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Author(s)	Dennis Lim Dennis Lim
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LOVE STREAMS

Directed by John Cassavetes
November 20, BAMcinématek

BAM's tribute to Gena Rowlands closes with a new print of John Cassavetes's final film, the all too rarely screened and still underappreciated *Love Streams* (1984), a movie that gets better with each viewing. Unavailable on DVD (except on a French import double-disc, paired with Cassavetes's 1963 *A Child Is Waiting*), *Love Streams* is at once a culmination of the director's obsessions and his most atypical film. It's a movie that gives up its mysteries slowly—flirting with theatricality, inserting dream sequences, concluding on a brazenly surreal enigma. Cassavetes stars as Robert Harmon, a tough-guy novelist with unorthodox research methods. Rowlands, magnificent as ever, is Robert's sister, Sarah Lawson, a divorcée who turns up at his doorstep with two taxis full of luggage and an entire barnyard menagerie. An emotional live wire and by default a social rebel, the embarrassingly demonstrative Sarah is kindred spirit to *A Woman Under the Influence's* unhinged housewife Mabel Longhetti and *Opening Night's* aging stage star Myrtle Gordon: All are women with a raw-nerved, overwhelming capacity and need for love. The enormously moving interplay between Cassavetes and Rowlands gets at the heart of the performative spectacle unique to his films: an interaction beyond words and gestures, predicated on the invention of a shared language so hyperbolic and specific and almost inexplicable it must be love. Indeed, the movie—as its title suggests—performs an anatomy of its subject. More explicitly metaphysical than the other great Cassavetes films, it nonetheless shares their view of love as a way of life and a form of madness. DENNIS LIM