

# DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

# ON THE TOWN

the movies  
**Dan Greenberg**

## Violence isn't pretty but film is touching

"La Balance" (R) is a hard-boiled, no-nonsense, violent cop show. Its intensity and physical energy will hold your attention, revolt you with its brutality but touch you with an unusual love story.

Everyone has a sympathetic view toward law and order, at least in the abstract. Who wants his home burglarized? To be attacked in the streets? No one, of course.

The police must keep things clean, and a close view of how that's done, at least in Paris, is not a pretty picture. One's generalized approval of law and order turns, as we see how brutal the police can become in doing their job.

As a matter of fact, the "heroine" and "hero" of "La Balance," a prostitute and her pimp, are sympathetic, even attractive characters. There are no limits to what they will do for one another. The police, who exploit that love, hardly earn our respect and good will, even though they are doing their job.

THE PROSTITUTE, Nicole (Nathalie Baye), has the misfortune to love a small-time, unemployed hoodlum, Dede (Philippe Lecoq), who is out of work because of an earlier run-in with the local underworld boss, Roger Massina (Maurice Ronet).

By French law, Dede is a pimp because he lives with a prostitute, and off of her earnings, even though he is not out pimping for her in the usual sense.

In Paris, a special, elite police force, the Territorial Brigades, exists. The cops of "La Balance" are members of the 13th Territorial Brigade. They are young, full of bravado and humor, a veneer covering the great fear and danger in which they live.

They are out in the streets coping with drug dealers, thieves and psychotic killers. Much of their success comes from the use of informers, "la balance" in underworld slang, literally that extra edge that tips the balance.

The film opens with the murder of Paulo, the brigade's current informer. Inspector Palouzi (Richard Berry) needs a new "balance" and settles on Dede because of his contact with Massina and his vulnerability.

PALOUZI'S BRIGADE includes a sidleick Tintin (Christophe Malavoy), "the Belgian" (Jean Paul Bonnard) and "the Captain" (Bernard Freyd), a former officer in the French Army fighting in Algeria. His attitude from that war makes him effectively brutal, particularly when dealing with Algerian underworld characters.


With Dede and Nicole ensnared, Inspector Palouzi casts his net for Mr. Big, Roger Massina.

There you have all the ingredients of the classic detective thriller. "La Balance" is so well made that it will keep you on the edge of your seat, with its intensity and unusual love story, effectively presented with great texture and atmosphere.

Palouzi is only successful because he is able to exploit the love of Dede and Nicole. That he does so with such graphic abuse hardly earns him our sympathy.

The 1982 French film was written by Bob Swalm, an American director working in France. A huge commercial success, "La Balance" won the French Oscar (Cesar) for best film, best actor and best actress, as well as technical prizes.

The photography richly presents the seamy side of Paris, with an occasional nice view. Images so well and densely composed that the sly, underworld life has a palpable physical presence.



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## what's at the movies

- AGAINST ALL ODDS (R).** Gangster story with Jeff Bridges and Rachel Ward is odds-on loser.
- THE DRESSER (PG).** Backstage in traditional touring Shakespearean stage company. Year's best film with Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay.
- ENTRE NOUS (PG).** Beautifully photographed, well-acted story of two women's relationship. Dramatic credibility weak.
- FOOTLOOSE (PG).** Kevin Bacon has to dance but the small-town minister (John Lithgow) won't let him. Guess who wins in this stupid drama with entertaining dance sequences.
- GREYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN, LORD OF THE APES (PG).** Excellent, lavish epic rendition of Edgar Rice Burroughs' classic with Sir Ralph Richardson.
- HARD TO HOLD (PG).** Rick Springfield, successful rock star in love with the one woman who isn't a fan.
- MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON (R).** Robin Williams as touring Russian circus musician who defects in Bloomingdale's.
- POLICE ACADEMY (R).** Steve Guttenberg and Kim Cattrall in comedy about a Police Academy open to all applicants.
- ROMANCING THE STONE (PG).** Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner star in romantic comedy.
- SPLASH (PG).** New York bachelor in love with a mermaid. Mildly mature Disney but lots of fun.
- THE STONE BOY (PG).** Academy-Award winner Robert Duvall stars in story of American family torn apart by a tragic accident.
- TERMS OF ENDEARMENT (PG).** Shirley MacLaine and Debra Winger successfully wring tears from their mother-daughter relationship.
- THAT SINKING FEELING (PG).** Lighthearted story from director of "Gregory's Girl" and "Local Hero."

## upcoming things to do

- MUSIC THEATER**  
The Thompson Twins, with special guest Re-Flex, appear at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Royal Oak Music Theatre in Royal Oak. Other attractions include the Gregg Allman Band at 3 p.m. Friday, David Snavers at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 4; Christine McVie at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 10, and Berlin at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 12. For ticket information, phone 546-7810.
- MULTI-MEDIA SHOW**  
Lewie Anderson, musician and performance artist, will appear in a multi-media show at 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 18, at the Michigan Theatre, 606 E. Liberty/Ann Arbor. Reserved tickets at \$12.50 are available at the Michigan Theatre Box Office and Schoenfeld's Records in Ann Arbor and at all CTC/Ticket World outlets.

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