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lot of the picture is highly entertaining. But the people—the young bourgeois who dreams of becoming an explorer, the opportunist girl who wants to be an actress, the jazz-fiends and the would-be litterateurs—they remain strangers, resisting the director's attempt to penetrate their hermetic world.

There is something elusive about Becker, something that remains uncommitted despite an approach apparently humane. This is not the place for an extended consideration of his talent: one can only note the problem. Perhaps he himself has suggested the key to it. "*Le côté un peu entomologiste que j'ai peut-être. . .*" He is an entomologist—who likes people—but an entomologist.

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FALBALAS and RENDEZVOUS DE JUILLET

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

Of the myriad sources available to future social historians of our over-selfconscious Europe, the films of Jacques Becker will surely be amongst the most fruitful. Discussing his work in a recent interview (in *Cahiers du Cinéma*), he let drop a suggestive phrase: "*Le côté un peu entomologiste que j'ai peut-être. . .*" These two films of his, neither of them new, both show strongly Becker's fascination with the specialised forms of human behaviour, with the peculiar conventions and apparatus through which individual sections of society express their ways of living. *Falbalas*, made in 1945, is a study of a paranoiac Don Juan, set mostly in a successful Parisian fashion house; *Rendezvous de Juillet* (1949) gives us the world of young French people in Paris shortly after the war, their aspirations and emotional tangles, their irresponsible and disordered lives in an atmosphere of disillusion and insecurity. In each case, one feels it is the setting that has appealed to Becker as much as the individuals who give him his story: in *Falbalas*, the background of professional fashion, the snobby, carpeted salons, and the hectic workrooms behind them; in *Rendezvous de Juillet*, the feverish jazz clubs of the Left Bank, all the private customs of dress and conduct of these turbulent adolescents.

But, as always with Becker—it is this that gives his films their particular virtue—the picturesque social *ambiance* is intimately a part of a whole conception which includes an observation of individual behaviour equally alert, equally canny. In *Falbalas* the progress of the affair between the self-infatuated couturier and the fiancée of his most intimate friend—a warm and generous girl, quite defenceless against the practised manoeuvres of her seducer—is mapped with a finesse and a precision that at times seems even unrelenting. The performance of Raymond Rouleau as the designer is accomplished, though rather too exterior; Micheline Presle plays his victim with a continuous subtlety of feeling that she has not surpassed. Only at the climax, with Rouleau's final incapacity to come to terms with reality and his evasive plunge into madness, does Becker's handling falter and the film decline into clumsy melodrama.

Rendezvous de Juillet is a more ambitious subject: the gulf between generations is always vast, and sympathetic though Becker's attitude towards his young people appears to be, he has not succeeded in entering unselfconsciously into their world. He is intrigued by it, charmed by it, but it is not his. It is a pity that the version of his film now available here is a good forty minutes shorter than his original; indeed, the cuts imposed by the British distributors have been so extensive that one has hardly the right to judge the picture by this severe abridgment. However, a five-year-old memory of its premiere at Cannes justifies the impression of *Rendezvous de Juillet* as a colourful fabrication rather than a living work. Superficially it is all true: the externals are brilliantly reproduced, and a