



**MICHEL PICCOLI: A FEARLESS TALENT**

# The Diary of a Chambermaid

**The Diary of a Chambermaid  
(Le Journal d'une femme de chambre)**

*Director:* Luis Buñuel  
*Production Companies:* Spéva Films, Ciné-Alliance, Filmsonor (Paris), Dear Film (Rome)  
*Presented by:* Cocinor  
*Produced by:* Serge Silberman, Michel Safra  
*Production Supervisor:* Henri Baum  
*Production Accountant:* Maurice Otte  
*Production Manager:* U. Pickard  
*Assistant:* Jacqueline Dudilleux  
*Unit Production Manager:* André Retbi  
*Administration:* Jean Van Praag, Robert Demollière  
*Secretary:* Odette Laeupplee  
*Assistant Directors:* Juan-Luis Buñuel, Pierre Lary  
*Script Supervisor:* Suzanne Durremberger  
*Adaptation/Dialogue:* Luis Buñuel, Jean-Claude Carrière  
*Based on the novel by:* Octave Mirbeau  
*Director of Photography:* Roger Fellous  
*Cameraman:* Adolphe Charlet  
*1st Assistant Camera:* René Schneider  
*2nd Assistant Camera:* Agathe Beaumont  
*Stills Photography:* Jean-Louis Castelli  
*Editor:* Louise Hautecoeur  
*Assisted by:* Arlette Lalande  
*Art Director:* Georges Wakhevitch  
*1st Assistant Art Director:* René Calviera  
*Set Decorator:* Charles Mérangel  
*Costume Designer:* Georges Wakhevitch  
*Costumes:* Jacqueline Moreau  
*Key Make-up:* Maguy Vernadet  
*Hair:* Simone Knapp  
*Laboratory:* Franay LTC  
*Sound Recording:* Antoine Petitjean  
*Assisted by:* Robert Cambourakis  
*Subtitles:* Jaib Warner  
*Novel Publisher:* Fasquelle Editeurs  
*Studio:* Franstudio-Saint Maurice  
*Cast:*  
Jeanne Moreau (*Célestine*)  
Georges Géret (*Joseph*)  
Daniel Ivernel (*Captain Mauger*)  
Françoise Lugagne (*Madame Monteil*)  
Muni (*Marianne*)  
Jean Ozenne (*Monsieur Rabout*)  
Michel Piccoli (*Monsieur Monteil*)  
Joëlle Bernard (*Captain Mauger's companion*)  
Françoise Bertin  
Aline Bertrand, Pierre Collet (*travellers*)  
Michelle Dacquid  
Madeleine Damien (*cook*)  
Marc Eyraud (*police secretary*)  
Jean Franval  
Gilberte Génat (*Rose*)  
Gabriel Gobin  
Bernard Musson (*the sacristan*)  
Jeanne Peres (*gossip*)  
Marcel Rouzé (*station manager*)  
Dominique Sauvage (*Claire*)  
Andrée Tainsy (*peasant*)  
Geymond Vital (*brigadier*)  
Jean-Claude Carrière (*priest*)  
Claude Jaeger (*judge*)  
Dominique Zardi (*police officer*)\*  
Marcel Le Floch \*  
France-Italy 1964  
101 mins

\* Uncredited

Buñuel updates Octave Mirbeau's 1890s story to a strangely timeless 1930s and the onset of Fascism, so that Célestine (Jeanne Moreau), newly employed at a rural mansion, fends off the attentions of her married boss, his anti-semitic, perhaps paedophile gamekeeper, and his ex-army neighbour. Piccoli excels as the neurotic, lecherous master-of-the-house, while Moreau is wonderfully ambiguous as the maid prepared to take control.

## A contemporary review

There is a distinct air of paradox about Buñuel's remake of the Octave Mirbeau novel previously filmed by Renoir. The novel would seem to fit Buñuel's idiosyncratic talents almost too snugly, and yet, for all the relish with which he elaborates on the fetishistic and pathological elements of the story, the film emerges as curiously untypical. It is not merely that its polished, elegant surface contrasts equally with the harsh, explosive urgency of *Viridiana* or *Nazarín* and with that air of triumphing over obstacles that marks such films as *La joven*. More troubling is an uncharacteristic air of uncertainty, which seems to derive from a lack of clarity over the character and significance of Célestine, and a puzzling shift of focus midway through the film.

When one recalls the film in detail, however, these reservations seem no more than carping. The emotional and visual keynote of the film is struck early on in Célestine's remark on the sadness of the countryside, and this underlying melancholy is maintained through all the different episodes and changes of mood in a masterly way. Buñuel's superbly economical narrative skill keeps one continuously engrossed, and his command of cinematic resources is such that even the rather old-hat symbolism of the murder (shots of a wild boar, and a rabbit, beating wings on the soundtrack, and so on), makes a powerful impact. The Monteil household offers Buñuel scope for a corrosive analysis of the master-servant relationship, as well as serving as the perfect paradigm for his vision of society as hopelessly corrupt from top to bottom. Buñuel, moreover, has a sense of history and politics which enables him, while concentrating on his characters as individuals, to set them in their historical and social context with a deft conviction that goes much deeper than a merely conventional sense of period. Joseph, for instance, apart from being a sharply drawn personality in his own right, is also the definitive portrait of a certain type of petit bourgeois Fascist mentality.

One enjoys, too, the expected flashes of wickedly sardonic humour (the preposterous priest, for example, gravely evaluating for Mme Monteil's benefit the propriety of various types of unorthodox 'caresses', and adding the stern proviso that she must on no account take pleasure from them), and one relishes especially the panache of Buñuel's final flourish. Having peremptorily dismissed a parade of chanting Fascists from the screen, he mockingly tilts his camera up to a stormy, lightning-riven sky, a symbolic ending as richly suggestive as Antonioni's street lamp in *L'ecclisse*.

Buñuel, it should be added, is splendidly served by his collaborators: Georges Wakhevitch's appropriately cluttered interiors and Roger Fellous' evocative, grey-toned photography contribute tellingly to the film's total effect. The cast, too, is uniformly excellent, particularly Georges Géret, Jean Ozenne and, of course, Jeanne Moreau. The film is almost worth a visit just to see how, with the merest twitch of that expressive mouth, she modulates from curiosity through amusement to boredom at Monsieur Rabout's antics.

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### **La Mort en ce jardin (Evil Eden)**

Thu 1 Jun 20:35; Tue 6 Jun 18:15

### **Le Mépris (Contempt)**

From Fri 2 Jun

### **The Diary of a Chambermaid (Le journal d'une femme de chambre)**

Fri 2 Jun 18:15; Fri 16 Jun 20:55

### **Belle de jour**

Fri 2 Jun 20:40; Sun 25 Jun 18:45

### **Les Choses de la vie (The Things of Life)**

Sat 3 Jun 12:30; Tue 13 Jun 20:45

### **Themroc**

Sat 3 Jun 15:00; Wed 14 Jun 18:15

### **La Grande Bouffe (Blow-Out)**

Sat 3 Jun 20:30; Mon 12 Jun 18:10

### **Ten Days' Wonder (La Décade prodigeuse)**

Sun 4 Jun 15:20; Sat 17 Jun 20:40

### **Vincent, François, Paul et les autres**

Sun 4 Jun 18:00; Sun 18 Jun 13:10

### **Beyond Good and Evil:**

### **The Discreet Charm of Michel Piccoli**

Mon 5 Jun 18:15

### **Passion**

Tue 6 Jun 21:00; Fri 16 Jun 18:20

### **Spoiled Children (Des enfants gâtés)**

Wed 7 Jun 18:10; Mon 12 Jun 20:40

### **Une chambre en ville (A Room in Town)**

Wed 14 Jun 20:45; Sat 24 Jun 13:00

### **Mauvais sang (The Night Is Young)**

Sat 17 Jun 15:15; Thu 22 Jun 20:40

### **Milou en mai (Milou in May)**

Sun 18 Jun 16:00; Mon 26 Jun 20:40

### **Belle toujours**

Wed 21 Jun 20:50; Sun 25 Jun 16:30

### **La Belle Noiseuse**

Sat 24 Jun 15:20; Wed 28 Jun 18:10

### **Habemus Papam – We Have a Pope**

Sun 25 Jun 14:00; Thu 29 Jun 20:45

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**SIGHT AND SOUND**

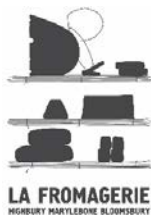
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