

A Cocaine Heist From The Philly Mob

(Continued from page 4)

extras, cops, Teamster officials and drivers, and euphemistically-named "production assistants" (P.A.), who range from organizers to crowd controllers to go-fers.

10 a.m.: Takes from the previous day's rushes (or "dailies") are missing. France LaChappelle, the woman in charge of continuity, makes phone calls with lightning speed from the building superintendent's office and tracks them down. All is still not well: the one toilet available to cast and crew has overflowed and been put off-limits. Technicians, informed of tradition, go under the Boardwalk.

10:30 a.m.: The sun reappears (at least, enough to please Malle), and the actors take "first position." Malle communicates with his face and body: He lets an actor tell him how he wants to play a scene, then gradually gets him to alter his opinion with a series of nearly imperceptible shrugs. Eventually, they agree.

Lancaster, handsome at 66 and carrying the burden of a reserved dignity on his broad shoulders, could pass for an aging laborer in his white-haired make-up. He waits quietly until run-through, his face closed, then walks back to his camper to listen to opera.

Sarandon prefers to hang about the set, despite the temperature. When it's time for her lines, she debates each nuance grandiloquently with Malle, with whom she lives. Even in khaki pants and a baggy brown sweater, she could make you look more than once at her if she wanted to.

Both she and Lancaster need the patience of chess grandmasters; a good film actor can manipulate emotion, but only a great one can repeat the same lines a dozen times without twisting their meaning. (A different sort of patience will be required the next day, when two actors and 11 crew members must squeeze into the men's room of the Club Harlem.)

Noon: A delicious catered affair: beef bourguignon, spinach souffle, lemon trifle. No pecking order affects the seating; Lancaster sits with the other actors and technicians, graciously fielding requests for autographs from the elderly inhabitants of the building, and Malle joins a crew table. Production assistants do, however, congregate in the adjacent room.

The gabble of voices seems deafening after the fidgety silence of the set, as if all the monks in a monastery had been released at once from their vows of silence.

1 p.m.: For the principals, back to work. For the extras, back to loafing. Half a dozen kids toss a sponge football up and down the halls until an old lady tells them to stop or go outside, where it's perhaps 30 degrees. They stop.

A tall, ruddy man whose loafing machine was rented for the day stretches out on a sagging couch in the chilly foyer and asks what the script's supposed to be about.



Photographer Richard Ciupka (left) and Louis Malle have different things on their minds during rehearsal.



Kate Reid seems to hold little hope for the final result as make-up artists work her over carefully.

One P.A. tells him it chronicles a cocaine heist from the Philly mob. Another calls it a suspense flick full of corpses. A third says it's "a love story where people gamble on each other," he has obviously been reading the press releases. John Guare isn't around to be asked.

1:30 p.m.: More onlookers brave

the weather to glimpse the embodiments of fame. Lancaster has an odd assortment of groupies: seedy grande dames mix cordially with haughty young lionesses. One minx murmurs romantic offers too low for Lancaster to hear, like a votary offering prayers to a god she's afraid to awaken.

One slim, dapper black man with a pencil mustache sidles up to a production assistant and asks gingerly, "Does anybody ever get...discovered, like...from bein' an extra in one of these things?" Shaking his head politely, the P.A.

(Continued on page 6)