Winger

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absolutely shoots from the hip," Bridges said. "She fights, but the fight is always about the work. It's never about petty things; it's always about trying to make the work better."

Winger's focus on her work is intense. Offscreen, she often lives her current role, and onscreen, critic Pauline Kael once wrote, "she makes you feel there's something burning inside her."

And she wants any fame that comes her way to be for that work, not for the celebrity peripherals.

"I mean, obviously you have to have a healthy ego to be in this business," she said. "But the other side of it is usually a real gnawing sense of self-loathing. I work hard, and I like the response to be to my work. But that's what's confusing, because (the tribute) is a bit about the body of work."

More than a bit. During the 11-day film festival, nine of Winger's 13 films will be shown, films that as a group say as much about Hollywood in the '80s as they do about her work as an actress. With a few notable exceptions, Winger has been a transcendent presence in mediocre commercial movies; a "born performer," as Kael called her, working with people who were not necessarily born filmmakers.

Winger, never shy about criticizing her own movies — or, for that matter, her own work — went over the nine films that will be shown as part of the 15th annual Cleveland International Film Festival, tomorrow through April 14 at Hoyts Tower City Cinemas.

"FRENCH POSTCARDS" Made in 1979, this story of three American college students in Paris was Winger's third film, after the 1977 "Slumber Party '57" and the 1978 disco film "Thank God It's Friday." Willard Huyck, one of the writers of "American Graffiti," directed. It will be shown at noon tomorrow.

Winger: "They're showing that? Oh, Lord, I'll be out there with a flashlight, saying, 'Next theater, I'm sorry, it's all sold out.'

"Well, you know, I spent three months making it and I think I'm in five scenes. The director and I just did not hit it off. It was one of my first pictures, and it was very damaging to have a director say, 'You don't have an ounce of talent.' But, you know, revenge is living. He made 'Howard the Duck.' So there is a God."

" 'The Sheltering Sky' changed my life."

"URBAN COWBOY" Made in 1980, this immensely popular romance was Winger's first big break. James Bridges co-wrote and directed it from a magazine article by Aaron Latham about the sexual wars, cowboy daydreams and mechanical bull at Gilley's, a Texas-sized fantasy saloon outside of Houston. Bridges battled producer Robert Evans to cast the unknown Winger as Sissy, John Travolta's love interest. It plays at noon Sunday.

Winger: "That's one of my fondest memories, mainly because a director really believed in me. I hadn't done anything impressive enough to really warrant that part. And he stood up and said, 'This is the girl,' after my screen test.

"And I just had an extraordinary experience making it, because right out of the pen I was working with a mega-superstar, which was Travolta at the time, who was a very nice guy, but caught in a (celebrity) lifestyle that's quite difficult. So I got to see a lot of the traps through his life. And I went into it in a way that I believed an actress should: I submerged.

"Jim (Bridges) encouraged me and fed me and was inspired by me, and he used a lot of the things I brought to him. And I was involved in every step of the process, through editing. So I didn't know it was going to be some other way; I thought it was always going to be that collaborative. Ha. Ha. Ha. So that was great, that was a big gift to have that be the first big movie."

"CANNERY ROW" Made in 1982, with writer-director David S. Ward (also a Clevelander) adapting John Steinbeck's novels "Cannery Row" and "Sweet Thursday." Winger replaced the original Suzy DeSoto, Raquel Welch (who then began a protracted lawsuit against the studio). She starred opposite Nick Nolte, with whom she would team up eight years later on "Everybody Wins." It plays at noon Monday.

Winger: "I like that film a lot. I mean, I know it's not fully realized, but I loved the character, and I liked the whole milieu. I just think it's a sweet film. It came at a time when the studio was falling apart. So it wasn't a big success — but I get a lot of response to it from people who see it on video."

"AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN" Winger was nominated for an Academy Award for her performance in this 1982 film, a military romance with Richard Gere and Louis Gossett Jr. (who won an Oscar for best supporting actor). Taylor Hackford wrote the screenplay and directed. Winger never made a secret of her dissatisfaction with the film, her director and her co-star. It plays at noon Tuesday.

Winger: "Oh, that one's a killer. It was also the only time I ever worked back to back, for lack of knowing any better. I did those films ("Cannery Row" and "Officer and a Gentleman") within weeks of each other, and I just can't do that.

"But also it came at a time when — I don't know, I'm sure men are beat up from the women's movement, and so everything kind of flaps back on you. But I just found myself in a bad situation. I've since run into Richard Gere, you know, and really like him. But at that point in time, with that director and that producer, it was just a nightmare for me. I was all alone. There were a lot of male perspectives around me, and I was trying to do my best and to do honor to the character and they were playing a lot of games with me that I didn't understand, that weren't about the work.

"They just had a lack of respect for the feminine species. So that was hard for me, because I didn't know how to handle it. I put up my dukes and I fought my way all the way through it. And then I just was exhausted afterward, and it was of little consequence to get nominated, even though the director didn't, and the film didn't. But I did my work — I worked as hard as I could."

"TERMS OF ENDEARMENT" This 1983 comedy-melodrama about the sometimes supportive, often suffocating, always intense relationship between a mother and daughter was the first movie directed by James L. Brooks, who had helped create the television series "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."

Winger played the daughter, Emma, through 30 years, from gangly adolescence to harrassed motherhood. She was nominated for an Academy Award, but her co-star, Shirley MacLaine, won it for her rather flamboyant performance as the difficult mother. It plays at noon Wednesday.

Winger: "That was a rare and wonderful experience. I took a chance on a first-time director, Jim Brooks, so maybe I got rewarded for that, for that leap of faith. Because he was right there, very accessible. We fought, but always for the work, to make it better. It was intense. Plus, it was a project where I was sort of the glue, not really the flashy role, so I had to keep my head on my shoulders."

"It's uncanny. Now that I am a mother, I look back and I think, 'How did I know that?'(Winger played pregnancy and motherhood several years before she had her son.) I wouldn't change a thing. But, you know, we've got the eggs. They're not activated, maybe, but the instinct is there. And Jim helped me to trust that. That's the important thing: The director can either support your instinct or undermine it."

"LEGAL EAGLES" Ivan Reitman directed this 1986 comedy-thriller about two rival lawyers who start out on opposite sides of an art-fraud and arson case, and end up together, both professionally and personally. Robert Redford co-starred. It is most famous for sur-

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Impressive film roster slated for festival

The 15th Cleveland International Film Festival will be held on three screens at Hoyts Tower City Cinemas, on the concourse level of the Avenue at Tower City downtown. General admission for matinees before 6 p.m. is $4.25, and evening shows after 6 p.m. are $6.75. Single admission for the Opening Night Benefit Gala is $100, and admission to the Closing Night Reception and Film is $10.

Call 349-FILM for information.

■ Tonight:

Opening Night Gala: An Evening with Debra Winger

5 p.m. — Screen 1: "Urban Cowboy" Screen 2: "An Officer and a Gentleman" Screen 3: "Terms of Endearment"

6:30 p.m. — Cocktail Receptions

8 p.m. — Dinner on the Avenue

9 p.m. — Tribute to Debra Winger

10 p.m. — Dessert and Dancing

■ Tomorrow:

SCREEN ONE:

Noon — Winger Retrospective: "French Postcards"

2 p.m. — "Silent Scream"

4 p.m. — "Time of the Servants"

6:30 p.m. — "An Angel at My Table"

9:30 p.m. — "Trust"

SCREEN TWO:

12:15 p.m. — "Vincent and Me"

2:15 p.m. — "Reyhaneh"

4:15 p.m. — "The Guardian Angel"

7 p.m. — "Daddy Nostalgia"

9:15 p.m. — "La Femme Nikita"

SCREEN THREE:

12:30 p.m. — "Christo in Paris/ Twinsburg, OH"

2:30 p.m. — Progressive Independents Program 1

4:30 p.m. — "A Little Stiff"

6:45 p.m. — "Ay, Carmela!"

9 p.m. — "Lonely in America"

■ Sunday:

SCREEN ONE:

Noon — Winger Retrospective: "Urban Cowboy"

2:45 p.m. — "Trust"

5 p.m. — "Daddy Nostalgia"

7:15 p.m. — "Dog's Feast"

9:15 p.m. — "Time of the Servants"

SCREEN TWO:

Noon — "An Angel at My Table"

3 p.m. — "Memories of a Marriage"

5 p.m. — "La Femme Nikita"

7:30 p.m. — "The Guardian Angel"

9:45 p.m. — "Nirvana Street Murder"

SCREEN THREE:

12:15 p.m. — "Magic Boat"

2 p.m. — Progressive Independents Program II

4:30 p.m. — "Lonely in America"

7 p.m. — "Maxine Sullivan/Benny Carter"

9:30 p.m. — "Latino Bar"

■ Monday:

SCREEN ONE:

Noon — Winger Retrospective: "Cannery Row"

2:30 p.m. — "Time of the Servants"

5 p.m. — "Overseas"

7 p.m. — "Venus Peter"

9 p.m. — "Silent Scream"

SCREEN TWO:

12:15 p.m — "Memories of a Marriage"

2:15 p.m. — "Ay, Carmela!"

5:15 p.m. — "Nirvana Street Murder"

7 p.m. — "Inventory"

9:30 p.m. — "Latino Bar"

SCREEN THREE:

12:30 p.m. — "Reyhaneh"

2:45 p.m. — "Lonely in America"

5:15 p.m. — Progressive Independents Program III

7:15 p.m. — "Christo in Paris/ Twinsburg, OH"

9:15 p.m. — "Maxine Sullivan/Benny Carter"

■ Tuesday:

SCREEN ONE:

Noon — Winger Retrospective: "An Officer and a Gentleman"

2:30 p.m. — "The Guardian Angel"

5 p.m. — "Vincent and Me"

7 p.m. — "Overseas"

9 p.m. — "Reyhaneh"

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"What the Moon Saw" will be screened as part of the International Film Festival's family film series April 12 and 13.