

Hot Young Actor
MICHAEL PARÉ
Stars in His First Two Movies

BY DAVIN SEAY



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It's a publicist's dream ... no long, drawn-out saga of a dreary, dues-paying climb to the top. No sir, you don't get much more instant than Michael Paré's nimble leap up the ladder of success, clear over the heads of countless toiling also-rans, right to the very portals of marquee immortality.

Consider, for instance, the current pitch: 24-year-old Paré's first film, as well as, not coincidentally, his first starring role, is Embassy Pictures' *Eddie and the Cruisers*. Paré portrays, quite convincingly, a mythic Sixties rock star, a cross between Eddie Cochran and Jim Morrison who disappears under suitably mysterious circumstances. "Michael doesn't do his own guitar playing or singing," his press agent breezily informs. "It's all synched

of few actors in Hollywood history who's never had to endure the indignity of playing a supporting role.

"Of course I'm lucky," says Paré between bites of breaded pork chop. "I'm the luckiest guy I ever met," and no one in the crowded town square — clogged with catering trucks, an idle herd of Harley Davidsons and a battalion of tattooed extras in black leather regalia — seems inclined to contest the point. For one thing, they're all busy scarfing down pounds of quintessential movie locale cuisine — canned fruit, overcooked entrées and stale cold cuts. For another, it's unbelievably hot out here — three degrees over a hundred on the Universal Studios backlot in Hollywood, where the filming of *Streets of Fire* — director

enormous beer belly, waddling by to reveal the Harley Davidson logo etched onto his back. Ominous-looking knots of biker types silently consume lunch beneath a pitiless sun, their D.A.'s wilting. Walter Hill, orchestrator of all this menace, is huddled with producer Lawrence Gordon under the only shade around, a mottled patch beneath a wormy elm tree. Looking like someone's jovial truck driving uncle, Hill, pudgy and bearded and wearing a baseball cap, seems completely at ease amidst the sizzling chaos of his own design.

"Walter has a vivid picture of what he wants," remarks Paré, squinting against the blinding glare. "There's never a question of 'do I have what he needs.' You wouldn't be here if you didn't."

Hill does indeed seem to know exactly what he's up to. Among the hottest of a current crop of bankable Hollywood directors, the one-time screenwriter is flush from his box office smash *48 Hrs.*, a film mapping exactly the same macho cosmos as the rest of his work, which includes the queasy *Southern Comfort*; that masterpiece of slow-motion gore, *The Long Riders*; and the hair-raising *The Warriors*, to which *Streets of Fire*, billed as "a rock 'n' roll action fantasy" bears more than a passing resemblance. With Hill's impressive credentials he could, of course, snag any number of rising or established stars to front this latest effort — the first of a projected film trilogy titled *The Adventures of Tom Cody*. That he chose Paré, a nearly complete unknown, to portray his mythic hero is revealing evidence of the young actor's considerable on-camera charisma.

Born in Brooklyn, the eighth of ten children, Paré and family moved to the wilds of Westchester County when Michael's father died. "I went to the Culinary Institute in Hyde Park," he relates through a mouthful of canned peaches, "because cooking was the first real job I had when I got out of high school. It was something I could do and get at least a middle class income. But I don't think I ever considered it my life's work."

That last comment sounds a bit fishy. After all, Paré graduated from the Institute with a cooking degree and began almost at once climbing the long ladder to chefdom, taking a few sous-chef positions in New York restaurants, filleting and flambéing until he landed a spot, at age 21, as an assistant baker at New York's ultra-trendy Tavern on the Green. It was just about then, however, that destiny intervened with stunning alacrity.

"I was waiting in a bar for my girlfriend to get off work," relates Paré, his winning smile suddenly bright at the memory. "I felt someone tap me on the shoulder." The tap, believe it or not, was Opportunity itself, in the person of a New York talent scout/agent who liked what she saw and wasn't shy about saying so. She suggested he attend acting school, where he was eventually to meet the late legendary talent agent Joyce Selznick, who was also duly impressed.

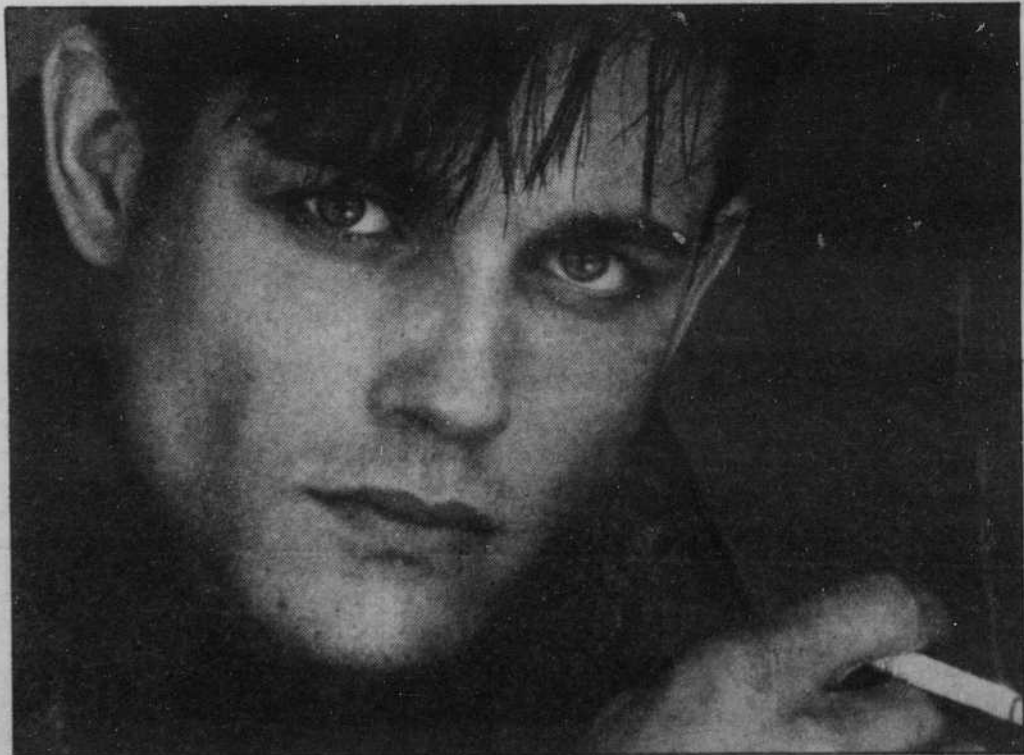
Sitting across from him it's impossible not to catch the full force of his appeal to sharp-eyed scouts and canny film directors. His striking good looks are set off by pale blue eyes and a shock of unruly blond hair. Looking a bit like a pre-dissipated Nick Nolte with a touch of down-home Gerard Depardeau, Paré certainly possesses the right mix of star quality facial fundamentals. But there must be file drawers full of appealing composites Hill and company passed clean over in favor of Paré. Why? It seems to have more than a little to do with the fledgling star's casual and unselfconscious poise. "When I first met him, he struck me as a kid with good instincts and not a lot of training," remarks *Eddie and the Cruisers* co-star Matthew Laurence. "I felt about him like a son, and even with everything that's swirling around him now, he's still that same kid." (Laurence is incidentally, roughly Paré's age.) There is, even now, a palpable eagerness to Paré, a transparency and guilelessness that is quite disarming. He is, in a word, malleable. "What he's got," intones one press release, "you can't spell."

Nor, it seems, is it something Paré can easily articulate. His frequent search-me shrugs seem about the most eloquent statements he's able to make on the subject of his own success. "I fell for acting right away," he says. "Who wouldn't?" One gets the feeling he's waiting to wake up.

With lunch over, the *Streets of Fire* menagerie straggles back to the scene of today's shooting. Six blocks of ersatz New York City streets, complete with elevated train tracks, comprise the main set for Hill's Fifties-styled vision of the future. Mounted over the entire length of the stage is one enormous expanse of plastic tarp. What seemed like a good idea at the time — cover an outdoor stage set to allow night shooting during daylight hours — now resembles a diabolical health hazard. The plastic sheet, flapping in a blistering breeze, cooks the set to an even 110, creating a sort of greenhouse effect as hordes of extras, decked out as the film's evil motorcycle gang, sweat and steam while waiting for their cues.

Paré, sitting in the ubiquitous personalized director's chair, suffers along with everyone else as he waits through another interminable break in the shooting. His costume is a woolen, Wallace Beery-style undershirt with suspenders holding up heavy suede trousers. Smoking a succession of Marlboros, he continues his account of his rocket ride to verging stardom. "After I met Joyce Selznick," he recalls, "I started taking the whole thing a little more seriously. She helped me get acting lessons, and I quit cooking. I gave myself a year to make it."

It took two, but he eventually landed a supporting role on the benighted prime-time TV series *Greatest American Hero* playing a "smart aleck kid" named Tony. "I had that job for a year and a half," he recounts, apparently unaware that in a single bound he cleared the



People who've seen the picture don't believe me when I tell them. That's how good Michael is." The stunning non-sequitur passes by without a pause. After all, lip synching is an art like any other; if one's client excels in faking it, why not let the world know?

Eddie and the Cruisers is something of a muddle: a flimsy whodunnit with a surfeit of who-cares plot twists, the flick wallows in enough clichés to embarrass the entire staff of *Reader's Digest*, while Martin Davidson directs with a hand heavier than Mr. T's. It is equally true, however, that for the time Paré's lean and hungry good looks fill the screen we are in the presence of a Presence. Even as rickety a vehicle as *Eddie and the Cruisers* can't seem to slow Paré's considerable matinee idol momentum — he smolders, flares and broods with all the instinctive élan of a Richard Gere or Matt Dillon. Even from such scant evidence it appears likely that with time he'll expand his dramatic repertoire to include charm, vulnerability and other emotional essentials.

As of this moment, the fate of his fledgling career rests on two considerably more promising starring slots, which must make him one

The face that launched a career: Paré as Eddie in Eddie and the Cruisers (above) and as Tom Cody, Walter Hill's latest futuristic urban hero in Streets of Fire (above right).

Walter Hill's latest paean to manly violence and other heroic virtues — is proceeding in fits and starts.

Standing by an enormous tub of strawberry ice cream is Mr. Lee Ving, fresh from his debut film role as the sleazy nightclub manager in *Flashdance* and quickly recruited for a small part in *Streets of Fire* alongside such notable supporting actors as SCTV's Rick Moranis. Lee's shirt is off, revealing a tattooed snake circling his bicep, and he's waving around what looks like a sawed-off shotgun, one of hundreds of dangerous-looking weapons lying in piles on the set. Next to him, another sunburned extra sans shirt totes an

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