



And Vadim created Vadim

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By: Melinda Camber Porter

ROGER VADIM is bored with the image he has created for himself. He feels that he has lost sight of what he wants to do by fulfilling the demands of producers, distributors and stars. In the 20 years since he directed his first film, *And God Created Woman* with Brigitte Bardot, he has known only too well how to sell himself, his wives and there by his films. He calls himself someone who has been typecast too long.

“It was very difficult to me to liberate myself from commercial success. When you've made a successful film, producers want to repeat the formula,” he says, talking in a mixture of French and English (although he has a perfect command of the latter).

At 46, he had made his first film for which he is willing to take full responsibility. *La Jeune Fille Assassinee* is, according to Vadim, an exploration of the problems of the new freedom that women have today. He has scripted, directed, and produced it and also stars in it. Its heroine, Charlotte, played by a new actress Sirpa Lane, is “young, beautiful and brilliant and feels that she can do whatever she likes”. But Vadim shows that it isn't that simple: she ends up brutally murdered.

“Nowadays women are in a difficult position,” he says. “They are made to believe that they can do anything. They can: but what they don't realise is that it's dangerous.” Vadim feels that he talks from personal experience, having seen both his 17- year-old daughter and his former wife, Jane Fonda, bewitched by the notion of absolute freedom. “Jane Fonda felt she was being turned into a sex symbol and fought so hard to achieve her freedom that she doesn't make movies.” Perhaps he has forgotten that she co-directed *Vietnam Journey*.

Vadim is perhaps best known for his unfailing sense of publicity and his talent for exploiting his personal life. His succession of wives and mistresses – Bardot, Annette Stroyberg, Catherine Deneuve, Fonda – have always given his films a spurious fascination. But the sort of publicity he once welcomed is what he now fears, particularly when his new film, which has been causing a sensation in Paris, reaches Britain.

“At the moment the English market for foreign films is diminishing. Often the only way to sell a film with sub-titles is to present it as a pornographic movie. I can see the distributors picking on the erotic scenes and selling it on that basis. I don't want that to happen because it will distort my conception of the film; so I'm going to supervise its distribution in England and America. Often the publicity surrounding a film determines the way people look at it.

“I enjoy beauty and so do other people,” says Vadim. “I don't see why one should feel bound to film ugly people. But I have often been accused of portraying women as sex objects and this is unfair. In my films and private life I have always wanted women to be free and not only sexually.



“Treating people as adults has its difficulties because quite a lot of adults are stupid and vulgar and so you get stupid and vulgar movies. But the good aspect is that directors who have something to say can do so without taboos. A few years ago, one of the scenes in *La Jenne Fille Assassinee* – in which a man makes love to a woman he has killed – would never have been accepted, but I had to include it to make my point.”

The film marks a new freedom for Vadim. “One of the most important factors in filming is time. If you don't finish a movie in time producers think you're not a real director. But projects should germinate and develop as one is filming. Because I was my own master, I took three weeks off before shooting two key scenes. If the film is bad, it is my own fault.

“Films cannot be made for a future audience. The life of the movie is short. It must be released quickly because what it has to say is linked directly to what is going on in the present.”

It would be easy to consider Vadim affected and superficial if one was not immediately aware of the dynamism and energy that is so carefully channelled into his performance as he stalks the room in his spacious flat in a fashionable part of Paris's Left Bank.

“I prefer to make films that do not propagate the latest -ism of the day,” he says. “And I don't want to present my ideas as definitive answers. Nowadays, people don't listen to you unless you're aggressive. In this sense I am not very fashionable at the moment. But I have always found it difficult not to be influenced by current fashions. In the end, one often feels if everyone is doing something, it must be right. But I'm beginning to listen to myself. For me, freedom is being able to say I'm not going to make a movie about social problems.”

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