



## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

# Code Unknown (Code inconnu Récit incomplet de divers voyages)

### Code Unknown (Code inconnu Récit incomplet de divers voyages)

Director: Michael Haneke

©: Bavaria-Film, Filmex Romania, France 2 Cinéma, Arte France Cinéma, MK2 Productions, Films Alain Sarde

In co-production with: Bavaria-Film,

Filmex Romania, France 2 Cinéma, Arte France Cinéma, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Romanian Ministry of Culture

Presented by: MK2 Productions, Films Alain Sarde

With the participation of: Canal+

Supported by: Eurimages Conseil de l'Europe, Procirep

Executive Producer: Yvon Crenn

Producers: Marin Karmitz, Alain Sarde

Bavaria Film GmbH Co-producer: Thilo Kleine, Michael Weber

ZDF Co-producer: Christoph Holch

Filmex Romania Co-producer: Titi Popescu

Romanian Unit Production Manager:

Doïna Dragnea

Senegal Unit Production: Moussa Touré

Unit Production Manager: Bruno Bernard

Romanian Unit Production Manager:

Razvan Constantinescu

Senegal Unit Production Manager: Mandiaye Touré

Unit Manager: Manuel Recolin

Romanian Unit Managers: Crîna Crisan,

Doïna Torcatoru

Senegal Unit Manager: Maguette Fonkou M'Baye

Location Manager: Thomas Pitre

Assistant Director: Alain Olivier

2nd Assistant Director: Joseph Rapp

Romanian Unit 1st Assistant Directors:

Melia Cerchez, Virgil Nicolaescu

Script Supervisor: Chloe Perlemutter

Casting: Kris Portier de Bellair

Romanian Unit Casting: Melia Cerchez,

Loredana Calina Soradi

Screenplay: Michael Haneke

Director of Photography: Jürgen Jürges

1st Assistant Operator: Irina Lubchansky

2nd Assistant Operator: Marion Befve

Steadicam Operator: Carlos Cabecerán

War and Metro Stills Photographs: Luc Delahaye

Visual Effects: Duboi

Special Effects: Pierre Foury, Daniel Lenoir,

Benoît Squizzato

Editors: Andreas Prochaska, Karin Hartusch

Romanian Unit Supervising Art Director:

Calin Papura

Art Director: Manuel de Chauvigny

Romanian Unit Art Directors: Gabriel Bucur,

Vlad Teodor, Viorel Banete, Aurel Draghici,

Ion Vasilescu

Set Decorator: Laurence Vendroux

Costumes: Françoise Clavel

Romanian Unit Key Costumer: Gloria Papura

Costumer: Isabelle Leblanc

Romanian Unit Costumer: Adina Bucur

Wardrobe: Germaine Ribet

Key Make-up: Thi-Loan Nguyen

Romanian Unit Key Make-up: Ion Toma

Key Hairstylist: Isabelle Luzet

Titles: Ercidan

Music: Giba Gonçalves

Sound: Guillaume Sciama, Jean-Pierre LaForce

Studio Recordist: Éric Ferret

Sound Editor: Nadine Muse

Sound Effects: Laurent Lévy

### SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

A youth tosses a wrapper into the lap of a Romanian woman begging in Paris... Haneke's exploration of the various consequences of this thoughtless act leads into the lives of a range of characters, mostly unconnected save that their different experiences touch on the lies, inequalities, injustices and contradictions of contemporary Western Europe. Fragmented, philosophically rigorous, it is nevertheless lucid, dramatically compelling and deeply affecting.

bfi.org.uk

'Morality,' *Cahiers du cinéma* critic Luc Moullet famously said in 1959, 'is a question of tracking shots.' Michael Haneke's first – predominantly – French-language film begins with an exquisitely realised nine-minute tracking shot initially following Juliette Binoche's Anne as she walks along the street. Were this not a Haneke film, it would be tempting to view these opening moments as a homage to the *nouvelle vague* filmmakers' fondness for long-take sequences that juxtapose a beautiful actress with a Parisian boulevard caught in real time. But as in Haneke's earlier *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* and *The Seventh Continent*, both of which introduce the fragmented, episodic narrative structure employed in *Code Unknown*, Haneke is concerned here with philosophical first principles rather than referentiality.

As this sequence-shot bears witness to the sudden street incident that links the disparate experiences of Maria (a Romanian immigrant), Amadou (the son of West African refugees), Anne, and Jean (the brother of Anne's boyfriend Georges), the film offers the first of a number of scenes which use the multicultural public spaces of Paris, not for their fashionability (Haneke points out he could as easily have filmed his script in London) but as a laboratory for testing the relationship between representation and reality. The results confirm Haneke's reputation as one of cinema's most accomplished moralists.

Both *Benny's Video* and *Funny Games* tended to didacticism and indulged Haneke's perverse modernist desire to punish us for our collusion with the commodified – and thus, for Haneke at least, mendacious – narrative certainties of dominant cinema. *Code Unknown*, on the other hand, furthers Haneke's project of countering what he sees as the degradation of our sense of the real by modulating with true virtuosity between various realisms. The opening sequence is by turns manipulative – stoking our indignation at the policemen's casually insensitive and implicitly racist handling of the confrontation between Jean and Amadou – and naturalistic, artfully thwarting our desire to reach easy judgement. In a later sequence in the Métro, a static camera observes in neutral long shot – again with an unbroken take – as Anne is tormented by an aggressive Arab youth who, incensed by her lack of reaction to his unprovoked taunts, spits in her face. In between the film presents us with fragments – interspersed with Brechtian fades and sudden Godardian sound edits – which turn on the difficulty of relating in a moral fashion to others in a world in which any communication seems fraught with

Recordist ADR: Lionel Le Bras  
Artistic Consultant: Hervé Icovic  
Screenplay Translator: Bernard Mangiante  
Romanian Translator: Ion Miron Damian  
Bambara Translator: Johnson Traoré  
Sing Language Translator: Béatrice Blondeau  
Cast:

Juliette Binoche (*Anne*)  
Thierry Neuvic (*Georges*)  
Sepp Bierbichler (*the farmer*)  
Alexandre Hamidi (*Jean*)  
Hélène Diarra (*Aminata*)  
Ona Lu Yenke (*Amadou*)  
Djibril Kouyate (*Youssouf*)  
Luminita Gheorghiu (*Maria*)  
Crenguta Hariton Stoica (*Irina*)  
Bob Nicolescu (*Dragos*)  
Bruno Todeschini (*Pierre*)  
Paulus Manker (*estate agent*)  
Didier Flamand (*director*)  
Walide Afkir (*young Arab*)  
Maurice Bénichou (*old Arab*)  
Carlo Brandt (*Henri*)  
Philippe Demarle (*Paul*)  
Marc Duret (*first policeman*)  
Arsinée Khanjian (*Francine*)  
Florence Loiret (*Amadou's friend*)  
Nathalie Richard (*Mathilde*)  
Andrée Tainsy (*Madame Becker*)  
Elisabeth Marceul, Melissande Zeddiam,  
Brandon Croteau, Sonia Chauvelin,  
Baptiste Gintzburger-Batle, Sarah Agogue Tasse,  
Alexandra Croteau, Jerome Ferreira, Melanie Lhote,  
José Marques (*children*)  
Guessi Diakite-Goumdo (*Salimata*)  
Jean-Yves Chatelais (*shop owner*)  
Laurent Suire (*second policeman*)  
Féodor Atkine (*taxi customer*)  
Malick Bowens (*witch doctor*)  
Ioan Marian Boris (*Nicu*)  
Monica Popa (*Nuta*)  
Ada Navrot (*Florica*)  
Giba Gonçalves (*percussion teacher*)  
Irina Lubtchansky (*camera assistant*)  
Dominique Douret (*David*)  
Tsyu Bridwell (*David's friend*)  
Antoine Mathieu (*restaurant waiter*)  
Constantin Barbulescu (*Mihai Popa*)  
Domeke Meite (*Demba*)  
Aïssa Maïga (*Rokia*)  
Marany Fofana (*Youssouf's sister*)  
Costel Cascaval (*man in the garden*)  
Sandu Mihai Gruia (*group leader*)  
Daniel Dublet (*uncle*)  
Boris Napes (*father in cemetery*)  
Isabelle Pietra (*mother in cemetery*)  
Cristina Ioanidis (*Tatiana*)  
Ion Haiduc (*man in squat*)  
Guillaume Morvilliers (*Pierrot*)  
Pascal Loison (*jolly man*)  
France/Germany/Romania 2000©  
117 mins

## SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25\*

\* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: [sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk](http://sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk)

**SIGHT AND SOUND**

the dangers of victimisation. Anne, while ironing, turns down the television when she hears screams coming from another apartment and this too is left unexplained and unresolved.

Alongside this quotidian malaise are the characters' attempts to achieve contact through dissimulation, such as when Anne challenges her elderly neighbour, who may or may not have written a letter purporting to be from an abused child in the adjoining apartment, or when Anne, during an argument with Georges, claims – we don't know whether it's true or not – to have aborted his child when he was in Kosovo. Georges' own subterfuge, his surreptitious photographing of people on the Métro – a form of surveillance that leads to a marvellous montage of portraits (the work of war photographer Luc Delahaye) – further complicates the film's insistent thematic build up around responsibility to others and the unbridgeable glacial distance between people.

As Haneke has suggested in interviews, all of this would merely be a reiteration of various modernist clichés about the impossibility of communication were the film not to comprise one superb sequence after another. Rather than dryly demonstrating a thesis, each scene conveys a deeply affecting sense of authenticity and immediacy. The performance of the deglamorised – but still luminescent – Juliette Binoche, whose approach to Haneke initiated the film, contributes immeasurably to the success of *Code Unknown*. A sequence from the film she is shooting (she plays an actress), in which she is interrogated – one of two startling scenes that reveal Haneke's grasp of the strength of our desire to be manipulated (the other – at first deliberately confusing levels of reality – involves a toddler crawling on the edge of a tall building) – is a masterclass in close-up acting.

That amid all these heavy-duty moral/aesthetic preoccupations Haneke manages to offer powerfully understated images of the lot of economic migrants – Maria's silent deportation and return to Paris – adds to the sense of *Code Unknown* as a major achievement. Orchestrating his long takes, his superb use of off-screen space and chilly long shots, Haneke sets about if not reinventing, then reinvigorating a non-naïve realism for the 21st century. In the process, he gives us the most intellectually stimulating and emotionally provocative piece of European cinema of recent times.

Richard Falcon, *Sight and Sound*, May 2001

## BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at [bfi.org.uk/join](http://bfi.org.uk/join)

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at [www.bfi.org.uk/signup](http://www.bfi.org.uk/signup)

## BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on [player.bfi.org.uk](http://player.bfi.org.uk)