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THE LAST METRO

(UNITED ARTISTS CLASSICS RELEASE)

Color French/English subtitles

133 Mins.

Cast: Catherine Deneuve, Gerard Depardieu, Jean Poiret, Andrea Ferreol, Paulette Dubost, Sabine Haudepin, Jean-Louis Richard, Maurice Risch, Heinz Bennent, Renata.

Credits: Produced by Les Films Du Carrosse, Sedif S.A., T.F. 1, and Societe Francaise De Production. Directed by Francois Truffaut. Screenplay by Francois Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman, and Jean-Claude Grumberg. Director of Photography, Nestor Almendros. Camera Assistants, Florent Bazin, Emilio Pacull-Latorre, and Tess Racine. Art Director, Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko. Music by Georges Delerue.

Truffaut's latest film, starring Catherine Deneuve and Gerard Depardieu, considers the lives of a theatre troupe pursuing their art in German-occupied Paris. Beautifully photographed, *The Last Metro* is a sincere meditation on theatre and lives in crisis. Record openings should make this a train to catch. **81-39**

At a time when government budget cuts threaten the future of American performing arts, Francois Truffaut reaches into the dusty valise of theatre history and portrays the struggles of life and theatre in German-occupied Paris.

Marion Steiner (Catherine Deneuve) assumes management of the Montmartre Theatre after the disappearance of her husband Lucas (Heinz Bennent). Lucas, a celebrated director, had escaped the Nazis in Germany and fled to Paris. As a prominent Jew, however, his life was again in danger after the occupation.

Marion Steiner and her cast and crew, in attempting to produce a play, must contend with mundane hardships and conflicts, as well as the presence of the Nazis and their French collaborators. Granger (Gerard Depardieu), a sensitive but womanizing hunk, suppresses his passion for Marion while unsuccessfully pursuing designer Arlette (Andrea Ferreol) and young actress Nadine (Sabine Haudepin). Director Jean-Loup (Jean Poiret) hopes to keep the Montmartre open through risky contact with collaborators, particularly the loathesome Daxiat (Jean-Louis Richard), a critic and publisher who serves as



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unofficial Culture Minister and Censor.

Truffaut and co-screenwriters Suzanne Schiffman and Jean-Claude Grumberg have created an interesting tribute to theatre and freedom. Photographed by Nestor Almendros, *The Last Metro* has a soft, 1940s quality. It is very much a nostalgia piece, a fond memory of survival during impossible years. Here, there are clear-cut heroes and villains. Only Marion, wonderfully played by Deneuve, maintains an ambiguous quality: living only for the theatre and her husband's safety, she shuns all politics, even slapping Granger when he plans to join the Resistance. Marion views the situation as clear-cut, but she chooses to resist by ignoring the Nazis and protecting her husband and the national culture.

In the production of the play ("The Woman Who Disappeared") within the film and the characters' relations, Truffaut evinces a deep love for theatre. The Show must go on. The appearance of anti-Semitism is ugly and moving, though it loses some power reflected mostly in the ego-inflated Daxiat, and the collaboration of a young actress looking for work. Still, the horror of "Aryan certificates" and the everyday humiliations are driven home with considerable force. The Final Solution is a distant threat.

The Last Metro offers excellent performances, including stage manager Raymond (Maurice Risch), and the volatile chemistry of Deneuve and Depardieu. Truffaut's feel for history is more evocative than realistic (as in Ophul's *Sorrow and the Pity*), and *The Last Metro* is more an homage to theatre than an updated version of "J'accuse." *The Last Metro* is a tonic that ponders the past and braces us for hard times ahead.

—T.N.