



Michelle Morgan and Claude Lelouch

No rats in this crossword puzzle

CAT AND MOUSE

Written, directed and produced by Claude Lelouch
With Michele Morgan and Sergei Reggiani
Released by Quartet Films

Here is a French detective film that is mildly suspenseful, marvelous to look at, told in a style that is original enough to keep you thinking you're thinking. And it all comes out neat as a crossword puzzle when you've peeked at the answer.

What makes it better than a way to spend two pleasant hours is its good-humoredly ironic view of the moral milieu in which the story unfolds. It is, and was intended to be, a relief from the cinema's incessant infatuation with policemen.

Lechat has a good job with the Paris detective bureau because he makes a lot of arrests, not because he is above dipping into the loot when there is a chance. He gets fired because he is about to make an arrest his superiors find "embarrassing."



The man who replaces him on the case of the mysterious (?) suicide or murder of millionaire Richard Morgan (Jean-Pierre Aumont) is advised to look for a "left-wing terrorist" suspect. And in no time at all, one falls into police hands, complete with damning circumstantial evidence.

The "left-wing terrorist" (who is neither of these things) is convicted and jailed. The Powers and the public are satisfied. But Lechat is bored. He decides to write

a fictional book on the case. In the process, he solves it. His solution is personal and private and does not rock the barge on which French justice rests.

There are, as director Claude Lelouch claims in his publicity, no "real rats." The closest thing to a heavy is the unidentified bureaucrat who takes Lechat off the case. But no one has a solid gold set of ethics, neither Detective Lechat nor his assistant nor the ungrieving widow (Michele Mor-

gan) nor the sultry siren who was the cause of it all (Valerie Lagrange).

But everyone is agreeable and amusing, including Lechat's untrainable police dog. The acting of a superb cast adds dimension to what was already a well-written script.

Claude Lelouch (*A Man and a Woman, And Now My Love*) wrote, directed and produced. And makes it look easy.

—Janet Stevenson

Homage to Band's memory

THE LAST WALTZ

Directed by Martin Scorsese
Produced by Robbie Robertson
Starring the Band
United Artists

I liked *The Last Waltz*, but probably for the wrong reasons.

The film, which has been called a "rockumentary," is the record of the last performance by a musical group (the Band) that decides to pack it in after 16 years of the road. They are tired. There are intercut interviews with band members, all of them worn out and willing to admit it. Robbie Robertson talks in terms of death, ticking off the names of performers who have died as a result of road touring.

This sort of thing is Scorsese's

Not really a documentary, the film is a series of moments.

meat. Self-destruction and the awareness of it have been key concerns in many of his films (*Mean Streets, New York, New York*). The Band offered him ingredients for a further exploration of the area.

It also offered technical problems. There are only so many ways you can cut from a close-up of hands on an instrument to sweating faces in deep concentration. At times Scorsese is so desperate that he stages songs instead of "documenting" the actual performance.

The film is really not a documentary anyway. It is a series of moments, some contrived, some captured live. Many of the guest stars seem uncomfortable. Paul Butterfield never gets around to meshing with the group. Eric Clapton is too laid back, Muddy Waters too quiet. Ronnie Hawkins and Doctor John try to get into the background flow of the Band and you wonder why they are there at all.

Van Morrison shows some fire, as do Neil Young and Joni Mitchell. But there isn't enough time

for any of them to create an explosive moment. Even Bob Dylan's performance is defused.

The music is most intense when the Band plays alone. (They are too polite when the guests are on.) But their final public appearance was more a party of remembrance than a performance of passion. This may be the key. Scorsese is stressing the elegiac, the idea of memory, the past. *The Last Waltz* is homage to something that is over and done with.

Scorsese has more to say about the exhaustion of creation, the hard work demanded of musicians who are, after all, people—fragile and susceptible to the pressures of their trade—than about the glory of stardom and the wonderful world of rock'n'roll.

The Band was smart enough, or tired enough to realize what a toll their work had taken. Scorsese was perceptive enough to present that as the central idea. That is the success of *The Last Waltz*.

—Joe Heumann

Joe Heumann reviews movies regularly for *In These Times*.

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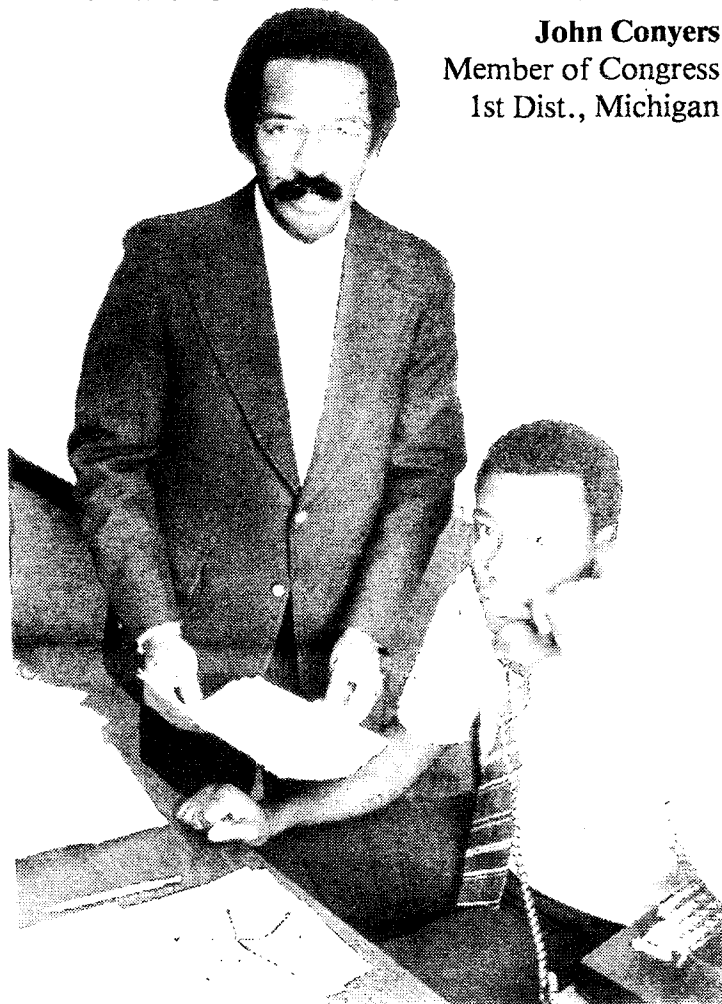
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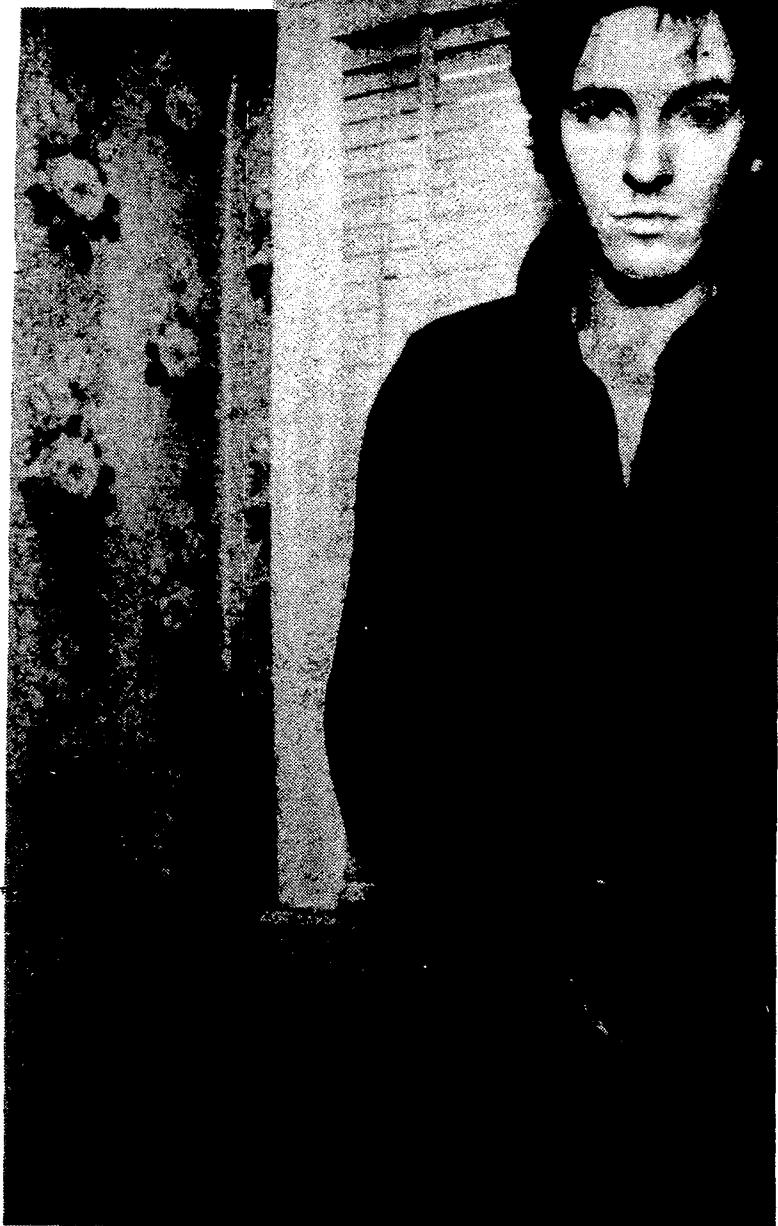
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Records



DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

Bruce Springsteen
(Columbia Records)

When Bruce Springsteen burst upon the rock scene in the early '70s, he was hailed as the successor to Bob Dylan. In rapid succession he released three critically

acclaimed albums and played countless concerts.

Almost overnight, he became a household word, appeared simultaneously on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, became a media event.

But success took its toll. It has been over two years since his last (and best) record, *Born to Run*.

His new album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* is timed to coincide with a national tour. Springsteen is making news again.

At first glance, he looks tired. On the cover photographs he leans against the bare wall of an undecorated room, looking like a burnt-out James Dean. His skin is pallid, his hair disheveled, and his white T-shirt contrasts starkly with his black leather jacket.

But appearances are often deceptive. *Darkness* is a vibrant and insightful record that interweaves a series of powerful themes into a unified musical statement: a vision of growing up in an urban working class family, full of energy and hope, finally breaking away only to find himself cruising the same streets at night.

He is at his best capturing the hopes and disappointments of urban life. "The Promised Land," "Badlands," and "Prove It All Night" are classic Springsteen rockers: bright, vibrant, driving, evocative lyrics delivered with strength. ("Prove It All Night," the album's single, is currently climbing the AM charts.) "Factory" is an elegant ballad that depicts his blue collar father's hard work.

Coming to terms with his past on "Adam Raised a Cain," a gutsy rock-blues tune featuring his tight guitar solo, Springsteen sings:

*"You're born into this life
paying,
for the sins of somebody else's
past,
Daddy worked his whole life,
for nothing but the pain..."*

Perhaps the most revealing cut on the record is "Racing in the Street." In the guise of a hymn about racing his car, Springsteen reveals some of the frustration of working class culture. "Summer's here and the time is right/For racing in the street."

Summer is here, all right. And Bruce Springsteen's *Darkness on the Edge of Town* is like steamy city summer nights: tough, gritty

and stripped of all pretense. It is perhaps the record of the summer of 1978. —Michael S. Kimmel
Michael S. Kimmel is a free-lance music critic in Berkeley.



LIFE DANCE OF IS Oliver Lake (Arista/Novus Records)

Novus means new, and *Life Dance of Is*, the latest album by alto saxophonist Oliver Lake, is among the first releases on this just-initiated subsidiary of Arista records.

It has been difficult for experimental musicians to get regular club dates or recording sessions. So, with the help of organizations like St. Louis' Black Artists' Group (of which Lake was a founder), Chicago's Association of Creative Music (started in part by Arista/Novus artists Richard Muhal Abrams and Anthony Braxton) and New York's Collective of Black Artists, they've produced their own concerts and recorded for small (often musician-run) labels. Novus aims to make them available to a larger audience.

Oliver Lake, like Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell of Chicago's Art Ensemble, explores spaces of pause, hesitation and disconnection. His sax breaks short and intense, bursts up and down the scale, skipping notes, leaving the ear or mind to fill the missing

spaces. The piano intervenes like a crosswise color line, Lake returns, reaching out with the sax. Moving against and through constraint, the music is a desire for something different. The directions pursued meld intellect and body heat intensity.

Disjunctive as Lake can be, he also carries that rooted, earth based sensuality which has always defined the best of blues, rock and soul. He once played behind people like Rufus Thomas and Solomon Burke. His swing connotes honkey tonk R&B with hard, tangibly erotic strength.

On *Change One* he uses an African rhythm base, and the harmonica of guitarist Michael Gregory Jackson sounds like Sonny Boy Williamson fused with a sax, halfway between pre-disco Stanley Turrentine and an Arabic call.

The strains weave throughout, and just as you're drained into exhaustion or jarred into lapsed attention, the back beat resumes, a reminder of always-held strength—a base from which flight and exploration can move.

There's a lot of polite jazz these days. Despite the abundance of synthesized space sounds, most is as genuinely funky as the discreet tap of a foot. Exponents like George Benson once played a much tougher sound that earned them little survival money. Their creation is now safe, linear, and, as the radio puts it, "movin' easy music," complete with hummable melodies and well wrapped up loose ends.

Lake's music resists this trend, as does that of his compatriots from the cooperative associations. In his check-backs and breaks there is no safe and settled ground, only aspiration, restless hope and a demand for room to move. One has to work to experience the album's full import. It reflects with richness on a complicated world and its depth makes it worth all necessary effort.

—Paul Loeb

Paul Loeb is a free-lance writer in New York City.

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MANNING MARABLE, ITT columnist and Chair of Tuskegee's Political Science Dept., will speak on "Black Nationalism Today," Monday, July 24th, 8 p.m., 3244 N. Clark, Chicago. Sponsored by NAM's Second City Socialist School.

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SOCIALISTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC Party? Seattle ITT Associates presents Clara Fraser (Radical Women), Rick Hull (Exec. Committee, 32nd District Demo. Party), George Thornton (New American Movement), Thursday, July 27, 7:30 pm at American Friends Service Center, 814 N.E. 40th St. Childcare provided.

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THE CITIZEN/LABOR ENERGY Coalition, a national coalition of labor, citizen action, and public interest organizations, is looking for experienced people to do the following jobs: minority and church recruitment and liaison; fundraiser and regional organizer. Experience in direct action community organizations and/or labor organizations preferable. Salary negotiable. Send resume to: Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition, 600 West Fullerton, Chicago, IL 60614.

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