



FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: FOR THE LOVE OF FILMS

Love on the Run (L'Amour en fuite)

A man in his early thirties, that day finally divorced, takes his son to the station to send him off on a school camping holiday. In order to carry out this assignment he has had to give up a date with his latest girlfriend. From a train standing at the opposite platform a beautiful woman (perhaps a girl still?) smiles and waves her recognition: she flaps a copy of the young man's only published novel, called *Les Salades d'amour*. He is exquisitely flattered. He turns to his son with a parting word of advice: 'Always be nice to girls.' The trains draw out of the station simultaneously. He hesitates a moment and, like a 20th century D'Artagnan, he leaps aboard the train containing the girl who is reading his novel. Antoine Doinel is in flight.

With the important exception of *Stolen Kisses*, the saga of this young man's love life through three and a half films is, to me, the least appealing of François Truffaut's glorious output. There's an occasional coyness; an indulgence of the actor Jean-Pierre Léaud who plays Antoine, which jars. The director loses some of his magic when faced with his alter ego – one notices how much better Léaud was as the outrageously egoistic film star in *Day for Night* than he is as the marginally less selfish Doinel. Perhaps the fact that the series has strayed from direct autobiography may account for the relative thinness of the later films. But, all seen and done, Truffaut's thinness is like a gigantic tapestry where a thousand details delight even if the colours and the texture have, as it were, dimmed.

Love on the Run, said to be the last of the series, has individual scenes which no other director in the history of the cinema could achieve with such elegant, heart-stopping, comic authority. He also uses flashbacks from the previous films with an exemplary tact and skill. Antoine has been through a lot since he stared out at us, without accusation or pity, in the last, famous frozen frames of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The moment when cinema changed. There's a shot of him in the new movie tearing down a parapet, as one of his girls says, with exasperated wryness: 'He's always running, he hasn't changed.'

This is true of Doinel, but not of Truffaut. Doinel has married, had a son, chased innumerable girls, published one novel and held down his job as a proof-reader in a printing press; meanwhile his creator has directed some 20 films, the majority of them masterpieces. The gap in achievement, and by implication in imagination, is perilously large. For all the tenderness and objectivity which Truffaut allows his hero, Doinel remains little more than a posturing, skirt-chasing, pretentious man – a nightmare Parisian whose arrogance is coated in self-pity. Nor, curiously, does he show any of the conventionally neurotic signs of a child who has suffered in the way we saw in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. His only insecurity seems to be the highly conventional one of possessing a well-developed libido. He is bourgeois through and through; on the evidence of his majestically humane and varied films, Truffaut is not like that.

The girls in the new movie are as terrific as ever – all of them prettier now than they were in their original manifestations. There is the Colette of Marie-France

Pisier, who is also, unsurprisingly, credited with co-writing the script; there's clearly high intelligence inside her voluptuous gaiety. Claude Jade's Christine now has some of the cool sweetness of Delphine Seyrig in *Stolen Kisses*. And Dani, as Liliane, is as sexy as Silvana Mangano in *Bitter Rice* – in fact she looks very like her. The newcomer to the budding grove is Dorothée, who plays Doinel's latest love, Sabine. She is a characteristically happy dream Parisienne – practical, romantic, kind, independent and very pretty too.

The plot is of a complexity which defies resumé. Suffice it to say that Antoine has discovered his latest love, Sabine, by piecing together a photograph of her which he has found after seeing a man tear it up in a frenzy of rage whilst telephoning in a kiosk. This act, and the attempt to find Sabine, is to be the plot of his new novel (which he assures Colette is not at all autobiographical!). The themes are more easily identified. Doinel is maturing emotionally; we are to believe that perhaps the final winning of Sabine indicates that he will settle down. The flight is meant to be over. He is no longer on the run – though the criminal overtones in the English translation of the title *L'Amour en fuite* are unfortunate: Truffaut never in any of his works equates love with crime, though in *Shoot the Pianist* and *Mississippi Mermaid* he examines the connection between them.

This maturing is best exemplified in the most masterly scene in the film in which, by chance, he meets an old lover of his mother's, now grizzled and rheumy-eyed, who had once been responsible for his greatest suffering years ago. They have a quick lunch together – significantly paying their own shares – whilst M. Lucien, the old lover, in a gloriously understated performance by Julien Bertheau, speaks of Antoine's mother with a sort of agitated nostalgia. Antoine, he insists, had never known her goodness, her love for them both. Antoine had not been to her funeral and has to admit that he has never visited her grave. M. Lucien is aghast: 'But she is buried next to Marguerite Gautier – the heroine of Dumas' *Camille*.' It is Doinel's turn to be surprised. 'But she was an invention. The heroine of a novel,' he says.

In the scene which follows we see the grave of the mother, with its photographic icon topping the dates of her birth and death. Both lover and son are doubly reconciled. Beyond that the relationships between art and life, between fiction and autobiography, are established as unimportant. We never see the grave of Marguerite Gautier. We, the audience, may decide if it interests us, whether the character on which Dumas based his cocotte is lying beside the late Madame Doinel.

There is evidence of this particular Truffaut-like trust in other scenes. Colette and Christine meet by chance in search of the new girlfriend, Sabine. They are on the staircase of her apartment building, introduce themselves with hesitant politeness – and descend into light to sit on a park bench and at first tentatively, and finally torrentially, discuss and reminisce about the follies of loving Antoine. There is an atmosphere of delighted generosity which is wholly, mysteriously free of sentimentality and which could only be produced by this director. Truffaut may be full of invention and ideas, but he knows first things first – he understands love of any kind. He has a respect for it which many other considerable artists reserve exclusively for pain or ecstasy.

Julian Jebb, *Sight & Sound*, Winter 1979/80

LOVE ON THE RUN (L'AMOUR EN FUITE)

Director: François Truffaut
©: Les Films du Carrosse
a Les Films du Carrosse production
Production Manager: Marcel Berbert
Production Co-ordinator: Roland Thénot
Unit Manager: Geneviève Lefebvre
Production Secretary: Josiane Couëdel
1st Assistant Director: Suzanne Schiffman
2nd Assistant Director: Emmanuel Clot
3rd Assistant Director: Nathalie Seaver
Script Supervisor: Christine Pellé
Screenplay by: François Truffaut, Marie-France Pisier, Jean Aurel, Suzanne Schiffman
Director of Photography: Nestor Almendros
Camera Assistants: Florent Bazin, Emilia Pakull-Latorre
Gaffer: Jean-Claude Gasché
Electricians: Serge Valezy, Michel Leclercq
Key Grip: Charles Freess
Grips: Jacques Fréjabue, Gérard Bougeant
Stills Photography: Dominique Le Rigoleur
Editor: Martine Barraqué-Curie
Assistant Editors: Jean Gargonne, Corinne Lapassade
Art Director: Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelco
Properties: Michel Grimaud
Art Department Crew: Pierre Gompertz, Jean-Louis Povéda
Costumes: Monique Dury
Make-up: Thi Loan N'Guyen
Titles and Opticals: Euro-Titres
Laboratory: L.T.C. Saint-Cloud
Film Stock: Eastmancolor, Pyral
Music by: Georges Delerue
Music Publisher: Editions Sidonie
Sound Recordist: Michel Laurent
Sound Mixer: Jacques Maumont
Sound Studio: S.I.M.O. (Boulogne)

Cast

Jean-Pierre Léaud (*Antoine Doinel*)
Marie-France Pisier (*Colette Tazzi*)
Claude Jade (*Christine Doinel*)
Dani (*Liliane*)
Julien Bertheau (*Monsieur Lucien*)
Rosy Varte (*Colette's mother*)
Daniel Mesguich (*Xavier Barnerias, a librarian*)
Dorothee (*Sabine Barnerias*)
Marie Henriau (*divorce judge*)
Jean-Pierre Ducos (*Christine's lawyer*)
Pierre Dios (*Maître Renard*)
Alain Ollivier (*judge in Aix en Provence*)
Julien Dubois (*Alphonse Doinel*)
Monique Dury (*Madame Ida*)
Emmanuel Clot (*Antoine's colleague*)
Christian Lentretien (*train attendant*)
Roland Thénot (*angry man on telephone*)
Alexandre Janssen (*child in restaurant car*)
Chantal Zaugg (*child*)

France 1978©

94 mins

THE ANTOINE DOINEL CYCLE

Antoine et Colette (from L'Amour à vingt ans)

+ Stolen Kisses (Baisers volés)

Sat 1 Jan 17:50, Tue 11 Jan 20:35,

Sat 15 Jan 12:10, Sun 23 Jan 15:30

Bed and Board (Domicile conjugale)

Mon 3 Jan 13:00, Thu 13 Jan 20:45, Wed 19 Jan 14:30

Love on the Run (L'Amour en fuite)

Wed 5 Jan 20:40, Sat 15 Jan 15:30, Mon 31 Jan 20:40

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