

■ Philippe Mora will film a modern sci-fi tale set in the past ■ C. Thomas Howell's career has been family-oriented from the start.

## Sci-Fi Specialist

To keep up with Philippe Mora, it pays to keep an eye on Hollywood, an eye on a map of the world beyond and an eye on the best-seller lists.

Did somebody count three eyes?

Well, in discussing the French-born, Australian-reared, Hollywood-based Mr. Mora and his latest movie projects, that seems altogether fitting. Lately, Mr. Mora has been concerned with beings from outer space.

On Nov. 10, New Line Cinema will be releasing the director's "Communion," based on his old friend Whitley Strieber's nonfiction best seller about his encounters with extraterrestrials, and starring Christopher Walken and Lindsay Crouse as Mr. Strieber and his wife, Frances, and Frances Sternhagen as Mrs. Strieber's psychiatrist.

And next, Mr. Mora will be making a film that deals with an actual reported encounter with alien beings near Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico more than 40 years ago. It's titled "Majestic," and it is based on Mr. Strieber's new novel of the same title, published by Putnam.

The other day, Mr. Mora was on the phone from an airport in Albuquerque, N.M., at the conclusion of a location scouting trip. "The novel," he said, "is based on quite a famous incident when the Air Force put out a press release saying they'd come into possession of a crashed disk. Then the next day it was retracted, and ever since then it has been sort of a legendary incident in U.F.O. lore. This is the origin of all the stories of finding alien remains and Air Force cover-ups."

Majestic, he explained, was the name of a supposedly top-secret committee set up by President Harry S. Truman to look into the report of the downed flying saucer.

Discussing the challenge of "Majestic," Mr. Mora said, "Well, it's going to be very interesting to do a science-fiction film set in 1947. That really appeals to me. Usually these things are very futuristic or contemporary. This is futuristic in the past.

"It means that obviously the look of the picture will be very accurately 1947 but with these very advanced spacecraft and beings."

Mr. Mora has a production company with Mr. Strieber, whom he first met in London in 1968 when he was in film school and Mr. Strieber was a Pop artist. Mr. Mora expects to begin filming "Majestic" from a screenplay by Mr. Strieber in February or



Philippe Mora

March in New Mexico, on a 12-week schedule.

Mr. Mora also knows what he wants to film after "Majestic." It's "The Duchess of Windsor," based on the Charles Higham best seller about Edward VIII, who abdicated the British throne to marry an American divorcée, Wallis Warfield Simpson.

"I found the political revelations in Charles's book fascinating — the English aristocracy's incredibly close connections to the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany," Mr. Mora said. "That, combined with the racy elements, have the making of a very good film."

He conceded that the Windsor project would be a departure from his recent preoccupation with beings from outer space. "As far as I know," he said, "there aren't any aliens involved with that one, but you never know."

NEW YORK TIMES F 10-13-89 P.18 CR/BS