

LIMELIGHT

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The art world's Alternative Establishment was present in force last weekend at the Second Super 8 Film Festival. Jo Dekmine, Thierry Zeno, Roger Domani and Henri Xhonneux were among the vast crowds (including film people from Britain and France) who packed the Auditorium 44 from Friday afternoon until the early hours of Monday morning when the Festival came to a stormy halt. Over a hundred films had been shown and, as an added bonus, there had been accusations, resignations, a striptease on stage, threats of police repression and charges of a «Leftist plot». Main trouble was over two films (by Roland Lethem and Eric Pauwels) withdrawn by the Festival organisers in case they ran into trouble with Belgium's obscenity laws. The «auto censorship» produced a furore of protest. In the end the public saw the films anyway: the projectionist was «kidnapped» and forced to screen them. The striptease was by Henri Van Eepeol, a young film-maker who dropped his trousers and gave the public a brief glimpse of his backside for expressing a low opinion of his film. The films themselves were a mixed bag: many of the novice cineasts seemed to be imitating Pasolini, Fellini or Russell, which isn't what Super 8 is all about. The best, prize-winning films were the least pretentious, such as the enchanting *Charlotte et Juliette*, about a small girl and her dog, by 14-year-old Bruno Cavenaille; *CTR*, by Roland Deraedt, on the rehabilitation of road accident victims; the very funny *Fume, C'est du Belge*, by Marc Henri Wajnberg and Eric Angelini, and *Franco la Muerte*, by Georges Lebouc, on Fascist Spain. Overall winner, with three prizes, was *Il y a un flic au fond de chacun de nous*, on police brutality, by Hermann Bertiau, an Insas film student, and Michel François, the young star of Marion Handwerker's *La Cage aux Ours*. The Prix de la Presse went to Jules Brunin's *J'Accuse*, an indictment of Belgian children's homes.

Patrice Chereau, one of France's best stage directors, was in Brussels this week to talk about the play he's producing for Europalia: the French



The Duchess of Malfi

version of Edward Bond's *Lear* (from October 2 to 5 at the Théâtre National). Chereau, 31, is one of the three directors of France's TNP (Théâtre National Populaire) with Roger Planchon and Robert Gilbert. After an early start in Paris he made a name staging opera and plays in Italy, then joined Planchon's Théâtre du Villeurbanne before being elected to the TNP three years ago. He's made a film, *La Chair de l'Orchidée*, with Charlotte Rampling, from a novel by James Hadley Chase, and he's to direct Wagner's Ring cycle at Bayreuth next year, which Boulez will conduct. He loves the Bond play, which, he says, is loosely based on Shakespeare, and in which Swiss actor François Simon (son of the late Michel Simon and well known to followers of the Swiss cinema) is «prodigious». *Lear* won rave reviews from the critics when it opened in Paris in April.

Monte Cristo, the new Michel Legrand operetta, will be given a gala performance as part of Europalia, at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, on Saturday, September 27. Le tout Bruxelles will see a slightly different version from the one that opened last week: composer Legrand and director Jean-Claude Auvray decided to add a couple of songs, remove four footmen and generally improve the production. They will not, alas, be shortening it:

Monte Cristo lasts a good three hours and there's an awful lot of talk, unfortunate since the book (by Jean Cosmos) is the weakest part. It's remorselessly faithful to the Dumas novel, thickly plotted, with endless knots to unravel. Anyone expecting the originality of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* or *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, for which Legrand wrote the music, will be disappointed: *Monte Cristo* is very traditional, more like *Fledermaus* than *Hair*. Still, it has its appeal: the music's charming, particularly the haunting opening song *L'Eau Grise*; the sets and costumes are pretty, the visual effects often stunning, and the mise-en-scène imaginative. It's a pity that Soula Markisi, who sings Mercedes, has such a tiny voice that she has to depend totally on a microphone, and even veteran comedian-singer Philippe Clay, in the name part, is occasionally drowned by the orchestra. But mainly the all-French cast acquit themselves honourably, particularly youthful newcomer Gilles Buhlmann as Dantes, who sings well and looks good. The TRM orchestra, under Armand Migiani, is splendid. Despite its longeurs, *Monte Cristo* was warmly received by last week's *avant première* audience.

The Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS), at the Rue de Laeken has a far-reaching and broadminded policy when it comes to selecting its programme. Molière's *Don Juan* opens the bill on September 27; it runs through most of October, but will take a one-day break when the Glasgow Citizens Theatre presents, on September 30, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Shakespeare's immediate junior Webster based his play on a true event that occurred in Italy — the clandestine marriage of a widowed duchess to a servant, the shame she brings on her family, and her ultimate murder by her brothers. Everyone else ends up being killed, too, in a final blood bath that quenches the thirst of death-minded Jacobians. The production is saturated with horrific details — weird music, muffled cries and shouting, skeletons dressed in courtly garments, and a predominantly black and gold decor — that emphasise the macabre theme of death and decay.