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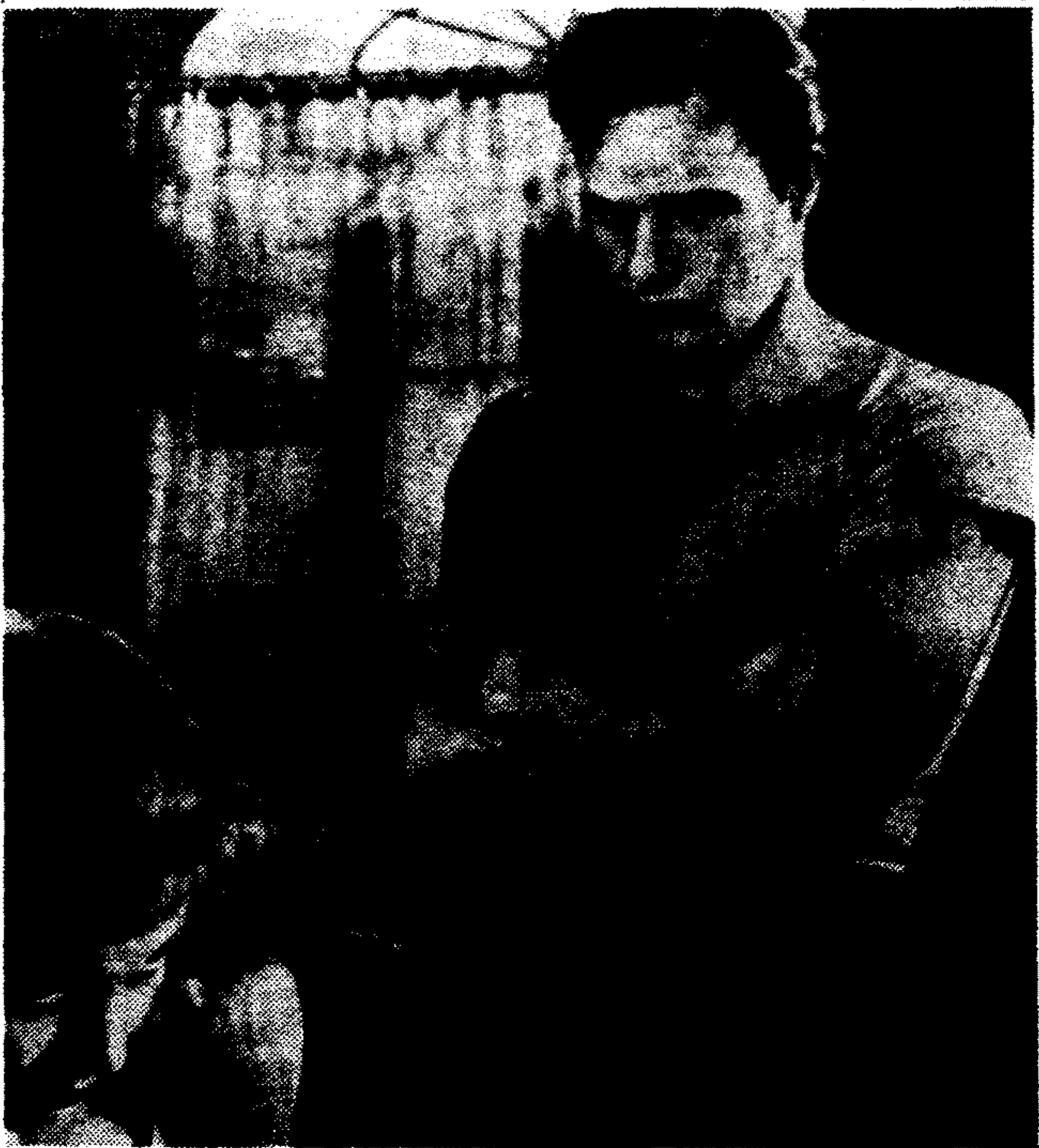
Elia Kazan's A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

(1951), based on Oscar Saul's adaptation of the drama and screenplay by Tennessee Williams, with Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Stanley, and Karl Malden, features the tempestuous Method at its roots through the bitter-sweet accident of Brando's casting as the ultimate Stanley Kowalski. Under Kazan's dynamic stylization in which close-ups were repeated on an emblematically claustropho-

bic set, Brando became the very axiom of Method Acting, and the focus of the film became more Brando's characterization of Orpheus than the original intention of depicting a monumentally lost lady sliding into eloquent insanity. In some ways, Leigh's guarded personality for once fitted a role in which she was the outsider in her character and the outsider of a theatrical ensemble carried over from Broadway. Supporting her valiant acting against the tide, the ever-evocative poetry of Williams supplies an elegant text befitting the gaudiest costumes of *La Belle Epoque*, and his dialogue carries the action forward with a Cocteau-esque conviction, at least until the censors intervened to see that Stanley got his comeuppance for raping Blanche. At other points, a clinical subtext tends to underline the lyrical surface, but the *mise-en-scène*, especially the scene of a hunk in a torn T-shirt clutching a woman in a slip, contributed some of the most explosive imagery of the repressed '50s. (Cofeature: Robert Rossen's *The Hustler*, another great T-shirt movie, with Paul Newman as the hunk) **Cinema Village: repeated Wednesday and Thursday, 1:10, 6, 10:40**

Voice 3/3/87

Sarris & Allen



A Streetcar Named Desire: the Method at its roots