People

"These are the kind of people who when you see them on the street you want to deny their presence," says Director Hector Babenco of the main characters in his new film, based on the novel Ironweed. Of course, even playing a skid row couple, Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep have a presence that is hard to deny. The Brazilian Babenco (Kiss of the Spider Woman) had never met the American stars before, "but after two days of working together, we had sealed a pact of fate," he exclaims. William Kennedy's Pulitzer-prize winning story, set in 1930s Albany, has a way of generating strong reactions. Nicholson calls his portrayal of Francis Phelan, an alcoholic ex-baseball player, his "toughest and most intricate role to date." And the interplay with Streep, observes Babenco, was dramatically a "rich, rich experience. I was totally in love with the work they were doing." Readers of the book will have a chance to see how subtly they are in December.

They both possess magnetism, but when the Dalai Lama was joined by Actor Richard Gere at a Manhattan press conference last week, it was Tibetan Buddhism's spiritual leader who gently commanded attention. Gere—who met His Holiness five years ago in northwestern India, at his headquarters in exile from Chinese-occupied Tibet—was there to promote the establishment of the first Tibetan House in the U.S. The center will help preserve and display "one of the ancient, rich cultures of the world," the Dalai Lama explained. The gravity of his message was underscored two days later as news came that at least six had been killed in a violent protest against Chinese rule by 2,000 Tibetans in the capital of Lhasa. Earlier in the week, during another clash, 27 lamas were arrested. The unrest, the first in ten years, was called by China a "direct outcome" of the Dalai Lama's exile activities. At week's end, following his return to New Delhi, the Dalai Lama said he was "grieved by the loss of lives," and called on the Chinese authorities to "stop the executions."

Launched in the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, it served as a kind of knowledgeable letter from home for Americans traveling abroad. Now the International Herald Tribune is sending back some news of its own. Last week the Trib celebrated its 100th anniversary with Paris' glitziest party of the year, a four-day gala culminating in a sit-down, black tie dinner for 1,500. The headline guests were Washington Post Owner Katharine Graham, New York Times Chairman Arthur Ochs Sulzberger and Art Buchwald, who got his start as a "boy columnist" on the Trib in 1949. Jointly published by the Times and Post and printed simultaneously in nine countries, the Trib has enjoyed a 50% jump in circulation in the past ten years, to 180,000. Says its editor, John Vinocur: "The Trib today is a mixture of two things—the enormous journalistic resources of the Times and the Post, and a tradition of really intelligent eclecticism and occasional eccentricity. Together they make quite a combination." And, every once in a while, quite a party.

If a man reaches 75 and is still climbing, it's time for more than a tip of the hat. When the Chicago Symphony Orchestra began planning this week's birthday concert for Sir Georg Solti, the still insouciant conductor had his own ideas. No Night of a Hundred Stars, if you please. Just three performers from the top of the A list: Tenor Placido Domingo, soprano Kiri Te Kanawa and, making his formal U.S. debut at the piano, Solti himself. Sir Georg began his illustrious career in Europe in 1924 as a pianist, but throughout his 18 years in command of the C.S.O. he had never performed publicly. Then last winter, when he and the Chicago were visiting San Francisco, a scheduled piece had to be canceled and he made an impromptu appearance at the piano. This time around, he plans to treat the audience to a Mozart double-piano concerto. Will Solti ever slow down? Well, first he wants to see the C.S.O. through its 100th season in 1991. Then, says Spokeswoman Joyce Idema, "maybe we'll give him the title of conductor laureate." Or maybe he'll just go back to being a full-time pianist.

—By Gay D. Garcia, Reported by David E. Thigpen/New York, with other bureaus

An officer and a guruk Gere and the Dalai Lama announcing Tibet House

Solti: the maestro plays on