

LE VENT DU WYOMING

Le vent du Wyoming

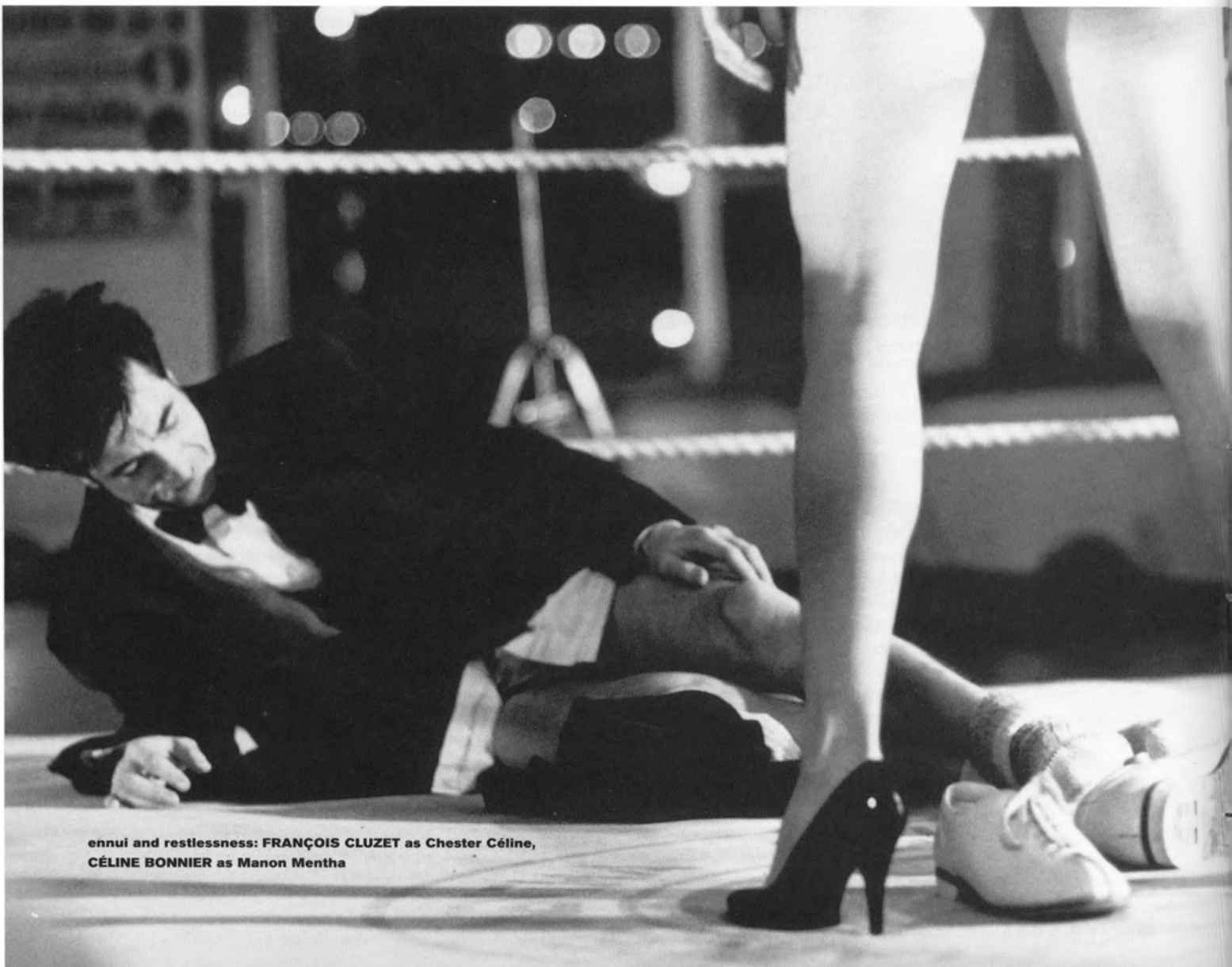
directed and written by **ANDRÉ FORCIER**
produced by **NARDO CASTILLO** and
CLAUDE LÉGER

with **FRANÇOIS CLUZET, SARAH-JEANNE SALVY, FRANCE CASTEL, MICHEL COTÉ, MARC MESSIER**

production company **LES PRODUCTIONS EGM LTÉE/TRANSFILM INC./EIFFEL PRODUCTIONS S.A.**

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André Forcier's seventh feature, *Le vent du Wyoming*, appears at a moment when the writer-director is being canonized in some quarters as the greatest living Québécois filmmaker while others speculate that he has lost his grip. Like Forcier's 1990 hit-in-Quebec,



ennui and restlessness: **FRANÇOIS CLUZET** as Chester Céline,
CÉLINE BONNIER as Manon Mentha

WYOMING: VALENTINE'S DAY; WALSLEY MUSIC; WASAGA

Une histoire inventée, *Wyoming* is a melancholic ensemble comedy placing an unorthodox mother-daughter relationship at the heart of a tarnished universe where love is both the answer and a curse.

Originally called *Ababouinée* (an archaic French word meaning a sailboat abandoned by the wind), *Wyoming's* storyline zeroes in on teen-age Léa (Sarah-Jeanne Salvy), a cigarette smuggler who's just been dumped by her prizefighter boyfriend Réo (Martin Randez). We find out why in a slapstick scene depicting the narcissistic jock getting a fervent blowjob from the new woman in his life – Léa's fifty-year-old mother, Lizette (France Castel). Lizette is tight with her daughter, but she adheres to her own jaded, world-weary motto: "There's nothing to understand. Do your best and fuck the rest."

Stricken by grief and self-destructive urges, Léa decides to pursue the object of her sister Manon's (Céline Bonnier) erotomania – Chester Céline (François Cluzet), a French novelist who lives in Wyoming, out of his element in Forcier's typically raunchy Montreal. Meanwhile, Léa's father Marcel (the most unmoored of the characters) sinks into desperate longing for his unfaithful wife, Lizette. Inevitably, everyone couples with at least one of the others as they all orbit around Marcel's boxing gym and a tacky nightclub presided over by a hypnotist called The Great Albert (Marc Messier). Does Albert get in on the action? You bet.

While giving off a whiff of his characteristic *vin triste*, Forcier's new movie exhibits his trademark

incongruities, nutty details, and moments of oddball lyricism. In an early scene, two couples, one of them male, waltz through Marcel's darkened gym as a soulful Edith Piaf imitator (Léo Munger) cranks out a melody on his/her street organ. *Wyoming's* centerpiece sequence involves Manon's rape of the writer in daddy's boxing ring. Naked, except for spike heels, she fucks the befuddled novelist to the canvas, discov-

B Y M A U R I E A L I O F

ers her desire is unreciprocal, and throws his pants out the window.

Throughout *Le vent du Wyoming*, the picture's lurching, off-beat rhythms accentuate the characters' ennui and restlessness. Its elliptical fades to red punctuate Forcier's nonchalant crisscrossing between reality and fantasy, literal and metaphorical. Léa gets into her jalopy and peels away from Chester. Cut. She's back on the street rolling a bowling ball at him.

The title's figurative *Le vent du Wyoming* propels the desire for love. Without love, Forcier is saying, you're lost. But he's also saying you should expect love to knock you on your ass, break your jaw, and smash your head against the ropes. Pain and joy are easily confused, and the whole time, the abyss waits. The film signifies death's inevitability with scenes of army veterans meaninglessly digging trenches under the auspices of a priest called Père Lachaise (get it?).

The writer-director has carefully plotted out a network of ideas for his movie, but as *Wyoming* develops, the feelings the picture generates are only intermittent. For one thing, too many elements with potential get locked into the same groove. The signs and symbols don't fill out into the substance of what they're about. The proscenium is here, but it

doesn't expand with human drama.

Sarah-Jeanne Salvy's wistfully sexual Léa gives the movie heart as do Castel's Lizette and Munger's ghostly Edith Piaf. But overall, the characters, especially the men, come off as too arch, too locked into cool poses, too much like the flat inhabitants of a pop-up book. That François Cluzet, with his cowlick and raincoat, suggests Tintin wouldn't be a problem in another movie; however, his

novelist, who is supposed to be a catalyzing force arousing emotional and sexual hunger, is a poorly focussed, unrealized character, more like a breeze from Nowhere than a wind from Wyoming.

A self-conscious movie maker, Forcier attempts a tricky balance between campy hyperbole and an evocation of bawdy, down-to-earth emotion. In this film, which cutely places department store mannequins among the extras in a hypnotist's audience, Forcier leans too heavily on the camp – not to mention excessively obvious symbolic conceits like the "boxing ring of love." Forcier has said he works like a collagist, but *Le vent du Wyoming* is more like patchwork of sketches, some working better than others. There are holes in the characters, in the repetitive storyline, and in the film's technique. There's something depressingly vacant about the picture's *mise en scène*, particularly Georges Dufaux's uninspired lighting, which is matched by a strangely lifeless soundtrack. In public places voices sound hollow, as if the characters are in a telephone booth. If the numbness is intentional on Forcier's part, it backfires. In a movie billed as a "crazy film about crazy love," you keep asking yourself, "Where's the passion, the tangible, blood-curdling emotion" ●