



**Paris nous appartient** Paris Belongs to Us

Director: Jacques Rivette

Production Companies: AJYM Films,  
Les Films du Carrosse

Producer: Roland Nonin

Unit Manager: Robert Lachenay

Assistants: Jean Herman, Isabelle Phat,

Alain Pozarnik

Script Girl: Laura Mauri

Scenario/Dialogue: Jacques Rivette, Jean Gruault

Director of Photography: Charles Bitsch

Camera Assistant: André Mrugalski

Key Grip: Bernard Largemains

Stills Photography: Georges Pierre \*

Editor: Denise de Casabianca

Assisted by: Ghislaine Desjonquères

Laboratory: GTC Joinville France

Music: Philippe Arthuys

With the collaboration of: Ivo Malec

Guitar: Jean Borredon

Sound Recordist: Christian Hackspill

Dialogue Coach: Suzanne Schiffman

'Babel' sequence extracted from the film

'Metropolis' by: Fritz Lang (Courtesy of: Ufa,  
La Cinémathèque française)

Cast:

Betty Schneider (Anne Goupil)

Giani Esposito (Gérard Lenz)

Françoise Prévost (Terry Yordan)

Daniel Crohem (Philip Kaufman)

François Maistre (Pierre Goupil)

Birgitta Juslin (Finnish model)

Noëlle Leiris

Monique Le Porrier

Malka Ribowska

Louise Roblin (guest at party in Neuilly)

Anne Zamire (woman with baby)

Paul Bisciglia (Paul, member of theatre group)

Jean-Pierre Delage

Claus Von Lorbach

Jean Martin

Henri Poirier (member of theatre group)

André Thorent (Bernard)

Jane Car

Jacqueline Dupuis

Claire Fischer

Teresa Gracia

Danielle Vercoutre

Liliane Weiner

Roland Daviller

Fernand George

François Robert

José Sebastian

Jean-Marie Robain (Jean-Bernard George)

Hans Lucas

Jean-Claude Brially (Jean-Marc)

Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette

(guests at party in Neuilly) \*

Jean-Luc Godard (man at café) \*

Jacques Demy \*

France 1961

141 mins

35mm

\* Uncredited

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Ensemble: The Filmmakers from Richard Linklater's *Nouvelle Vague*

# Paris nous appartient

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

The innocuous title of *Paris nous appartient* suggests we are in for a New Wave fourteenth of July. In fact it uncovers a secret chamber, a mysterious, disquieting world of abrupt cuts, enigmatic faces and unfinished sentences, brusque fades and unanswered telephone calls. Everything, we feel, exists on a subliminal as well as a conscious level. This is one of the cinema's nearest equivalents to Kafka. On the surface the images are crisp and disciplined, the sequences simple like the sentences in a Kafka novel. But these images are merely floating above a sea of doubts. It is five in the morning again, and Chaos may have come by six...

Even the story has parallels to, say, *The Trial*, as a quest by sober reason into quicksands of mystery which it can never hope to penetrate, a quicksand which finally traps its heroine and all but swallows her up. Anne Goupil (Betty Schneider) is a student living in Paris who becomes involved with a group of hard-up, hopeful young actors, staying in town for the summer to stage a production of *Pericles*. But the production seems doomed by the tensions within and around it, by dissonant relationships and the indifference of the professionals in the cast. This tension feeds constantly on the unexplained death of a Spaniard who had composed a production score, since all the circumstances which led up to Juan's murder (or suicide) before the start of the film are now apparently repeating themselves for Gérard (Giani Esposito), the play's producer. Anne's growing love for Gérard impels her to investigate the mystery surrounding Juan's death, and she sets out to find the missing clue – a tape-recording of his composition.

But her efforts are futile. Not only does she fail to prevent Gérard's death, but her search involves her more and more deeply with a circle of bizarre, complex characters – Dark Powers behind the scene. Who are these Powers? A world-wide conspiracy awaiting the hour when they can seize power, an espionage network, or simply fantasy figures, creatures of the mind, liable at any moment to dissolve into the thin air of a sleepy summer Paris? We never find out. We remain to the end in a maze where both seeker and suspect are 'tragic puppets' – in Rivette's own words – 'sickened by the real world which they cannot reform.' The world knows which way it goes, says one of these puppets, but it doesn't let us know. Bearings are lost, danger is real, whatever its source. 'An unknown horror threatens,' rants the paranoid American novelist exiled by McCarthyism, 'and nothing can be done.' And the immeasurable proportions of this horror, the terrifying irony of unknown dimensions, 57 megatons packed into a single warhead, has never been put on to film in quite this way. *Paris nous appartient* is a story rooted in the despair of its own time, in which the music of the Apocalypse comes from a tape-recorder and the Dark Powers descend into Hades in the latest Thunderbird.

This is a difficult film in that it is open to innumerable meanings and works on many levels. Also it is full of influences. To me its key lies in a speech by the idealistic Gérard, whose staging of *Pericles* is an ingenuously ardent challenge to the machinations of the Dark Powers.

'We are life,' he tells Anne. 'We are those who reach out after a fatal secret.' And Rivette speaks up for this life of the everyday, which he respects and

## Ensemble: The Filmmakers from Richard Linklater's *Nouvelle Vague*

**The 400 Blows** Les Quatre cents coups

Thu 1 Jan 12:30; Fri 30 Jan 18:00

**Journey to Italy** Viaggio in Italia

Thu 1 Jan 15:00; Sun 18 Jan 15:10;

Wed 28 Jan 20:45

**Orphée**

Sat 3 Jan 20:50; Thu 15 Jan 21:00;

Sun 25 Jan 15:20

**Léon Morin, prêtre** Léon Morin, Priest

Sun 4 Jan 12:20; Tue 27 Jan 18:10 (+ intro by

season curator Diana Cipriano)

**Paris nous appartient** Paris Belongs to Us

Sun 4 Jan 18:00; Fri 16 Jan 20:20

**Slacker**

Mon 5 Jan 20:45 (+ intro by season programme

assistant Sean Atkinson); Thu 29 Jan 18:00

**Last Year at Marienbad** L'année dernière à

Marienbad

Tue 6 Jan 18:10 (+ intro by film critic Phuong Le);

Tue 13 Jan 20:45

**Le Bonheur** Happiness

Wed 7 Jan 20:40 (+ intro by film critic

Christina Newland); Sat 17 Jan 12:00

**Les Cousins** The Cousins

Thu 8 Jan 18:10 (+ intro by season curator

Diana Cipriano); Sat 31 Jan 20:30

**Pickpocket**

Thu 8 Jan 20:45; Wed 28 Jan 18:15 (+ intro by

Muriel Zagha, writer and broadcaster on film, and

co-host of cross-cultural podcast Garlic & Pearls)

**My Night with Maud** Ma nuit chez Maud

Fri 9 Jan 20:40; Wed 14 Jan 18:00;

Thu 22 Jan 20:30

**Out 1: Noli me tangere**

Sat 10 Jan 11:40 (Episodes 1-4);

Sun 11 Jan 12:10 (Episodes 5-8)

**With thanks to**

Season Programme Assistant Sean Atkinson

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records with humour: for the cheerful young Finnish model; for the pensioner alone in his hotel room; for eager young actors putting on Shakespeare: each and every one of them in the face of danger. They too are innocent sorcerers, unable any longer to believe they can change their destiny. And yet, in Anne's quest after the truth about Juan's death, Rivette is hinting at that intuitive, unavoidable spirit of human inquiry for reason, knowledge, cause in the face of imminent tragedy. The show – life – must go on, even if it seems vulnerable and futile. And the fusion of these ideas lends a disturbing beauty to the final image, when the diminished little group begins rehearsals afresh at a lakeside in a deserted country park. Swans float up and down the still water, stirring it with their wings. A symbol of calm, sober beauty or of continuing menace – whatever you want to make of it. But certainly an image of power and poetic quality.

Rivette realises this manifold concept with a firm technical control. The narrative is at first sight loose, like that of *Pericles*, but as Gérard remarks, 'it all ties up in another place.' The plot walks with tightrope assurance that narrow line where mystification ends and the demands of the thriller form begin. Well-observed as individuals, the characters also contribute to Rivette's picture of them as a microcosm of a world on the brink of disaster, with a dreamer, a seeker, victims, cheats and dupes. And in this context the figures themselves exist as enigmas – nowhere more compellingly than in the case of Françoise Prévost's destructive schemer, Cocteau's princess in a Sixties guise. Throughout, the complex interplay is managed with ease and skill.

Undeniably a rare film, one can still describe it perhaps in that less rare term of a revelation. For one thing, Jacques Rivette, unlike some of his more fashionable colleagues (Godard, Chabrol), has shown the courage it takes to remain disciplined. He gives us surface accuracy and trusts us to understand that there is far more behind what he shows. He has conscience and intellect; and he lives, breathes, understands our age of Fright Breaks and End-of-the-World demonstrations in Colour and Stereophonic Sound. He has captured some part of the essence of our times, almost like a last message in a bottle, floating in the sea.

Robert Vas, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1961/2