



Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

Diva

Diva

Director: Jean-Jacques Beineix
©/Production Companies: Films Galaxie, Greenwich Film Production
In association with: Antenne 2
Producer: Irène Silberman
Production Supervisor: Ulli Pickard
Production Co-ordinators: Jacqueline Benloulou, Maurice Cadaze
Production Manager: Catherine Mazières
Location Manager: Gérard Marcireau
Assistant Directors: Gérard Pujolar, Patrick Halpine, Jean-Jacques Albert
Screenplay: Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jean van Hamme
Dialogue: Jean-Jacques Beineix
Based on the novel by: Delacorta
Director of Photography: Philippe Rousselot
Camera Operator: Dominique Brenguier
Stills Photography: Dominique Le Strat
Special Effects: Paul Trielli
Editors: Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte, Monique Prim
Production Designer: Hilton McConnico
Assistant Production Designer: Carlos Conti
Costumes: Claire Fraisse
Make-up: Judith Gayo
Music Composed and Conducted by: Vladimir Cosma
Sound Recording: Jean-Pierre Ruh
Sound Re-recording: Jacqueline Porel, Catherine Leygonie
Supervising Sound Editor: Gina Pignier
Sound Editor: Claude Villand
Sound Effects: Jean-Pierre Lelong
Subtitles: Anne Brav, Hal Brav
Stunt Co-ordinator: Michel Norman
Cast:
Frédéric Andréi (*Jules*)
Roland Bertin (*Simon Weinstadt*)
Richard Bohringer (*Gorodish*)
Gérard Darmon (*Spic*)
Chantal Deruaz (*Nadia Kalonsky*)
Jacques Fabbri (*Inspector Jean Saporta*)
Patrick Floersheim (*Mortier*)
Thuy An Luu (*Alba*)
Jean-Jacques Moreau (*Krantz*)
Dominique Pinon (*Le Curé*)
Anny Romand (*Paula*)
Wilhelmenia Wiggins Fernandez (*Cynthia Hawkins, the Diva*)
Raymond Aquilon
Eugène Berthier
Gérard Chaillou
Andrée Champeaux
Nathalie Dalian
Laurence Darpy
Michel Debrane
Etienne Draber
Laure Duthilleul
Nane Germon
Gebriel Gobin
Jim-Adhi Limas
Louissette Malapert
Dimo Mally
Veneta Mally
Alain Marcel
Isabelle Mergault
Marthe Moudiki-Moreau
Jean-Luc Porraz
Bernard Robin
Yann Roussel
Brigitte Simonin
Jean-Louis Vitrac

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

Alex Cox: *Diva* is just the sort of film that American movie critics love: big on style and short on substance. And, of course, because it's French. It's the kind of film that gets called 'scintillating', or 'fabulous, frothy fun'. It doesn't, however, have any real passion, nor any acting worthy of note. It doesn't have a theme or any real direction, but what it does have is art direction. It's the only film I've ever seen where a whole sequence has been designed around a packet of cigarettes – the colour of the walls, the set decoration, the costumes, everything exists to complement a packet of Gitanes.

It's an art director's film and the name of the art director is Hilton McConnico. Hilton's film is, I guess, what you'd call a New Wave film. It's a post-punk, hyper-modern, ultra-realist sort of subject. It's fresh and shiny, like one of those glum-looking models that stare out at you from the pages of *The Face*. It also features musical selections from the noted opera *La Wally – une de mes favorites*.

A lot of people like *Diva*, which became an instant cult when it opened.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide* (BBC, 1990). With thanks to moviedromer.tumblr.com

A contemporary review

Diva is the first feature by Jean-Jacques Beineix, a former assistant to a number of mainstream French directors. One notes first its contemporaneity – a hyper-realist, post-punk visual style – overlooking, perhaps, the traditions of humanism and genre cinema, the *policier*, in which the film is rooted.

The particular frisson of *Diva* is to witness contemporary stylishness – the elegance of the Diva in her hotel room, the chic of the supercool hero Gorodish – triumphant over ugliness (the punkish gangsters), corruption (the police chief) or inscrutability (the grasping, blackmailing businessmen). A traditional morality then, in ultramodern garb. But the modernity of Beineix's style should not be undervalued. Pop Art decors, offbeat locations, selective colours and idiosyncratic compositions are assertively used to create a fantasy world which is only a sidestep from crime-movie realism, itself a stylisation from the pulp thriller.

Tania Zabaloeff
France 1981©
117 mins
Digital 4K (restoration)

New 4K restoration from the original negative by
Studiocanal with the support of the CNC

Moviedrome transmission date: 22 May 1988

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Johnny Guitar

Fri 1 Aug 20:30; Sun 10 Aug 14:45;
Tue 19 Aug 18:10

The Harder They Come

Sat 2 Aug 15:00; Fri 8 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 18:10

Yojimbo

Sat 2 Aug 20:45; Mon 11 Aug 18:15;
Sun 24 Aug 12:30

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

Sun 3 Aug 14:45; Sat 16 Aug 12:00;
Thu 21 Aug 20:25

Mommie Dearest

Sun 3 Aug 18:20; Thu 14 Aug 20:30

Carnival of Souls

Wed 6 Aug 18:40; Fri 15 Aug 20:50

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Thu 7 Aug 19:00; Sun 10 Aug 17:30;
Sun 24 Aug 17:30

The Girl on a Motorcycle

Fri 8 Aug 18:30; Sun 17 Aug 15:40

Badlands

Sat 9 Aug 12:30; Sat 16 Aug 18:10;
Tue 26 Aug 20:50

Performance

Sat 9 Aug 18:20; Mon 18 Aug 20:50

Diva

Sat 9 Aug 20:30; Tue 19 Aug 20:40;
Fri 29 Aug 18:15

Escape From New York

Mon 11 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 20:50;
Thu 28 Aug 18:20

To Sleep with Anger

Tue 12 Aug 20:35; Sat 16 Aug 15:10

Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters

Wed 13 Aug 18:20; Mon 25 Aug 14:50;
Sat 30 Aug 20:40

White of the Eye

Wed 20 Aug 20:40; Sun 31 Aug 15:10

Electra Glide in Blue

Thu 21 Aug 18:15; Fri 22 Aug 20:45

With thanks to

Sue Deeks, Simon Chilcott, Carl Davies,
Josephine Haining and Andrew Abbott

The plot, which turns and U-turns on a confusion over two, and subsequently three, tape recordings, the various villains would kill for, is a cunning, piece of cinematic adaptation, from a novel by 'Delacorta', that calls attention to the importance of sound. In the opening sequence we hear a full-bodied aria over the credits which is abruptly 'cut' short when the young mailman Jules switches off the cassette machine on his moped. Beineix also uses silences judiciously interposed between scenes of dialogue and tyre-squealing action.

The texture of his images, however, is even richer than that of the soundtrack, for here Beineix has boldly attempted to integrate two environments – a film familiar Paris, the Place de la Concorde, the Tuilleries, and a newer, more vulgar, Paris of parking lots, wrecked warehouses and pinball arcades. Each milieu is its own significant setting and the interaction of backgrounds is just as unnerving as the tensions between the opposing characters.

That the film should be so engaging and amusing is attributable rather to the increasingly improbable action. In this sense the dramatic structure is strikingly close to the operatic form and it is entirely appropriate that the film should end in an opera-house with the Diva singing an aria from *La Wally*.

Beineix acknowledges opera as a key influence on his work, preferring its heightened demonstrative action and stylised settings to conventional film realism. In his use of classical music in modernist settings Beineix has been compared to the young Godard. The most apposite cross-reference would be to *A bout de souffle*. Both films display their affection for Hollywood cinema and Americana through a gangster movie plot and the relationship between a Frenchman and an American woman, and both represent a distinctive departure from the ossifying conventions of the national cinema from which they spring. Such a comparison marks *Diva* as an auspicious debut from a refreshingly original talent.

Martyn Auty, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1982

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