



## Mauvais sang (The Night Is Young)

Director: Léos Carax

Production Companies: Films Plain-Chant, Soprofilms, FR3 Films, Unité 3

With the participation of:

Centre national de la cinématographie, Sofima

Executive Producer: Alain Dahan

Producer: Philippe Diaz

Associate Producers: Georges Reinhart,

Limbo-Films, Sogedis, Julien Drahy, J.M. Dupré

Production Managers: Michèle Arnould,

Jean-Loup Monthieux, Catherine Huhardeaux

Production Assistants: Frédéric Delpech,

Luc Bouchitte, Franck Congi, Eric Monin,

Stéphane Volante, Jean-Luc Vincent,

Daniel Dupouy

Assistant Directors: Antoine Beau, Christian Faure,

Zazie Carcedo, Ariel Sctrick

Casting: Hélène Bernardin

Screenplay: Léos Carax

Director of Photography: Jean-Yves Escoffier

Camera Operator: Jean-Yves Escoffier

Special Effects: Guy Trielli

Editor: Nelly Quettier

Art Directors: Michel Vandestien,

Thomas Peckre, Jack Dubus

Set Dressers: Pascal Lechat, Bruno Dubet,

Paul-Philippe Arnaud, Marie-Paule Clemot Streliski,

Sabine Lamale, Frédéric Lavaud, Line Augereau,

Michel Choquet

Costume Designer: Robert Nardone,

Costumes: Dominique Gregogna, Martine Metert

Wardrobe: Lucille Reichert

Head Make-up: Chantal Houdoy

Choreography: Christine Burgos

Sound Recording: Harrik Maury, Joël Riant,

Claude Hivernon, Henri Morelle, Julien Cloquet

Sound Re-recording: Jacques Lévy,

Gérard Rousseau

Supervising Sound Editor: Hélène Muller

Sound Effects: Jérôme Levy

Consultant: Marion Binoche

Stunts: Rémy Julienne, Antoine Baud

Aerial Stunts: Jean Gamaury,

Jean-Jacques Guiounet, Laurence Blanc,

Yves Fugen

Cast:

Michel Piccoli (*Marc*)

Juliette Binoche (*Anna*)

Denis Lavant (*Alex*)

Hans Meyer (*Hans*)

Julie Delpy (*Lise*)

Carroll Brooks (*American woman*)

Hugo Pratt (*Boris*)

Mireille Perrier (*young mother*)

Serge Reggiani (*Charlie*)

Jerome Zucca (*Thomas*)

Charles Schmitt (*commissar*)

Paul Handford

François Negret

Philippe Fretun

Thomas Peckre

Ralph Brown

Eric Wasberg

France 1986

119 mins

## MICHEL PICCOLI: A FEARLESS TALENT

# Mauvais sang (The Night Is Young)

Reminiscent of Godard's early genre movies, Leos Carax's second feature combines a semi-parodic crime fable about rivals seeking to steal a vaccine for a new virus, a faltering romance between innocents trapped in an adult world, and the director's evident delight in conspicuous cinematic artifice and whimsy. Piccoli invests Max, a reluctant gangster with a young lover (Binoche, in an often thankless role), with unexpected pathos.

## A contemporary review

The *bande à trois* consisting of Besson, Beineix and now Carax, currently acclaimed as the 'newest wave' in French cinema, illustrates how strong the example of the old New Wave remains. This is a cinema about cinema about cinema, highly derivative and deliberately so, which most resembles both the cinema of two decades ago and the American cinema it refers to in its urbanity. It is metropolitan through and through – a *mise en scène* of what in *Alphaville* seemed merely fantastic but is now often a gruesome reality.

Both Carax's features, *Boy Meets Girl* and *Mauvais sang*, reinvent the city, transforming it into a Utopia for the year 2000. Carax assumes the surrealist heritage but has exchanged serendipity for the menace appropriate to the new millennium.

Few moviegoers would attend to Carax's films for their plot, towards which the director's attitude is at best casual: if you must have it, let it be slender and preferably unoriginal. *Boy Meets Girl* is eponymously the tale of young love. *Mauvais sang*, on the other hand, is a sort of thriller (a nuance captured in the otherwise inexplicable English translation of the title *The Night Is Young*) which is peopled by sort of underworld characters, with a vague gangster (Michel Piccoli splendid in the Eddie Constantine role), a would-be moll (Juliette Binoche got up to look like Louise Brooks but called Anna), a deceased gangster's cardsharp son, Alex, plus an accomplice, Hans, who is the only one of them who looks remotely heavy enough for the part. This crew of slightly flaccid criminals is attempting in desultory fashion to steal the only known cure for STBO, a new and fatal virus which attacks all those who make love without love.

Needless to say there is a rival gang, in the pay of a different laboratory, which is led by a demonic American woman who looks like the ageing Gloria Swanson, and they attempt to get Alex to double-cross his pals. A chase ensues followed by a shoot-out. You've seen it all before, usually starring Anna Karina and Jean-Paul Belmondo. These themes are commonplace and the use of the genre is so familiar in French cinema that we would almost have been surprised if they had not been used to structure the film. Nevertheless, Carax's skill should not be underestimated, and the insistently heavy-handed self-referentiality of comparable films – losseliani's *Les Favoris de la Lune* or Deville's *Le Paltoquet* – shows that the thriller cannot necessarily be recycled with impunity, even if it is ultimately no more than a convenient narrative peg. In *Mauvais sang*, unless one were to choose a paranoid interpretation of the film, the plot remains resolutely insignificant.

## MICHEL PICCOLI: A FEARLESS TALENT

### Le Mépris (Contempt)

From Fri 2 Jun

### Mauvais sang (The Night Is Young)

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

### Ten Days' Wonder (La Décade prodigieuse)

Sat 17 Jun 20:40

### Vincent, François, Paul et les autres

Sun 18 Jun 13:10

### 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

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

Sat 24 Jun 13:00

### La Belle Noiseuse

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

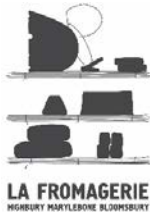
### Habemus Papam – We Have a Pope

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

### Belle de jour

Sun 25 Jun 18:45

### Promotional partner



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In fact Carax most resembles his predecessors, both the pre-1968 Godard and the early Truffaut, in the area in which he is most unexpectedly original, namely the emotional intensity and anxiety that so evidently run through his films. Despite what some viewers have said about youth culture, *Boy Meets Girl* is less about how to be streetwise in the 1980s than about love – love writ large and without any of the irony the title implies. In the same way, much of *Mauvais sang* is devoted to Alex's attempts to seduce Anna, and the fact that in Piccoli she already has a lover twice her age and that she might be struck by STBO were she to succumb without loving Alex only makes the attempt more poignant. It is extremely disconcerting, because so unexpected, to encounter such emotions presented without cynicism or patronage, and is perhaps something only the French cinema now does, but the reason Carax's films are compelling is that they combine visual pleasure with sentiment. Thus Alex's courtship of Anna is played out as a series of gags from the silent cinema but almost completely without words.

Here Carax is brilliantly served by Denis Lavant who plays the leading role 'Alex' in both films – such reiteration leading one to believe that the actor serves, à la Jean-Pierre Léaud, as a kind of alter ego. It comes as no surprise to learn that Lavant has a background in mime. His face, which is gaunt, pockmarked with acne and with narrow, deep-set eyes, is the most compellingly melancholy since Jean-Louis Barrault, whom he resembles not as the youthful Baptiste but as an old man. It is an old young face, constantly wearing grease-paint, the sad clown of legend destined never to be successful in love. Through the expressiveness of face and body, of a language beyond or anterior to words, particularly with Lavant and Juliette Binoche but to a greater or lesser degree with all his actors, Carax goes back to the origins of the cinema as well as to a state of emotional innocence temporarily recaptured in a look or a gesture – the woman tap-dancing in *Boy Meets Girl*, the juggling sequence in *Mauvais sang*. This is why Carax's films make Besson's look merely slick, all gloss and no substance however accurately they capture a mood, since unlike his contemporaries Carax appears able to portray a corrupt world with an innocent eye – indeed, the innocent eye of the early days of the film industry.

Jill Forbes, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1987