



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

# Out 1

## Out 1

**Director:** Jacques Rivette  
**Co-director:** Suzanne Schiffman  
**Production Companies:** Sunchild Productions, Les Films du Losange (Paris)  
**Producer:** Stéphane Tchalgadjeff  
**Associate Producers:** Michel Chandlerli, Danielle Gégauff, Gérard Vaugeois  
**Unit Manager:** Jean-Claude Valezy  
**Assistant Director:** Jean-François Stévenin  
**Script Supervisor:** Lydie Mahias  
**Scenario:** Jacques Rivette \*, Suzanne Schiffman \*  
**Director of Photography:** Pierre-William Glenn  
**Camera Assistant:** Dominique Chapuis  
**Electricians:** Jean-Claude Gasché, Georges Boisrond  
**Stills Photography:** Pierre Zucca  
**Editor:** Nicole Lubtchansky  
**Assistant Editor:** Carole Marquand  
**Titles:** Jean-Noël Delamarre  
**Musician (Zarb):** Jean-Pierre Drouet  
**Sound:** René-Jean Bouyer  
**Sound Assistant:** Michel Laurent  
**Sound Mixing:** Bernard Aubouy  
**Cast:**  
Jean-Pierre Léaud (*Colin*)  
Juliet Berto (*Frédérique*)  
Michèle Moretti (*Lili*)  
Michael Lonsdale (*Thomas*)  
Bernadette Lafont (*Sarah*)  
Bulle Ogier (*Pauline/Emilie*)  
Françoise Fabian (*Lucie*)  
Hermine Karagheuz (*Marie*)  
Marie-Paule André (*Nicolas's friend*)  
Pierre Baillot (*Quentin*)  
Gilette Barbier (*Colin's landlady*)  
Jean-Pierre Bastid (*gangster*)  
Michel Berto (*Honeymoon*)  
René Biaggi (*Chausette*)  
Ode Bitton (*Iris*)  
Jean Bouise (*Warok*)  
Marcel Bozonnet (*Arsenal/Nicolas/Papa/Théo*)  
Michel Chandlerli (*gangster*)  
Marc Chapiteau (*footballer*)  
Monique Clément (*Faune*)  
Christiane Corthay (*Rose*)  
Sylvain Corthay (*Achille*)  
Pierre Cottrell (*pornographer*)  
Michel Delahaye (*ethnologist*)  
Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (*Etienne*)  
Bernard Eisenschitz (*pornographer*)  
Patrick Hec (*Léonard*)  
André Julien (*second-hand goods dealer*)  
Louis Julien (*Max*)  
Michèle Khan (*bobbysoxer*)  
Alain Libolt (*Renaud*)  
Gérard Martin (*the false bachelor*)  
Edwine Moatti (*Béatrice*)  
Urbain Dia Moukori (*gangster*)  
Bernadette Onfroy (*Bergamotte*)  
Jacques Prayer (*gangster*)  
Karen Puig (*Elaine*)  
Jérôme Richard (*Martin*)  
Brigitte Roüan (*Miss Blandish*)  
Eric Rohmer (*the Balzac specialist*)  
Lorraine Santoni (*the woman with glasses*)  
Guillaume Schiffman (*child in the shop*)  
Mathieu Schiffman (*young boy*)  
Barbet Schroeder (*Gian-Reto*)  
Jean-François Stévenin (*Marlon*)  
Stéphane Tchalgadjeff (*Lorenzo's messenger*)  
Christian de Tillière (*night bird*)  
Jean-Claude Valezy (*gangster*)

Jacques Rivette's 12-hour-plus *Out 1* languished for years as one of European cinema's great unseen films, although it has gradually emerged into the daylight over the past decade or so. *Out 1* is perhaps the director's ultimate fiction – in the sense of an attempt to create something that is larger and stranger than everyday reality, yet made out of the very stuff of the quotidian.

That has been a key ploy of Rivette's from the very start; his first feature, *Paris nous appartient* (1961), spun a tantalisingly complex narrative – or rather, the smoke-and-mirrors effect of such a narrative – out of the mundane scenery of late-50s Parisian attics, theatres, bedrooms and rehearsal spaces. The peculiar magic of films such as *Paris nous appartient*, *Céline and Julie Go Boating*, *Le Pont du Nord* and *Out 1* is to evoke the mysterious, sinister underside of the known urban landscape while really showing little but the familiar city, in its rawest, unadorned form.

*Out 1* – originally made as an eight-part TV serial but never screened as such – is Rivette's most elaborate attempt to spin the richest possible fiction out of the plainest ingredients. His basic material: Paris in 1970, and an artistic and cultural subculture in the doldrums two years after the anti-climax of 1968. Here's the plot, or rather, some elements of plot (everyone chooses their own dominant pattern when watching *Out 1*): two theatre groups, led respectively by Lili (Michèle Moretti) and the charismatic Thomas (Michel Lonsdale), attempt to rehearse experimental productions of Aeschylus, vaguely in the mode of Peter Brook (with whom Lonsdale had worked); an enthused young loner named Colin (Jean-Pierre Léaud) comes into possession of an enigmatic text, spiked with allusions to Balzac and Lewis Carroll, which puts him on the trail of a supposed conspiracy, 'the Thirteen'.

Also tangling with this cabal, though by a more indirect route, is another solitary dreamer, a thief and con artist named Frédérique (Juliet Berto), who may be cooking up the whole story in her mind, alone in her *chambre de bonne* overlooking the city. All roads seem to lead to L'Angle du Hasard (Chance Corner), a head shop cum militant hangout run by bohemian bourgeoisie Pauline, aka Emilie (Bulle Ogier). Also involved are Eric Rohmer (a juicy cameo as a bemused Balzac specialist); a group of unflappable Establishment figures (played by actors including Françoise Fabian and *Cahiers du cinéma* founding father Jacques Doniol-Valcroze); Bernadette Lafont as a blocked novelist whose character suddenly takes a baleful, Lynchian turn in the final chapter; and an eerie beachside house with a locked room that possibly contains the Thirteen's absentee member Igor – or possibly nothing at all.

*Out 1* (sometimes known by the subtitle 'Noli me tangere', although the words don't appear in the credits) is a mesmerising narrative, yet at moments barely watchable. The film bears many traces of its place and period, but the hardest to handle today is the extensive amount of theatre rehearsal, now smacking of post-hippie 'happening' (or worse, workshop towards happening) of the most unpalatable kind. It's sometimes hard for Rivette viewers to take his characteristic plays-within-films as seriously as he does, but these sessions are particularly gruelling. What's ironic is that the rehearsals themselves, arduous workings towards productions that can never finally happen, are offset – and upstaged – by dramatic episodes that display the magic of cinema as an art of

France 1971  
750 mins  
Digital

#### Episodes 1-4

11:40 – Episode 1: De Lili à Thomas (86min)  
Interval (14min)  
13:30 – Episode 2: De Thomas à Frédérique (104min)  
Interval (36min)  
15:50 – Episode 3: De Frédérique à Sarah (105min)  
Interval (45min)  
18:20 – Episode 4: De Sarah à Colin (103min)  
Ends – 20:00

#### Episodes 5-8

12:10 – Episode 5: De Colin à Pauline (87min)  
Interval (23min)  
14:30 – Episode 6: De Pauline à Émilie (98min)  
Interval (22min)  
16:30 – Episode 7: De Émilie à Lucie (95min)  
Interval (55min)  
19:00 – Episode 8: De Lucie à Marie (71min)  
Ends – 20:10

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the spontaneous. The drama of *Out 1* was entirely improvised by the cast, after they and Rivette had devised the characters and the narrative broad strokes. Especially in the Léaud and Berto strands (both play childlike 'orphan' figures trying for a foothold in the adult world), there's a powerful sense of pure play, of something conjured up, in the instant, out of nothing.

The film was called *Out 1* because it was about marginal characters, and because there could easily have been a sequel called *Out 2*. At work here is the ideal of the ever-expanding narrative that can never be contained or exhausted (one imagines a sort of boho post-surrealist *EastEnders*), but in fact the closing episodes tellingly show the narrative drive to proliferation winding down into episodes of despair and madness, and into increasing fragmentation. The underlying model for such narrative expansion is of course Balzac's vast series 'The Human Comedy' – to which Rivette admits coming late, long after completing the film (Rohmer was in fact the true Balzacian). But there are other parallels: the serials of Eugène Sue in literature (*The Mysteries of Paris*) and Louis Feuillade in silent cinema ('Strange,' muses Frédérique, turning to camera, 'it's like being in a cloak-and-dagger story'), Julio Cortazar's similarly fragmented Paris-set experimental novel *Hopscotch* (1963), and explorations of dream Paris by such writers as Baudelaire, André Breton and André Pieyre de Mandiargues.

*Out 1* is a sprawling, barely navigable labyrinth of avenues, all the richer for including so many threads that lead nowhere – Berto's strand, in particular, seems for a long time like a random drift, unified by the actress's astonishingly potent wit and disruptive sexual energy (even more striking here than in *Céline and Julie*). For the most part, Frédérique's 'story' is a string of comic or sinister encounters – notably with a melancholic gay friend, Honeymoon (Michel Berto), and a violent bike boy, 'Marlon' (a comically brutish Jean-François Stévenin, also working as assistant director). But, as Rivette points out, the film's narrative premise is merely a pretext to make such encounters happen. The idea of the conspiracy (a theme running through his films from *Paris nous appartient* to 2007's *Don't Touch the Axe*, which revisits Balzac's 'Story of the Thirteen') is, he explains, a mere excuse to make things happen.

Yet the idea of the paranoid investigation, the search for hidden explanations for the way the world works, not only motivates *Out 1* as one of cinema's greatest fictions about storytelling itself, it also voices a particular anxiety about social motivation in post-1968 France. Frédérique and Colin represent a lost generation of youth searching for adult figures who may be benevolent or not, but whose supposed string-pulling and will to direct (in every sense) would give some shape to the formlessness of lived existence, a formlessness *Out 1* at once confronts and yet revels in. (The film's 253-minute concise version, *Spectre*, imposes order by jettisoning much of the theatre, reshuffling scenes and losing some loose ends, including the tragic and extremely cloak-and-dagger climax of Frédérique's story.)

The whole story of *Out 1*, then, is of various rival attempts to impose a 'map' on life, and on Paris. What the supposed conspiracy consists of, no one really knows – but the search for it elevates the device of the arbitrary Hitchcockian MacGuffin to something like a universal metaphysical principle.

Jonathan Romney, *Sight and Sound*, September 2013