



MICHEL PICCOLI: A FEARLESS TALENT

Passion

Passion

Director: Jean-Luc Godard

©/Production Companies: Sonimage, Sara Films (Paris)

Production Companies: Films A2,

Film et Vidéo Productions, SSR Télévision Suisse

Producer: Alain Sarde *

Unit Manager: Daniel Chevalier

Production Managers: Martine Marignac,

Catherine Lapoujardé, Armand Barbault

Administration: Michèle Cretel

Location Manager: Ruth Waldburger

Production Secretary: Danielle Tholomé

[Production] Assistant: Lee Collver

1st Assistant Director: Alain Tasma

2nd Assistant Director: Gérard Ruey

3rd Assistant Director: Bertrand Theubet

Continuity: Lydie Mahias

Screenplay: Jean-Luc Godard

Director of Photography: Raoul Coutard

Camera Operator: André Clément

Assistant Operator: Jean Garcenót

Gaffers: Michel Vaucoret, Jean-Claude Basselet,

Alain Cousseau, Jacques Guyot

Grips: Jean Hennau, René Albert Pequignot,

Gaston Verdonck, Frédérique Erni

Video Operator: Jean-Bernard Ménoud

Stills Photography: Anne-Marie Miéville

Editor: Jean-Luc Godard

Art Directors: Serge Marzolf, Jean Bauer

Construction: Manu Décor

Painter: Yvon Aubinel

Costume Designers: Christian Gasc, Rosalie Varda

Wardrobe: Bernard Minne, Rosemary Melka

Hairdresser: Patrick Archambault

Music Extracts: Maurice Ravel,

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Antonín Dvorák,

Gabriel Fauré, Ludwig van Beethoven

Song: Léo Ferré

Sound: François Musy

Mixer: Bernard Leroux

Subtitles: Brooks Riley, Barbet Schroeder,

Cinétitres

Specialist: Bernard Gruninger

Consultant: Anne-Marie Miéville

Cast:

Isabelle Huppert (*Isabelle*)

Hanna Schygulla (*Hanna*)

Michel Piccoli (*Michel Gulla*)

Jerzy Radziwilowicz (*Jerzy*)

László Szabó (*Lazlo*)

Jean-François Stévenin, Patrick Bonnel,

Sophie Loucachevsky, Barbara Tissier,

Myriem Roussel, Magali Campos,

Serge Desarnauds, Agi Banfalvi, Ezio Ambrosetti,

Manuelle Baltazar, Sarah Beauchesne,

Bertrand Theubet, Sarah Cohen-Sali,

Catherine van Cauwenberghé, Sophie Maire,

Cornélia Mandry, Cathy Marchand,

Marie-Annick Abgrall, René Mennotier,

Frantizek Mandik, Attila Bokor

France-Switzerland 1982©

88 mins

* Uncredited

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If *Passion* is about anything, it is about light. It's about light in the pedantically literal sense that, for example, *Gandhi* is about Gandhi – here, you might say, is a film about that shaft of light, that 'bloody Tinkerbell' which Attenborough famously refused to have stand in for his protagonist. Not only do its characters repeatedly refer to the light, either on a specialist or a casually conversational level – 'La lumière ne va pas', mutters Jerzy while setting up one of his tableaux (the phrase has been subtitled as 'The lighting isn't working' where 'The lighting isn't right' is what was meant); 'Il n'y a pas de lumière', says Hanna in the dark well of a staircase – but also sources of light in the form of film studio spotlights, table lamps, matches being struck, etc., are often visible on the screen. *Passion's* own cinematographer, Raoul Coutard, comments off-screen on the significance of the single brightly lit figure in the first of the film's tableaux – Rembrandt's 'The Night Watch' – a figure who then obligingly absents herself from the composition for the purposes of his demonstration. In each sequence, practically in each shot, the lighting changes, from the watered-silk quiver of reflections on the surface of a studio tank to the dazzling play of sunlight and shadow on the snow to the merciless Photomat glare which highlights the flaws of Isabelle's complexion.

A film about light is, by extension, a film about the cinema itself. In 1983, only a fool would attempt to contain a global definition of the cinema within one neat formula; and, as for defining beauty, there even fools have learned not to tread. Nevertheless... the medium's chromosomal essence, its DNA, so to speak, must reside in the tension generated between what is filmed and what is not filmed. A camera describes a lateral pan, for instance, tracking the movement of a performer through an interior or exterior: that is what is filmed. As the pan proceeds, however, a number of visual units will necessarily 'pan' in the reverse direction, meeting, then being obscured by, then subsequently reappearing from behind the performer: that is what is not filmed, i.e., never wholly premeditated by the director. Though certain filmmakers (Fellini, Resnais, the Eisenstein of *Ivan the Terrible*) have endeavoured to obtain maximum control over the organisation of their visual material, the only instance of total domination that comes to mind is Murnau's *Sunrise*.

Consider an early scene in which Janet Gaynor, having prepared a lunch box, waits under a tree for her husband George O'Brien, at that moment ploughing his little tract of land. The ox harnessed to the plough enters the frame diagonally from the lower right-hand corner. It advances just far enough for the preordained image to fall nicely into place... then comes to an abrupt halt. Had that ox advanced a fraction of an inch more, the composition would have gone askew – an almost parodic illustration of Murnau's mania for perfection. *Sunrise*, a great film, is also a case apart. What the majority of (good) directors aim for is control, not over every zig and zag of the film's discourse, but over the ultimate harmony (or harmonious discordance) of its diverse elements, of the filmed and the not-filmed. For this school, by far the more extensive, the supreme model would be *La Règle du jeu*, a work to which *Passion* bears an odd resemblance.

In fact, Godard goes further than Renoir, to the point where it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish the filmed from the not-filmed. *Passion* is an explosion

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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 prodigieuse)

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

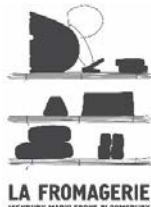
La Belle Noiseuse

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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– a diffraction, as one says of light – of filmic materiality (like the unmotivated explosion which ends *Zabriskie Point*), a multifarious dialectic of texture against texture, voices against lip movements, the lyric against the staccato, film against video, a film studio against a factory, love against work, naked flesh against rich, sickly fabrics, sound against image, narrative against non-narrative, light against darkness, light, indeed, against light.

Nothing is ever allowed its 'proper' *élan*. In a shot somehow both ridiculous and moving, a young woman jots down a room-service order, her torso bent back on itself like a contortionist's or like a nutcracker. Michel Piccoli is burdened with a racking cough, one which appears to be caused by the rose permanently dangling from his lips like a Gitane Bleu. Isabelle Huppert stutters. The camera stutters, too, in the film's opening shot, a glittering skyscape bisected by the straight-as-an-arrow, fluffy white wake of a jet, an exquisite shot 'marred' by some disturbingly jerky camera movements. Yet, elsewhere, there are intimations of a classical, nostalgic, marbly perfection: in the tableaux (even though Jerzy is never satisfied with the way they are lit); in the music (Ravel, Fauré, Mozart, Beethoven and Dvorák); and in the Ingresque curves of nude extras (mostly feminine, but with one becurled cherub).

Which leads to the second definition. What, the critic brashly enquires, is beauty? Perfection with faults? In painting (except for the readymades of Schwitters or Robert Rauschenberg), everything is painted. In music (except for a few recent aleatoric pieces), everything is composed. In literature (except for the automatic writings of the Surrealists and the cut-up processes of William Burroughs and co.), everything is written. Only in film, a modern art by definition, does the premeditated co-exist innately with the unpremeditated; and if Jerzy's tableaux are beautiful in themselves, it's precisely because they remain flawed, imperfect – in a word, *vivants*. Godard wrestles with the angel of perfection (as does Jerzy, quite literally, with a recalcitrant angel in one of the Delacroix tableaux), knowing full well that he cannot win, knowing equally that in his defeat lies the salvation of his film. *Passion* is a masterpiece.

Gilbert Adair, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1983