

Photos by John Lazar/ Staff Photographer

Roman à clef

Coppola's first feature reflects his personality

By Evan Hersonson | Staff Writer

LOOKING TO BEAT clever newspaper copy writers to the punch, the director of the low-budget, sci-fi-spoofing comedy "CQ" got together with his filmmaking sister and started spitting headlines: "We'll Make You a Movie You Can't Refuse"; "I Love the Smell of 'CQ' in the Morning"; "The Son Also Rises."

If your last name is Coppola and you step behind a camera, you am yourself. With a sense of humor, if possible.

"We were kidding around, only because it is human nature to be curious about a family people are interested in. I don't blame them," says Roman Coppola, the son of five-time Oscar-winning

writer/producer/director Francis Ford Coppola. "I would be very interested in people that had worked on something that I admired too.

"People will say, 'Oh, yeah, I've heard about that. That's Francis Ford Coppola's son.' That's just the context."

The offbeat "CQ" — Morse code for the phrase "seek you" — is the product. Carrying a \$7 million budget and opening in limited release Friday, the film follows Paul, a young American filmmaker working in 1960s Paris as he moves from being the editor to the director of a "Barbarella"-like science-fiction picture and falls for the leading lady. Jeremy Davies ("Saving Private Ryan") stars with Gerard Depardieu, Giancarlo Giannini, Elodie Bouchez, Jason Schwartzman and Dean Stockwell.

Frequent Vogue model Angela Lindvall, in her film debut, plays super spy Dragonfly and Valentine, the actress who plays her in Paul's film.

And proud of it

It wasn't exactly as though Coppola — who wrote "CQ's" screenplay — was trying to work under the radar or ignore his lineage. American Zoetrope, his father's company, is co-producing "CQ" with United Artists. Francis Ford Coppola is one of the film's executive producers. Sister Sofia — who directed the critically acclaimed "The Virgin Suicides" — has a cameo role, and Schwartzman, the Coppola kids' cousin — plays an egotistical director. Roman talked filmmaking with Sofia and showed the script to his father ("He encouraged me to take it further. He's a writer by background," says Roman).

"Roman and Sofia like to say that they're giving nepotism a good name," says "CQ" producer Gary Marcus, who has worked with all three filmmaking Coppolas. "They're both very nurtured in an artistic family and their ability to create very good films has been demonstrated. Other people may see (the family connection) as a burden. I think they use it to their advantage."

"CQ" is Roman Coppola's feature-film directing debut though hardly his first time holding a camera. An award-winning director of commercials and music videos, Coppola, 36, figured it was a matter of time before he would enter the family business.

"I wasn't casual about it," he says, stylishly dressed and slightly fidgety in a too-large armchair in a Beverly Hills hotel. "I'd say, 'Oh, I'll do a Coke commercial. I

love Coke.' But I sort of drew the line at film. I wanted it to be something special, probably because I knew I was going to get a lot of eyes cast on me."

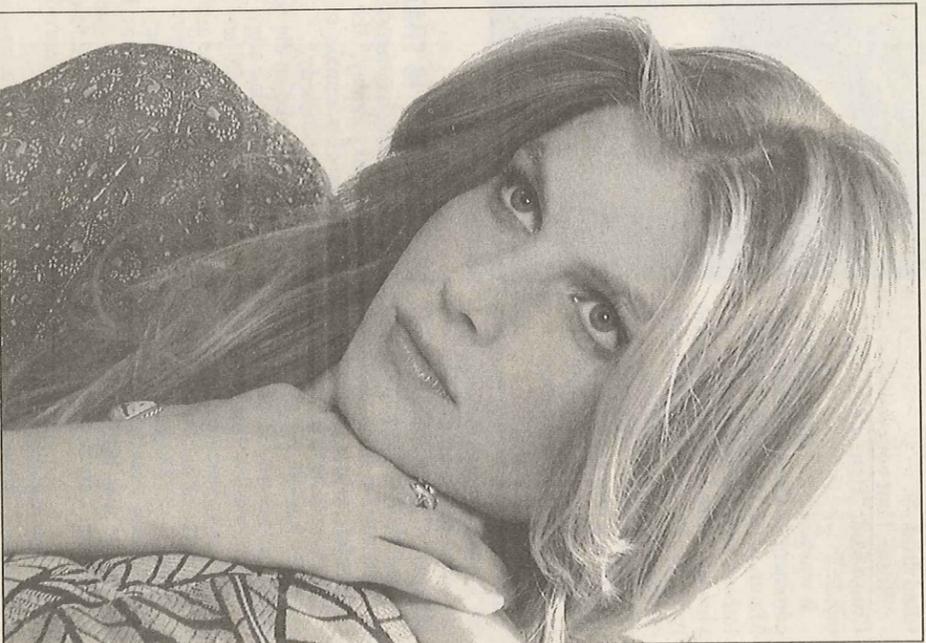
If anything, Coppola wanted his film to carry the stamp of whimsy that, he says, characterizes both his work and his personality. When "CQ" was complete and Sofia Coppola told her brother, "Your movie is so *you*," a delighted Roman Coppola knew exactly what she meant.

"It's a first-time movie about a first-time movie, and I sort of wanted to do it all. I wanted to have a car chase. I wanted to have a dramatic scene. I wanted space travel," says Coppola. "People ask me, 'Oh, what's your style, what are you about?' I like things that are playful and fun, things that kind of evoke a funny and playful sensation."

"CQ" star Lindvall saw that quality in her director. "He's got a funny side to him, and kind of a silly side to him as well, but also a very calm side," she says. "He definitely knew what he wanted, but he wasn't forceful and he wouldn't get upset if something went wrong."

Making camp

Fusing elements of "Danger: Diabolik," "David Holzman's Diary" and "Modesty Blaise," Coppola shot his film with 1960s lenses and camera equipment to help give it a period look. When pennies had to be pinched, the filmmakers deliberately put the squeeze on the film-within-a-film "Dragonfly" movie, figuring the cheaper it looked, the better. Coppola also cast 1960s B-movie star John Phillip Law (who starred in both "Barbarella" and "Danger: Diabolik") and L.M. Kit



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on director
Roman Coppola

Carson ("David Holzman's Diary") for "CO."
"Roman was extremely clear about the film he wanted to make," says Marcus. "Both he and his father are very assured filmmakers. They know what they want, which is a rare talent in any individual filmmaker."

His script and financing in place, Coppola was still without a leading lady three weeks before filming was to start in Luxembourg. Lindvall needed some convincing. A hugely successful magazine and runway model with campaigns for Chanel and Tommy Hilfger, among others, the 23-year-old Missouri native wasn't looking to break into the movies.

"I had a weekend to decide," says Lindvall. "I've never acted before, and I thought I could do a really terrible job and ruin the film, or even if the film did really well, that's kind of scary in itself. So I just said no."
But Coppola wasn't about to take no for an answer.

"She won me over right off the bat, and I was totally convinced. 'Oh, she's got to do it,' says Coppola. "I could appreciate that she was kind of at a place in her life where she kind of needed a new experience, and that's sort of what I was going through. The character is sort of plucked off the streets in the context of the movie, so I was going to pluck her out, too."

As hot as she looks within — and without — Dragonfly's god-awful tacky wardrobe, Lindvall confesses she didn't always quite "get" the appeal of the 1960s films "CO" is lampooning.

"It really all made sense when I got to Luxembourg and we sat down as a cast and read through the whole thing," says Lindvall. "We kind of got the quirkiness of it and I got the funny parts. I still haven't seen 'Barbarella.'"

Coppola, who has returned to the world of music videos and commercials since wrapping "CO," expects to try another movie eventually. A self-confessed procrastinator, he also wants to continue to spread his interests. *ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY* **A film-only Coppola? Fuggedaboutit.**



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"I always liked the idea of making a movie, but to be honest, I'd like to do a lot of things," he says. "I'd like to build a building, I'd like to have a family, I'd like to own a restaurant. I'd just like to keep my fingers in a lot of different areas."