

February 2004

6	Safe Conduct (Laissez-passer)	7pm
7	The Last Letter (La dernière lettre)	7pm
	Almost Peaceful Un monde presque tranquille)	9pm
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24	La Commune Paris 1871	7pm
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26	Chronicle of a Summer (Chronique d'un été)	7pm
27	A Woman is a Woman (Une femme est une femme)	7pm & 9pm
28	A Woman is a Woman (Une femme est une femme)	7pm & 9pm
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FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL 2004: Feb. 6-15

This program is made possible with the support of UWM Union Programming, the Helen Bader Foundation, the Center for International Education, the Center for 21st Century Studies, Department of Film, Department of French, Italian and Comparative Literature, Department of History, French and Francophone Studies Certificate Program, the Community Media Project, and the Holocaust Research Project.

Friday, February 6 – 7pm

Safe Conduct (Laissez-passer)

(Bertrand Tavernier, France, 162 min., French w/English St., 35mm, 2002)

A vast, detailed canvas of a rarely portrayed aspect of the Resistance, charting the trajectories of two real-life figures working in the German-controlled French film industry from 1942 to 1944.

Based on the actual war time experiences of assistant director / resistance partisan Jean Devaivre and screenwriter and future Tavernier collaborator Jean Aurenche, Tavernier fashions a fascinating and wholly convincing reflection of a unique epoch in French history. "...one of the very best movies ever made about the life of moviemaking," Michael Atkinson, VILLAGE VOICE [Free Admission]

Saturday, February 7 – 7pm & Sunday, February 8 – 9pm

The Last Letter (La dernière lettre) *Milwaukee Premiere

(Frederick Wiseman, France/USA, 61 min., French w/Eng. St., 35mm B&W, 2002)

For his first fiction film, the renowned documentarian adapts his own Paris stage production of *La Dernière lettre*, itself a translation of an epistolary chapter from the Soviet-era novel, *Life and Fate* by Vasili Grossman. Featuring Catherine Samie in a stunning solo performance as the woman who writes a letter to her son from a ghetto where she awaits her annihilation. "Visuals

reminiscent of German Expressionist film – the actress’s physiognomy and the shadows surrounding her figure – combine with the pure power of language to conjure up the lost world of the ghetto.” Leslie Camhi, THE NATION
[\$4 Student, \$5 General]

Saturday, February 7 – 9pm & Sunday, February 8 – 7pm

Almost Peaceful (Un monde presque tranquille) *Milwaukee Premiere

(Michel Deville, France, 94 min., French w/Eng. St., 35mm, 2002)

Set during the largely unexplored period in France immediately after WWII, this bittersweet and life-affirming film follows a group of mostly Jewish Parisians who attempt to restart their lives and rekindle their capacity for happiness in the shadow of unspeakable horrors. Husband and wife, Albert and Lea, have reopened their tailoring business in central Paris. All of their new employees have been scarred – in varying degrees – by their experiences during the war, but all eventually realize that the only way to truly move forward with the rest of their lives is to come to terms with their pasts. *“The film’s generosity and humor, though it deals with basically sad and difficult themes, are inspirational.” VARIETY*

[\$4 Student, \$5 General]

Wednesday & Thursday, February 11 & 12 – 7pm

Quai des orfèvres

(Henri-Georges Clouzot, 106 min., France, French w/Eng. St., B&W, 1947)

One of the uncontested masterpieces of postwar French cinema, a whodunit film noir tour-de-force transferred to the wings and dressing rooms of the Parisian music hall and circus worlds. Toothbrush-mustached Inspector Antoine of the “Quai des Orfèvres”, France’s Scotland Yard equivalent, investigates the murder of a movie financier, the suspects of which are saucy chanteuse Jenny Lamour (Suzy Delair) and her balding, incurably jealous accompanist husband (Bernard Blier). From great gallic master of suspense Henri-Georges Clouzot (*Wages of Fear, Diabolique*). *“As atmospheric as they come!” NEW YORK TIMES*

[\$4 Student, \$5 General]

Friday & Saturday, February 13 & 14 – 7pm

Borders (Frontières) *Milwaukee Premiere

(Mostéfa Djadjam, France, 105 min., French w/Eng., St., 35mm, 2002)

Director Mostéfa Djadjam will be in attendance!

Six men and a woman set out on the hazardous journey from Senegal to Morocco in a bid to slip clandestinely into Europe. All are lured by the promise of a better life, but each has particular reasons for risking life and limb. As they get closer to Tangiers, the last stop before they reach Spain, their group solidarity starts to fall apart. Making his directorial debut, Djadjam, presents a restrained, compassionate account of what’s at stake for illegal immigrants in their harrowing crossing over a new frontier.

[\$4 Student, \$5 General]

Saturday, February 14 – 9pm & Sunday, February 15 – 7pm

Inch’Allah Dimanche *Milwaukee Premiere

(Yamina Benguigui, France/Algeria, 97 min., French w/Eng. St., 35mm, 2001)

Acclaimed documentarian’s first feature: a poignant, often humorous portrait of an Arab woman’s initiation into French provincial life in the mid-1970’s. Zouina (Fejria Deliba in a richly emotional performance) is a woman who is torn from her home in Algeria. With her three children and her abrupt mother-in-law, she rejoins her husband in a foreign and unaccommodating land. Through steady social reinforcements, her own feisty character and sheer desperation she finds the strength to confront her husband and an entire patriarchal tradition.

[Free Admission]

Friday – Sunday, February 20 - 22

Community Media Project

A weekend of films highlighting African cinema, for more information regarding titles and time please call 229-2931.

[Free Admission]

Do not miss the Union Theatre's additional French film programming during the week of February 24 - 29

Tuesday & Wednesday, February 24 & 25 – 7pm

In two parts, shown at 7pm each night

La Commune Paris 1871

(Peter Watkins, France, 345 minutes, French w/Eng. St., Beta SP B&W, 2000)

Watkin's epic *La Commune* restages the voices of the revolutionary government established by the people of France during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). Working with more than 200 non-professional actors, Watkins recreates the "broadcasts" of two anachronistically available and politically opposed media outlets -- Commune TV and the ousted regime's "official" National TV Versailles -- to craft an immersive and remarkably detailed depiction of the euphoria and struggles of historical radicalism while offering a critique of contemporary media practices.

[Free Admission]

Thursday, February 26 – 7pm

Chronicle of a Summer (Chronique d'un été)

(Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin, French, 85 min., French w/Eng. St., Beta SP B&W, 1961)

Heralding a new kind of documentary through the pioneering use of a direct, "live" aesthetic, Rouch and Morin's landmark film ushered in the term "cinéma vérité," becoming one of the first to embark on an ethnographic portrait of its own – specifically French – society. In an effort to film "true life" but also reveal the innermost truth of peoples' lives *Chronicle of a Summer* delves deeper and deeper into the lives of its subjects, getting its various characters to talk about their experiences and ambitions, prompted by a single, simple question: "Are you happy?" *"What this film engages is humanity itself."* Roland Barthes

[Free Admission]

Friday - Sunday, February 27 - 29 – 7pm & 9pm

A Woman is a Woman (Une femme est une femme)

(Jean-Luc Godard, France/Italy, 84 min., French w/Eng. St., 35mm, 1961)

"I want to be in a musical with Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly . . . choreography by Bob Fauce (sic)!" declares Anna Karina, and she almost gets her wish in this first color, Scope and mostly studio-shot film by then-husband Jean-Luc Godard, the second of their 7½ collaborations. A simple story – Karina's Angela, an afternoon stripper in the sleazy Zodiac Club, yearns for motherhood "just because," but live-in boyfriend Jean-Claude Brialy "isn't ready yet," though hanger-on Jean-Paul Belmondo is more than happy to help out. (FILM FORUM) "Jean-Luc Godard's idea of a musical is, of course, the idea of a musical...It's the grande folie of Godard's early career." J. Hoberman, *VILLAGE VOICE*

[\$4 Student, \$5 General]