

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Opening night</b>
Author(s)	Jonathan Rosenbaum
Source	<i>Reader (Chicago, Ill.)</i>
Date	1996 Sep 13
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Opening night, Cassavetes, John, 1977

CRITIC'S  
CHOICE

## Opening Night

For all of John Cassavetes's concern with acting, this 1977 film is the only one of his features that takes it on as a subject; it also boasts his most impressive cast. During the New Haven tryouts for a new play, an aging star (Gena Rowlands), already distressed that she's playing a woman older than herself, is traumatized further by the accidental death of an adoring teenage fan (Laura Johnson). Fantasizing the continued existence of this girl as a younger version of herself, she repeatedly changes her lines onstage and addresses the audience directly, while the other members of the company—the director (Ben Gazzara), playwright (Joan Blondell), costar

(Cassavetes), and producer (Paul Stewart)—try to help end her distress. Juggling onstage and offstage action, Cassavetes makes this a fascinating look at some of the internal mechanisms and conflicts that create theatrical fiction, and his wonderful cast—which also includes Zohra Lampert as the director's wife, assorted Cassavetes regulars, and cameos by Peter Falk and Peter Bogdanovich as themselves—never lets him down. Film Center, Art Institute, Columbus Drive at Jackson, Saturday, September 14, 3:00, 443-3737.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum