Terrible Beauty Of "Tango"

...Ineptness Of "Superstar"

Bob Craft

Last Tango in Paris has come to town. It has come despite opposition from the local custodians of public morality.

The film starts amid lush, sexy music, and the symbolism that accompanies it: the movie starts immediately. There is an overhead railway, beneath it a walkway with Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider strolling, complete strangers. The camera works back and reveals it. The railroad is the penis, the walkway beneath it the vagina.

Such symbolism runs all the way through. Running water, trains, long hallways, apartments in towers, wide, round rooms, pistols, military boots and rain.

The story is complicated and intricate. Marlon Brando plays the part of a man who has wasted his life in many pursuits. The most recent being the "kept" husband of a woman. Brando's wife has committed suicide and Maria is an act that he cannot comprehend, that leaves her shamed and wounded.

He is wandering the streets, confused and alone. By chance, he meets the girl Jeanne (Marie Schneider) in an empty apartment that he арендes. He is not there to talk, not to converse. Brando takes Maria to a corner and has intercourse with her.

They leave the apartment and Maria goes to meet her boyfriend. He is a cinema bug and the art of making a film is a whole new life for her. Maria is making a film of her life, but as she talks to the young man, his thoughts are ever racing ahead to the next shot or making sure everything gets on film.

Very little sympathy can be given to this boy. He is obsessed instead of hiding behind poetry and flowers, he hides behind a camera.

Maria continues her assignations with Brando. The apartment has become a womb, where they are both safe from the outside. Strict rules are set up in the middle. In the name, no seeing each other outside and no talking about what goes on outside.

Brando shows many facets. He is in turn, a lover, a father, a bully, a clown, a wounded man, a rapist, a little boy, a protector, a gentle spirit, a beast, Death, a true lover, and a victim.

Maria is buffeted between the boy and the man. She is not satisfied with the filmmaker and resents his use of her for his film. He proposes and she accepts, only to rush out after buying her wedding gown to see Brando at the apartment.

Maria has a terrible fascination with Brando. He seems like a small animal who is conquered by the cobra: frightened, yet rigid, not able to run away. She vows time and again that she wants to leave and never return, yet never to do it.

The wife is buried. Brando dries his tears. Maria comes to the apartment and finds it empty. The rules have changed. Brando accosts her in the street and says it time for a new phase in the relationship.

Maria says no, it is all over. Brando disagrees, when something is over, it merely begins again.

But if the rules have changed for Maria, they have also changed for Brando. And it is too late. The tragic mechanism takes over.

Much has been said about the sex scenes in this film. There are such scenes, but in every case, they are something less than explicit.

The language in the film is sometimes rough, but it is fair an accurate interpretation of the American idiom as it is spoken today.

There is nothing obscure about this film and those who claim that it is have no sense of reality and probably the film scraped across their psyches too much. These are the same people who turned up their noses and walked out on "Marat/Sade," "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" "Satyricon," etc.

The claims that the film is obscene are so absurd and those who think differently will probably laugh until the film cans are seized, but then it's too late.

The film is a beautiful work of art that is valid for every man and every woman. It studies the elemental things that we all must come to grips with: Death, Sex, Love, Failure, Betrayal, Loss, Misunderstandings.

See it and when you do, forget what you have heard about it Lay aside parochial considerations and open to it. There is no other way to approach it. It is the pure, the work of art that must be viewed in the same fashion, privately.

It is not a film to see in a gang, neither is it a film to see with first date. It is not to be viewed with strangers. It is a film that may make you re-evaluate things about your life.

If it doesn't make you think, if it doesn't hit you, smash you hard somewhere, then you have not been watching it closely and you cannot say that you have seen Last Tango in Paris.

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