Document Citation

Title	**Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco**
Author(s)	Michael Goodwin
Source	*San Francisco Magazine*
Date	1982 Jul
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	50-57
No. of Pages	10
Subjects	Hitchcock, Alfred (1899-1980), Leytonstone, London, Great Britain
Film Subjects	Vertigo, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1958

SPECIAL · SUMMER · GUIDE

SAN FRANCISCO

THE MAGAZINE OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

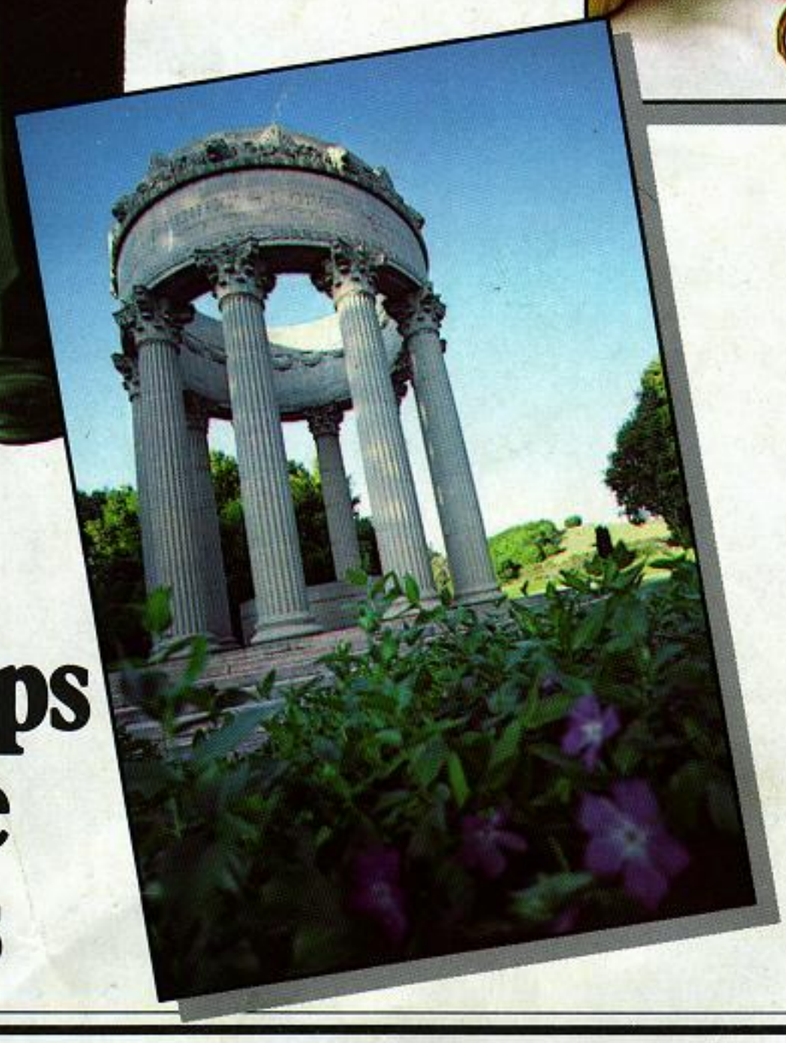
JULY 1982 / $1.95

A Hitchcock Tour of the City

The Unexpected San Francisco

Sex and the Tourist

SF on $10,000 a Day



plus … Great Food, Fine Wine, Splendid Sights, and an Indispensable Entertainment Calendar

Day Trips of the Gods

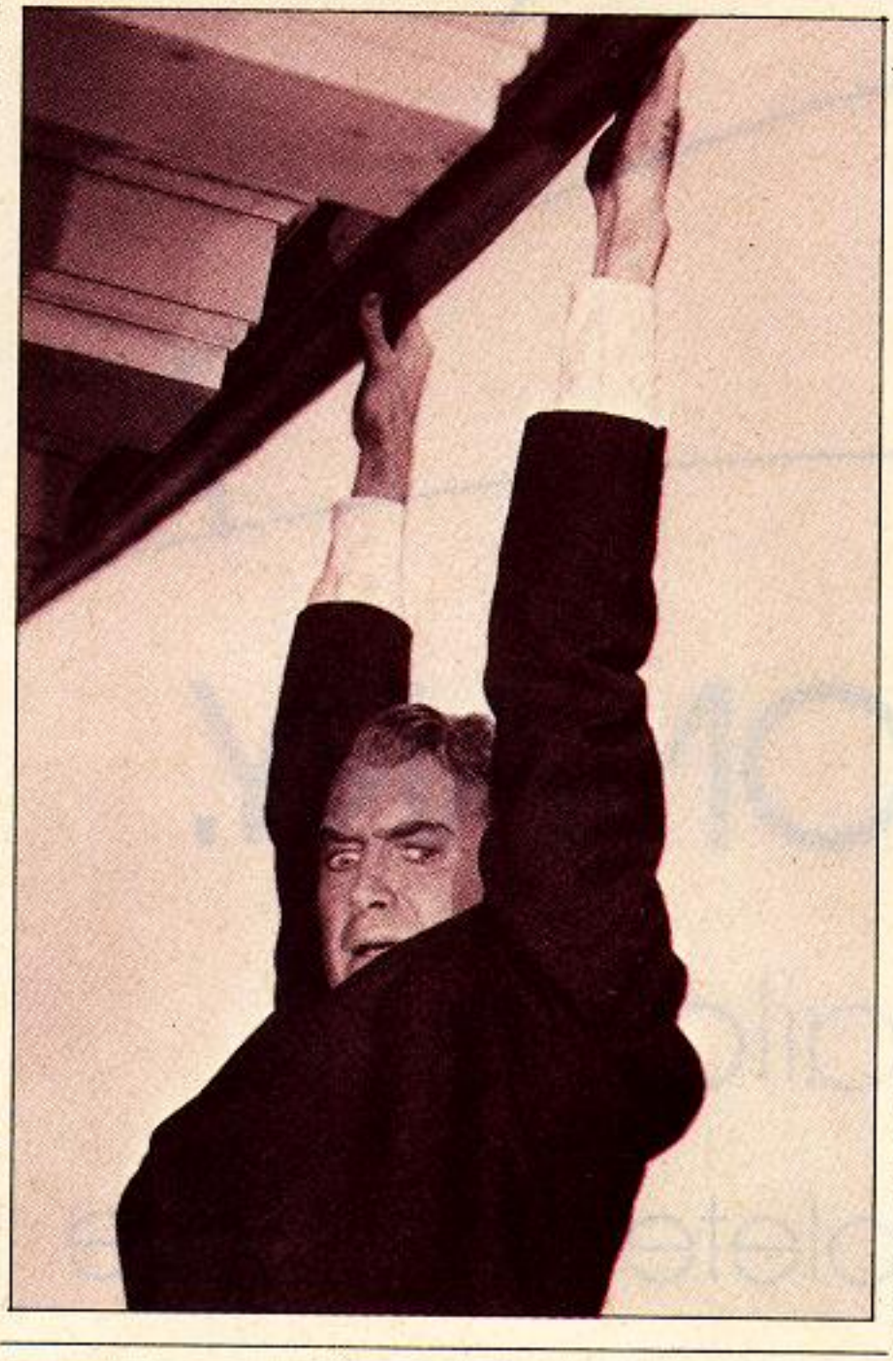
0 74470 65605 07

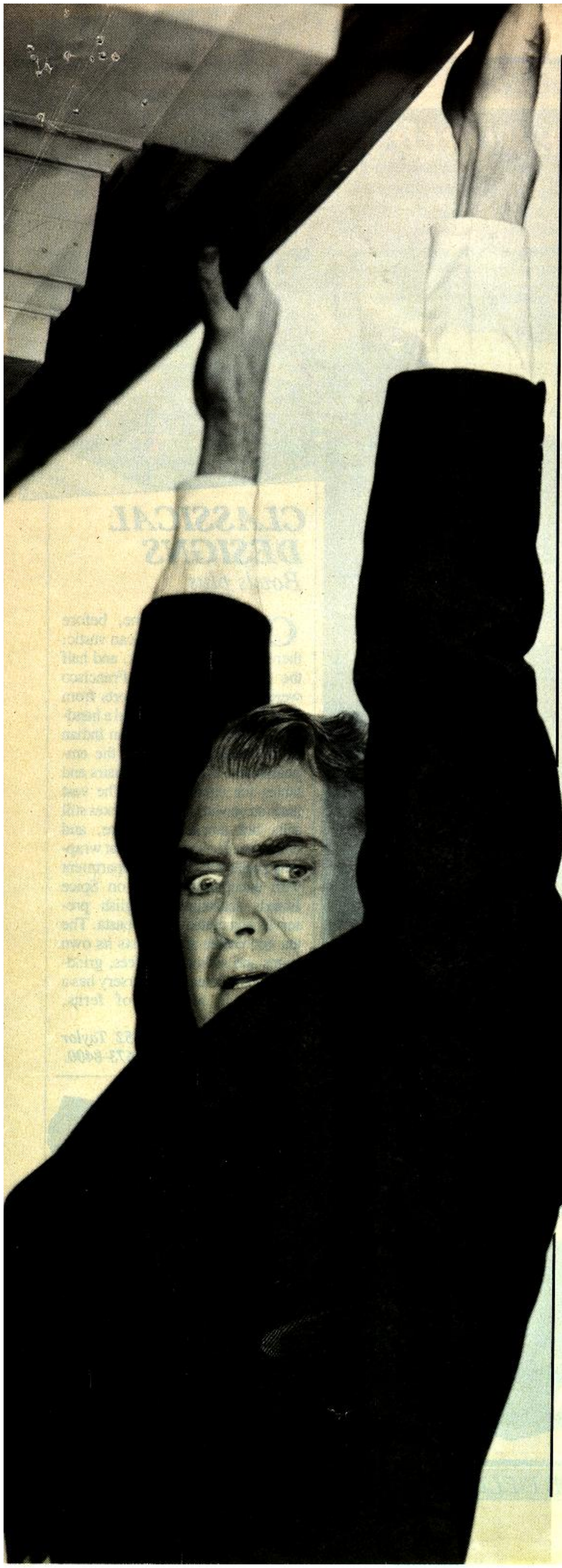
50

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S SAN FRANCISCO

by Michael Goodwin and Lynda Myles

Explore our city through the great director's eyes—and relive his masterpiece of romantic obsession—on the *Vertigo* tour.





Alfred Hitchcock's San Francisco

You can hang
by your fingers with
James Stewart,

dream in the fog
with
Kim Novak,

and relive their
terrifying
love story
on the

VERTIGO TOUR

by Michael Goodwin and Lynda Myles

FOG, MYSTERY, DEATH

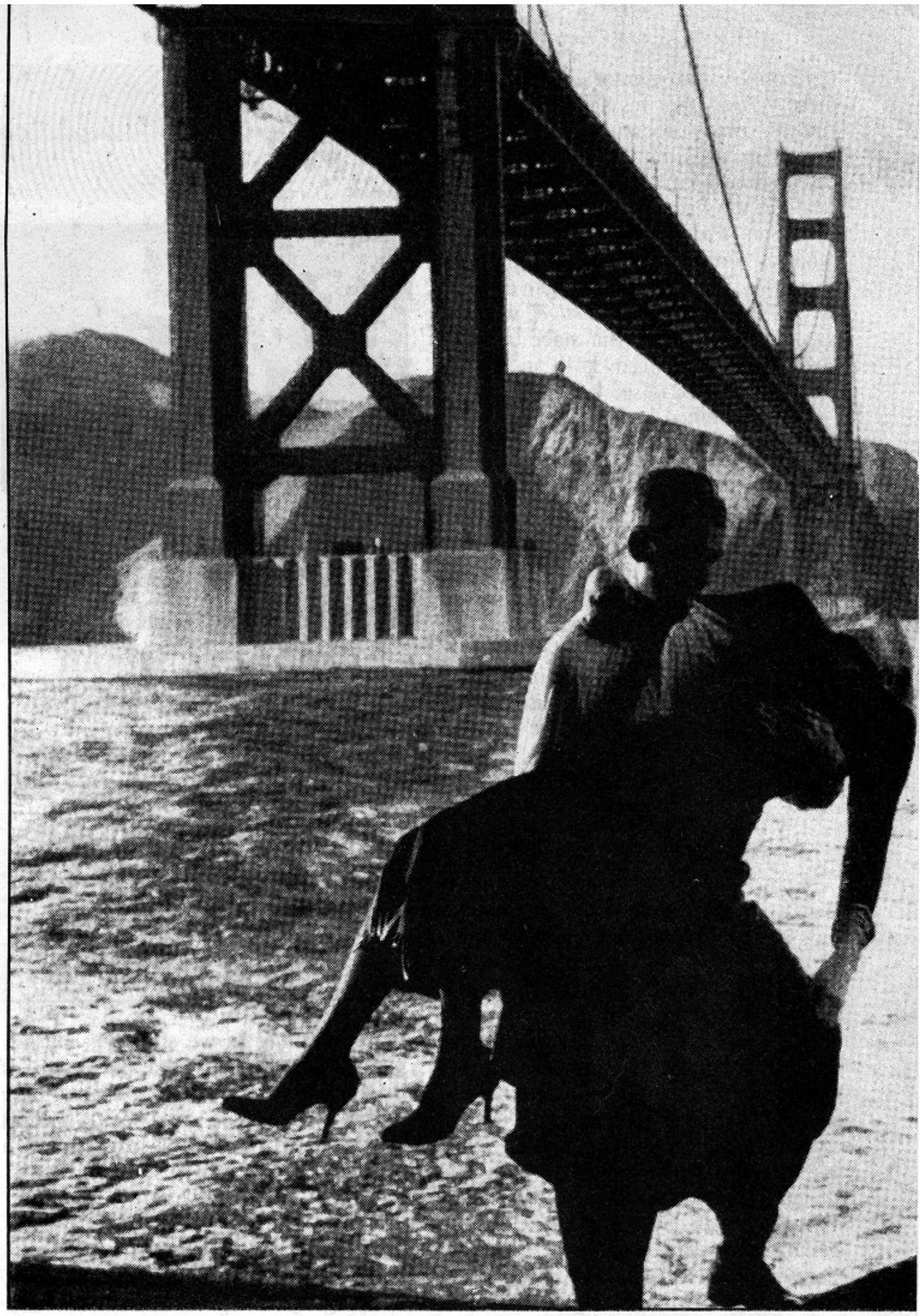
THE OPERATION CALLED FOR US TO meet this collector—call him Manny Balestrero—in the Gino and Carlo bar on Green Street. Everything had been arranged through a third party, with elaborate safety factors worthy of a John Le Carré spy novel. We didn't know "Manny's" address, or phone number, or even his real name. All we knew was that he had a rare, priceless, highly illegal 35-mm print of *Vertigo*, Alfred Hitchcock's missing masterpiece. And he was going to show it to us. And he was half an hour late already.

Vertigo, released in 1958, starring James Stewart and Kim Novak, is only one of five "missing" Hitchcocks—the others are *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Rope*, and *The Trouble With Harry*—but many critics around the world (at least the ones who have managed to see it) consider it Hitchcock's best picture, and one of the most beautiful and profound films ever made.

To San Franciscans, *Vertigo* has an even greater significance, since it was filmed almost entirely in our city and sets San Francisco as the central metaphor in an unforgettably dreamlike drama of passion, romantic obsession, madness, and death. *Vertigo* is so disturbingly accurate, so psychologically unsettling, that once you've seen it, the simple act of walking through the streets of the city is transformed, totally, ever afterwards.

But of course you *can't* see it. The missing Hitchcocks are owned by the Hitchcock estate, which, presumably, is holding out for a lucrative package sale to videotape or videodisc. Theatrical release does not seem likely. All prints have been pulled from circulation, leaving private collectors' illegal libraries as the only known source for this legendary masterpiece. Present law probably makes private possession of 35-mm prints of these films illegal, which means that if the FBI finds out, it can confiscate the prints—with no compensation. Hence, collectors tend (wisely) to have little to do with journalists, and as the minutes passed we began to wonder if Manny was going to show up at all. (In fact, he had been there all along, drinking a beer at the end of the bar and checking us out.)

Cold fog was rolling down the hills as we hailed a cab and started a steep climb toward Coit Tower that ended at the door of a tall, dark, wooden house. Manny led us through a shadowy hallway, down the back stairs, and into a small basement room with a screen at one end, a tiny, well-equipped projection booth at the other, tapestries on the walls, and a few rows of theater seats. In the back a beautiful, vintage Fireball pinball machine stood



Fort Point: Scottie leaps in after Madeleine and pulls her to safety, swimming surreally through floating flower petals.

glowing with hellish red flames, black devils, and various apocalyptic images of death and damnation.

Fog, mystery, death—they provided the perfect setting for our long-awaited encounter with Hitchcock's classic. Notebooks poised, we waited for the slow-spinning, multicolored spirals of the opening titles to fill the screen. At last, our own obsession could be confronted: *Vertigo* was only a beginning, the first step on the *Vertigo* tour.

Hitchcock shot a number of his films in northern California. *The Birds* is probably the best known of them all, and every year dedicated film fans wend their way north to Bodega Bay, looking for the old Tides Restaurant, near where the car blew up (it burned down quite a few years ago), or the street where the birds attacked the school kids. But recently, as *Vertigo*'s reputation has continued to rise, growing numbers of Hitchcock tourists have been turning up in San Francisco, hoping to follow in James Stewart and Kim Novak's footsteps as a kind of participatory rite, a concrete homage to a film that's moved them past words and into action. Naturally, many of these Hitchcock-obsessed tourists have been film makers—an international roster that includes Akira Kurosawa, Jean-Luc Godard, Wim Wenders, Chris Marker, and critic Donald Spoto.

Working from the slimmest evidence

(and only vague memories of the film), these *Vertigo* pilgrims have succeeded in finding many locations, but several important sites remain lost—and false clues (some from Hitchcock himself) have muddied the water. We felt certain that we two San Francisco–based Hitchcock fanatics could solve the remaining mysteries. Since 1982 is the 25th anniversary of the shooting of *Vertigo,* we were eager to get started. But since our own memories of the film and its locations were fuzzy, we needed to see *Vertigo* again.

Manny dimmed the lights, and we heard the projector start to whir. Surreally, an eye appeared on the screen, a reminder that for Hitch, vision was always primary. The iris of the eye expanded like a black hole, filling the screen as the camera zoomed into one of Hitchcock's famous, giant close-ups. Bernard Herrmann's terrifying, dreamlike music whispered into being around us. A blue spiral appeared in the center of the iris, spinning slowly against the blackness like an island universe—ominous, hypnotic. We fell into the screen.

LOVE IS A KIND OF SICKNESS

A BAR CROSSES THE FRAME—THE TOP rung of a ladder. Hands appear, grasping it, the camera pulls back, and suddenly we're in the midst of a hot pursuit across the rooftops of San Francisco. Detective Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) is just about to collar the criminal he's chasing when he loses his footing on a steep rooftop and finds himself dangling from a crumbling gutter, seconds away from a fatal fall. A policeman tries to give Scottie a hand but slips himself and falls screaming to his death. Scottie is saved, but the traumatic experience and guilt at his colleague's death leave him suffering from acute acrophobia and vertigo.

Thus begins one of the most terrifying love stories in modern drama. As the film unreels, Scottie falls deeply in love with Madeleine (Kim Novak), a mysterious, ethereal blonde haunted by the past. When she, too, falls to her death, Scottie blames himself and retreats into near catatonic melancholia. Just as he's beginning to recover, he meets Judy, a tough, passionate brunette who bears a strong resemblance to Madeleine. Scottie uses Judy's romantic attachment to him to remake her, against her will, in the image of his dead love.

Gradually, the stunning wrongness of Scottie's obsession begins to dawn on us. His insane determination to conquer death borders on necrophilia; his all-encompassing need to regain his romantic love object makes him seem almost inhuman. Worst of all, Hitchcock never lets us lose sympathy with Scottie—which is all the more alarming as we share his journey past sadomasochism into the realm of malevolent metaphysics. Inevitably, Judy falls to her death too—and Scottie's world is annihilated. Hitchcock leaves us with nothing.

Hitchcock took great pains to duplicate Ernie's second-floor Ambrosia Room down to the tiniest detail, so if you're on the tour you might as well drop in. Scottie and Judy didn't need reservations, but you will.

***

THE LIGHTS CAME UP, AND WE STARED wordlessly at each other—half in awe, half in agony. *Vertigo*'s undercurrents and thematic complexities, not to mention its flawless filmic craft, left not the slightest doubt that we had just seen a major work of twentieth-century art. As we crisscrossed San Francisco in the weeks that followed, we became more and more convinced that *Vertigo* might well be the greatest American film ever made. We weren't pleased with this notion; the very concept of "the greatest American film" is a foolish oversimplification. But we couldn't shake the growing conviction that Hitchcock had captured and dramatized a fundamental insight into the contradiction of being alive in America in the last half of the twentieth century.

Vertigo, we think, represents the most extreme form of Hollywood romanticism, fused with a violent critique of this romanticism. The film's themes—romantic love, death, and the deceptive nature of appearances—are universal and contribute to its overwhelming effect. Yet *Vertigo*'s disturbing power may result from something even deeper, related to the very roots of eroticism. Psychoanalyst Robert Stoller writes, "For most people, sexual excitement is a melodrama composed of the past and the present, building on tensions of wish, mystery, illusion, hostility and revenge." Stoller could not have written a more brilliant précis of *Vertigo* had he been trying. He goes on, in fact, to write about fetishism as a central erotic process. A fetish is an object, like a shoe or an undergarment, that becomes sexually exciting through contact with or resemblance to the loved person—just as Scottie chooses Judy not for herself, but for her resemblance to Madeleine.

Vertigo also explores the veiled connection between mystery and eroticism. Madeleine is the very essence of mystery, and hence infinitely desirable, but the telling point is that, as we will see, Scottie is obsessed with a counterfeit, a creature of his own imagination. Hitchcock underscores this fact by having Scottie create her once again, from scratch, with Judy's help. In a pertinent essay on classic Freudian theory, Janet Malcolm notes, "Romantic love is fundamentally solitary, and has at its core a profound impersonality. Love is a kind of sickness, with a blindness as to what the loved person is really like."

Hitchcock's brilliance lies in revealing the fraud at the heart of the relationship between Scottie and Madeleine/Judy. The real tragedy in *Vertigo* springs from Scottie's inability to see through the deception of romantic love; hence he is doomed to repeat the same fatal mistake, dramatized by Hitchcock as a series of fatal falls. Clearly the title *Vertigo* refers to more than Scottie's acrophobia; it speaks to the moral imbalance of a world in which our most highly prized relationship—romantic love—may be based on a fatal lie.

SOMEONE DEAD

LLOYD LAKE AND THE PORTALS OF THE Past never actually appear in *Vertigo,* but Scottie's old school friend Gavin Elster mentions them when he tries to get Scottie, who has quit his job on the force, to shadow Elster's wife, Madeleine. Elster suspects her of suicidal tendencies. "She wanders . . ." he begins. "She got in her car and drove out to Golden Gate Park. Sat by the lake, staring across the water at the pillars that stand on the far shore, the Portals of the Past. Sat there a long time without moving . . . ." Lloyd Lake and the portals are still there, on John F. Kennedy Drive just west of the Nineteenth Avenue overpass. They make a fine starting place for the *Vertigo* tour—and while you're sitting, pretending to be Kim Novak (or

James Stewart imagining Kim Novak), you might ponder Gavin's next question: "Scottie, do you believe that someone out of the past, someone dead, can enter and take possession of a living being?"

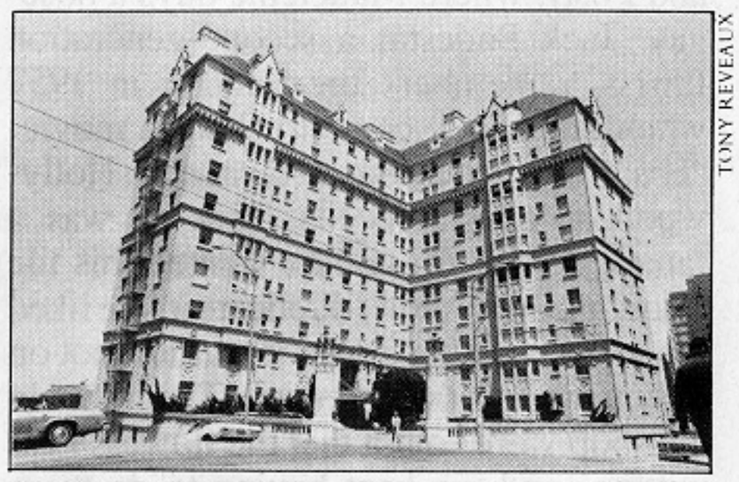
OUR PLACE

ANTHONY HEINDEL

THE OPULENT, RED-PLUSH INTERIOR OF Ernie's Restaurant (847 Montgomery, between Jackson and Pacific) is an important *Vertigo* location. Not only does Scottie catch his first glimpse of Madeleine here (looking elegant and unattainable in a green cape and a black evening gown), but later he brings Judy to the restaurant as part of his attempt to make her assume Madeleine's persona. Predictably, Judy comes to love Ernie's, even calling it "our place," and more than one important scene plays out against its white tablecloths, gleaming mirrors, and gold lighting fixtures. Ernie's works as a visibly luxurious reminder that Scottie and Madeleine are independently wealthy (and hence free to indulge their perverse fantasies) and as a warmly lit "safe harbor" to contrast with the cool, ambiguous exterior sequences in which the dangers of the past threaten. Actually, all the scenes in Ernie's (exteriors as well as interiors) were filmed on a Hollywood sound stage, but Hitchcock took great pains to duplicate Ernie's second-floor Ambrosia Room down to the tiniest detail, so if you're on the tour you might as well indulge yourself and drop in for dinner. Scottie and Judy never seem to need a reservation, but you will.

HIGH-PRICED AUTOMOBILES

MADELEINE'S APARTMENT BUILDING—A handsome, L-shaped edifice atop Nob Hill—is one of the sites that many *Vertigo* pilgrims get wrong. We had always been told that it was the Mark Hopkins Hotel, but there was something about the shape of the Mark's parking lot that wasn't right. Finally we asked the parking attendant at the hotel, a middle-aged man busily shuffling three limos into and out of a single parking space. "*Vertigo?* Yeah, I was here when they filmed *Vertigo,* but they didn't shoot it here. They did it over there, see?" He pointed down Mason, and there was Madeleine's building, the Brocklebank, a tall, expensive-looking apartment complex at 1000 Mason, just across Sacramento from the Fairmont (where Hitchcock always stayed). The Brocklebank sports splendid art deco pillars at the entrance to *its* parking lot, and a number of large, high-priced automobiles perfectly suitable for someone like Madeleine Elster. If you're play-



TONY REVEAUX

Invasion of the Movie Makers

SAN FRANCISCO has always been a film maker's dream. If you count the early silent days, when the city was a major film-making center, literally hundreds of films have been shot here. Even if you ignore those prehistoric one- and two-reelers, there are still far too many San Francisco–shot features for a manageable list. Second-rate obscurities are in plentiful supply, and there's not much point in enumerating them. What follows is a selective list: *important* films shot entirely (or partially) in San Francisco.

***

Greed (1923). Erich von Stroheim directed, and the (long-lost) original, uncut version ran 9½ hours. Universally considered one of the greatest films of all time.

The Barbary Coast (1935). Howard Hawks's brawling, period adventure film, with Edward G. Robinson and Miriam Hopkins.

Dark Passage (1947). Bogart and Bacall star in an atmospheric thriller set in the foggiest Frisco you ever saw.

Out of the Past (1947). Arguably the greatest *film noir* ever made, featuring Robert Mitchum as a cynical, wisecracking detective and Jane Greer as the lethally attractive woman who proves his cynicism inadequate.

I Remember Mama (1948). Sentimental favorite.

Raw Deal (1948). Hard-boiled tale of revenge among the gangsters, directed by cult favorite Anthony Mann.

The Lady from Shanghai (1949). See Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth stroll through Steinhart Aquarium! See the Laughing Fat Lady of Playland-at-the-Beach! This pyrotechnic thriller (arguably Welles's best) was mostly shot in studios, but sharp-eyed viewers will spot several fascinating location sequences.

It Came from Beneath the Sea (1955). Monster destroys the city, courtesy of special effects wizard Ray Harryhousen.

Pal Joey (1957). "Cleaned up" screen version of Rodgers and Hart's great musical, featuring Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak.

Vertigo (1958). See above, below, either side.

The Lineup (1958). Taut crime thriller, directed by action ace Don Siegel, with Eli Wallach and Robert Keith.

Days of Wine and Roses (1962). Drunks in San Francisco, with Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick under Blake Edwards's direction.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967). Socially conscious interracial comedy directed by (who else?) Stanley Kramer, with Spencer Tracy, Sidney Poitier, and Katharine Hepburn. Katie won an Oscar.

Point Blank (1967). Brilliantly made existential thriller featuring Lee Marvin as a gangster bent on revenge and Angie Dickinson as his faithless wife. John Boorman directs.

Bullitt (1968). Cars go flying in what many consider *the* definitive San Francisco chase sequence. Steve McQueen plays a police detective; Peter Yates directs.

Petulia (1968). Julie Christie, George C. Scott, and Shirley Knight in Richard Lester's sad, moving love story about being alive in the 1960s. Highly regarded by critics and a growing audience.

Psych-out (1968). Early performances by Jack Nicholson and Bruce Dern are highlights of this cult item, set during Summer of Love.

Dirty Harry (1971). Action masterpiece from director Don Siegel stars Clint Eastwood as mean Inspector Callahan. Siegel's brilliant visuals show San Francisco to fine advantage.

Harold and Maude (1972). Swinging septuagenarian (Ruth Gordon) and suicidal youngster (Bud Cort) fall in love in Hal Ashby's popular black comedy.

What's Up Doc? (1972). Peter Bogdanovich's screwball remake of Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* features Barbra Streisand, Ryan O'Neal, and some of the funniest car chases ever filmed.

Freebie and the Bean (1973). Comic cops-and-robbers with James Caan and Alan Arkin plus flying cars—all directed by Richard Rush.

Magnum Force (1973). Sequel to *Dirty Harry* misses director Siegel, but includes some amusing moments.

The Conversation (1974). Gene Hackman stars in Francis Coppola's masterpiece of paranoia, probably the director's best film.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978). Bay Area film maker Philip Kaufman's stylish remake of Don Siegel's scary original.

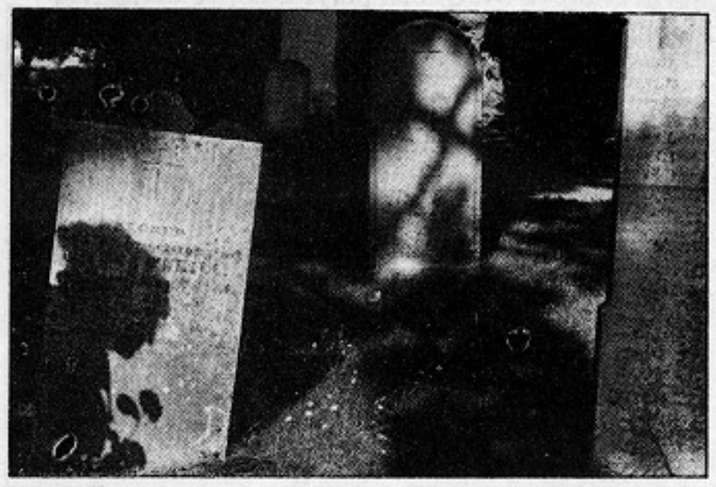
ing Scottie, you should lurk across the street and wait for a beautiful blonde to appear. If you're playing Madeleine, get in your car and drive down toward Grant; you're going to buy some flowers.

LAVENDER WAS HER COLOR

FLOWERS ARE MADELEINE'S MOTIF—A classically romantic motif, one traditionally associated with death. Hence several scenes were shot in the Podesta Baldocchi flower shop (224 Grant, between Sutter and Post), where Madeleine buys a nosegay. Jack Podesta, a second-generation florist, remembers the Sunday in 1957 when Hitchcock came to shoot a movie. "His original idea was to do a set in Hollywood," Podesta recalls, "but he was a fanatic for detail, and he wanted this tile floor, and he couldn't duplicate it. He liked the marble statuary, too. It was all shot on a Sunday—all three scenes. The lights in the shop were so hot that the flowers kept wilting, and we kept having to do them again. Kim Novak was very nice. We sent lavender flowers to her room. Lavender was her color."

There's a short scene in an alley "behind" the flower shop, and rumor has long held it to have been shot in nearby Maiden Lane. Podesta says no. "That whole alleyway sequence was shot in the studio," he insists. "People come in looking for the rear door, the one that Kim Novak seems to come through, but it's not here—it's in Hollywood."

DEATH AND VANISHED TIME



ANTHONY HEINDEL

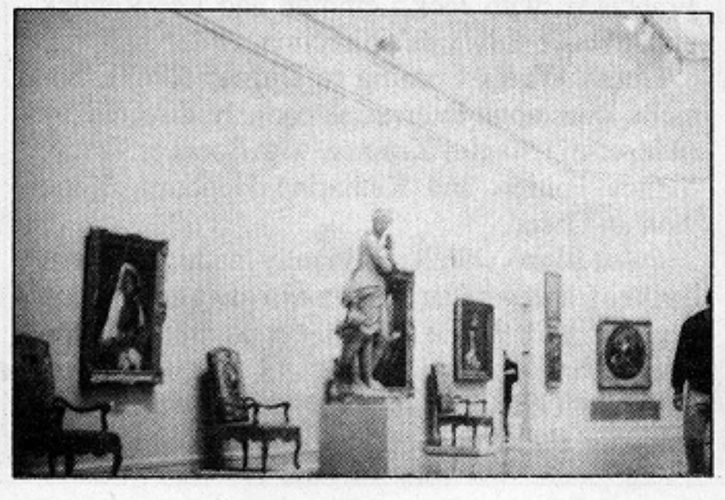
THE NEXT STOP ON MADELEINE'S DREAMY tour of San Francisco is Mission Dolores (on Dolores Street, between Sixteenth and Seventeenth), the oldest building in the city. As if in a trance, she walks through the chapel and passes silently into the cemetery garden, a place of such quietude and tranquility that it seems to belong to another world. Scottie slips into the garden too, and watches as she stands, enchanted, clutching her flowers, before a gravestone that reads CARLOTTA VALDES, 1831–1857.

The scene plays entirely without dialogue, with Hitchcock's soft, slightly blurred images underscoring the elements of death and vanished time that contribute to Madeleine's mystery. The gravestone itself was put up by Hitchcock, of course, and is long gone, as are the low, concentric, curving hedges that seem to enclose Madeleine in a magic time of her own. But if you catch a foggy afternoon, it shouldn't be hard to imagine a sad, dreamy young woman with a pastel nosegay just around the next turn in the path.

Helpless in the grip of his romantic obsession, Scottie determines to remake Judy in the image of his lost love. "If I let you change me," she asks him, "if I do what you tell me, will you love me?"

MEDIOCRE BAROQUE PAINTINGS

MADELEINE DRIVES NEXT TO THE PALACE of the Legion of Honor (Thirty-fourth Avenue off Clement, in Lincoln Park). Scottie finds her in a gallery with a square skylight, lost in reverie before *Portrait of Carlotta,* a painting in which a sad-eyed



Latina holds a pastel nosegay identical to the one Madeleine still carries. There are two galleries that fill the bill just inside the entrance of the Palace—one on the left, full of mediocre Baroque paintings, and one on the right, housing French impressionist paintings. The Information lady was bemused. "We're just volunteers," she apologized, "and these guards don't know anything either about 25 years ago." People were lining up behind us with questions of their own, but the Information lady wasn't giving up easily. She dug out a book, leafed through it quickly, and looked acutely distressed. "This only goes up to 1924," she wailed, "and we just don't . . . ." Fortunately, Bill Elsner, who was curator of special services when the film was made, was able to recall that Hitchcock used the gallery on the left. Carlotta's portrait would have been on the left wall, with a low museum bench before it. If you're Madeleine, you may sit on the bench and enjoy as long a reverie as you deem appropriate. If you're Scottie, you should lurk in the entrance and watch Madeleine with growing fascination. Either way, you should probably begin to fall in love.

OMINOUS VICTORIAN

THE PATH LEADS NEXT TO THE MCKITtrick Hotel, where Scottie discovers Madeleine has rented a room as Carlotta Valdes. It's a beautiful, gray, slightly ominous Victorian building at the corner of Eddy and Gough, catty-corner from an imposing stone church. Here Madeleine makes an enigmatic appearance in a second-story window; then there's a magical disappearing act that Hitchcock never gets around to explaining. Sadly, the McKittrick has done its own disappearing act, replaced by the low, concrete structure of the Cathedral Parish School—but St. Paul's Lutheran Church is still across the intersection.

BACK-PROJECTION

ONE OF THE MOST PERILOUS SIDE-TRAILS on the *Vertigo* tour (we never said it was safe) is the search for the Argosy Book Shop, where Scottie discovers that the mysterious Carlotta had an illegitimate child—Madeleine's grandmother, as it turns out—by her wealthy lover. Later, when her lover abandoned her, Carlotta became "the mad Carlotta" and wandered the streets of San Francisco, eventually dying by her own hand. Countless hours have been spent trying to find this elusive bookshop. The film offers several tempting clues—a street number on the transom, a cable car seen in a reverse-angle through the window—but the only loca-

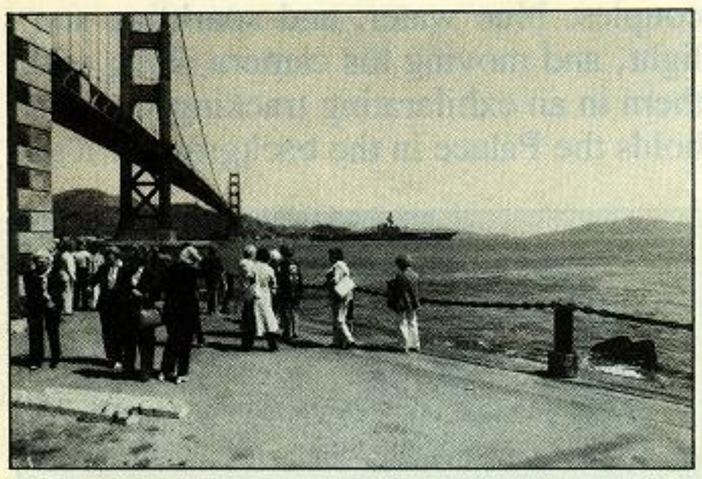
tion that satisfies all of them puts the shop smack in the middle of Union Square. We are convinced that the Argosy never existed—that it was created in the studio, using a back-projection shot taken from Union Square.

DOWN THROUGH THE PRESIDIO

THE NEXT MORNING, NOSEGAY STILL IN hand, Madeleine sets out on another day's wandering. With Scottie in pursuit, she drives down through the Presidio on Presidio Boulevard, allowing Hitchcock to film one of San Francisco's most spectacular vistas—a broad expanse of bay and rolling Marin County hills, with the Palace of Fine Arts in the foreground. The striking beauty of the blue, sparkling water sets a serene mood that Hitchcock is about to shatter abruptly.

FLOATING FLOWER PETALS

AT OLD FORT POINT, DIRECTLY UNDER THE Golden Gate Bridge (enter via Long Avenue, off Lincoln Avenue, in the Presidio), Madeleine stands silently next to the red brick building. Then she drops her flowers into the bay, stares at the floating petals for a moment, and abruptly, almost dreamily, lets herself fall into the black, choppy water. Horrified, Scottie leaps in after her and pulls her to safety, swimming surreally through floating flower petals. Fort Point is one of the most dramatic locations in San Francisco, with fierce wind, blasting foghorns, black water crashing on the rocks, and the best view of the Gate in the city. It's usually choked with tourists.



TONY REVEAUX

Serious *Vertigo* pilgrims will find cold rainy afternoons or very early mornings the best (i.e., the most deserted) times for a visit. We've never heard of anyone plunging into the bay in ultimate homage to Hitchcock, but there's certainly nothing to stop you from dropping a nosegay into the water if you feel so moved.

SCOTTIE REMOVES HER CLOTHES

ALL THE INTERIORS IN SCOTTIE'S APARTment, where he takes Madeleine to dry off (and where, in one of Hitchcock's subtlest sexual hints, he presumably removes her clothes before putting her to bed), were shot in a studio, but the exterior entrance to the apartment is at 900 Lombard, at the corner of Jones. The Chinese-looking railing has been replaced, and the building has been repainted, but it's obviously the same house. The young woman who lives there now speaks only French, has never heard of *Vertigo*, and was relieved when we went away. We know you won't bother her.

The Podesta Baldocchi flower shop: "The lights were so hot the flowers wilted and we kept having to do them again."

THE FACE OF CERTAIN DEATH

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, AS SCOTTIE AND Madeleine set off to "wander" together, they find themselves amongst the ancient redwood trees of Muir Woods (take Route 1 out of Mill Valley and follow the signs), in a pivotal, deeply moving scene that evolves as an extended meditation on death. "[I'm thinking] of all the people who've been born and died while the trees went on living," confides Madeleine, with a strange, distant look in her eyes. "I don't like it, knowing I have to die." In a sense, the rest of *Vertigo* follows inevitably from this line, as Scottie struggles to beat back death for his beloved.

The scene continues, and they approach a felled tree trunk (still on exhibit near the gift shop) with its rings marked to locate key historical events. "Somewhere in here I was born," whispers Madeleine, tracing a brief span in a previous century, "and there I died. It was only a moment for you . . . you took no notice." Her remark underscores the powerful, unspoken emotions running through this almost love scene between two spiritually rootless people, displaced in time, remote in a world of their own. How can they fail to fall in love, Hitchcock seems to be asking, with only one another to cling to in the face of certain death? How can any of us?

MIDNIGHT STREETS

LATER YET, SCOTTIE WANDERS ALONE through the rain-washed midnight streets; a brief shot captures him emerging from the southeast corner of Union Square, crossing Stockton, and walking east on Geary. He seems lost in a dream, and the combination of his intense body language, Herrmann's haunting music, and the gleaming pavement suggests the depth of his growing passion.

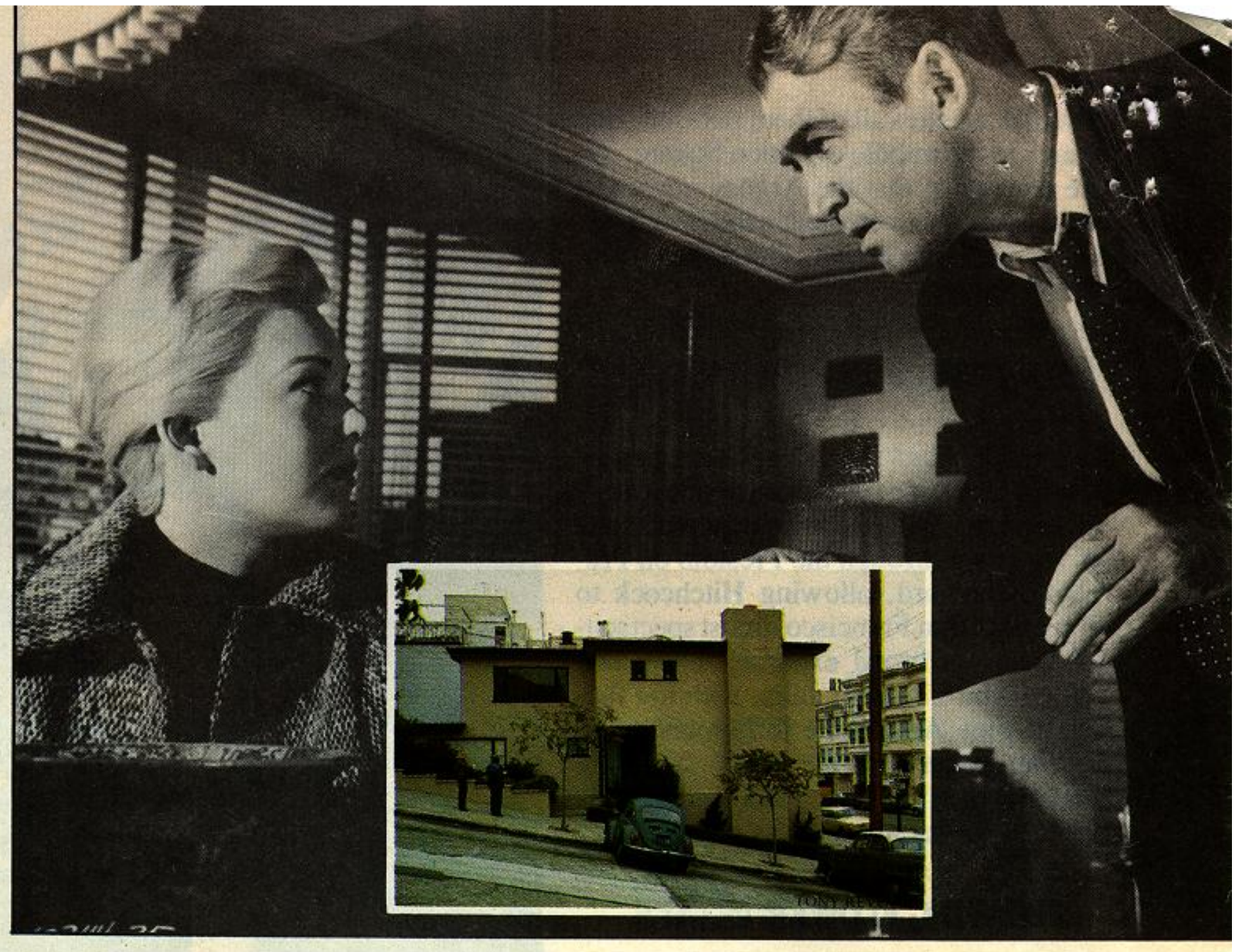
JUDY'S HOTEL

LATER THAT NIGHT, MADELEINE BURSTS into Scottie's apartment. She's had a terri-

fying dream. "The tower again," she cries, "the bell and the old Spanish village . . . ." Scottie thinks he recognizes her description, and in hopes of calming her he drives with her to the Mission of San Juan Bautista. But once there, she grows even more upset and runs up a steep flight of stairs to the mission tower. Beset by vertigo, Scottie can't follow—a failure that takes on dreadful significance when she hurtles to her death from the high belfry tower.

Overwhelmed by guilt and by the loss of his beloved, Scottie goes quietly mad and is hospitalized. Then, in the early stages of recovery, he meets Judy, a dark-haired woman who bears a striking resemblance to the dead Madeleine. Helpless in the grip of his romantic obsession, Scottie determines to remake Judy in the image of Madeleine. However, as a flashback reveals to us (but not to him), Judy is *in fact* Madeleine—Elster's mistress, who had impersonated Elster's wife as part of a complicated murder plot. Nonetheless, Judy really loves Scottie, and she gives in to his sexual fantasy in hope of winning him for herself.

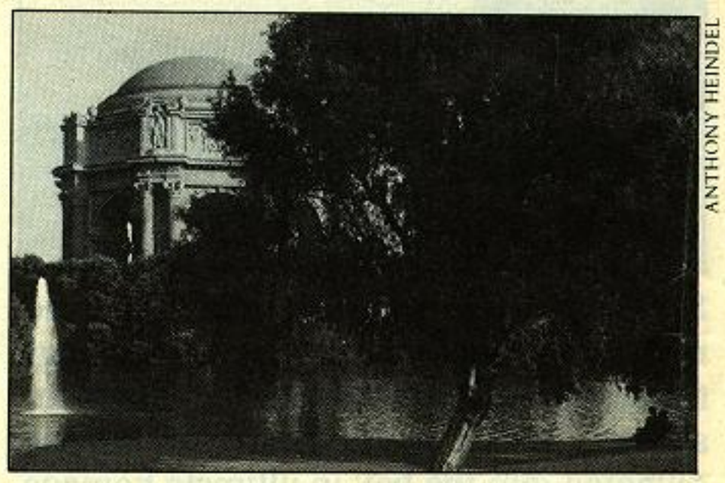
Judy lives in the Empire Hotel, a modest, attractive establishment with a green neon sign that Hitchcock uses to great atmospheric effect in several (studio) interior sequences. The Empire is one of the most elusive of all the *Vertigo* locations—partly because it's no longer called the Empire, and partly because Hitchcock misremembered its location (he said it was on Post) in Truffaut's seminal interview. Renamed the York Hotel (and, alas, missing the great neon sign), Judy's hotel is located at 940 Sutter Street. It's a clean, airy place, and except for the missing neon, the façade seems basically unchanged. The deskman remembers Hitchcock's shooting a sequence with Stewart and Novak on the spiral staircase, but no such sequence appears in the finished film. In any case, if we came to town to take the *Vertigo* tour (or even if we didn't), we know where *we'd* want to stay.



Scottie's apartment: The young woman who lives there now has never heard of *Vertigo*. We know you won't bother her.

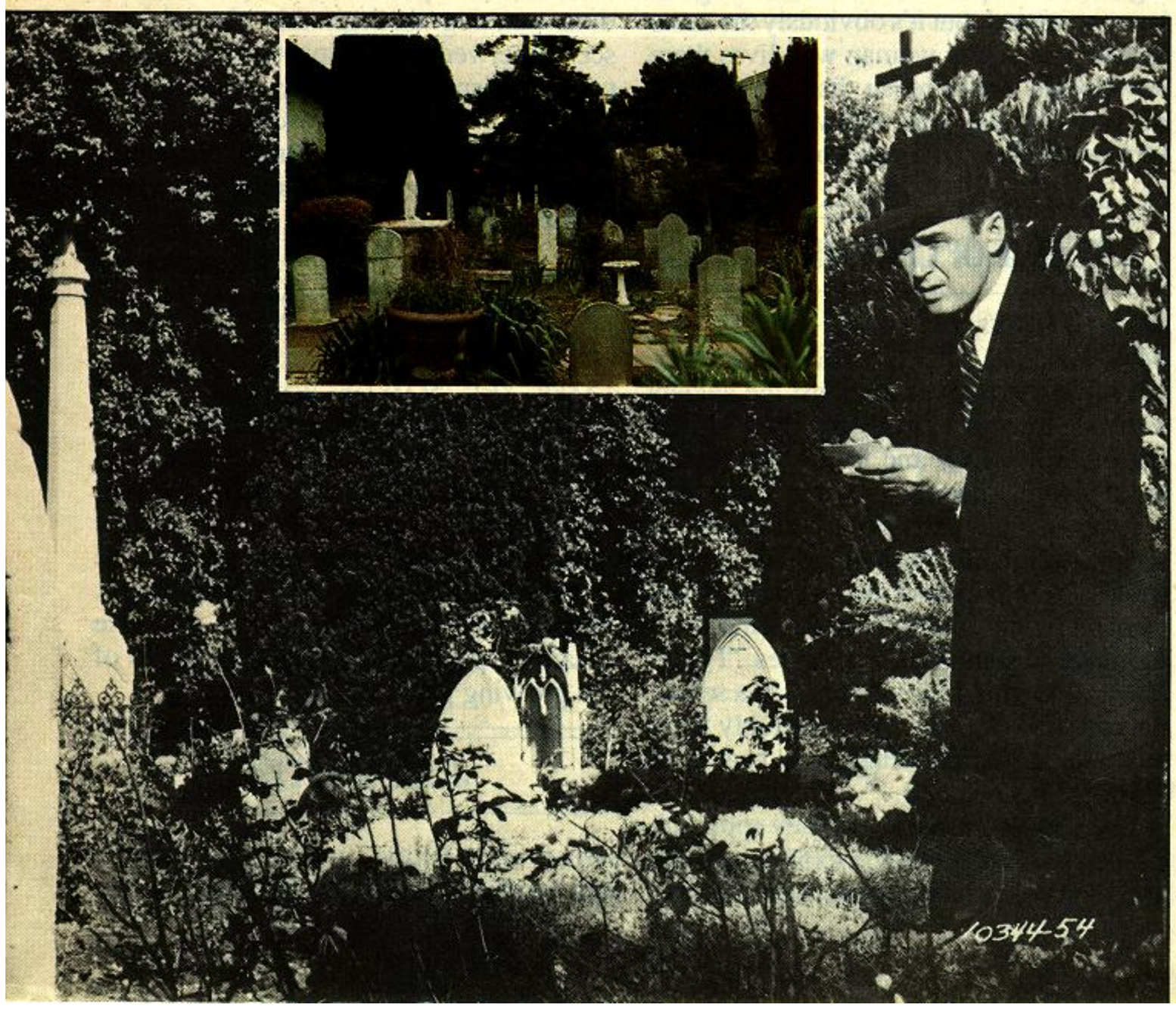
THE LAST SAFE MOMENT

SCOTTIE AND JUDY GO TO ERNIE'S FOR DINner, and the next morning they go strolling along the lagoon next to the Palace of Fine Arts (off Baker, near Marina Boulevard). They don't need to speak of love. Hitchcock lets his images do the job, surrounding Scottie and Judy with affectionate couples, blue water, and sparkling sunlight, and moving his camera along with them in an exhilarating tracking shot that holds the Palace in the background. It's a setting of exquisite beauty—and all the more disturbing for the sinister subcurrent running through it as Scottie focuses his obsession on Judy. It's a good place for a thoughtful stroll, especially if you're a couple and feel like playing Scottie and Judy. On some level, it was exactly what *we* had wanted all along: a way to drop into the film, just for a bit. And this is the last safe moment, the last protected place. Time and the tour are running out.



ANTHONY HEINDEL

Mission Dolores: Scottie watches as she stands, enchanted, before the gravestone of Carlotta Valdes.



PROVOCATIVE LINGERIE

JUDY CAN'T *BE* MADELEINE UNTIL SHE dresses like Madeleine, so Scottie takes her to Ransohoffs, a ritzy clothing store near Union Square, and forces her to buy the appropriate items. The sequence is almost unbearably perverse, even pornographic; although the garments are innocuous—a gray suit, for instance—the sexual purpose behind them is as explicit as if Scottie were making Judy buy provocative lingerie against her will—and she knows it. Scottie is trying to annihilate Judy, and reluctantly she submits, giving her lover total control of her body and soul. "If I let you change me," she asks, "if I do what you tell me, will you love me?" Ransohoffs is gone, but another clothing store—The Limited—has taken its place in the same building, at 259 Post Street. We're reluctant to suggest an appropriate gesture of homage—at least in a family magazine.

GOD HAVE MERCY

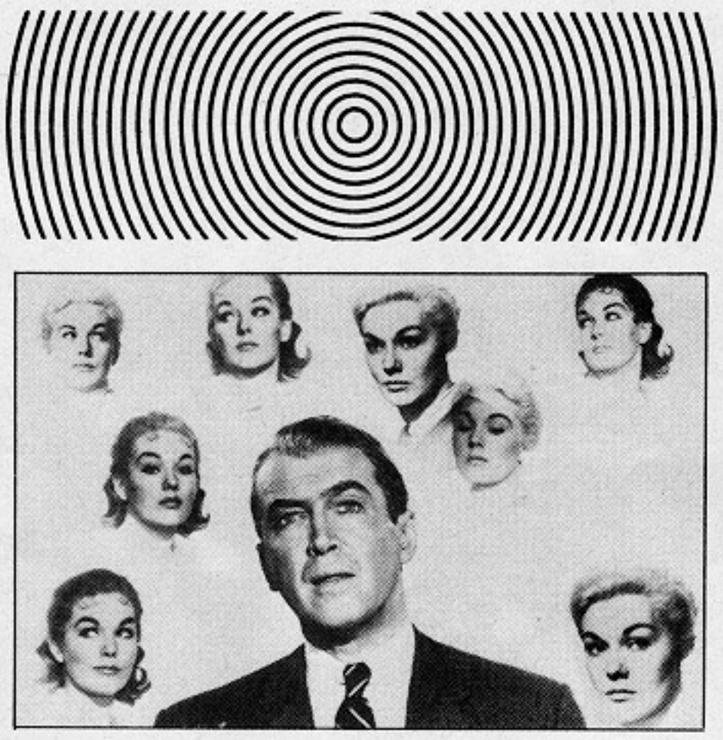
IN THE END, JUDY GIVES SCOTTIE THE ultimate gift, herself, and becomes Madeleine for him. But when the transformation is complete—Judy wearing Madeleine's clothing, her hair dyed blonde and swept up like Madeleine's—she makes a terrible mistake: She puts on a necklace that she wore as Madeleine, and Scottie recognizes it. In a fury of frustrated passion, Scottie hurtles southward, through the night, carrying Judy/Madeleine toward a dreadful confrontation at the Mission of San Juan Bautista. Scottie's fragile psychological equilibrium is coming apart before our eyes. "One doesn't often get a second chance," he tells Judy/Madeleine with a terrible smile. "I want to stop being haunted. You're my second chance, Judy, you're my second chance." But he's wrong; no one gets a second chance.

At the mission, he forces Judy/Madeleine to climb the stairs of the tower, and his mental anguish bursts out in one of the most extraordinary speeches in modern drama. "You played the wife very well, Judy," he cries in an agony of jealousy at not being the *first*. "He made you over, didn't he, he made you over just as *I* made you over, only *better*, not only the clothes and the hair, but the looks and the manner and the words and those beautiful, phony trances . . . . Did he train you? Did he rehearse you? You were a very apt pupil, weren't you?"

They reach the open belfry at the top of the tower, they argue, she falls, and Scottie stares after her from on high. His vertigo is cured, but at an unbearable price. In the final shot, he gazes in horror over a world in which guilt and madness must surely drown him. The film's last words are spoken by a nun: "God have mercy!"

San Juan Bautista lies 90 miles south of San Francisco on Route 156, just three miles off Highway 101, and the church is still there, nestled in the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains where it's been since 1812. In 1957, however, there was no bell tower. Hitchcock built a 70-foot mock-up in the studio and superimposed it optically onto the actual mission. Otherwise the location exists exactly as in the film, including the livery stable where Madeleine shares a final embrace with Scottie before she "dies." Curiously, more than one of the locals reports having seen Kim Novak, on several occasions over the years, sitting alone in the plaza, gazing silently at the mission as if lost in a dream. We can't promise that she'll be there when *you* visit, but in a sense they're *all* still there: Scottie, Madeleine, Judy, and the man who made their dream, Alfred Hitchcock. SF

Michael Goodwin is a Bay Area writer specializing in film and traditional American music. His credits include Esquire, New West, *the* New York Times *Sunday magazine*, Penthouse, Mother Jones, *the* Village Voice, *and an occasional* SF *popcorn profile. Lynda Myles is coauthor of* The Movie Brats. *After seven years as director of the Edinburgh Film Festival, she became director of the Pacific Film Archive, in Berkeley. She is now producing films in London.*



Hitchcock's brilliance lies in revealing the fraud at the heart of romantic love. Scottie doesn't see through the deception, so he's doomed to repeat the same fatal mistake—dramatized as a series of fatal falls.

Two Routes to Vertigo

WHILE YOU WAIT for *Vertigo* to come out on videodisc, there *is* a way to see it—if you know where to look and are willing to devote an inordinate amount of time to the project.

There are two routes to *Vertigo*. The first one is to find a collector willing to show you his or her print. Collectors tend to hang around film archives, museums, repertory theaters, film festivals, and the like. If you hang around too, and keep your ears open, and get to know the curators and programmers and note writers, you will eventually meet someone you think might be a collector. Be cool. Be discreet. Be patient. And eventually you will score. We know of at least two prints of *Vertigo* in the Bay Area. There may be more.

The second route is to watch the printed schedules at film archives, festivals, and repertory theaters for events identified as "special rare print," "surprise screening," or the like. If these "surprises" occur in proximity to Hitchcock showings or series, you are almost sure to hit one of the five missing films, with a 20 percent chance of its being *Vertigo*.

How long is this likely to take? Obviously, we can't make any promises, but if you want to see *Vertigo* badly enough, we'd be surprised if it took you more than two or three years to track down a print. Good luck!

Poster Courtesy of CINE MONDE