

CHRISTIAN FECHNER PRÉSENTE

JULIETTE BINOCHÉ DENIS LAVANT

Les Amants du Pont-Neuf

UN FILM DE
LEOS CARAX



Juliette Binoché

Avec **KLAUS-MICHAEL GRÜBER** dans le rôle de **HANS**

Producteur délégué **BERNARD ARTIGUES**
Directeur de la photo **JEAN-YVES ESCOFFIER**
Décors **MICHEL VANDESTIEN**
Ingénieur du son **HENRI MORELLE**
Montage **NELLY QUETTIER**

Producteurs exécutifs **HERVÉ TRUFFAUT - ALBERT PRÉVOST**
Directeurs de production **CHARLES FERRON - NICOLAS DAGUET**
Une coproduction **FILMS CHRISTIAN FECHNER - FILMS A2**

ARTIFICIAL EYE presents

LEOS CARAX's

L E S A M A N T S D U P O N T N E U F (18)

starring

JULIETTE BINOCHÉ DENIS LAVANT

France 1991 Colour English Subtitles 125 mins
Dolby Stereo

AN ARTIFICIAL EYE RELEASE

RELEASE: 11th SEPTEMBER at the LUMIERE CINEMA,
42 St Martins Lane, WC2 followed by
screenings at selected cinemas around
the country.

Further information from PAM ENGEL or SARAH HARVEY at
ARTIFICIAL EYE on 071-267 6036 or 071-482 3981

ARTIFICIAL EYE FILM COMPANY
211 Camden High Street
London
NW1 7BT

LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF (18)

Director LEOS CARAX
Screenplay LEOS CARAX
Director of Photography JEAN-YVES ESCOFFIER
Art Director MICHEL VANDESTIEN
Sound HENRI MORELLE
Costume designer ROBERT NARDONE
Make-up VALERIE TRANIER
Editor NELLY QUETTIER
Sound Editor NADINE MUSE
Producer CHRISTIAN FECHNER
Executive Producer HERVE TRUFFAUT
ALBERT PREVOST
Delegate Producer BERNARD ARTIGUES
Associate Producer ALAIN DAHAN
Director of Production CHARLES FERRON
NICOLAS DAGUET

A Films Christian Fechner/Films A2 Co-Production

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CAST

Michele JULIETTE BINOCHE
Alex DENIS LAVANT
Hans KLAUS-MICHAEL GRUBER

SYNOPSIS

Michele (JULIETTE BINOCHE) sees Alex (DENIS LAVANT) lying in the road with his leg injured. Alex has his leg patched up and hobbles back to his makeshift home on the Pont Neuf (which has been closed for repairs), which he shares with another down-and-out, Hans (KLAUS-MICHAEL GRUBER). He finds Michele sleeping on his pitch. She is suffering from a degenerative eye disease and has left home in order to draw until her developing blindness forces her to stop. At first resentful of this intrusion, Alex tries to get rid of Michele, but the couple fall in love. She nurses him back to health and he resumes his fire-eating act. During a Parisian fire-work celebration they steal a motor-boat and go water-skiing down the Seine. Hans smuggles Michele into the Louvre in the middle of the night to have one last undisturbed look at the paintings.

One day posters spring up all over Paris with Michele's face on them. A cure has been found for her eye disease and her family is trying to get her to contact them before it is too late. Alex is afraid he will lose her and tries to destroy as many of the posters he can: setting fire to a van full of the posters, he accidentally kills the bill-sticker.

Michele goes back to her family and has her sight restored. Alex goes to prison. She visits him there and promises to meet him on the Pont-Neuf when he is released.

One snowy night they meet again, jump off the bridge into the Seine, are rescued by a passing barge and sail off.

LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (18)

Extract from an interview given by CARAX to Les Inrockuptibles

(...)

Your love of the cinema dates from when you were 16?

Very early on I loved women on film. The cinema came later. I have no childhood memories, but there is one however... the evening the continuity announcer announced the actress from **The Avengers** would be different from the next episode on. I remember being terribly disappointed, crying ... Later, I used to go and see Charles Bronson films, things like that. Then, after I came to Paris at 16 I discovered other films with other women. And that behind the screen there was a man with a machine. A man and a woman had one day shared what I was seeing there, sitting there, all alone. So that was what I wanted to do: get up, leave the darkened auditorium and share for myself.

What was the nature of your relationship with cinema? Were you an avid cinema-goer?

Oh yes. Of course, it was the Cinematheque then. Silent films at the Cinematheque. I was convinced that silent films had been made for me. It was at a time when I didn't speak, I was ensconced in this auditorium, free of the past. It didn't last long, two, three years, but I used to go often. It was as if I had been asleep for seventeen years and that, on awakening, I'd discovered my world.

Was there a particular trigger for this frenzy?

Watching a film ... At a lunchtime screening at the Saint-Andre des Arts, I had just arrived in Paris. It was an old film and I said to myself, "Here's a man who all those years ago knew that one day I would come to this auditorium, and he made this film to change my life." On leaving the cinema I found a 500 F note on the pavement and I thought, "This will be the money I'll use in my first film." From then on it all happened very fast.

What made you choose the films you went to see during this period?

I'd met a boy called Elie Poicard who initiated me into cinema. After that, I caught on quickly. From the time you discover Lilian Gish in a Vidor, you go and see her in a Griffith; then you go and see other Griffith films without Lilian Gish, etc. Like that, I got through a great number of silent films.

(...)

The majority of filmmakers come to films from a fairly long and logical career path or university background. But all we know about you is that you collaborated with Cahiers and that you attended the lectures given by Daney and Toubiana at Jussieu.

Not at all, that's not true. I knew there were free screenings at the university in Paris, so I went to see the films. But I wasn't a student. And then one day, Daney or Toubiana, whom I'd never spoken to before, suggested I try and write if I wanted to earn a bit of money. I said yes, I went to see a Stallone film and I wrote about it. But I did very little.

Was there something else in your filmmaking apprenticeship ?

No ... I ripped off the company for whom I worked as a flyposter and I bought myself a Bolex 16mm camera - a nice one, I still have it - with which I imagined making this film for a girl called Florence ... Almost all the film took place in a maid's room in the rue du Louvre where I had lived when I first arrived in Paris... It was called *La Fille rêvée*... In the opening scene she awakens from a nightmare, in her bed - it was a bad experience.. For a start, to open with a bedroom scene was terrifying both for her and for me. I sensed it would be impossible to finish this thing with her.. So I put advertisements in *Libération* and I found another girl, one I wasn't at all attracted to. I pretended to film for a bit ... For one scene in a Chinese restaurant we positioned a projector above the tables (they were serving banana flambe). The projector exploded and set fire to the curtains. There was uproar in the restaurant; it ended up in a mini *Towering Inferno*. That put an end to that little adventure.

(...)

The financial pitfalls aside, how did the destiny of *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* change so dramatically, from the original idea to the finished result?

The original idea was to make a liberating film, a film where the actors and I would be free. Free to live and to film at the same time. That would have been possible had we filmed with a super 8. Finally, I got round it another way. It was a strange kind of freedom because we ended up in prison several times... So, life was there, I suppose.

Do we not find this idea of a film that is free and light in the opening scenes of *Les Amants*, where the tramps are being rounded up to be taken to the hospice at Nanterre?

No, that has always been the risk involved in the film: to confront reality but not to mimic it. I hear people saying now that the film is split: part documentary part fiction. Rubbish ... Freedom doesn't mean carrying the camera on your shoulder instead of fixed to a crane; freedom is how you see things. And for me, whether I film a real-life tramp lost in thought or a couple of make-believe tramps dancing on a bridge that is a gigantic set,

under a shower of fireworks, it's the same way of looking. It's the feeling that changes.

Is your desire to film people who are broken, clapped-out, vagabonds, a reaction to current cinema that is too clean, too antiseptic?

Cinema, television, press, thought ... they have the cleanliness of a body in a morgue... After *The Night is Young* I had completely lost direction in my filmmaking. So, we set off anew without signposts and without rations. It's perhaps for that reason that things almost turned cannibal... I had the idea of talking about love without make-up, without a telephone or a bed. About love in its raw state, without trappings... Someone who has nothing, who is old enough to love and who discovers love like an unknown virus that eats away at the body and the brain.

(...)

When you say you hate this age, is this a vague and general feeling or can you give specific examples?

We're engulfed by reason. And reason kills, but it kills... There is a writer who said, "You can't make a baby reasonably, you need delirium at the moment of coitus", and it's the same for everything... Whether it be a film, or an encounter ... What democracy has given us is a dictatorship of reason which reigns over all and ends up causing much anguish. Especially when it is exercised over young people. Rock is reasonable, the cinema is reasonable, relationships are reasonable... Nowadays you have to make love in rubber if you don't want to die, which I understand, I'm for a healthy life, but ... condoms are everywhere, not only in the bedroom, we live in them... All this bodily hygiene, cleanliness of the soul, it disgusts me.

Do you make a conscious effort to escape from the reasonable as you call it?

I often find myself in chaotic situations... I don't know if it's conscious or not. It's the idea of not picnicking on a beautiful lawn .. It's opening oneself up to risk, to imperfection ... This age is obsessed with money. People think that if a film is expensive to make, therefore it must be perfect. No... *Les Amants* isn't perfect. It's alive. Well, alive... More importantly, this film is open. The idea behind this film was generosity... When I saw the pain involved for us in making it, for us, for Juliette and Denis, the only thing that could possibly save us was generosity. Cinema is a bit like the army in the shadows. It's a form of resistance against the world, like autism. But the form is projected, generous, it has to explode, splattering stains that are more or less beautiful, clean. There, there was this idea of generosity, that people don't realise when you're spending lots of money. They think you're stealing from them, that you're wasting taxpayers' money. As for me, I got myself thrown out of my film... Art is a way of life that is fairly loutish. It's always been that way.

(...)

The press has written many things about the filming of *Les Amants*. Do you wish to comment on certain accusations that have been directed at you?

I went the distance with this film for Juliette and me, for those who made it with us, for those whose story it tells, and for those women and men who ... the audience I'll never meet who'll reflect on it.

Do difficulties get your adrenaline going? Is it a case of "the more complex the situation, the better you like it" as you once said to your set designer?

We're bound by the impossible. I certainly don't go out of my way to complicate things. On the contrary, what's impossible is simplicity. That's how *The Night is Young* finished ... When Alex was dying he said, "Girls used to tell me "Be simple" ... it was so difficult to be simple". That was my starting point. This quest for simplicity ... to put myself in the position of saying that I know nothing anymore about cinema, which was taken by some in affluent circles as arrogance.

(...)

LEOS CARAX

Leos Carax was born in 1960 in Suresnes in France. At sixteen he dropped out of school and had a succession of jobs, one of which led him to work as a translator for an American director. He became a journalist and cinema critic, and made two shorts: LA FILLE AINEE and STRANGULATION'S BLUES.

His first feature film, BOY MEETS GIRL provoked the Parisian critics and seduced the public. Marvellously photographed in black and white by Jean-Yves Escoffier, BOY MEETS GIRL was one of the most astonishing debut films in recent years.

It was with THE NIGHT IS YOUNG (MAUVAIS SANG) made in 1986 that the 25 year old Carax reached a larger public: this enigmatic thriller mixes memories of Chaplin with homages to Godard. In this intense and romantic film, the sounds and the images reveal the characters: the explosive choreography of Denis Lavant and the pale tints of the Louise Brooks-like Juliette Binoche, gives moments of pure cinema: a mixture of breathless reality and crazy dream.

In his new film LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF, Carax has made a visually dazzling, highly personal love story.

1978	LA FILLE REVEE (short)
1980	STRANGULATION'S BLUES (short)
1983	BOY MEETS GIRL
1986	MAUVAIS SANG (The Night is Young)
1988/91	LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF

LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF (18)

JULIETTE BINOCHÉ

Juliette Binoche was born in 1964 into a family of artists (her father and sister are directors, her mother teaches theatre). She soon caught the acting bug. At the age of 15 she left for Paris where she found a job as a cashier. She took a course with Vera Gregh before entering the Paris Conservatoire. She started with small roles for great directors: in Godard's HAIL MARY and Jacques Doillon's LA VIE DE FAMILLE.

It was with Andre Techine's RENDEZ-VOUS, shown in the 1985 Cannes Film Festival, that she became the revelation of the year and the public discovered a promising, luminous, natural and above all positive actress.

In 1986 she was awarded the Priz Romy Schneider. She is currently shooting Damage in London with Jeremy Irons.

FILMOGRAPHY

1983	LIBERTY BELLE (directed by Pascal Kane)
1985	JE VOUS SALUE MARIE (Hail Mary) (directed by Jean-Luc Godard)
1985	LA VIE DE FAMILLE (directed by Jacques Doillon)
	RENDEZ-VOUS (directed by Andre Techine)
1985	ADIEU BLAIREAU (directed by Bob Decout)
1985	LES NANAS (directed by Annick Lanoe)
1986	MON BEAU-FRERE A TU MA SOUER (directed by Jacques Rouffio)
1986	MAUVAIS SANG (The Night is Young) (directed by Leos Carax)
1988	THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING (directed by Philip Kauffman)
1991	LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (directed by Leos Carax)
	MARA (directed by Mike Figgis)
1992	WUTHERING HEIGHTS (directed by Peter Kosminsky)
1992	DAMAGE (directed by Louis Malle starring Jeremy Irons)
1992	BLEU (directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski)

LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF (18)

DENIS LAVANT

FILMOGRAPHY

- 1982 LES MISERABLE (directed by Robert Hossein)
- 1983 L'HOMME BLESSE (directed by Patrice Chereau)
- 1983 COUP DE FOUDRE (directed by Diane Kurys)
- 1985 BOY MEETS GIRL (directed by Leos Carax)
- 1986 PARTIR, REVENIR (directed by Claude Lelouch)
- 1986 MAUVAIS SANG (The Night is Young) (directed by Leos Carax)
- 1990 MONA ET MOI (directed by Patrick Grangperret)
- 1991 LES AMANTS DU PONT-NEUF (directed by Leos Carax)

KLAUS MICHAEL GRUEBER

The role of Hans in LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF is his first cinema part.