



PRESS STORIES

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Author: Victoria Baker
Title: **Le weekend**

The Academie Française is a 400-year old institution whose sole function is to safeguard the French language. So, when Francophiles started to use the English term 'le weekend' there was a veritable outcry. However, the French Academy's intolerance of this and similar terms won't have any effect on their popular acceptance. The results of globalization have made it inevitable that words like le weekend, le parking and e-mail should slip into the language.

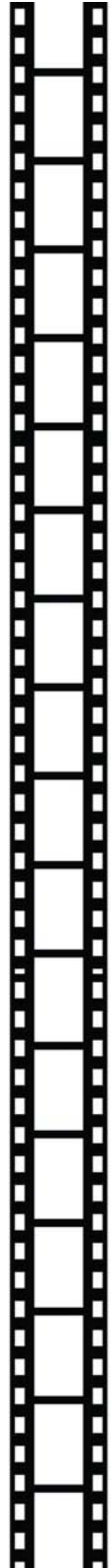
Last weekend Focus on French Cinema, in conjunction with Greenwich's Alliance Française, came to town and impressed us all with its chic allure and classic Parisian charisma. The directors of this festival clearly understand that an excellent way to encourage a Francophile and Anglophile culture celebration is through the universal medium of film. This is the third annual Focus on French Cinema and it is fast becoming one of the best Film festivals in the area and possibly the country.

Opening night featured the U.S. premiere of *Le Heros de la famille* starring Catherine Deneuve and legendary actor Claude Brasseur. Reputed beauty Ms. Deneuve proved to us she has real staying power. Even though she is no longer in the first flush of youth, she remains regal, with an undeniable on-screen presence and confident that her career has stood the test of time. Mr. Brasseur attended the premiere and stayed to answer questions about the movie. His earthy Parisian street charm was a huge hit with French and English-speaking members of the audience.

Dinner after the movie showcased the works of talented local chefs like Jean-Louis Gerin as well as culinary personages from afar. It was a French extravaganza of cheese, wine and petits fours desserts that nobody could resist. Personally, I succumbed to the delicious petits fours, miniature pastries so tiny it's hard to believe they contain calories. For others, the culinary highlight may have been bread imported from Poilane, the chic renowned artisanal bakery in Paris. FedEx allows Poilane's bread to leave the Paris bakery in the morning and be on dinner tables in the United States the next night.

Focus on French Cinema is only a three-year-old festival but it is gaining accolades with such startling rapidity that those of us who are fans eagerly anticipate its bright future. The Academie Française may never eliminate the words 'le weekend' from the French vocabulary but perhaps it may warm to the notion that

festivals like this one bring a delicious slice of French culture to a deeply enthusiastic U.S. audience. For their great work in attempting to bridge two remarkable cultures we owe Focus on French Cinema our sincerest thanks... merci.





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Victoria Baker of Greenwich is an opera singer: She teaches piano and voice privately in Greenwich. Questions, call 531-7499 or e-mail vikyb@optonline.net.

