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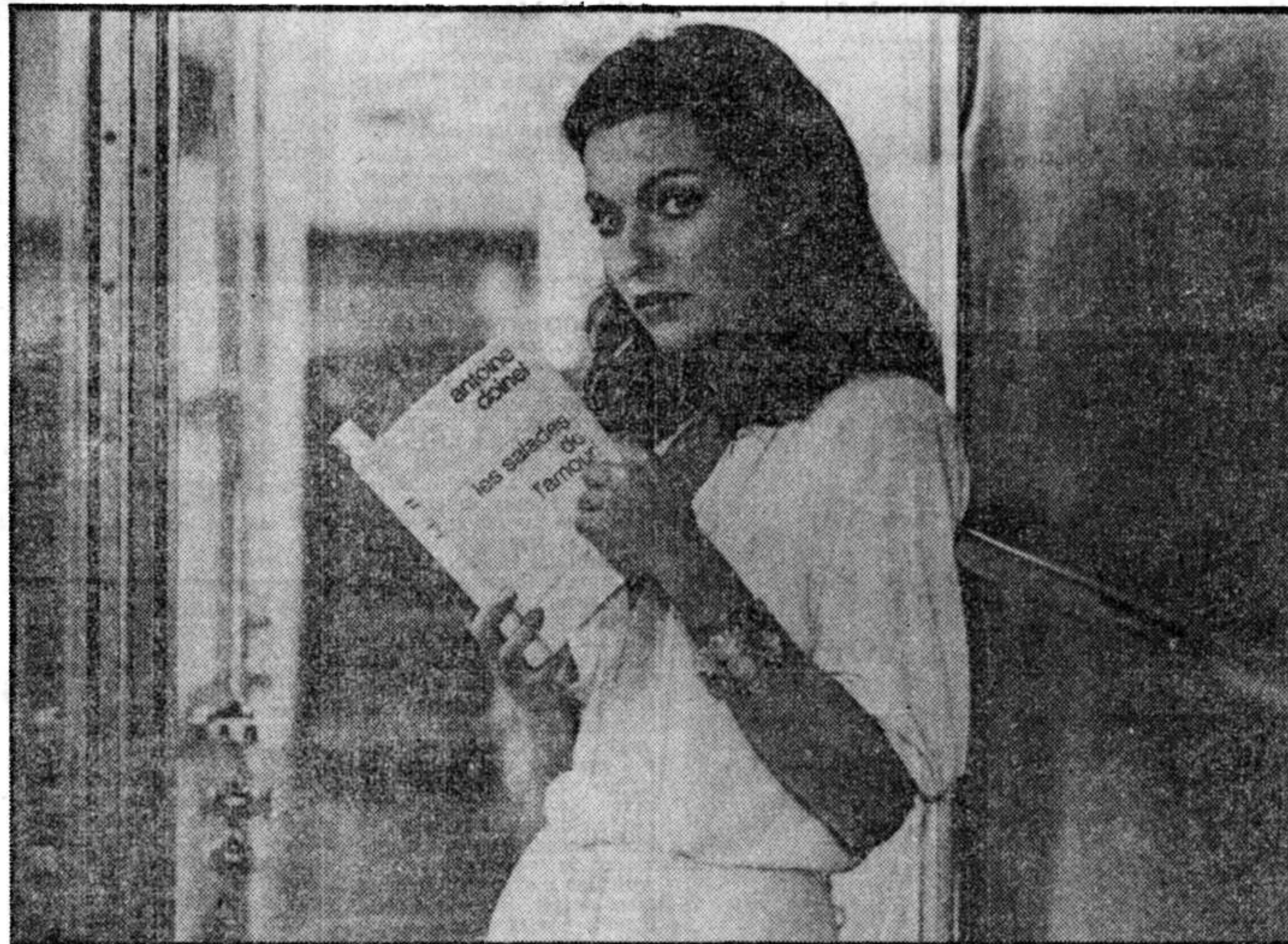
## FESTIVAL

THE FIRST WEEK of the Berlin Film Festival looked terrific on paper: new films by Truffaut, Fassbinder, Herzog, Jeanne Moreau, and Paul Schrader. Only the first two, however, lived up to their promise. The Fassbinder film — *The Marriage Of Maria Braun* — was the opening night film and will probably win something when the prizes are given out. A kind of post-war *Mother Courage*, it begins during a wartime bombardment which just allows time for Maria (Khanny Schygulla) to get her marriage licence signed before her husband, Hermann, goes off the Russian front.

He doesn't come back, and after waiting and searching for a few years, Maria takes up with a black American soldier. One night when they are climbing into bed, the husband returns, there is a fight, the black gets killed and although it was Maria who had wielded the fatal bottle, Hermann takes the rap. He goes to prison for several years. Maria uses her time wisely: she becomes the friend and mistress of a rich textile manufacturer, and saves a lot of money for the day when Hermann gets out.

But Hermann is proud: he refuses her money, says he wants to make his own fortune, goes off to Canada and does it. Maria is somewhat daunted, but keeps on with her industrialist until he dies and leaves her all his money. Coincidentally, Hermann comes back with his fortune made) at just that time and it looks as if they are going to live happily ever after. Except that by now something has happened to Maria's feelings for Hermann, and either accidentally or on purpose she manages to blow up the house. Everybody dies. The end credits come on, the screen fades to white, and we get a series of portraits on the screen: Adenauer, Erhart, etc.

The point is that Maria's post-war progress is somehow meant to parallel (or be paralleled by) the progress of post-war Germany. I wasn't entirely convinced. Her attempt to sustain a grand passion in a greedy capitalist society is shown as impossible: motives count less



Marie-France Pisier in Truffaut's *Love on the Run*

Richard Roud considers the new Truffaut and other films in Berlin

## End of a twenty year affair

than actions, Fassbinder seems to be saying. Agreed, but somehow I find Fassbinder more convincing in his portraits of losers than of all-conquering heroines like Maria Braun. That said, it is still an important film and one which was very much liked: much more so, I must add, than *The Year With Thirteen Moons*, which was shown here in the forum section.

*Love On The Run* — Truffaut's latest film, was shown in competition and his *The*

*Green Room* (seen in London on television last Autumn), was relegated to the information section. For me, *The Green Room* was the masterpiece. *Love On The Run* is charming in its summing up of the story of Antoine Doinel, a story Truffaut began 20 years ago with *The Four Hundred Blows*. In fact, the new film contains clips from that film, from the little-known episode from the film *Love At Twenty* (in which we see Antoine — Jean-Pierre Leaud — at 20

falling unrequitedly in love with an even younger Marie-France Pisier), as well as scenes from *Stolen Kisses* and *Bed and Board*.

Truffaut has announced that this is the last of the Doinel films, and I for one, am not overly distressed. The charm is wearing thin — but this last of the Doinel films is nonetheless a very entertaining experience. Intricately put together (the old films matching admirably with the new one), the film is also distinguished by a

brilliant performance by Marie Pisier as the one woman Antoine wanted and never had.

The new Werner Herzog film — *Nosferatu* — was frankly disappointing. It is a huge commercial success in Paris already, and I suppose it will do well everywhere. One can't blame Herzog for wanting to get out of the festival and art-house circuit, but it's a shame that he couldn't find a better way of doing it. Of course, the film has its extraordinarily

beautiful moments and Klaus Kinski as *Nosferatu/Dracula* is incredibly good. But there really seems little point in re-making the old Murnau film, even if Herzog has provided a new and fancy twist to the end.

Jeanne Moreau's second film as a director is both better and worse than her first one. Better in the sense that it is more successful in doing what it sets out to do, worse in that it is trying for much less. *L'Adolescente*, is a beautiful evocation of the summer of 1939: under the shadow of war a young girl learns what love and life are all about. Well, we've seen that one before, and despite fine performances from Simone Signoret as the ideal grandmother and Francis Huster as the (inevitably) Jewish doctor, the film doesn't add up to much.

Finally, there was Paul Schrader's new film *Hard Core*. Any doubts one might have had about *Blue Collar* (and I had plenty) are alas confirmed by the new film. It's a disaster. A disaster because Schrader doesn't know how to direct actors convincingly (George C. Scott is grotesque as the calvinist father) and because with all his experience as a script-writer (*Taxi Driver*, etc), he simply has not been able to write a convincing script. Considering that Schrader's first published work was a book on his three favourite directors, Dreyer, Bresson, and Ozu, one cannot help but feel that his must be a hopelessly schizophrenic personality.

We are told so little about the main characters that when we learn that Scott's teenage daughter has suddenly dropped out of a Calvinist youth congress in Los Angeles to become a porno movie star, we can't believe it. And we wait throughout the film to find out why she did it. The only answer we ever get is that her father didn't tell her that he loved her. Schrader would probably say it was all a matter of pre-destination — since that is what the Dutch Calvinist father believes in. But, however satisfactory this explanation may be on the theological level, it is not very convincing dramatically.