



Director Hector Babenco (center) advises William Hurt (left) and Raul Julia during the filming of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

bankable leading man, he decided to run off to Brazil to work for low wages on a screen adaption of a complex novel by Manuel Puig.

His gamble has paid off, for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is an excellent film. Hurt plays an effeminate homosexual named Luis Molina who has been jailed for "corrupting a minor."

Molina's cellmate in the dark, South American jail is Valentin Arregui, portrayed intensely by Raul Julia. Arregui is a political prisoner who is the antithesis of Molina.

While Molina wears eye shadow, Arregui wears the scars from numerous torture sessions. While Molina delights in every little luxury, Arregui even refuses to eat an avocado, for fear it will make him soft. And, most importantly, while Molina escapes from his harsh existence by reveling in a fantasy world of movies, Arregui is trapped by his duties, by reality, by the weight of the world.

*Kiss of the Spider Woman* deals with the

relationship between the two men and the ways they change each other. The heart of their friendship revolves around the movies that Molina lovingly recounts to Arregui to wile away the time.

In these inner-movies, Sonia Braga portrays three characters, all of them exotically beautiful heroines. Her performance is stylized enough to give one the impression of actually seeing Molina's memory of the movies. And her presence is striking and powerful, reminiscent of Gloria Swanson's "Norma Desmond."

The adjectives (dazzling, stimulating, superbly acted) are easy. But, any serious discussion of the characters or the symbolic ending would involve revealing details that are better left discovered by seeing *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. And that is highly recommended.

By Michael Glitz

## Kiss of the Spider Woman

Center Theater

Just when William Hurt (*The Big Chill*, *Body Heat*) had consolidated his position as a