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Courtesy photo  
Emily (Jane Birkin) shows her disapproval of Virgil (Lazlo Szabo) in a scene from "Love On The Ground."

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*'Love On The Ground' is refreshing; story line keeps audience guessing*

Life, artifice and the manipulation of reality are the subjects of Jacques Rivette's enigmatic "Love On The Ground," a thoroughly engrossing puzzle of a film that puts theater up as a mirror on life.

Jane Birkin and Geraldine Chaplin are struggling actresses Emily and Charlotte, currently featured in a play staged in an urban apartment for an audience of "eavesdroppers." One onlooker, Clement (Jean-

improvise to save the performance.

Clement is charmed by the entire concept and invites them to perform a play he is writing and directing in his stately mansion in like fashion. The two women are invited to live on the premises for the weeklong rehearsal schedule before the first, and only, performance.

The house is peopled with colorful characters. Paul (Andre Dussollier) is a magician by trade, and contact with him causes both Emily and Charlotte to experience visions that come to pass in the film. The omniscient butler, Virgil (Lazlo Szabo), is friendly but impenetrable. He is a veritable stage manager for both the household and the play, working mostly behind the scenes in almost every facet, including typing, and "improving" Clement's scripts.

Clement himself is the manipulative director of the house and the play, which are not as isolated as one might think. As our actresses soon find out, the play is a recreation of events that transpired in this very house amid the love triangle of Clement, Paul and a mystery woman, Eleanor.

Here the barriers between life and art break down. Clement's direction doesn't stop at the

Review by  
Sean Axmaker

Pierre Kalfon), happens to be the playwright from whose work this play was rather liberally "adapted." The leading man is terrified and begins to drink the props, and Emily and Charlotte frantically

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