ex-lover from Paris. As she attempts to recapture the (illusory) happiness of their past, her stepson is driven to murder in a futile attempt to extinguish the memory of his participation as a torturer during the Algerian War. Filmed with what has been called "hallucinatory realism," scored with unnerving Henze songs, and acted with stylized intensity by Delphine Seyrig, *MURIEL* is, at the very least, "one of the ten greatest films in the history of cinema" (Penelope Houston). This is a 35mm print imported from France especially for tonight's screening.

Friday, July 7 6:30 p.m.

MURIEL

FREE SCREENING!

LA GUERRE EST FINIE (THE WAR IS OVER)

Director: Alain Resnais
France/Sweden 1966 120 minutes
Cast: Yves Montand, Ingrid Thulin, Geneviève Bujold

A long unseen essential of sixties cinema, *LA GUERRE EST FINIE* features the greatest performance of Yves Montand's career. He plays Diego, a world-weary "professional revolutionary" who works against the fascist regime in Spain, though he knows the cause is hopeless. Having escaped to Paris with a false passport, he becomes involved with two women: a young leftist (Geneviève Bujold) who is part of a group planning to terrorize tourists in Spain to publicize their cause, and his former mistress (Ingrid Thulin) who wants nothing to do with politics. When he decides to return to Madrid to continue the anti-Franco fight, Diego's fate is sealed. Famous for its insights into the political disillusionment of a generation, for Montand's anguished performance, and for its chic, oblique sex scenes, *LA GUERRE EST FINIE* won several international awards and is "extraordinarily excellent . . . in some ways the most satisfying movie Resnais has made" (Andrew Sarris).

Friday, July 7 8:45 p.m.

NEW 35MM PRINT!

JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME

Director: Alain Resnais
France 1968 94 minutes
Cast: Claude Rich, Olga Georges-Picot

"Quite simply, Resnais's masterpiece of realistic montage . . . the quintessential distillation of Resnais's obsession with time, memory and the imagination" (James Monaco). Unquestionably Resnais's most underrated film, the moving, very strange *JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME* comes to us in a brand new print, made especially for this retrospective. Resnais's fascination with science fiction is reflected in his poignant tale about a man who, recovering from a suicide attempt, is persuaded to act as a guinea pig in a time-travelling experiment. Trapped in a malfunctioning time capsule, he re-experiences his immediate past, but in achronological flashes: his seduction of a beautiful, rebellious co-worker; their idyllic vacation on the Riviera; and a miserable sojourn in Glasgow which led to her death. The influence exerted by *JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME* is in inverse proportion to its renown: though little seen, its influence is readily apparent in many films, including *SUTURE* and Cronenberg's *THE FLY*. The music is by Penderecki, and there are cameo appearances by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jorge Semprun and other giants of postwar French culture. "With Marker's *LA JETÉE* and Tarkovsky's *SOLARIS* it constitutes a holy trinity of meditations on the horrors of eternal life" (Raymond Durgnat).

followed by

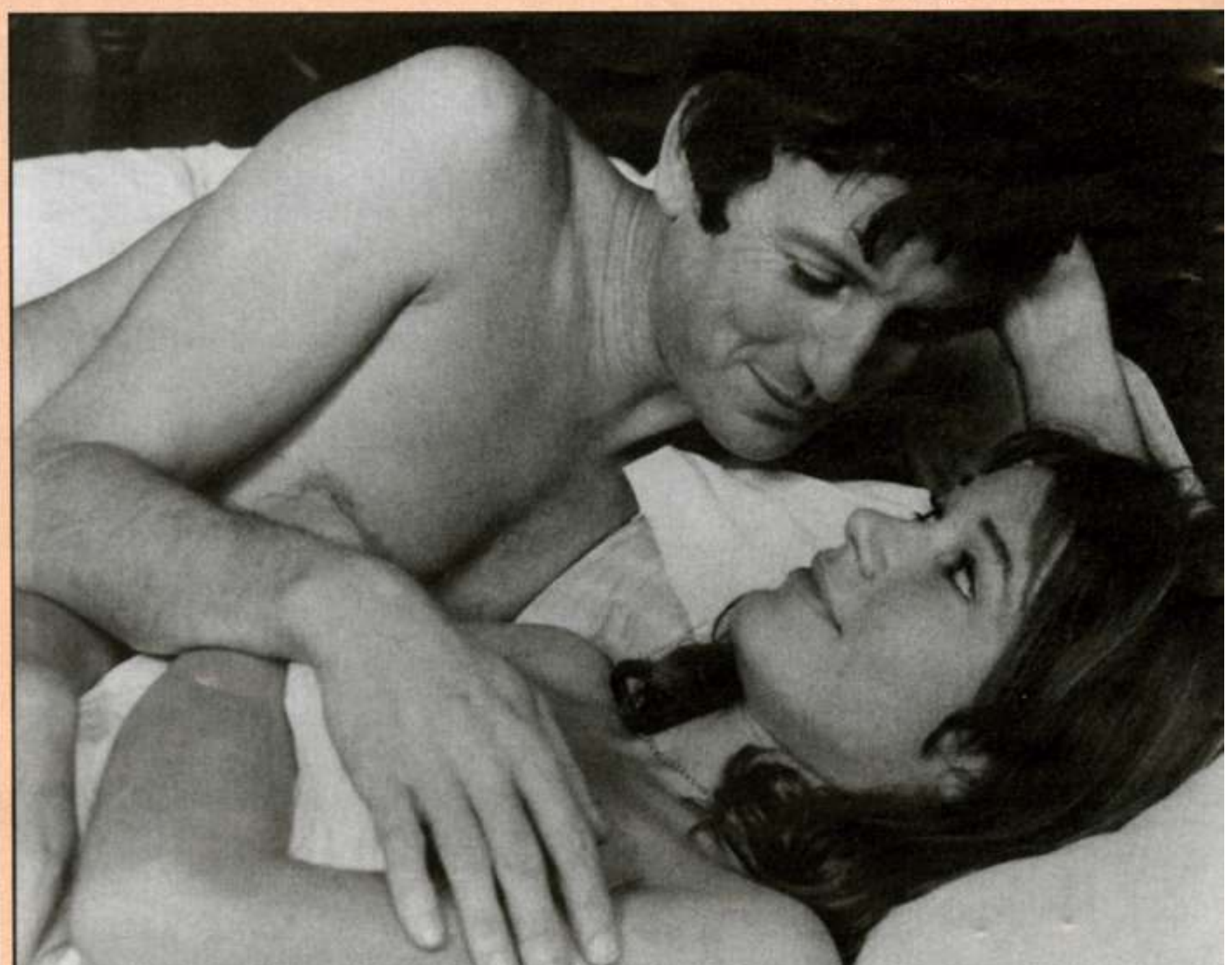
NIGHT AND FOG (NUIT ET BROUILLARD)

Director: Alain Resnais
France/Italy 1955 30 minutes

Perhaps the most influential documentary ever made – directors from Oshima to von Trotta have invoked it in their own films – Resnais's chilling, lucid meditation on the Nazi concentration camps ten years after their liberation is one of cinema's most profound works on memory and forgetfulness.

Tuesday, July 11 6:30 p.m.

JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME



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STAVISKY...

Director: Alain Resnais
France 1974 115 minutes
Cast: Jean-Paul Belmondo, Charles Boyer, Gérard Dépardieu

The most visually sumptuous of Resnais's films, STAVISKY... boasts a Stephen Sondheim score, lavish white-on-white Art Deco sets and *objets d'art*, a silver Hispano-Suiza, and an opulence of period costumes and glittering *bijoux*. Set in the seaside resort of Biarritz in 1933, the film tells the true story of the embezzler Serge Stavisky (Belmondo), who bribed his way into the centre of French political power and brought the government to the verge of collapse just before the Second World War. Charles Boyer has a high old time in the role of Baron Raoul, an impoverished Spanish nobleman, drawn to Stavisky in hopes that the suave swindler might help him bring down the government in Spain. With an elegantly literate script by Jorge Semprun (who also wrote Z), STAVISKY... has been hailed as "Resnais's greatest artistic success. . . . Entertaining, colorful, nostalgic, romantically evocative, witty and droll" (James Monaco).

Tuesday, July 11 8:45 p.m.

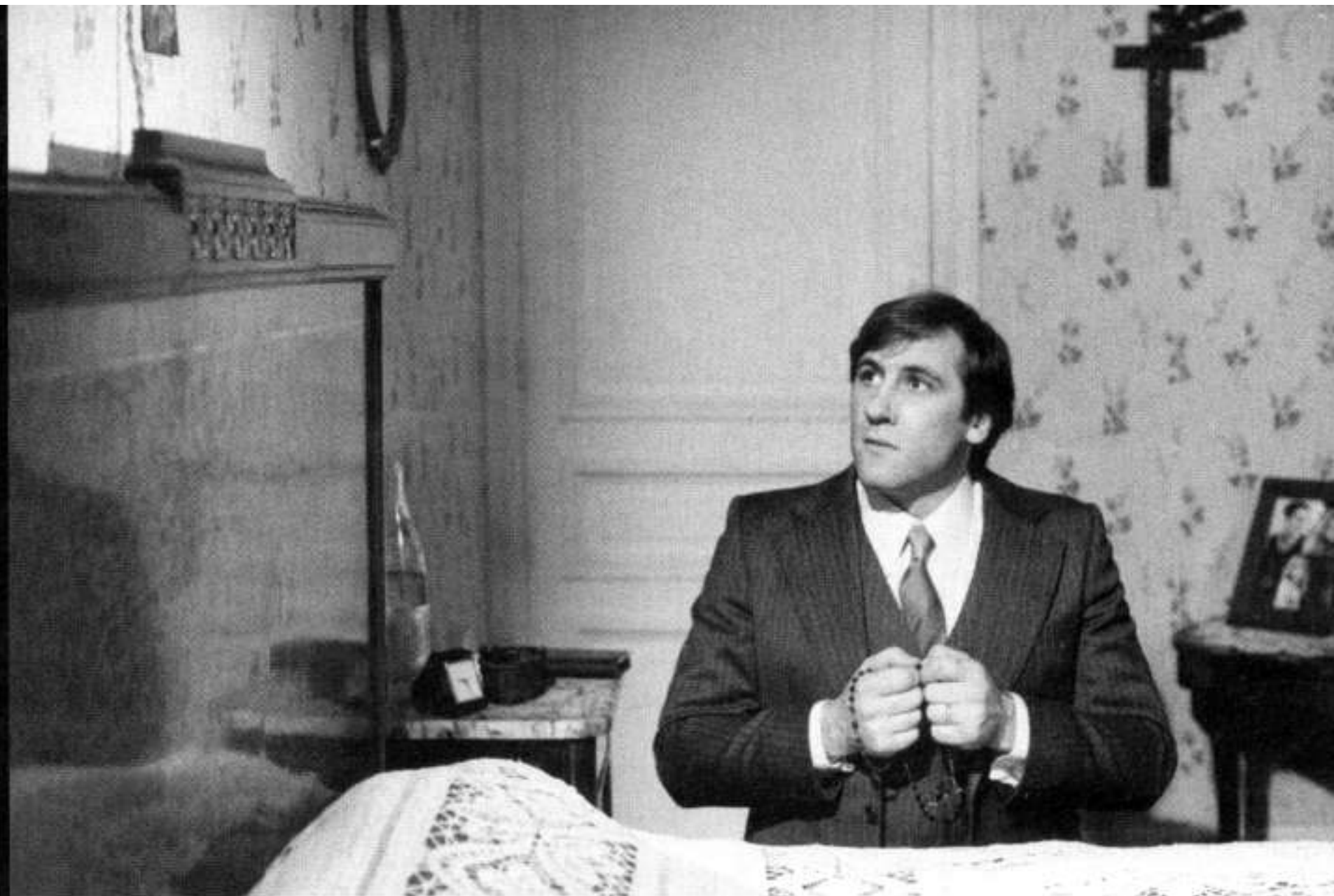
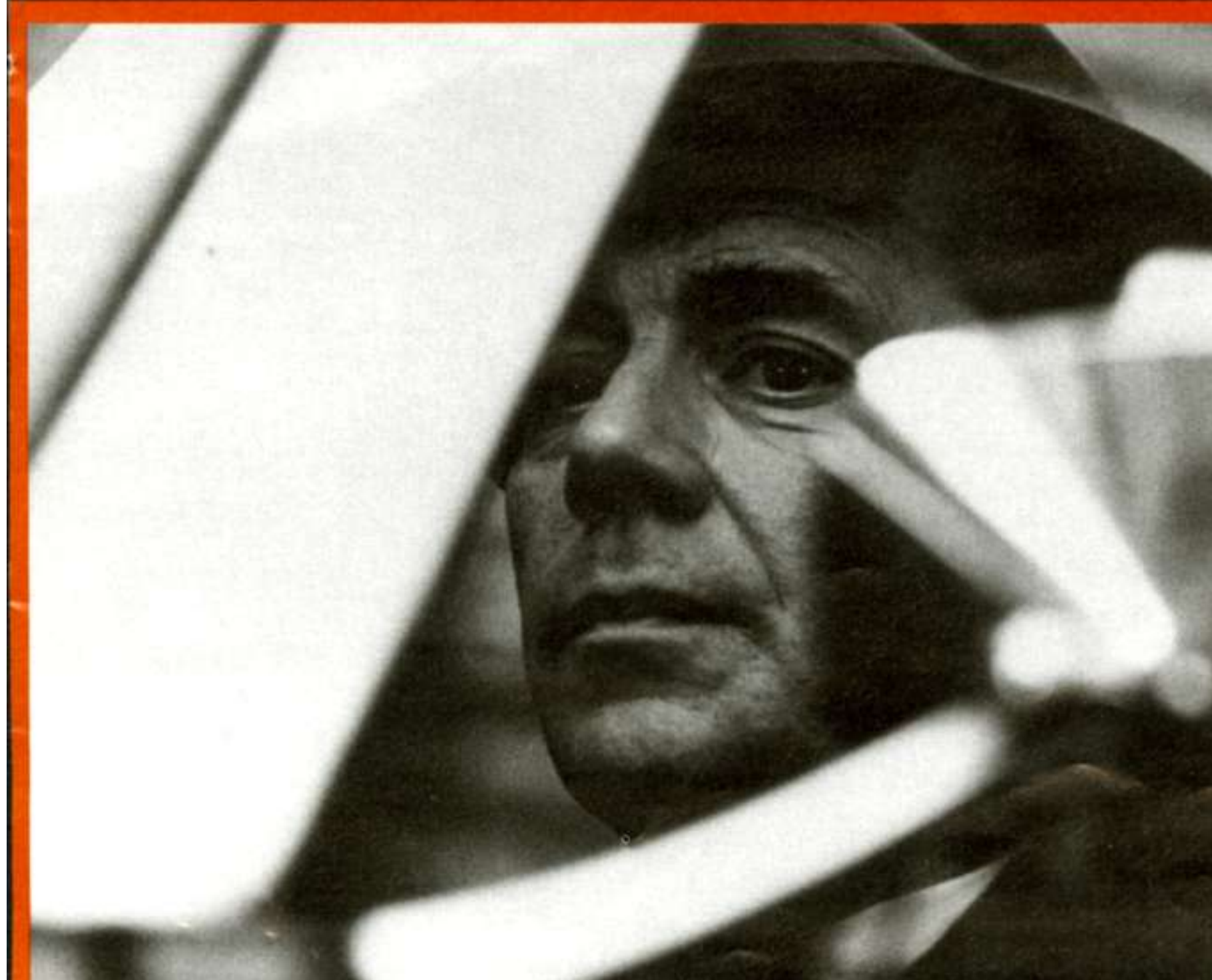
PROVIDENCE

Director: Alain Resnais
France/Britain 1976 110 minutes
Cast: John Gielgud, Dirk Bogarde, Ellen Burstyn

Voted the greatest film of the seventies by an international jury of critics, PROVIDENCE is a cruelly funny Oedipal puzzle movie set mostly inside the mind of a dying novelist. Racked by pain, raging against his imminent death, the Nobel Prize-winning writer hallucinates one last novel in which members of his family are portrayed as cold-blooded monsters. David Mercer's brittle Brit acidulous script provided John Gielgud with the crowning performance of his career as the dying scribe. Whether bitching about his bowels, skewering family members with glinting wit, or raging against the dying of the light, Gielgud triumphantly refuses to go gentle into that good night. "Resnais's greatest film since MURIEL, and that means it is one of the great films of our time" (Richard Roud).

Friday, July 14 6:30 p.m.

PROVIDENCE



MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE

NEW 35MM PRINT!

MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE

Director: Alain Resnais
France 1980 125 minutes
Cast: Gérard Dépardieu, Nicole Garcia

A masterpiece which only becomes richer with each viewing, MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE turned an improbable premise into an art house hit. A comedy about sociobiology and behaviourism which includes lectures by French scientist Henri Laborit sounds cerebral and rarefied, even for Resnais. The result is anything but: MON ONCLE is playful, engrossing, elegant, witty, and poignant. To illustrate Laborit's theories about how modern society is ruled by primitive instincts, Resnais intertwines the stories of three contrasting characters: an ambitious, ultra-bourgeois media executive; a leftist ex-actress now in the fashion design business; and a peasant who has risen to become the head of a textile plant. The praise for MON ONCLE was voluble and unanimous: "By far the best film of the year" (Richard Corliss); "the most provocative movie of the season" (David Denby); "the best film, from any source, this year" (Derek Malcolm); "the funniest movie about the horrors of working since Charles Chaplin's MODERN TIMES" (Andrew Sarris).

Friday, July 14 8:45 p.m.

LIFE IS A BED OF ROSES (LA VIE EST UN ROMAN)

Director: Alain Resnais
France 1983 111 minutes
Cast: Vittorio Gassman, Fanny Ardant, Geraldine Chaplin

"Resnais's most extraordinary film yet" (Richard Roud), this audacious comedy links three stories, all of them set in a monstrous, futuristic château in the Ardennes Forest. In the first, a rich Utopian builds a "palace of happiness" in which his friends can experience rebirth, but finds his plans thwarted by the outbreak of the First World War. In the second, set in 1982, the château has become a progressive school in which a group of intellectuals gather to study "The Education of the Imagination." The third centres on two children who turn the château into a fantasy world of damsels and dragons. With a dream cast, including Geraldine Chaplin as an anthropologist who wrote a thesis on "The Sexual Fantasies of Working Class Males in the Canadian North," LA VIE EST UN ROMAN proves that "Resnais is above all the world's greatest director of actors" (Roud).

Tuesday, July 18 6:30 p.m.

LIFE IS A BED OF ROSES



July Programme Guide

5



L'AMOUR À MORT

L'AMOUR À MORT

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1984 93 minutes

Cast: Sabine Azéma, Fanny Ardant, Pierre Arditi, André Dussolier

"A major work of contemporary European cinema" (*Variety*), L'AMOUR À MORT (literally, LOVE UNTIL DEATH) has long been impossible to see in North America. Working with the same quartet of actors he later employed in MÉLO, Resnais made L'AMOUR À MORT to complete a trilogy begun with MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE and LA VIE EST UN ROMAN. Described by the director as "a film about romantic love," the film focuses on the relationship between two couples: an archaeologist and his lover of two months, and their best friends, two clerics who are married to each other. Resnais's most personal and accessible film, L'AMOUR À MORT recalls the work of such directors as Bergman and Dreyer in its austere settings, Protestant theological concerns, and in its portrait of spiritual anguish. "As sheer drama, L'AMOUR À MORT is both moving and magnificent. . . . The performance by Sabine Azéma, one of the most beautiful actresses in France today, is absolutely not to be missed" (Philip Strick, *Films & Filming*).

Tuesday, July 18 8:45 p.m.

MÉLO

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1986 110 minutes

Cast: Sabine Azéma, Fanny Ardant, Pierre Arditi, André Dussolier

A favourite film of Susan Sontag, MÉLO brought the director his greatest acclaim since MON ONCLE D'AMÉRIQUE. An exquisite chamber drama set in the twenties, it centres on two violinists who have been friends since their student days, one of whom betrays the other by seducing his wife. The acting ensemble of Azéma, Ardant, Arditi, and Dussolier – the quartet which Resnais had employed in L'AMOUR À MORT – is impeccable. Unfolding in a series of sumptuously authentic Art Deco sets, MÉLO is "the unlikeliest of masterpieces. You're seduced by the movie's spectacular gorgeousness. . . . The 1987 [New York Film] Festival's perfect film, MÉLO proves that the stylized striptease of one actor revealing the most primal emotions can still be the greatest spectacle of all" (Stephen Harvey, *Film Comment*).

Friday, July 21 6:30 p.m.

I WANT TO GO HOME (JE VEUX RENTRER À LA MAISON)

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1989 110 minutes

Cast: Adolf Green, Gérard Dépardieu

In this, perhaps the oddest project of his career, Resnais was able to indulge his passion for comic strips (and for the music of George Gershwin, about whom he made an affectionate documentary). Celebrated cartoonist and novelist Jules Feiffer wrote I WANT TO GO HOME for Resnais with its lead actor – the venerable Adolf Green (writer, with Betty Comden, of many classic musicals, including SINGIN' IN THE RAIN and THE BAND WAGON) – in mind. Green plays a cranky old cartoonist on his first trip away from the States. Travelling from Cleveland to Paris to appear at an exhibition of his work and to visit his daughter who is studying literature at the Sorbonne (under Gérard Dépardieu!), Green is the classic American boob abroad. Too naive to be aware of the exquisite humiliations meted out to him by the supercilious French, he finds himself in an increasingly amusing series of gaffes, misunderstandings, and trans-cultural farce. (Lost in a French village, he makes himself understood by singing American show tunes.) Though it won a standing ovation and the prize for Best Script at the Venice Film Festival and was applauded by leading European critics, I WANT TO GO HOME so nonplussed the few English critics who saw it that the film was never released here.

Friday, July 21 8:45 p.m.



TOUTE LA MÉMOIRE DU MONDE

SHORT FILMS BY RESNAIS FREE SCREENING!

Few programmes are as rich as this: in the distinguished history of the short film, Resnais looms large. From his seminal meditation on the Holocaust, NIGHT AND FOG (screening July 11) through his elegant portraits of artists and art works, and his revelatory explorations of plastic making, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and colonialism, Resnais revealed a characteristically French gift for aphorism, for packing an image or line with wit, horror, or both. Resnais's short films are difficult to see; today's programme assembles most of the key works, some of which have never been subtitled.

TOUTE LA MÉMOIRE DU MONDE

France 1956 20 minutes

A semiotic reading of the Bibliothèque Nationale as prison, as repository of official memory, and as monster, TOUTE LA MÉMOIRE DU MONDE is a witty and unnerving essay dedicated to "Chris (the Magic) Marker." As Judy Bloch (Pacific Film Archive) has written, this film is "Alain Resnais in microcosm: time, space, and memory are the hidden subjects of a documentary on the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. . . . One is reminded of de Chirico, of Cocteau's ORPHEUS, of Godard's ALPHAVILLE, of heaven and hell." Noël Burch cited MÉMOIRE as one of the best examples of abstract filmmaking and claimed that the work of Ghislain Cloquet qualified him as "one of the finest cinematographers in the world." (Raymond Durgnat characterized the hypnotic visual style as "all-tracking, all-cutting.")

VAN GOGH

France 1948 20 minutes

Resnais's documentary about the Dutch painter won an Oscar and brought its director international fame.

GUERNICA

France 1950 12 minutes

"A powerful cinematic exploration of Picasso's painting of the Spanish village bombed by Franco in 1937, accompanied by readings from Paul Eluard's poem on the disaster" (Peter Cowie).

GAUGUIN

France 1950 12 minutes • Note: French without English subtitles

Another of Resnais's idiosyncratic portraits of painters, GAUGUIN is an acknowledged model for the art documentary genre.

LES STATUES MEURENT AUSSI (STATUES ALSO DIE)

Directors: Alain Resnais & Chris Marker

France 1953 27 minutes

Banned for eight years by the French government, and released only after ten minutes were deleted (which are restored in this print), STATUES, more apposite than ever, explores European culture's misuse of African art, particularly sacred art. "When men die, they become History. When statues die, they become Art. This botany of death is what we refer to as culture" (Marker). "A passionate outcry . . . amazing for its time" (Georgia Brown, *The Village Voice*).

LE CHANT DU STYRÈNE

France 1958 14 minutes • Note: French without English subtitles

One of the most dazzling short films ever made, LE CHANT DU STYRÈNE was commissioned by a company concerned that the French had a prejudice against plastics. Resnais attempted to capture the exhilarating, stylized movement of Astaire & Rogers dance numbers by turning the film into a "spoken opera," shot in CinemaScope and with a text (in alexandrines!) by poet Raymond Queneau. The result is as crisp, jaunty, and odd as a Debussy syrxn.

Saturday, July 22 4:00 p.m.

"One of the ten best films of the nineties." – Michel Ciment

SMOKING/NO SMOKING

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1993 (Part I: 135 minutes; Part II: 142 minutes) • Cast: Sabine Azéma, Pierre Arditi

Resnais's high concept duo, SMOKING and NO SMOKING, has an amazing history. Winner of five César Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Actor, of the prestigious Prix Louis Delluc, and of wall-to-wall rave reviews – *Variety* called it "just about perfect" – the audacious two-part film slid into mythic obscurity when its North American release was indefinitely postponed. This might be your only chance to see "the first self-regulating interactive movie," in which Resnais plays with the notions of destiny, parallel universes, and the pleasures and perils of smoking. Resnais daringly combined eight plays by British dramatist Alan Ayckbourn, and has two of his favourite actors, Sabine Azéma and Pierre Arditi, play multiple characters who live in a Yorkshire village – most memorably the Teasdales, an alcoholic school director and his insecure wife. Depending on whether a character lights up a cigarette or not, their fates develop in different directions; the film explores these divergent destinies, always asking "What if?" about its characters' lives, turning the film into a kind of philosophical Rubik's Cube. Wise, witty, and ingenious, SMOKING/NO SMOKING appears to be Resnais's culminating statement on his central theme of choice and contingency. "SMOKING and NO SMOKING light up the screen and rev up the intellect. . . . Joy aplenty" (*Variety*).

Please note: Special ticket prices are in effect for this double screening: \$10.00 (including GST) for members; \$20.00 (including GST) for non-members. Prices include both Parts I & II.

Tuesday, July 25 6:30 p.m. SMOKING

Tuesday, July 25 9:05 p.m. NO SMOKING

TORONTO PREMIERE! RESNAIS'S LATEST!

ON CONNAÎT LA CHANSON (SAME OLD SONG)

Director: Alain Resnais

France 1997 120 minutes • Cast: Pierre Arditi, Sabine Azéma

"Audacious, delightful and just about perfect from first note to last" (*Variety*), Resnais's latest film became a phenomenon in France and the biggest hit of his career, sweeping the Césars (the French Academy Awards), winning Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress and three others. A sly, wry *jeu d'esprit*, designed partly as an homage to Dennis Potter (*THE SINGING DETECTIVE*), the film sets in motion one of Resnais's romantic roundelays in contemporary Paris. A constellation of middle-aged lovers, including a tour guide, a real estate agent, and a business executive, acted by Resnais's favourite troupe of stars, spins through a series of amorous misunderstandings, occasionally breaking into song to express their secret emotions. The catch is these are not classic musical numbers, but a kind of breakaway karaoke, with the characters lip-synching to favourite popular French songs. (Which is why, literally and figuratively, *on connaît la chanson*.) Equally poignant and effervescent, *SAME OLD SONG* is "a bittersweet delight that cements the 75-year-old Resnais's status as one of international cinema's most playful and innovative elder statesmen" (*Variety*).

Friday, August 4 8:45 p.m.

MÉLO



TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL GROUP

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