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PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE
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EXTRA MARCH PROGRAM!

March 22 1979

EGYPTIAN FILM-MAKER YOUSSEF CHAHINE
WILL PRESENT HIS LATEST FILM
"ALEXANDRIA WHY?"

Wheeler Auditorium UC Berkeley Campus
7:30 Friday, March 23 Admission \$2.50

Egypt's leading film-maker, Youssef Chahine, will be present for a special screening of his latest film, ALEXANDRIA WHY? at 7:30 Friday, March 23, Wheeler Auditorium, UC Campus, Berkeley: the program is sponsored by the University Art Museum's Pacific Film Archive.

Chahine, who many film historians consider one of the world's greatest film-makers, appeared at the Pacific Film Archive in August 1978 for a small retrospective of his work, which includes such classic films as CAIRO STATION. THE LAND, and THE SPARROW.

ALEXANDRIA WHY? is a quasi-autobiographical film, set in Alexandria during World War II, and dealing both with the real-life intrigues of the 1942-45 period, and with the dream-life of films as this type of sur-reality entered the consciousness of the director's screen alter ego.

At its US Premiere this month in the Los Angeles International Film Exposition, critic Richard Whitehall wrote: "Covering three years, from the tense days of 1942 when the Germans were within a few miles of the city, to 1945 and the end of the war, this colorful mixture of intrigue and aspirations is a close weave of several interconnecting slots. One story eventually takes precedence, that of a young Egyptian boy who desires to be an actor and study at the Pasadena Playhouse. There's also a marvelously loony conspiracy (if two inept Army Officers can be said to form a conspiracy) to kidnap Churchill and sell him to the Germans.

What gives the film its vitality is the speed and unpredictability of the narrative line. The characters live at and off the movies (particularly MGM musicals), and the directorial style is as strongly influenced by those hours in magic darkness as the psyches of his characters. If there are strong traces of later Fellini in Youssef Chahine's approach, they don't obliterate an earlier allegiance to Hollywood style and pacing of the forties. ALEXANDRIA WHY is screwball, imaginative, hilarious, inventive. Just how many movies have you seen that juxtapose Hitler and Eleanor Powell?"

ALEXANDRIA WHY? was awarded The Silver Bear at the 1979 Berlin Film Festival.

(1979, 133 mins, Color, 35mm, English titles)