



## Big Screen Classics

# Swimming Pool

### Swimming Pool

Director: François Ozon  
©/Presented by: Fidélité  
©/In association with: Headforce Limited  
©/Co-production: France 2 Cinéma, Gimages Films, Foz  
With the participation of: Canal+  
Producers: Olivier Delbosc, Marc Missonnier  
Co-producer: Timothy Burrill  
Line Producer: Christine de Jekel  
Unit Managers: David Mitnik, Bruno Amestoy  
Pre-production Manager (English Crew): Jo Farr  
Production Manager (English Crew): Marshall Leviten  
Production Accountant: Thierry Chapat  
Accountant (English Crew): Jon Duncan  
Location Manager (English Crew): Michael Harm  
Director of Post-production (Fidélité): Mélanie Karlin  
1st Assistant Director: Antoine Garceau  
2nd Assistant Director: André Cavaillé  
Script Supervisor: Agnès Feuvre  
Casting: Antoinette Boulat  
Casting (English Crew): Sarah Bird  
Screenplay: François Ozon  
With the collaboration of: Emmanuèle Bernheim  
Director of Photography: Yorick Le Saux  
Steadicam Operators: Jean-Baptiste Thibaud, Patrick de Ranter  
Gaffer: Jean-Noël Viry  
Key Grip: Carlos Ribeiro  
Stills Photographer: Jean-Claude Moireau  
Computer Graphics Designers: Daniel Esperanssa, Cyril Vonck  
Editor: Monica Coleman  
Assistant Editor: Frédéric Barbe  
Art Director: Wouter Zoon  
Assistant Art Director: David Lagache  
Set Decorator: Brice Blasquez  
Set Decorator (English Crew): Jane Cooke  
Property Master: Jean-Louis Lalet  
Costume Designer: Pascaline Chavanne  
Wardrobe Mistress: Christine Vargas  
Dresser: Chloé Lesueur  
Make-up Artist: Gill Robillard  
Hairstylist: Myriam Roger  
Opening Credits: Aparté  
Ending Credits: TEST  
Original Score Composed by: Philippe Rombi  
Musical Director: Richard Boudarham  
Music Recorded/Mixed by: Stéphane Reichard  
Recorder: Pascal Von Hatten  
Re-recording Mixer: Jean-Pierre Laforce  
Sound Editor: Benoît Hillebrant  
Cast:  
Charlotte Rampling (Sarah Morton)  
Ludivine Sagnier (Julie)  
Charles Dance (John Bosload)  
Marc Fayolle (Marcel)  
Jean-Marie Lamour (Franck)  
Mireille Mossé (Marcel's daughter)  
Michel Fau (1st man)  
Jean-Claude Lecas (2nd man)  
Émilie Gavois Kahn (waitress at café)  
Erarde Forestali (old man)  
Lauren Farrow (Julia)  
Sebastian Harcombe (Terry Long)  
Frances Cuka (lady on the Underground)  
Keith Yeates (Sarah's father)  
Tricia Aileen (John Bosload's secretary)  
Glen Davies (pub barman)  
France-UK 2002©  
103 mins  
35mm

A repressed British crime novelist travels to the south of France for a sojourn at her publisher's summer house, where she hopes to write her next book. However, the peaceful stay is interrupted by an unexpected visit from the free-spirited daughter of the publisher. Sexual tensions, jealousy and unexpected twists all unfold in and around the villa's swimming pool. This superb thriller, inspired by Deray's *La Piscine*, remains one of Ozon's finest films.

bfi.org.uk

**François Ozon:** The swimming pool stands for whatever anyone wants to see in it. I have often filmed water, usually the ocean which is associated in my mind with shedding one's inhibitions, or with a certain sense of fear. In this instance, I was interested in the swimming pool as texture and also as water imprisoned. Swimming pools, unlike the ocean, are manageable and controlled.

The swimming-pool is Julie's realm. It's like a movie-screen against which images are projected and into which a character penetrates. Sarah Morton takes time before entering the pool: she does not do so until Julie has become a source of inspiration – and until the swimming-pool is at last clean.

Production notes

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away some of the plot.

Like *The Usual Suspects*, *Swimming Pool* ends with a revelation that substantially alters what has gone before, but it begins with three smaller surprises. The first is that this is 'A Film By' – rather than 'Un Film De' – François Ozon. The second comes when the camera pulls back from a close-up of water, over which the title is superimposed, to reveal not a swimming pool but a river – a hint, perhaps, that we should heed the bigger picture. Another joke is contained within that image: it's virtually the same opening as Ozon's *Under the Sand* (2000), though here the camera pans up from the Thames, rather than down to the Seine. Once again it is Charlotte Rampling, with her buttoned-up clothes and buttoned-down desires, who flees the city for a rural hideaway. She plays Sarah Morton, a crime novelist who finds inspiration in her publisher John's Provence retreat. Her tranquillity is disrupted by his teenage daughter Julie, with her hair extensions, clip-clopping heels and trail of uncouth one-night stands.

Whereas *Under the Sand* crushed Rampling's brittle persona until it splintered, *Swimming Pool* gives her room to bloom luxuriously. But even her opening warning – 'I am not the person you think I am' – cannot prepare you for the glorious moment when she boogies stiffly to a raunchy disco number. Rampling also gets a nude scene which comes as a delightful shock after Ozon has lulled our eyes almost to the point of boredom with the bronzed body of Ludivine Sagnier, who plays Julie. It's nice for anyone still recovering from *The Night Porter* (1974) to see Rampling in the hands of a director whose staging of sex is as playful as it is economic. A bobbing head, or a row of flexed toes, says all that needs to be expressed about the sex enjoyed by these characters, making it seem an awfully long time since Ozon had the temerity to show an erection, in his 1998 debut *Sitcom*.

## Big Screen Classics

### The Swimmer

Wed 2 Jul 18:15 (+ intro by film critic Phuong Le);  
Sat 5 Jul 20:45; Mon 21 Jul 20:30

### Unrelated

Wed 2 Jul 20:40; Tue 22 Jul 21:00;  
Wed 30 Jul 18:10

### Water Lilies

 Naissance des Pieuvres

Thu 3 Jul 18:20 (+ intro by Diana Cipriano, BFI Flare  
programmer); Thu 31 Jul 18:05

### Mon Oncle

Thu 3 Jul 20:30; Sun 13 Jul 12:30;  
Sun 20 Jul 11:45; Thu 24 Jul 12:20

### Three Colours: Blue

 Trois couleurs: Bleu

Fri 4 Jul 12:30; Wed 9 Jul 18:10 (+ intro by Jason  
Wood, BFI Executive Director of Public  
Programmes and Audiences); Tue 15 Jul 20:45

### The Cameraman

Sun 6 Jul 12:20; Sun 27 Jul 19:00

### Alphaville

Mon 7 Jul 15:00; Tue 22 Jul 20:45;  
Mon 28 Jul 18:20

### Deep End

Tue 8 Jul 20:50; Wed 16 Jul 12:30; Sun 20 Jul 18:45

### Sexy Beast

Thu 10 Jul 20:50; Sun 13 Jul 18:50;  
Tue 29 Jul 18:00

### La Piscine

 The Swimming Pool

Fri 11 Jul 20:35; Wed 23 Jul 17:55 (+ intro by critic  
and programmer Cici Peng)

### Million Dollar Mermaid (aka One-piece Bathing Suit)

Sat 12 Jul 12:10; Sat 19 Jul 15:00; Wed 30 Jul  
18:00 (+ intro by Amber Butchart, curator of Splash!  
A Century of Swimming and Style exhibition at the  
Design Museum)

### Boogie Nights

Sat 12 Jul 16:45; Thu 17 Jul 17:50

### Drowning By Numbers

Mon 14 Jul 20:15; Sat 26 Jul 11:45

### La Ciénaga

 The Swamp

Fri 18 Jul 18:20; Sat 26 Jul 14:20

### Swimming Pool

Fri 25 Jul 18:10; Mon 28 Jul 20:45

Increasingly his talent lies in locating visual equivalents for amorphous pleasures and processes. Trying to depict artistic creation is a task that has undone directors as noteworthy as Joel Coen (in *Barton Fink*) and Stephen Frears (in *Prick up Your Ears*). In *Swimming Pool*, Ozon has devised a weightless metaphor to liberate himself from the cliché of the blank page in the typewriter. The clue is in the title: the pool on to which Sarah stares down each day is itself that page, the void on to which definition is gradually imposed. It begins as a murky lagoon where Julie completes laps beneath a tattoo of orange leaves on the water's surface. Eventually, it becomes the setting for erotic dreams, and a murder. The removal of the tarpaulin cover, suggesting the opening of a new book, enhances the metaphor.

The film is ripe with allusions. The scenario of two women cooped up in an isolated house for a game of identity-swapping recalls *Persona* (1966), as well as Ozon's own chilling featurette *See the Sea* (1997). The trail of dislocated noir motifs suggests Bertrand Blier's icy deployment of genre conventions in *Buffet Froid* (1979). Like *Deep End* (1970), the film imagines the swimming pool as a font of erotic power, while the positioning of it at the centre of a psychological tug-of-war that is exclusively female strongly echoes Robert Altman's *3 Women* (1977). The women's criminal collusion, and an exquisitely tense scene in which Sarah anticipates the discovery of a corpse in the pool, nods to *Les Diaboliques* (1954).

*Swimming Pool* also recalls those moments in *Celine and Julie Go Boating* (1974) when the heroines plunge into the film's interior narrative in order to avert its course. In this case Sarah manipulates the plot for the good of her novel. She conjures Julie because she, as the heroine of her own story, requires the friction of a nemesis. She dreams up a mutual object of desire to introduce erotic tension. And a bizarre network of surrogate family relationships is laid over the action; Sarah is both daughter and mistress to John, and sister and mother to Julie, while Julie jokingly passes off a lover as her father. We can only guess which of these relationships, if any, is ratified in Sarah's novel, also called *Swimming Pool*. For now, the ambiguities intensify the picture's hothouse atmosphere, making it all the more impressive that Ozon maintains such a consistently cool touch.

Ryan Gilbey, *Sight and Sound*, October 2003

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