



WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA

# The Nature of Love (Simple Comme Sylvain)

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Directed by: Monia Chokri

©: 9472-3558 Québec Inc., MK Productions

Production Company: Metafilms, MK2 Films

Presented by: Metafilms

In co-production with: MK Productions

In association with: Memento Distribution,  
MK2 Films

Executive Producer: Philippe Lombart

Produced by: Sylvain Corbeil, Nancy Grant,  
Nathanaël Karmitz

Producers: Nancy Grant, Sylvain Corbeil,  
Nathanaël Karmitz, Elisha Karmitz

Associate Producer: Marie-Claire Lalonde

Production Manager Canada: Marie-Claire Lalonde

Production Manager France: Pascal Metge

Production Accountant: Mélanie Bouchard

Post-production Supervisor France: Mélanie Karlin

Post-production Supervisor Canada:

Pierre Thériault

1st Assistant Director: Cédrick Kluyskens

Script Supervisor: Nathalie Paquette

Casting Director: Annie St-Pierre

Screenplay: Monia Chokri

Director of Photography: André Turpin

B Camera Operators: Sara Mishara, Pierre Vanier

Special Effects: MFX Productions

Editing: Pauline Gaillard

Assistant Editor: Manon Granet, Clara Chapus

Artistic Conception/Art Direction: Colombe Raby

Assistant Art Director: Charles-Olivier Tremblay

Set Designer: Marc-André Tratch

Set Decorator: Kimberley Thibodeau

Costume Designer: Guillaume Laflamme

Wardrobe Master: Thomas Langlois-Lacoste

Key Make-up Artist: Adriana Verbert

Key Hair Stylists: Ann Lou Landry, Colette Martel

Titles: La Brigade du Titre, Mathieu Decarli

Music/Original Music Composed and Conducted  
by: Emile Sornin

Piano/Organ/Harpsichord/Celesta/Drums:

Emile Sornin

Music Recording: Dragisa Stojanov

Sound: François Grenon, Julien Roig,

Olivier Guillaume

Sound Mixer: Jonas Orantin

Dialogue Editor: Simon Poupard

Stunt Co-ordinator: Sébastien Rouleau

Cast:

Magalie Lépine-Blondeau (*Sophia*)

Pierre-Yves Cardinal (*Sylvain*)

Francis-William Rhéaume (*Xavier*)

Monia Chokri (*Françoise*)

Steve Laplante (*Philippe*)

Marie-Ginette Guay (*Sylvie*)

Micheline Lanctôt (*Madeleine*)

Guillaume Laurin (*Olivier*)

Linda Sorgini (*Guylaine*)

Mathieu Baron (*Kevin*)

Christine Beaulieu (*Karine*)

Lubna Playoust (*Joséphine*)

Guy Thauvette (*Pierre*)

Karelle Tremblay (*Camélia*)

Johanna Toretto (*Vanessa*)

Kenny Dorvil (*Harry*)

Jade De Bruto (*Sun*)

Jordan Arseneault (*Drew*)

Eve Aubert (*bar waitress*)

Lila Sofia Houle (*Carolane*)

Zack Charbonneau (*Jayden*)

Phil Lauzon (*local singer*)

Philosophy professor Sophia has been living with her partner Xavier for ten years. Their relationship is intellectually stimulating; however, when she meets rugged carpenter Sylvain, an intense physical chemistry erupts.

Monia Chokri's fun romantic comedy is an extremely sexy watch – packed with laughs and some razor-sharp truths about desire, social class and co-dependency.

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'Humans destroy to create new things,' observes Sophia idly at a Montreal dinner party. It's the faintest batsqueak of warning to the audience that this sweet-natured fortyish lecturer on the philosophy of love, snug in a pleasant, passionless marriage, will find herself sideswiped by a *coup de foudre*. Monia Chokri's spiky tale has all the elements of a twinkly Netflix romcom, as Sophia (Magalie Lépine-Blondeau) falls hard and fast for Sylvain (Pierre-Yves Cardinal), the rugged, beer-swilling contractor renovating her rural lake cabin. But from them she's fashioned a sharp, sensuous comedy, puzzling over the clash between love and class identity to stitch Sophia and Sylvain's torrid affair into a pointed social satire.

Chokri carefully picks over the upheaval of Sophia's tidy, cerebral life, which has been overwhelmed by her delight in their urgent, adulterous couplings. The professionally ethical Sophia can't reconcile her covert months of feverish backwoods excitement with her loyalty to know-it-all husband Xavier. Cleverly reworking the tropes of the class-crossing romance, the film sidesteps the sentimentality of *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003) or the doomy melodrama of contractor-cautionary tale *Leaving* (2009), focusing on Sophia's doggedly academic attempts to weigh up a risky new love against her cosy, intellectual home life. Can she pledge herself to a man to whom Michel Sardou's cheesy lyrics are the last word in love poetry?

Tonally, the film rides a fine if occasionally unsteady line, between celebrating Sophia and Sylvain's joy in one another, and mocking their utter romcomminess. Swoony retro music cues swell around the couple as they gaze raptly at one another. Giddy autumnal shots skim the lake and russet woods outside Sophia's Quebec cabin, emphasising the 'earthy' and 'natural' qualities she finds entrancing in Sylvain. Chokri's script even sets up a mind-body opposition between Sophia's chattering-class city life, with its screwball-pace dialogue, and her slow, sex-centred rural idyll with Sylvain. Once they are a legitimate couple, however, the film dedicates itself to the grating mismatch between Sophia's snobby, bougie circle and Sylvain's boozy, book-shunning family.

Léa Caron (*Gisèle*)  
Clara David (*Paloma*)  
Noam Desbiens-Lépine (*Victor*)  
Dominick Landry (*redneck*)  
Canada-France 2023  
111 mins  
Digital

Courtesy of Vertigo Releasing

Woman with a Movie Camera is generously supported by Jane Stanton.

The results are comic, poignant and overworked, but underpinned by fine, increasingly uneasy lead performances. Cardinal's openhearted Sylvain is far from a cartoon hick, but Lépine-Blondeau injects into her infatuation just the right amount of growing irritation at his uncouthness. Chokri's readiness to explore love's endless uncertainties makes for a fresh, thoughtful take, but one ultimately unsure where to land its ruminative romance.

Kate Stables, *Sight and Sound*, [www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound](http://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound), 1 July 2024

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## DISCOMFORT MOVIES

### Eraserhead

Mon 1 Jul 20:40 (+ extended intro to the season by curator Kimberley Sheehan); Sun 14 Jul 17:50; Sat 27 Jul 20:50

### The Lost Weekend

Sat 6 Jul 15:10; Sun 21 Jul 17:45; Mon 29 Jul 20:40

### Requiem for a Dream

Sat 6 Jul 20:45; Fri 19 Jul 18:20

### A Woman under the Influence

Sun 7 Jul 19:30; Sun 28 Jul 17:20

### Bug

Mon 8 Jul 18:15; Thu 25 Jul 20:50

### They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

Tue 9 Jul 18:10; Mon 22 Jul 20:35

### Threads

Thu 11 Jul 18:15; Sun 21 Jul 15:15

### Possession

Mon 15 Jul 18:00

### Funny Games

Mon 15 Jul 20:45; Sat 27 Jul 14:15

### Climax + Strasbourg 1518

Tue 16 Jul 18:10; Sun 28 Jul 20:20

### Crash + Titane

Sat 20 Jul 18:15, 18:30

### Audition Ôdishon

Wed 24 Jul 20:45; Wed 31 Jul 18:15

### Skinamarink

Sun 28 Jul 14:20; Wed 31 Jul 20:45

**Relaxed Screenings: Eraserhead** + intro and discussion

Mon 29 Jul 18:10

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## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

### Wild Strawberries Smultronstället

Mon 1 Jul 11:50; Tue 9 Jul 20:50; Sun 21 Jul 14:20; Tue 30 Jul 18:20

### Point Blank

Tue 2 Jul 12:20; Wed 17 Jul 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Sat 27 Jul 18:30

### Pierrot le fou

Tue 2 Jul 18:10; Fri 12 Jul 20:40; Mon 15 Jul 12:10; Mon 29 Jul 20:45

### Taxi Driver

Wed 3 Jul 17:50 (+ intro by Chantelle Lavel Boyea, BFI Assistant Curator of Television); Sat 13 Jul 18:00; Tue 16 Jul 12:15; Tue 23 Jul 12:20

### The Passenger Professione: reporter

Thu 4 Jul 20:40; Sat 6 Jul 12:00; Mon 15 Jul 18:10; Fri 19 Jul 12:20

### Au hasard Balthazar

Fri 5 Jul 12:20; Wed 10 Jul 12:20; Fri 19 Jul 20:45; Wed 31 Jul 18:10 (+ intro)

### The English Patient

Sat 6 Jul 17:15; Sun 21 Jul 19:20

### The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie Le

Charme discret de la bourgeoisie  
Sun 7 Jul 17:10; Thu 11 Jul 12:20; Sat 20 Jul 16:10

### Theorem Teorema

Mon 8 Jul 12:20; Wed 10 Jul 18:15 (+ intro); Wed 17 Jul 12:30; Sun 28 Jul 20:30

### Gloria

Sat 13 Jul 13:10; Tue 16 Jul 20:35; Sat 20 Jul 13:30; Tue 30 Jul 20:30

### Unforgiven

Sun 14 Jul 19:50; Tue 23 Jul 20:30; Thu 25 Jul 14:40

### Bitter Victory

Thu 18 Jul 20:45; Sun 28 Jul 12:00

### Daughters of the Dust

Mon 22 Jul 12:20; Wed 24 Jul 18:10 (+ intro by Arike Oke, Executive Director of Knowledge, Learning and Collections); Sat 27 Jul 20:45

### F for Fake

Mon 22 Jul 18:20; Wed 24 Jul 12:40; Fri 26 Jul 20:50