

Retrospective Getting Perspective

French director **Louis Malle**—who will turn 62 this Sunday—has followed a decidedly idiosyncratic career path. Beginning with an underwater feature he co-directed with Jacques-Yves Cousteau (*The Silent World*), he's tackled thrillers (*Frantic*), India in a seven-part TV documentary (*Phantom India*), the American dream (*Atlantic City*), philosophy (*My Dinner With Andre*), and, most recently, Chekhov (*Uncle Vanya on 42nd Street*). A Symphony Space retrospective is double-billing a Malle film with a French classic. "Some of them," Malle says, "I'm almost embarrassed to have my film next to them because they're so great." Like *May Fools* with Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*? "That's the one I was thinking of," he admits. "When I was doing *May Fools*, it was my little



homage to Renoir and that movie. The old lady who dies at the beginning is Paulette Godbode, who played the maid in *The Rules of the Game*. So there is a connection; except, you know, *Rules* is one of the great masterpieces of the cinema." And, of course, even the idea of a retrospective can be off-putting to a director looking ahead to his next project. "It's like when people come to you and they say, 'Oh, you made that film; that's a great film.' And they talk about the first one I made, when I was 24. That happened to me yesterday, and that makes you feel *terrible*," he laughs. "[What about] everything I've done since?"

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