

get-happy attitude that has swept Hollywood in recent months. "Witness the success of *Rocky* and the failure of *The Parallax View*. For me, it all goes back to *Z*. The moment in *Z* that sold tickets was when the attorney got to hear 'indicted.' I mean the fucking audience cheered. They put on the liberal disclaimer that the government was taken over. (In fact, a military junta came to power in Greece, abolishing all democratic channels.) But you had that moment where good was victorious over bad. Ever since I saw *Z* I said damnit, that's the kind of movie I want to make. Then *Rocky* came out and I said goddamn it, I wanted to

"... after '69, everything in this country went into the toilet. America went home with a headache. We all took Bufferin."

be the first to say Victory. I mean, *Rocky* wasn't a very good movie, but it was about winning."

To remain faithful to his current winner-take-all attitude, Dreyfuss pulled out of Bob (Cabaret) Fosse's semiautobiographical movie, *All That Jazz*, just days before it was to go into production, because Dreyfuss said the script was cruel. While he admits the movie is well written—even beautiful—he says the characters were mean to each other, and Dreyfuss says he doesn't want to be mean to anyone—at least not on film. What he wants is more movies like *The Goodbye Girl*, a film he calls "nearly perfect."

"I was in love with making that movie," Dreyfuss concedes, still bursting with enthusiasm for the project. "I played the most wonderful person on earth. The most decent guy you've ever seen. I once said to Neil (Simon), 'Do you know you've written a perfect person?' I began to feel real good in a way I hadn't felt before. It's one thing for people to recognize you from *Jaws* and it's another to walk down the street and have people tell you *The Goodbye Girl* made them more happy than anything they've ever been."

To keep the smiles coming, Dreyfuss will again play Elliot in *The Goodbye Girl II*, with Marsha Mason again as his lady love. He thinks some of the criticism women heaped on the first film will be eliminated in the sequel. "Since the movie came out," Dreyfuss admits, "a lot of people, especially women, have had very valid criticism about the film. The woman's character especially. I have the feeling that because Neil isn't of our generation, he didn't think of her character as being solely dependent on men. Although," he adds smiling, "I must admit neither did I, nor did anyone else making the movie. When we made the movie, we thought we were making the perfect love story."

Like most men today who think, analyze and question, Dreyfuss can't take too many steps

without the women's movement dogging his heels. He agrees women's liberation is one of the few political ideals to survive the 60's and says with enough force to shatter glass, "the oppression of women is so obvious that no one is going to talk anyone out of it. It survived and will survive as a tangible political reality. There were and are enough strong-minded, impatient women to keep at it."

"What I'd like to do now," he explains "is a love story where the problem is the woman's inner life and the man's inability—or ability—to cope with that. If only someone could write it. Everyone's too close to it now, and when they try, they get crazed. It's very difficult. All art reflects society and society is based on what is known. But today relationships between men and women are up in the air and attached to so many nerve endings that writers, as they start writing, go off on tangents and take easy outs."

"But," he concedes with largesse, "who can get a fix on what's happening? I'd like to do a love story that would dramatize not knowing the answer."

Today, Dreyfuss makes his home in New York. He plans to return to Manhattan as soon as *The Big Fix* is released, saying he needs the pace of New York because Los Angeles is a Company Town and here everyone he knows, sleeps with and talks to is in show business. It's getting on his million-dollar nerves. "You know, here I'm not just the center of my universe, I'm the center of a lot of people's universe. It's a frightening experience. We all want to be the center of attention, but when you get to be the center of attention no matter what you do, or what you say, it gets to be crazy. You're sought, observed, all of the time. Everything is directed toward you. The irony of course is that I never wanted to be anonymous in the first place."

"Right now, it's tough for me to be here. Everyone wants me to read his script and give my approval for a movie, which means millions to them, so," he says raising his voice and getting dramatic, "they ain't gonna be polite about it." Now, he's standing and screaming, "I could be RICH. READ THE FUCKING SCRIPT." He calms down again. "It gets to you," he understates.

It's gotten to Dreyfuss. He's not particularly happy for all his trappings of success. He trusts very few people (one of whom is his long-time agent, Meyer Mishkin). He sees a similarity in his work that doesn't please him. He wants to play only those roles which will make people love him, but he knows that could short-circuit his growth as an artist. He still battles overweight. His friends point out that for all his talk of understanding women's liberation, he's proved himself to be a one-man Reign of Terror in personal relationships. He recently broke up with his girlfriend of several years, Lucinda Valles, and has been seen about New York and Los Angeles with dozens of young women—most of them aspiring actresses (one friend who's known him since the old days says with a laugh, "Richard has hot pants"). He has all these political impulses and is still uncertain which avenue of activism to take. And in an absurd twist, what makes all of this worse, is that Dreyfuss is as smart, bright and funny as they come. One of the best.

There is however, one thing that currently gives Dreyfuss unabashed pleasure—he's skinny in the *The Big Fix*, skinny and curly-haired and moustached. Nothing short of irresistible. Even without Neil Simon.

Jacoba Atlas

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