

Reviews: *Vagabond*, *La Vie Est a Nous*  
**Festival Features**

by Lois Wadsworth

In *Vagabond*, neo-realist French director Agnes Varda creates an unforgettable portrait of an uncom- promising and unthinking vagrant girl (brilliantly played by Sandrine Bonnaire) on a solitary, cold winter trek through the south of France. In *La Vie Est a Nous*, a collaborative propaganda docu- mentary made 50 years earlier, French director Jean Renoir cap- tures the idealism of the young communists who hoped to stem the fascist tide in Europe in 1936.

Mona, the young wanderer in Agnes Varda's newest film, *Vaga- bond*, is not the kind of girl you'd want to bring home to meet the family. She's dirty, rebellious to a fault, and completely selfish. But she's free. Or so it seems to some of the more conventional people whose paths she crosses, a few of whom try to help her. Mona takes what she can get and never says thanks.

*Vagabond's* stark winter land- scape is a perfect background for the story of this distressing girl whose homelessness and poverty are grinding realities. Mona is ex- tremely inarticulate; she never says why she's on the road, what she wants to go. Her rebellion centers on the unfocused freedoms

demanded by some in a generation now fading from memory. For Mona, the price of this legacy is dear.

Too brief glimpses of a laughing child-woman, suddenly beautiful, haunt us. From time to time, we are startled to realize that Mona has some education and knows a different life, but mostly we can't see beyond what she has become. Sandrine Bonnaire, 18 years old when the film was made, clearly earned the French Cesar (their Oscar) she was awarded for her compelling performance as Mona.

Agnes Varda is an accomplished filmmaker, and this is her first feature film in several years. Recognized in Europe as the first of the new wave auteurs, Varda is probably best known in this coun- try for her 1976 film, *One Sings, The Other Doesn't*. *Vagabond* is her twelfth picture. Don't miss it.

The great French film director Jean Renoir was asked by some young friends in the French Com- munist Party to make a documen- tary film they could use to bolster participation in the 1936 elections. Fascism was on the rise all over Europe, many countries were al- ready under right-wing dictator- ships (Italy, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Poland, Yugoslavia,



Sandrine Bonnaire and Agnes Varda, the star and director of *Vagabond*.

Greece, Bulgaria), and France was vulnerable. The Popular Front wanted to make a difference. Renoir, who was never a member of the party, describes the group effort of the intellectual and ar- tistic community to make the film:

"Several of us . . . Cartier- Bresson, Jacque Becker and I, each directed some, and I supervised it all. No one was paid for working on this film; everyone had other jobs, so it had to be made between jobs or after work. I don't think of it as my film, in the same sense as the others, because I didn't edit it. Oh, when we saw the rushes, I would give some ad- vice on the editing . . . I never did see the finished picture in 1936."

The picture opens with school- boys who are watching a class- room film that glorifies France's great and abundant natural resources. These boys are hungry,

their fathers unemployed; the fruits of the horn of plenty don't reach these kids. The film focuses on the 20 families who control the wealth in France, naming names, docu- menting positions. Newsreels are doctored to show Hitler barking like a dog instead of speaking. Lit- tle vignettes (purportedly mail to the editor of the Communist newspaper, *L'Humanite*) are enacted. From a sophisticated point of view, the stories appear contrived and simplistic. But because of the genius of the im- ages, the film does not degenerate into shallow posturing. Renoir's images embody the highest hopes of human beings.

*La Vie Est a Nous* (*Life Is Ours*) is an historically significant docu- ment. It is a heartfelt memorial to the liberal goals of an expressive segment of society in the last years before the devastation of World War II. It is also remarkable as a non-commercial co-operative film venture.

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**NEW TO TOWN**

**International Film Festival**

**Broken Mirrors:** Set in an Amsterdam brothel, this suspenseful film follows the murder of a shop- keeper. By feminist director Marleen Gorris, it's a double feature with *Vagabond* from August 21-24 at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**Camina Camina:** Directed by Italy's Ermanno Olmi (*Tree of Wooden Clogs*), it's a re-telling of the birth of Christ with "a rare, fresh intensity of feeling." Double feature with *La Vie Est a Nous* from August 25-27 at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**Vagabond:** New film by France's Agnes Varda (*A Very Curious Girl*). Sandrine Bonnaire plays a feisty young woman who hits the road in search of freedom. Double feature with *Broken Mirrors* from August 21-24 at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**La Vie Est A Nous:** Made in 1936 by the in- comparable Jean Renoir, this film has just been released in the U.S. A propaganda documentary made for the French Communist Party, it's a double feature with *Camina Camina* from August 25-27 at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**Starting Friday, August 21:**

**Born in East L.A.:** Cheech Marin is back, without his partner. This time he's both director and star, in a comedy with Jan Michael Vincent. National (344-3431).

**Dirty Dancing:** Being compared to *Saturday Night Fever* and *Flashdance*, this musical/romance takes place in 1963 in upstate New York. Jennifer Grey plays a young woman who falls for older man Patrick Swayze. MovieLand (342-4142) and Spring- field Quad (726-9073).

**My Life As a Dog:** A nostalgic look at pre- adolescence, this film depicts a year in a boy's life, during which he learns his mother is dying. By the Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom, it's the premiere showing in the new, second theater at the Bijou (686-2458). Call to verify.

**CONTINUING/RETURNING**

**Back to the Beach:** Late '50s pop stars Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon reappear on movie beaches. This time they're a couple visiting a daughter at her California pad. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**La Bamba:** Lou Diamond Phillips and Esai Morales star in this re-creation of the life of Richie

Valens, a late-'50s rock star who died in a plane crash at the peak of his career. Los Lobos pro- vides many of the musical numbers. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Can't Buy Me Love:** As a high school nerd, Patrick Dempsey tries to use his money to attract cheerleader Amanda Peterson. Teen comedy. MovieLand (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**The Care Bears Adventure in Wonderland:** The Care Bears meet Alice and other creatures in this animated, G-rated movie. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Full Metal Jacket:** The long-awaited Stanley (2001) Kubrick film, it never lets up revealing the mindlessness and brutality of war, climaxing at the 1968 Tet Offensive of the Vietnam War. Double feature with *Roxanne* at the McDonald (344-4343).

**Heartbreak Ridge:** Clint Eastwood plays a tough marine sergeant about to retire. Double feature with *Witches of Eastwick* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Lethal Weapon:** This action picture stars Mel Gibson and Danny Glover. Returns to town as the late-night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

**The Living Daylights:** Two firsts are in this new James Bond flick: Timothy Dalton now plays Agent 007, and he is involved with a new intrigue—mono- gamy. Fantasy/adventure. MovieLand (342-4142).

**The Lost Boys:** A new twist in the annals of vampire stories, it combines rock and roll with ter- ror. With Jami Gertz, Dianne Wiest and Edward Herrmann. Moves to Cinema World (342-6536).

**Maid to Order:** Ally Sheedy goes from riches to rags. Co-stars Beverly D'Angelo, Michael Ont- kean and Valerie Perrine. Comedy. MovieLand (342-4142).

**Masters of the Universe:** Dolph Lundgren and Frank Langella face combat in this live-action sci-fi adaptation of the toys/cartoon series. MovieLand (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Monster Squad:** Heroic teenagers save a town from a crew of famous monsters. Horror/com- edy/adventure. MovieLand (342-4142) and Spring- field Quad (726-9073).

**Nadine:** Takes place in Texas in the '50s. Jeff Bridges and Kim Basinger play a couple at odds, trying to avoid a murder rap. Comedy-thriller. Cinema World (342-6536).

**No Way Out:** Navy lieutenant Kevin Costner goes from shipboard duty to involvement with the CIA. With Gene Hackman and some reportedly steamy scenes. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**North Shore:** Matt Adler plays Rick Kane, who finds challenge in romance and surfing on Oahu's north shore. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Prick Up Your Ears:** Stephen Frears (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) directs Gary Oldham (*Sid and Nancy*) and Alfred Molina in a film based on the life—and brutal death—of playwright Joe Orton. Continues at the Bijou (686-2458).

**RoboCop:** Sci-fi thriller about a cyborg employed to clean up on Detroit lowlife. With Peter Weller, it's graphically violent, satirizes TV newscasts, and is more than comix brought to life. MovieLand (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Roxanne:** Steve Martin, with the longest nose since Pinocchio, and Daryl Hannah star in a modern-day comedy based on the story of Cyrano de Bergerac. Double feature with *Full Metal Jacket* at the McDonald (344-4343).

**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs:** Heigh- hol! This re-release of the 1937 technicolor Disney classic is at MovieLand (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Stakeout:** Emilio Estevez and Richard Dreyfuss are two undercover detectives. Comedy-adventure. Cinema World (342-6536).

**Superman IV: The Quest for Peace:** Chris- topher Reeve again plays the Man of Steel, up against Nuclear Man. Gene Hackman plays a villain, with Margot Kidder as Lois Lane, and Mariel Hemingway. MovieLand (342-4142).

**Witches of Eastwick:** Jack Nicholson as the devil, with Cher, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Susan Sarandon, star in this adaptation of a John Up- dike novel. Double feature with *Heartbreak Ridge* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Who's That Girl:** Madonna plays a parolee seek- ing the man who actually committed the crime for which she did four years. Griffin Dunne is her attorney. MovieLand (342-4142).

Thursday, August 20 is the last showing for: *Beyond Therapy* and *Nineteen Nineteen* at Cinema 7. *Roxanne* and *Innerspace* at Cinema World. *Lost Boys* at the National.

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