

A 'Love Film' Not to Miss

BY DONIA MILLS

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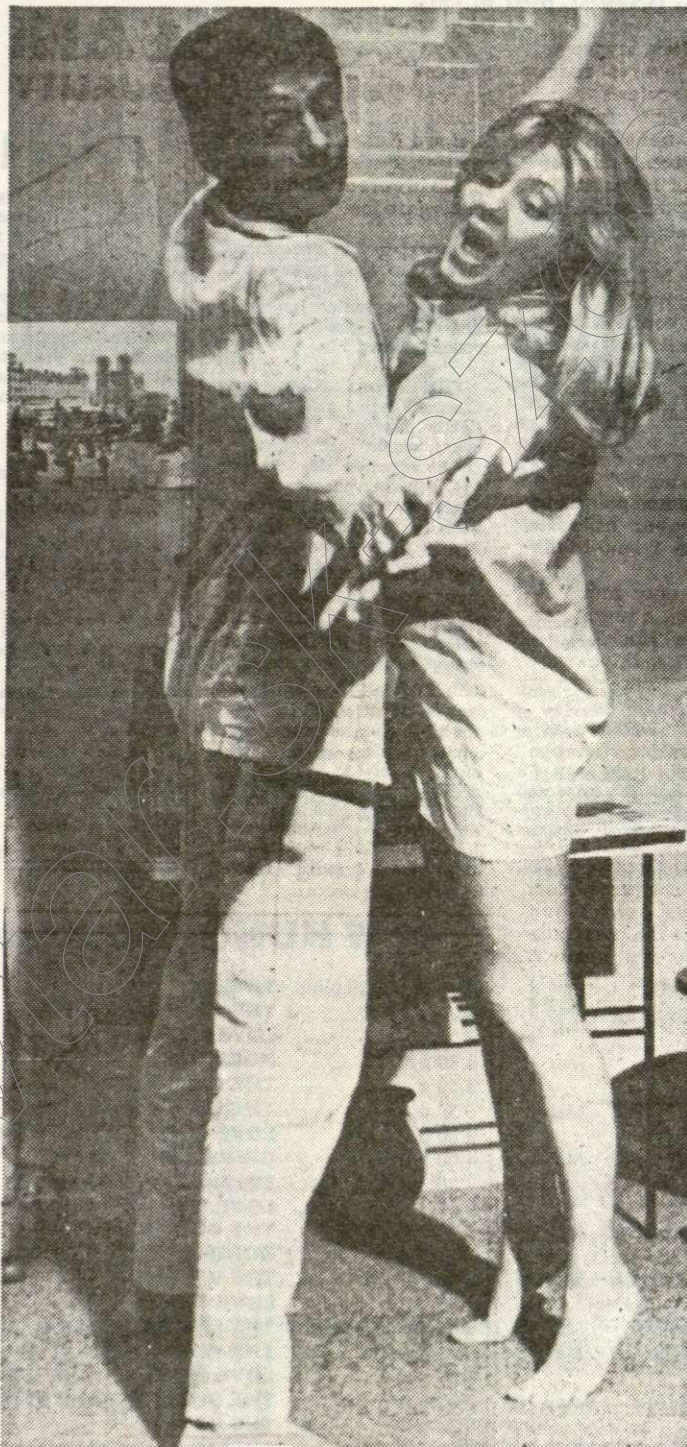
There are many attractive offerings in the American Film Institute's current "New Hungarian Cinema" series, but the one movie not to be missed is Istvan Szabo's "Love Film," which will be shown at 9 o'clock tonight and again on May 16.

On the surface, this is a bitter-sweet love story set against a background of massive social and political upheaval — as was Michael Curtiz' Casablanca, to name just one notable example of the genre also directed by a young Hungarian-born director. But whereas Humphrey Bogart had Ingrid Bergman and the rest of his choke-up audience convinced that "the problems of two little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world," Szabo has made the problems of his two little people the leading issue — indeed, a metaphor for the very craziness of the world.

THERE IS SOMETHING much more vita than romantic love at stake in the separation of the two lovers by the diaspora of 1956. Severed from their past, Szabo's characters can lead only provisional lives, plagued with a nagging sense of having lost some irrevocable part of themselves and obsessed with the urge to reclaim it.

The story is told in a series of stream-of-consciousness flashbacks experienced by Jancsi, the 27-year-old hero, as he travels by train to France to visit Kata, to whom he has written faithfully but has not seen in he 10 years since she fled Budapest during the 1956 uprising.

FROM THE INITIAL chaos and confusion of his memories gradually emerges a picture of Hungary's national tragedy as reflected in Jancsi's personal story. In the mid-1940s, his earliest relationship with Kata was as a brother and constant companion from the age of 6 when he was adopted by Kata's family after the imprisonment of his own parents by the Nazis. In the mid-1950s, his chaste but intense passion for Kata puts to shame the programmed fervor of the Com-



Frivolity in Istvan Szabo's "Love Film."

munist youth organization they belong to. And in the mid-1960s, the initial euphoria of their long-delayed physical fulfillment is quickly dispersed by the vaguely melancholy mood that pervades the outwardly cheerful society of Hungarian exiles Kata lives among in Lyon.

SZABO HAS DONE several things brilliantly in this movie, one of which is his subjective use of the camera to make Jancsi's eyes our eyes and more crucially, Jancsi's feelings our feelings.

His screen play is simple in its basic design, yet at the same time rich in symbolic reverberations. He has undeniably injected an intriguing element of incest by having Jancsi fall in love with his foster-sister, but what an economical stroke to combine family, lover and country into a single figure as the focus of all the hero's longings.

The leads are beautifully played by Andras Balint, who suggests a young Jean Louis Trintignant, and Judit Halasz, so fresh and athletic and wholesome that she seems the perfect embodiment of the all-European girl.

IN HIS CONCERN over bringing their affair to a comfortable conclusion, Szabo has perhaps let the movie run on a bit too long. The scenes late in the movie between the disillusioned lovers and their displaced countrymen in France achieve a dramatic intensity that is simply too strong and affecting to support the rambling, Truffaut-ish coda that Szabo tacks on the end. But this is a quibbling point; one is nonetheless left with a deep, haunting awareness of the bitter legacy remaining to a generation of eastern European youths after half a century of ideological strife.

"Love Film" reportedly was received with much enthusiasm in the handful of American cities where it was toured earlier in the year by the AFI. Hopefully this support, plus a strong local response, will help the movie attract a commercial distributor and the wider audiences it deserves.

WASHINGTON, D.C., TUESDAY, MAY 8, 1973

MOVIE NOTEBOOK

The AFI's Hungarian 'Renaissance'

BY DONIA MILLS
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Twelve feature films made by young Hungarian directors between 1961 and 1972 will be presented by the American Film Institute tonight through May 20 in the "New Hungarian Cinema" series. The movies were selected by AFI programming manager Michael Webb last summer during a two-week stay in Budapest at the invitation of the Institute for Cultural Relations and the Hungarofilm distributors.

During recent months, the program has been toured by the AFI in several U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, New Orleans, Indianapolis and Philadelphia.

WHILE the movies encompass a wide range of styles and moods, they share a common obsession with Hungarian history, and provide varying views of the political and social oppression which has for centuries plagued this tiny Slavic country, a chronic victim of geography and strong neighbors.

Between the prewar Fascist regimes and the postwar Communist influence, Hungarian cinema got off to a badly stunted start. After the 1956 revolution, however, in a more liberal atmosphere, the cinema was recognized and supported by the government as a viable art form. The films in the AFI series therefore represent a kind of renaissance in Hungarian filmmaking.

There is, for example, "The Confrontation," (May 9 and 15) a study by Miklos Jancso of the idealistic fervor of young revolutionaries in 1947, when faith in the power of communism to transform the world was at a peak in Hungary. Sandor Sara's "The Upraised Stone" (May 11) is set in a slightly later period

when this idealism was being systematically crushed by the official cruelty and injustice of the Stalinist regime.

ZOLTAN FABRI'S "The Last Goal" (May 17) concerns a group of men in a Nazi labor camp in the last year of the war, and in "The Falcons" (May 10 and 18) Istvan Gaal has created an absorbing allegory in which the training of a superior strain of exterminator falcons in an isolated camp suggests the development of totalitarian processes. "The Valley" (May 16 and 19) and "The Boys of Paul Street" (May 19) are two more parables about human societies ravaged by militarism.

An impressionistic, semi-autobiographical overview of the entire period is seen in Istvan Szabo's "Lovefilm" (May 9 and 16), the story of a young Hungarian couple who are brought together by wartime Nazi terrorism, separated during the 1956 revolt, and who spend the next 15 years

trying to recapture their fragmented youth.

Taken together, these films give a fascinating picture of a generation of young persons struggling to define, interpret and draw lessons from their collective past.

THE "New Hungarian Cinema" series also has its lighter moments. The series opens tonight with "Sinbad" (to be repeated May 12 and 19), a lushly photographed romantic elegy by Zoltan Huszarik and cinematographer-director Sandor Sara. The surrealistic adventures of this great Slavic lover are taken from the writings of Gyula Krudy, sometimes called "the Hungarian Proust."

"Love-Emilia" (May 11, 12 and 18) portrays on one level the zany capers of a teen-aged girl rebelling against the stuffiness of her fashionable finishing school, set against the Hungarian millenium celebrations of 1896. On other levels, the movie treats symbolically the growing nation-

alistic movement and the breaking up of traditional cultural patterns at the turn of the century. With her spectacular act of defiance at the end, Emilia is a thoroughly modern heroine, and her story is told in a sumptuous visual style that is a dramatic contrast to the austere black-and-white treatment given many of the other pictures in the series.

"Horizon" (May 10 and 15) and "The Lady from Constantinople" (May 11, 12 and 18) are socialist slice-of-life pictures exploring, respectively, the dead-end prospects of a youthful dropout from a civil service job, and the housing problems of an elderly Budapest matron.

MOST OF the features are accompanied by cartoons and experimental short films made at the Bela Balazs Studio, a national workshop which fosters the talents of novice directors.

An interesting footnote is added by Hungarian critic

and writer Lorant Czigany, who is currently teaching Slavic languages at Berkeley. In a recent article on the "new wave" directors, he points out that the great mass of Hungarian moviegoers — like those elsewhere in the world — prefer the commercial fare of simple romances and action melodramas to these heavier, didactic films. Jancso, Szabo, Sara, Fabri and the others represented here are the experimental, avant-garde element in Hungarian cinema, their audiences largely confined to youth and intelligentsia.

NEW HUNGARIAN CINEMA

Tuesday	May 8	6:30 and 9:00 p.m.	SINBAD
Wednesday	May 9	6:30 p.m.	THE CONFRONTATION
		9:00 p.m.	LOVE FILM
Thursday	May 10	6:30 p.m.	HORIZON
		9:00 p.m.	THE FALCONS
Friday	May 11	6:30 p.m.	THE UPTHROWN STONE
		9:00 p.m.	LOVE EMILIA! + THE LADY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE
Saturday	May 12	4:00 p.m.	GRIMACES
		6:30 p.m.	SINBAD
		9:00 p.m.	LOVE EMILIA! + THE LADY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE
Tuesday	May 15	6:30 p.m.	THE CONFRONTATION
Wednesday	May 16	9:00 p.m.	HORIZON
		6:30 p.m.	THE VALLEY
Thursday	May 17	9:00 p.m.	LOVE FILM
Friday	May 18	6:30 and 9:00 p.m.	THE LAST GOAL
		6:30 p.m.	THE FALCONS
		9:00 p.m.	LOVE EMILIA! + THE LADY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE
Saturday	May 19	4:00 p.m.	THE BOYS OF PAUL STREET
		6:30 p.m.	THE VALLEY
		9:00 p.m.	SINBAD
Sunday	May 20	4:00 p.m.	GRIMACES



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