



NEW RELEASES

The Beast

The Beast (La bête)

Director: Bertrand Bonello

©: Les Films du Belier, My New Picture,

Arte France Cinéma, 9459-5154 Québec Inc.,

AMI Paris, Jamal Zeinal Zade

a Les films du Bélier, My New Picture,

ARTE France Cinéma, Sons of Manual, AMI Paris,

Jamal Zeinal Zade co-production

Produced by: Justin Taurand, Bertrand Bonello

Director of Post-production: Christina Crassaris

Script Supervisor: Élodie van Beuren

Screenplay: Bertrand Bonello

Based on a treatment by: Bertrand Bonello,

Benjamin Charbit, Guillaume Bréaud

Adaptation/Dialogue: Bertrand Bonello

Loosely based on 'The Beast in the Jungle' by:

Henry James

Director of Photography: Josée Deshaies

Steadicam Operator: Loïc Andrieu

Editor: Anita Roth

Production Designer: Katia Wyzkop

Costume Designer: Pauline Jacquard

Make-up: Maïna Militza

Hair: Miguel Santos

Music: Bertrand Bonello, Anna Bonello

Sound: Nicolas Cantin, Clement Laforce,

Jean-Pierre Laforce

Cast:

Léa Seydoux (Gabrielle Monnier)

George MacKay (Louis Lewanski)

Guslagie Malanda (Poupée Kelly)

Dasha Nekrasova (Dakota)

Martin Scali (Georges)

Elina Löwensohn (seer)

Marta Hoskins (Gina)

Julia Faure (Sophie)

Kester Lovelace (Tom)

Félicien Pinot (Augustin)

Laurent Lacotte (architect)

France-Canada 2022©

146 mins

Digital

A Vertigo release

Bertrand Bonello on 'The Beast'

The Beast deals with a lot of disparate ideas and themes, some of which you explored in Coma. When and how did you begin conceptualising the new film?

For me it was a mix of many desires, the first being a desire to make a melodrama. That's what led me to *The Beast in the Jungle*, which for me is one of the most heartbreaking, beautiful and tragic melodramatic novels.

Another desire was to mix genres. One of the ideas in the novel is that love is fear. I wanted to go further into that fear by adding some other sections, such as a slasher tale in a more contemporary setting, and then a futuristic story, where you have this horrible dilemma of having to choose between being able to love and being able to work.

Lastly, I wanted to make a film with a female lead, which I had never done before. I started writing the film about five years ago, and at one point it began to feel like a miniseries. It took me a long time to find the right form.

It was also delayed at one point due to the pandemic, which is when I made *Coma*. So yes, because of this there is a relationship between the two films. There are some ideas in *The Beast* that I was first able to try out in *Coma*, which, among other things, taught me that it requires a lot of work to make a truly free movie, one that goes from one universe to another, one period to another, one texture to another.

What made you finally want to make a film about the future?

It's the future, but it's also the present. It's tomorrow. I think I made a mistake setting the film in 2044. It should probably be 2027. I didn't realise when I started writing the script that the AI themes would be so contemporary. I liked the idea of trying science fiction for the first time, but a science fiction that's almost familiar. Sci-fi is usually either hyper-technological or post-apocalyptic. I wanted to find another way. This is mostly just the world as we know it, except that behaviour has changed.

Can you talk about the idea of expanding the novel into a film set in three eras?

One of the reasons the film begins with the party in 1910 is because that scene establishes all the concepts in the film right away. That scene is the closest to the book; all the dialogue comes from it. Having set up all these themes allows them to naturally permeate the other stories, but the changes in time periods also impact those themes. We can say that in the 1910 section Gabrielle has a fear of love, but in 2014 it's Louis who has that fear, which he expresses a different way, by repressing something and not saying it. And in 2044 Gabrielle understands that fear, but it's too late.

At what point did you decide to set the contemporary portion of the film in Los Angeles?

It came from the Louis character's story in that section, and the videos he shoots while stalking Gabrielle. I won't say that we don't have incels in France, but these kind of videos, at least for me, do not work in French. It's a very American phenomenon, like only America could create this character, which is in fact based on the American mass murderer Elliot Rodger. So for me this part of the film had to be set in LA.

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Àma Gloria

From Fri 14 Jun

Green Border Zielona granica

From Fri 21 Jun

Bye Bye Tiberias Bye Bye Tibériade

From Fri 28 Jun + Q&A on Fri 28 Jun 18:00

Sleep Jam

From Fri 12 Jul

About Dry Grasses Kuru Otlar Üstüne

From Fri 26 Jul

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From 7 June

Network

From Fri 28 Jun

The Conversation

From Fri 5 Jul

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When did you learn about Elliot Rodger?

I saw all the videos when it happened, and I immediately wrote his name down in my notebook, where I keep ideas for possible projects. What interested me wasn't the fact that he killed some girls, but the videos, and the words he's using. For example, if I had written the character's dialogue myself, instead of taking it from Rodger's videos, it would have been crazier and more evil. What's scary about his words is that they're so calm, so normal.

Those scenes almost have a Lynchian quality to them.

It's funny you say that: there was a screening of the film in a Paris a few days ago, and someone told me that in one of Louis' videos you can see David Lynch's house in the background. I don't know if that's true, but maybe there's a connection there. As a French person shooting in LA, you can't help but see so many images from cinema history coming up inside you. It's mythological.

The two films I did watch before shooting were *The Age of Innocence* (1993) and *When a Stranger Calls* (1979). The period connection with *The Age of Innocence* is probably obvious, but *When a Stranger Calls* was useful to get some ideas for the 2014 section in terms of how to stage scenes with a girl alone in a house, and how to use objects, like the phone, or sounds, to build tension. Of course, there's also techniques taken from all sorts of slasher films, from *Halloween* (1978) to *Scream* (1996), but *When a Stranger Calls* was of particular use. I really love that film.

How did you come to the idea of using the Great Flood as the first of the film's catastrophes?

My idea for the film was that each section would have an intimate catastrophe and a collective catastrophe. I chose the flood for the first collective catastrophe because of the images and footage of it that survives, and the feelings they evoke. I use some of that archival material in the film. But I also liked the year 1910 because it's a moment where everyone thought we were entering a century of peace and progress, and the 20th century has been terrible. 1910 is a luminous moment; four years later Europe sunk into a dark tunnel of war.

When I saw the film in Venice it had a QR code in place of the credits, which I thought might be a temporary thing, but I've heard that's how it's continued to show?

Yes, it's definitive. If you scan the code there's an eight-minute credit sequence, as well as one cut scene. For me a credit sequence is part of a film, so I thought it would be perfect – since things end with Gabrielle crying and Louis showing no emotion – to conclude the film with something equally emotionless: a QR code. It somehow becomes even more lonely for the viewer in that moment.

Interview by Jordan Cronk, bfi.org.uk, 24 May 2024