

'Jacquot' gives audience a childhood journey

By Malcom Miles
Staff Reporter

Director Agnès Varda ("Cleo From Five to Seven," "Vagabond") has captured the spirit of childhood in her film "Jacquot."

"Jacquot" is the true story of the late director Jacques Demy, Varda's husband, who died of leukemia in 1990.

The film traces Demy's childhood, showing how the events of his life led to the films he made.

Varda uses images from Demy's films to highlight the connections. She also includes footage of Demy talking and writing about his childhood — an activity he took up as he began his fight with his fatal disease.

"Jacquot" highlights Demy's will to make films as he overcomes the obstacles of money, family and World War II.

One of the first images in "Jacquot" is that of Demy's tired hand slipping sand slowly through its fingers. The visual metaphor could mean many things, but what is apparent throughout the movie is a contradictory sense of both strength and fragility.

Demy was born in 1931 and spent his youth in Nantes, France. Early in life he became fascinated by puppet shows and the cinema. Demy built puppets and sets out of scrap cardboard so he could perform in the local park.

By the time he was 14, he had managed to trade some of his childhood toys and books for a second-hand camera. He immediately began making stop-action animation, which he screened for his family on a kitchen cupboard he had designed to look like the local theater.

His father ignored young Jacques' yearning to study film, forcing him to go to a technical school to learn a trade. When director Christian-Jaques saw one of Demy's early films and encouraged him, the father's stubbornness faded.

Demy went to Paris at age 18 and studied for two years. There, he met



Courtesy of Sony Pictures

Philippe Maron, center, starts in "Jacquot," which is the story of film director Jacques Demy's life. The film is directed by Demy's wife, Agnès Varda. Demy died of leukemia in 1990.

his future wife, Agnès Varda.

He went on to become popular and reached the height of his critical success with his 1964 film "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg." The entire dia-

logue of this film is sung, which points to the prominence of music in Demy's childhood years.

The film is nearly perfect in its acting, directing, editing and cinema-

tophography. It gives a realistic portrait by confusing the documentary and dramatic segments.

"Jacquot" is a fitting tribute to an inspirational director, but it is far

more than that. This film lives up to its billing as "a voyage into childhood, all childhoods..."

"Jacquot" will be shown at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater for the next two weekends.

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05 Bicycles	182 Recycling
10 Books	183 Religious
13 Clothing	185 Rentals
16 Computers	188 Tanning
20 Furniture	190 Tattooing
30 Jewelry	193 Travel
40 Garage Sales	195 Typing & Resumes
10 Misc. For Sale	
45 Musical Instruments	NOTICES 200s
46 Office Furniture	200 Rides
50 Pets	203 Spring Break Trips
55 Photo Equipment	205 Career Events
60 Sporting Goods	210 Announcements
65 Stereos/TVs	215 Meetings
70 Ticket Exchange	220 Greek Affairs
90 Vehicles	230 Student Government
	240 Personals
	245 Lost & Found
	250 Wanted
	260 Fundraising
SERVICES 100s	JOBS 300s
100 Adoption	300 Help Wanted
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110 Automotive	320 Work Study Jobs
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120 Bridal	340 Internships
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