

MILESTONE FILM
Presents

By the Famous Imaginary Director
Yevgeny Antinov's

*The Man
Without
a World*

A Film By Eleanor Antin

A Milestone Film Release
PO Box 128 • 38 George Street • Harrington Park, New Jersey 07640
Phone: (201) 767-3117 • Fax: (201) 767-3035 • Email: milefilms@aol.com • www.milestonefilms.com

CREDITS

THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD

USA. 1991. B&W. 98 Minutes.

Written, produced and directed by.....Eleanor Antin
Associate Producer.....Lynn Burnstan
Director of Photography.....Rich Wargo
Editor.....Lynn Burnstan
Music.....Charlie Morrow & Lee Erwin
Theater Organ.....Lee Erwin
Associate Directors.....Marcia Goodman & David Antin
Production Manager.....Pam Whidden
Set Design.....Roger Sherman
Art Director.....Sabato Fiorello
Costume Design.....Judy Ryerson
Hair & Makeup Design.....Laura Andrews
Camera Assistant.....Erik von Neumann
Additional Photography.....Erik von Neumann & Peter Kreklow
Backdrop Design.....Janice Tellier
Scenic Artists.....Janice Tellier & Rich Larson
Choreography.....Melissa Cottle
Zevi's Poems.....David Antin

Special Thanks to
Sherman George, Jim Smith,
Jerome RoThenberg, Susan Slyomovics,
Harris Lenowitz, David Antin,
Jean Pierre Gorin, Steve Fagin, Ron Robboy,
The National Center for Jewish Film,
The Film Department of the Museum of Modern Art,
The University of California at San Diego Judaic Studies Program,
and The University of California at San Diego Academic Senate.

CAST

Zevi.....Pier Marton
Rukheleh.....Christine Berry
Sooreleh.....Anna Henriques

THE PLAYERS:

The Ballerina.....Eleanor Antin
The Strong Man.....Nicolai Lennox
The Gypsy.....Sabato Fiorello
The Magician.....James Scott Kerwin

THE INTELLECTUALS:

The Zionist.....George Leonard

The Socialist.....Don Sommese
 The Cynic.....Bennett Berger
 The Bomber.....Ellen Zweig
 The Sexy Anarchist.....Lisa Welti

THE FAMILY

Rukheleh's moTher.....Marcia Goodman
 Rukheleh's faTher.....Sargun A. Tont
 Zevi's moTher.....Luba Talpalatsky

The Constable.....Grant Taylor
 The Butcher.....John Borba
 Angel of Death.....Berne Smith
 Reb Eliezar, The Cabalist.....Newton Harrison
 The Dancing Rabbi.....Jerome RoThenberg
 The Shoe Peddlar, Shamus.....Harris Lenowitz
 Moishe.....Jim Rix McGilvery
 Gravedigger.....Don Sommese
 Rapists.....Greg Durbin, Mike Weix & Ben Anderson
 Jewish Baker.....Aaron Cicourel
 Polish Baker.....Alan Asa-Dorian
 Mikvah Attendant.....Pam Whidden
 Mikva Dancers.....Baba Hillman & Emily Evans-Gillis
 Kissing Girls.....Wendy Arons & Michelle Rabkin
 Dybbuk.....Jack Greenstein
 and
 Bertha the Chicken
 Clementine the Goat
 Delight the Horse
 Dixie the Pig

© 1991 Eleanor Antin

“I make seemingly old films in order to enter the lost world of the past from the inside, not to stand outside of it and see it as history. The technology of a film determines a large part of what the audience sees. A Hollywood costume drama holds the subject of the film at the conventional distance of representation. I want my audience to experience this world as if from inside — but at the same time — with a sense of the distance they have travelled to get there.” — Eleanor Antin

ELEANOR ANTIN (writer/director/producer/Gypsy ballerina). In her book *Beyond Modernism* Kim Levin writes: “Impersonating the past, Antin personalizes the issues and dilemmas of the present. Her work is, probably more than we yet realize, a portrait of our time.” An artist/filmmaker working for many years in installation, performance and video, Eleanor Antin has built an impressive international reputation based in part on her historical impersonations. Her portrayals have included Eleanor Nightingale (a Crimean War nurse), the Black King (the leader of a Ship of Fools in a medieval passion play), Eleanora Antinova (a black ballerina of the Diaghilev’s Ballet Russe who hopes one day to dance in the classical “white” ballets), and now Yevgeny Antinov (the 1920s Soviet film director now exiled for the pro-Trotsky elements in his

film *THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN*). The famous and imaginary Yevgeny Antinov is currently working on raising funds and writing the screenplay for a gangster film based on the classic Yiddish play, Sholem Asch's "Mottka, The Thief." In a recent interview, Yevgeny promises he will use all the latest technology including sound. Eleanor Antin will once again assist him in his latest work of art. Eleanor Antin is also working on another film, scripted by the real Kathy Acker.

Antin's artworks have been featured in one-woman exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art and the Wadsworth Athenaeum. Antin has also had major installations at the Hirshhorn Museum and the Philadelphia Fine Arts Museum, among others. As a performance artist, Antin appeared at the Venice Biennale and has performed around the world. Several of Antin's groundbreaking mixed media works including "100 Boots," "Carving; A Traditional Sculpture," "Angel of Mercy," "Recollections of My Life with Diaghilev," "The King of Solana Beach," and "Adventures of a Nurse," are considered classics of contemporary feminist, post-modern art. As an artist she is represented by the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. Antin has published two books: *Being Antinova* (Astro Artz Press, 1983) and *The Eleanora Antinov Plays* (Sun and Moon Press, 1992). She has written, directed and produced five films: *THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN* (1989), *FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MODERN ART* (1987), *LOVES OF A BALLERINA* (1986) and *IT AIN'T THE BALLET RUSSE* (1986). *THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD* is Antin's first feature film.

LYNN BURNSTAN (associate producer/editor). Possessed of considerable editing, production and postproduction skills and talents, Lynn Burnstan has worked with Antin on all of her films. She has also worked on award-winning films and videos by such adventurous artists as Jean-Pierre Gorin, Stanton Kaye, Sherry Milner and Tom Palazzolo. Burnstan also produced the first ecological surf film, *LIQUID THUNDER*.

RICHARD WARGO (director of photography). In addition to working for such network news programs as *48 HOURS* and *FRONTLINE*, Richard Wargo has over ten years experience as a cinematographer and director of photography for many independent and mainstream documentary producers. He photographed all of Antin's films and has also worked for filmmakers such as Greg Durbin, Steve Fagin, and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Wargo directed the thinking person's surf movie, *LIQUID THUNDER*.

LEE ERWIN (music composer/theater organist). Lee Erwin is the dean of American cinema theater organists. He has composed scores for over one hundred silent films including the recent re-issues of the Buster Keaton classics. Erwin was the long-time staff composer for the Arthur Godfrey Show and worked on many other radio programs.

CHARLES MORROW (music composer/music executive producer). Charlie Morrow is an internationally recognized composer and sound designer for both art and commercial films, television, radio and public events.

SABATO FIORELLO (art director/Gypsy fortune teller) A dialogue editor at Universal Studios for over 18 years, Sabato Fiorello now works as a freelance floral designer for Michael's restaurant in Santa Monica and for private parties. He is a performance/correspondence artist who has appeared in three Antin films.

MARCIA GOODMAN (assistant director/Rukheleh's mother) A New York-based actor and director, Marcia Goodman has directed workshop productions of new short plays at Playwright's Horizons and at Ensemble Studio Theater. As a performer, she has appeared in numerous off-Broadway productions, directed by Estelle Parsons among others, and has also appeared in television soap operas.

DAVID ANTIN (assistant director/Zevi's poems) An internationally recognized poet and performance artist, David Antin's most recent books of poetry include *Talking at the Boundaries* (New Directions), *Tuning* (New Directions) and *Selected Poems, 1963-73* (Sun and Moon Press).

CHRISTINE BERRY (Rukheleh). Christine Berry is living in Los Angeles and is a member of Rachel Rosenthal's new performance group. Her stage work includes Strindberg's "Ghost Sonata," directed by Anne Bogart. Berry has also appeared in several films, including Antin's *THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN*.

ANNA HENRIQUES (Sorreleh). A video and performance artist, Anna Henriques is currently living and working in Jamaica.

PIER MARTON (Zevi) A video artist who frequently deals in Jewish themes, Pier Marton has exhibited in major museums and festivals around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Berlin Film Festival, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and the Japan Video/Television Festival in Tokyo.

GEORGE LEONARD (Yisroel). George Leonard is a novelist best known for *The Ice Cathedral* and *Beyond Control*. He also conceived and choreographed the popular rock-and-roll group Sha Na Na and appeared in the film *WOODSTOCK*. Leonard wrote and directed the silent film feature, *THE EVIL WEEK* in 1972.

DON SOMMESE (Gedaliah). Don Sommesse has appeared in numerous films including *GRAY LADY DOWN* (Universal) and *STRAIGHT TIME* (Warner Brothers). He has performed on television and in workshop theaters in Hollywood.

BACKGROUND

In 1989, Eleanor Antin directed the short film, *THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN*. After the film became a success around the museum and semi-theatrical film circuits (especially when she appeared as the aged ballerina Eleanora Antinova, talking about her life and the making of the film) Antin decided that she wanted to continue to investigate her newest persona, film director Yevgeny Antinov, but on a much more in-depth scale. At the same time, her mother, formerly a Yiddish actress on the Polish stage, had developed Alzheimer's disease. A "red-diaper baby," Antin had never (and still today *has* never) even been inside a synagogue. But with a loss of her mother's memory, Antin worked to gain her own understanding of her Jewish heritage — in order to remember for them both. Antin spent over a year reading books and memoirs of *shtetl* life and watching countless Yiddish movies at the National Center for Jewish Film and the Museum of Modern Art. In the process, she began to remember stories of her mother's childhood in Poland. What slowly evolved was a detailed script set in the early part of the 20th century when Jewish life and culture thrived in Eastern Europe. Using films, photographs and memoirs of the time, Antin created as authentic a look and scenario as possible. In the tradition of Russian cinema pioneers like Sergei Eisenstein and Alexander Dovzhenko, she chose to cast her film with both actors and

nonprofessionals. A *billet-doux* to her mother and her own rediscovered Judaism, Eleanor Antin's THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD was completed in late 1991. It has since shown at the Berlin Film Festival, the USA Film Festival in Dallas and the Jewish Film Festivals of San Francisco, Boston, Palm Beach and London.

SYNOPSIS

"This story could have been told of any shtetl in Eastern Europe but it happened here, in Poland. In all the world Poland may be the country most beloved of the Angel of Death."
— Yevgeny Antinov, 1928

THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD is credited to the legendary (and imaginary) 1920s Soviet director, Yevgeny Antinov. But the film is anything but old. In fact, Antinov himself is the creation of contemporary filmmaker Eleanor Antin. A world-renowned artist, author and performer, Antin has exhibited her work at major museums around the world. In her art, Antin explores history through the eyes of various imaginary personas, including Eleanor Nightingale (a nurse in the Crimean War) and Eleanora Antinova (the famous black dancer in Diaghilev's Ballet Russe). THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD, is also Antin's "love letter" to her mother, a former actress in the Yiddish theater, who is now suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD is a dark, comic melodrama set in a typical village (*shtetl*) in Poland. The Jews' struggle against poverty and racial hatred is complicated by their own division into hostile political factions of the religious orthodoxy, assimilationists, socialists, Zionists, anarchists and survivors. While the Jews of the *shtetl* pursue their loves, politics, religion, business and dreams for the future, the Angel of Death is ever near...

The story centers on the romance of Zevi, a Bohemian Yiddish poet, and Rukheleh, the nice Jewish daughter of a local merchant. Rukheleh longs to marry Zevi, but her parents plan a match with the butcher. Zevi's sister, Sooreleh, has been half-mad and mute since the day she was raped by Polish soldiers. Their mother Sarah, lies ill at home.

Zevi and Rukheleh's relationship is threatened by the arrival of a Gypsy acting troupe. Zevi is seduced by the sultry Gypsy dancer, and settles into a life of decadence. He drinks nightly with socialists, Zionists and anarchists at Moishe's cafe, where the town's intellectuals meet "to solve the world's problems."

When the Angel of Death comes for Sarah, Zevi's grief and guilt lead him briefly back to Rukheleh. But after one night of passion, Zevi returns to the charms of his Gypsy ballerina. Later, Rukheleh learns she is pregnant. Her parents arrange for a marriage with the butcher, who is too much in love to notice her condition.

Rukheleh runs to confide in Sooreleh, but the mad girl is kidnapped by religious "fanatics" who take her to the synagogue. There, Rabbi Eliezar, the great Cabbalist, tries to exorcise the *dybbuk* within the girl. After a harrowing ritual, the spirit agrees to leave her body. Instead of leaving through her fingernail, the *dybbuk* escapes through Sooreleh's throat, suffocating her. A window breaks in the temple as her wretched soul escapes.

After Sooreleh's funeral, Zevi discovers the truth about Rukheleh and woos her back. At the wedding, the drunken butcher crashes the celebration and in a jealous rage, attacks the guests with a knife, killing two. Zevi grabs the weapon and in the struggle, kills the butcher.

Zevi decides that he must run away and hide in Warsaw. Rukheleh wants to go with him but the Gypsy dancer tells her that the big city is no place for a young mother and child. The next day, Zevi leaves with the Gypsy caravan. The Angel of Death follows the little band as they head down the road...

*"On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland.
In 1941, the massive deportations of the Jews began.
By 1943, the shtetl world had disappeared."*

INTRODUCTION TO "THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD"

An Archives of Modern Art film classic

As the policy of Glasnost reveals to an astonished world the crumbling ruins of a once great and terrible empire, it has also brought to light a vast number of lost artists and art works from the moldy oblivion of state cellars and the dusty graves of Soviet libraries.

Among these recently discovered works is another film by Yevgeny Antinov, the controversial Soviet silent film director, whose recently discovered THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN, with its decadent sexuality, questionable politics and friendly reference to Trotsky, got him into trouble with Stalin, from whom he fled to Poland in 1927 one step ahead of the Cheka.

In Cracow, he seems to have fallen in with a couple of affluent American entrepreneurs who offered to back him in a film about shtetl life for the Jewish nostalgia market back home. To a pair of garment manufacturers looking for a quick killing in a new medium, a serious Russian film director like Antinov must have been a great catch, while for the down-at-the-heels exile, these rich Americans were a pot of gold, after two or three French and German producers disappeared like rainbows with the next day's sun.

For a secular urban Jew, doing a Yiddish shtetl film must have presented something of a problem. He seems to have tried to interest his friend, the Russian Jewish writer, Isaac Babel, in doing the screenplay, but Babel's notoriety in Jewish circles as the creator of Jewish gangsters, scared off the backers, who insisted upon a shtetl film "pure and simple."

Antinov ended up writing the scenario himself, but his insistence on political commentary in a work that was meant to appeal to a nostalgia market, got him into trouble once again. The disappointed backers agreed not to throw good money after bad and withdrew the film from circulation.

It seems never to have shown in the United States at all and was just about forgotten. The last known print, belonged to a Warsaw collector disappeared into the Holocaust with its owner, until years later at the end of the Cold War, a vintage print showed up in an obscure Odessa archive for which it was liberated by Glasnost.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELEANOR ANTIN

Why did you do a silent film?

I love silent film. I believe — though there are certainly many great talking films — that visually they were often more poetic and interesting than the talkies. There they were at the height of their inventiveness, the possibilities were dazzling, and bang! along came sound. And disaster struck immediately, as the Russian modernists knew it would. They synched up the sound, the cameras stopped swirling, everybody sat down and we got talking heads. And they're still talking, you can't stop them. They're more sophisticated now, of course, but when it comes down to it, what you still get is talking heads most the time. And maybe people are beginning to get tired of it. Look at MTV. No talk, just sound and image. Maybe that's why people can look at silent pictures again.

Also, my work with personas led me to the silents. I wanted to film Eleanora Antinova, my invented black ballerina of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. Since she danced in the early part of the century, the films would have been old, poor quality, black and white. So I made archival films of her dances, then of her little burlesque films — artists have to make a living — and I was hooked on filmmaking, silent filmmaking. Then to get her into more serious films of her period, early modernist Russian films, I invented Yevgeny Antinov, the Soviet silent film director, who it turns out now was Jewish and made Yiddish films as well. I hope to make his complete *oeuvre*. To go through the history of early film by re-inventing it in the light of the present. This wasn't merely an exercise in *chutzpah*. I wanted to enter that lost world of the past from the inside, not to stand outside of it to see it as history. The technology of a film determines a large part of what it is you actually see. A Hollywood costume drama holds the subject of the film at the conventional distance of representation. I wanted to experience this world, not represent it and to make it possible for an audience to experience it as if from within, but obviously feeling itself somewhat displaced from its comfortable modern position. My intention was to try to throw light on both worlds. When the Socialist in *THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD* dies and the Zionist cries out "Don't leave me, Gedaliah, the world is empty without you," I feel like crying myself. We're standing here in 1992 as the Communist dream gives up the ghost. But in the early 20th century, nobody knew how the revolution would betray them. Communism was still a noble dream and hadn't turned into a nightmare yet.

Let's get back to the technology. In this way, if you were to explore the Middle Ages would you do an illuminated manuscript?

No, but in 1983 I did a medieval morality play. It was called "El Desdichado." My King persona, a kind of Don Quixote, wandered with his talking horse, his Sancho Panza, through a plague-stricken landscape of death and dying, something like 14th-century England, and by extension, our own plague-stricken time. And yes, I had a cardboard mountain in the installation because mountain tops were where religious experiences occurred, and I led the old, the crippled, the wounded, the sick, the dying, the poor to the White City, which turns out to be the city of death and destruction. I played all the roles as I used to do in those days. Remember, this wasn't a film. Who ever heard of a 14th-century film? It was a live performance in a cardboard stage set with a hanging tree and seven cardboard hanged men swinging from the branches. And I considered who they were and how they got there and I mourned for them while my talking horse, less liberal and unforgiving, took the side of the poor orphans and other unfortunates who had been victimized by these criminals. Of course, only if the prosecution was correct. The problem of the whole piece was how to read the evidence.

So who were these personas?

The King was my male self, my political self; a king without a kingdom because he has no power. None of us has any power. So he's always looking for his lost kingdom. You can't be a king without a kingdom even if it's just a memory of one. My female self was the Ballerina, the artist, always fighting a lost battle to make an interesting art and stay alive inside of a degenerate traditional art form — ballet — my metaphor for the condition of the art world. And when I saw I needed a more colloquial self the Nurse appeared, fantasizing and daydreaming endless romantic soap operas, the little heroine of a succession of imperfect love affairs, comically representing the unequal power relations in the affairs of men and women. Antinova eventually became that impossible figure, a black ballerina who danced with Diaghilev's Ballet Russe, wanting to do the classical "white" ballets but being relegated to the darker roles of Pocahontas and Pharaoh's daughter who finds the baby Moses in the rushes. Again none of these selves lived in film, though they lived in video, live performance, photography, narrative texts, drawings, installations...

And Yevgeny Antinov? Where does he fit in?

Well, I began making films, the little tacky dance films in one of my plays "Help, I'm in Seattle." Then I did a large filmic installation, "Loves of a Ballerina" for my gallery, Ronald Feldman, in New York. The exhibition consisted of three constructions, an abandoned 1930s movie palace with three films shown continuously on a loop; an abandoned Pullman car with films back projected in *trompe l'oeil* fashion onto the windows, two synchronized film loops depicting two related romances going on simultaneously in separate compartments on opposite sides of the train; and a backstage dressing table with the ballerina's ghostly face back projected on the mirror seemingly either regarding her own image or looking out into the world.

I invented Antinov, the Soviet silent film director, when I began to make bigger and bigger films that moved out from an art world ambiance into a more traditional theatrical audience viewing situation. When you have a real film, you need a real director.

Why a male director?

THE LAST NIGHT OF RASPUTIN was often introduced by a performance. It's a 38-minute short theatrical film, introduced live by the now very old Eleanora Antinova who, like Lillian Gish say, tells about the making of the film when she was young and Yevgeny Antinov was her difficult lover. After her rap, the audience sees her young, starring in the film. It was a performance I always enjoyed doing — often touching in its way. I love old movie stars, and then, it paid for one third of the cost of THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD — live performance makes much more money than a film screening. So I wanted Antinov to provide a Russian modernist context for the making of RASPUTIN because I was making a film that was determinedly narrative but tentatively modernist in its period style. But I probably would have made him a man anyway, Most film directors have been men and I chose to confront this fact.

While making the film, did you make decisions based on the fact he was a male director?

I get a kick out of my double life. Antinov makes decisions men would make. I don't know if you know anything about *mikvahs*, the ceremonial baths. Well, the one thing a woman being cleansed in the *mikvah* can't have are knots anywhere in her hair. The attendant will even comb out her pubic hair or the hair under her arms in case there are some knots there. So braids would have been out of the question for a young woman being ceremoniously purified before her wedding. But Antinov was not about to have that beautiful young body hidden by a cascade of hair, so he braided

her hair and filled the screen with her naked back. Still, two can play this game, and in the fantasy scene I knew I was going to show the hero's ass as well. And to return to the *mikvah* scene — that pretty woman's community — Antinov would never have shown that. But as a woman, I know that in a patriarchal community, when the men are away, the women will play. Would Antinov have made that sweet little lesbian romance — or responded with the basically good nature, if disruptive attitude of the mothers? No way. So we live with each other, Antinov and I, and in the fluid medium of film nobody knows we quarreled.

Well, it gives you a real double vision...
One of the perks.

In the opening, is the Angel of Death creating the world?

It's a derivative of a fairy tale type artifice often used in the Yiddish theater, and in films too, like *THE DYBBUK*. A framing device signaling the curtain's going up. The story is about to begin. Usually it's the appearance of the prophet Elijah. But I have no interest in religion, so I'm not interested in prophets. I remembered David, my husband, telling me about the death of his grandmother. How she kept protesting against some invisible person who seemed to be crowding her in her bed. David liked to imagine him as one of those religious guys who used to come around with a tin can collecting money for Israel. Film images are different from verbal ones. I made the guy in the bed the Angel of Death, a neat, trim little Hasid, a sort of accountant, a little bureaucrat with a nasty streak and a bum leg. He takes the dying mother by force. Death as a kind of rape.

You shot the film in California?

But we still had to turn southern California into Poland. Southern California light doesn't look like Polish light. Look at a map. Poland is up north. It's on a line with Nova Scotia. San Diego is on a line with Morocco. We constructed a kind of ceiling over the street, made out of some kind of sheer linen. My people were sewing it for a week. It took a fair sized crew to get it up. But it worked. It filtered the California sun and we got this pearly light, diffuse and bleak. All the other scenes though, including the graveyard scene were done in the two video studios on campus.

The men marching to the "Internationale" on the country road...was that shot in San Diego?

That was shot where I live (outside of San Diego), in the country. When they're fighting, they're actually coming up my driveway.

Let's talk about the cast and start with Rukheleh.

That's Christine Berry. She's a young actress, a recent graduate. She's actually Polish, not Jewish. And Sooreleh, the unfortunate mad sister, is Anna Henriques. She's a young performance and video artist, a Jamaican Jew with a black grandfather. Pier Marton, a well-known video artist often working with Jewish themes, plays Zevi. The supporting roles too are superb. Grant Holcomb is the Polish policeman; George Leonard, the Zionist; Marcia Goodman, the perennial Jewish mother, who was also an assistant director; Sabato Fiorello, my art director also played the Gypsy fortuneteller in drag; I could go on and on. As for the magician, I discovered him in a video store in a La Jolla shopping center. He was the clerk there. I kept looking at him and thought to myself...someday...I loved his face.

Dixie, the pig, she was great. This was a 650-pound show pig and a pet. She wins prizes. We built a pen for her, watered it down for mud — all for her eight-second cameo role!

Now, the weight lifter...

Nicolai, my chiropractor. Isn't he beautiful? He could have lifted real weights but I preferred the bogus ones. Girls used to come on the set asking to see the gorgeous strong man they had heard about.

Now Zevi's mother is played by Luba Talpalatsky. She's a Russian émigré. She's fabulous! In her death bed scene, she was literally, in Russian, telling us these horrible Babi Yar-type stories that happened to her mother and father. And that's why she *really* looks so upset. She was telling us these terrible stories that she said she never told *anyone* before. But we couldn't understand them, because they were in Russian.

Your entrance is very dramatic.

My first femme fatale role. I loved playing it. I thought of myself as a Gypsy slut.

Are they Gypsies because they were part of the holocaust as well?

Because they were outsiders like the Jews. Because they were artists, con men, survivors, wanderers, exiles. Like Jews.

How did you prepare to make this film?

I looked at all the Yiddish films, both silents and talkies at the National Center for Jewish Film. Sharon Rivo and Miriam Krantz were wonderfully generous and shared everything with me — the Museum of Modern Art was also very helpful. And when I looked at the films, the Yiddish theater legacy and Yiddish literary culture that I had forgotten, all came back to me. I read endlessly, books on *shtetl* life, literary works, some of them quite wonderful. There were photographs, personal memoirs, Yisker books... But from the beginning I knew the film would live off its images. The narrative would come out of the images. I knew I wanted to do the Dance of Death, I saw one done rather badly, I must say, in one of the old films. I knew I had to have funerals, a wedding, a dying mother, a *dybbuk*, et cetera. And above all, I knew I had to have discourse. Café life and arguments about politics. That's one of the aspects of Jewish life Hollywood never includes. I don't believe in Jews who don't get passionate about politics. I don't believe they're real Jews. They must be passing. My mother would have called such Jews *prost*, low class. And I enjoyed the irony of making discourse the core of a silent film. It was tricky. Silent films commonly used the titles to propel the narrative, to clarify character, to enhance atmosphere and comedy but I also needed them to insist on argument. But it was always a discourse that emerged from the images themselves.

What were some of the films you saw that most influenced THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD?

I got little things from every film. A pillow in a corner of the screen could do it. A guy sitting on a barrel chewing a corn cob, I stole for the café scene. I gave it to the cynic. It had been in one of the films at MoMA. It was a film that was obviously shot in the *shtetl* and not on a set. I was stunned. This guy was sitting on a barrel eating corn on the cob. I always thought corn on the cob was American food. I didn't think Europe had it. They must have had it for pig food. So it was also a cheap food for poor people. And the guy was eating it raw. That was such a beautiful scene to me, it was so weird.

About Sooreleh's stuff, all her...

...paraphernalia, her pots and pans. I knew I had to have a mad girl. In one of the books I was reading the author said that in each town, there was a crazy person. And they had this mad woman

in this town, who's name I think *was* Sooreleh — that's where I got her name — who used to collect these pots and pans and would go around banging on them.

Could you talk about the look of the Jonah scene and it's theatricality?

That's Yiddish theater. It's a very funny argument they're having, that they'll always blame the Jews.

What about the image of the ballerina with the beard in Rukheleh's nightmare?

Obviously, the ballerina is the Gypsy that's stolen him away. You don't know she's done that then, but apparently Rukheleh and Zevi's love is over. It's a suggestion. And the beard is a symbol of power. Later on, the religious leaders who have the power have beards. And when Zevi has a false beard later on, he runs into the synagogue and they make fun of him and say how shameful he looks. And then he turns around and looks at the people with real beards and he's ashamed and pulls his off. And I *liked* the image of the bearded ballerina, a private nightmare...

In your film, almost every single plot complication in Yiddish cinema...

...is there. Even the exorcism. I didn't model mine after THE DYBBUK. It's a great film — but their exorcism is too timid. I patterned mine after a 17th-century exorcism in a Dutch synagogue. If you notice the scene starts with Rukheleh peeking into the synagogue through the window. My grandfather, Reb Shmoel Mekham, was a Hasidic wise man who, among other activities, used to exorcise *dybbuks*. When my mother was four years old, she peeked in on one through the window. She heard the *dybbuk* speak in a deep, man's voice through the possessed woman's mouth. I can still hear my mother imitate it. She'd been an actress on the Yiddish stage in Poland, she could recall the *dybbuk's* sound so fiercely I would wiggle in delicious fear. That's the one time in the film I wished I had sound. The man's voice coming out of the woman's body — how I wanted that voice. We had to settle for a Gothic script in the text whenever the *dybbuk* spoke. Anna contorted her face so well to suggest him, that I think nobody misses his actual voice.

Where was your mother born?

In a little town called Rush, near Bialystok. At times it was Poland, other times it was claimed by Germany, the next week it would be Russia, who knew? "The rivers ran with blood," she said.

Have you shown the film to your mother?

She has advanced Alzheimer's now and can't focus on anything. In a sense, this whole film was born in me when my mother's Alzheimer's started taking away her memory. I like to think that as she lost her memory, I found mine. I think of the film as a love letter to my mother.

I wanted to put her into the film. She would have looked wonderful, with her demented, childlike face, ravaged but still pretty, like a little bird. She hops around the nursing home in San Diego kissing everybody and calling the pleasant Filipino nurses *mamaleh*. "What does *mamaleh* mean?" they ask. "Little mother," I say and they look confused as she laughs, dancing down the sterile corridor singing "*mamaleh, mamaleh...*" I would kill for an image of that, sell my soul even, but I couldn't do it...

Milestone Film & Video

"Since its birth the Milestone Film & Video Co. has steadily become the industry's foremost boutique distributor of classic and art films — and probably the only distributor in America whose name is actually a guarantee of some quality."

— William Arnold, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

Milestone is a boutique distribution company with more than 13 years experience in art-house film distribution. The company has earned an unparalleled reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to Milestone's rediscovery, restoration and release of such important discoveries as Mikhail Kalatozov's award-winning *I am Cuba*, Jane Campion's *Two Friends*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, the company now occupies an honored position as one of the most influential independent distributors in the American film industry. In 1999, the *L.A. Weekly* chose Milestone as "Indie Distributor of the Year."

Amy Heller and Dennis Doros started Milestone in 1990 to bring out the best films of yesterday *and* today. The company has released such remarkable new films as Manoel de Oliveira's *I'm Going Home*, Bae Yong-kyun's *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?*, Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Maborosi*, and Takeshi Kitano's *Fireworks (Hana-Bi)*.

Milestone's re-releases have included restored versions of Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers*, F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *Grass and Chang*, Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Mystery of Picasso*, and Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (a Woody Allen presentation). Milestone is also working with the Mary Pickford Foundation on a long-term project to preserve, re-score and release the best films of the legendary silent screen star. In recent years, Milestone has re-released beautifully restored versions of Frank Hurley's *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition*, Kevin Brownlow's *It Happened Here and Winstanley*, Lotte Reiniger's animation masterpiece, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, Michael Powell's *The Edge of the World* (a Martin Scorsese presentation), Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Wide Blue Road* (a Jonathan Demme and Dustin Hoffman presentation), Conrad Rooks' *Siddhartha* and Rolando Klein's Mexican classic, *Chac*.

Since its beginning, Milestone has had a fruitful collaboration with some of the world's major archives including the British Film Institute, UCLA Film & Television Archive, George Eastman House, Museum of Modern Art, Library of Congress, Nederlands Filmmuseum and the Norsk Filmintitutt. In August 2000 the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York premiered Milestone's 10th Anniversary Retrospective. During the New York run and the nationwide tour that followed, all revenues from retrospective screenings were donated to four major archives in the United States and England to help restore films that might otherwise be lost.

In 2003–2004, Milestone will be releasing an important series of great silent films restored by the world's foremost film historians and preservationists, Photoplay Productions. These stunning versions, never before available in the United States, include the horror classic *The Phantom of the Opera*; André Antoine's early neorealist adaptation of Emile Zola's *La Terre*; and an astonishing historical epic of Polish independence by Raymond Bernard, *The Chess Player*. Video highlights for this year also include a special DVD series of incredible animation including *Cut-Up: The Films of Grant Munro*; *Norman McLaren: The Collector's Edition*; and *Winsor McCay: The Master Edition*.

In theaters, Milestone will be releasing Tareque Masud's remarkable *The Clay Bird* from Bangladesh and *The Big Animal*, directed by and starring Jerzy Stuhr, from a script by Krzysztof Kieslowski.

Milestone received a Special Archival Award in 1995 from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I am Cuba*. Eight of the company's films — Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Edward S. Curtis' *In the Land of the War Canoes*, Mary Pickford's *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Lon Chaney's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Clara Bow's *It*, Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur*, and Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison's *Grass* — are listed on the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

Cindi Rowell, director of acquisitions, has been with Milestone since 1999. In 2003 Nadja Tennstedt joined the company as director of international sales.

“Milestone Film & Video is an art-film distributor that has released some of the most distinguished new movies (along with seldom-seen vintage movie classics) of the past decade”

— Stephen Holden, *New York Times*