

Rendez-Vous with French Cinema

2008

Detailed Program and Schedule Information

OPENING NIGHT

Roman de gare

Claude Lelouch, France, 2007; 103m

Walter Reade Theater: Fri Feb 29: 6:30 pm and 9:00 pm

IFC Center: Sat Mar 1: 7:00pm

Bestselling author Judith Ralitzer (the wonderful Fanny Ardant) is being interrogated by the police because of some uncomfortable similarities between events in her novels and the actions of *The Magician*, a serial killer known for luring victims with card tricks and sleight-of-hand. Cut to a highway, where, after being abandoned by her boyfriend, Huguette (Audrey Dana) sees a man (Dominique Pinon) at a roadside rest stop performing card tricks for kids. He offers her a ride, and she thinks he might make a fine substitute for the boyfriend she was supposed to be bringing home to the family. These and several other stories cross, criss-cross and come back for more in Claude Lelouch's extremely wry, intriguing thriller of mixed identities and thwarted ambitions—a wonderful return to form for Lelouch, with a lovely soundtrack featuring the chansons of Gilbert Bécaud.

Ain't Scared / Regarde-moi

Audrey Estrougo, France, 2007; 97m

WRT: Sun Mar 2: 3:30; Wed Mar 5: 1:30pm

IFC: Tue Mar 4: 9:30pm

An astonishing debut for 23-year-old director Audrey Estrougo, *Ain't Scared* chronicles one day in the emotional life of a Parisian housing project. Its focus is a group of young people, each of whom tries in his own way to express deep feelings for someone else while simultaneously maintaining the hard emotional shells needed to survive in these mean streets. Especially after the disturbances of 2005, the Parisian suburbs—the ring of housing projects known as “les cités” that surround Paris—have been much discussed, yet rarely has anyone offered such a close-up sense of their daily life. Estrougo, who grew up in a housing project, also explores the racial dynamics that are very much part of this world, detailing the special codes and practices young men and women follow. Estrougo's cast, chosen largely from residents of les cités, gives her film a remarkable authenticity.

All Is Forgiven / Tout est pardonné

Mia Hansen-Løve, France, 2007; 105m

WRT: Fri Mar 7: 8:45pm; Sat Mar 8: 4:00pm

IFC: Thu Mar 6: 9:30pm

Actress Mia Hansen-Løve's feature directorial debut is a film of the rarest delicacy, an altogether remarkable expression of evanescent joy and sadness, achieved through the simplest of means. The story begins in Vienna, where a French writer named Victor (Paul Blain, whose haunted eyes make him a dead ringer for his father Gérard) finds it increasingly difficult to cope with life, and retreats from his Austrian wife Annette (Marie-Christine Friedrich) and their young daughter Pamela (Victoire Rousseau) into the anxious dissipation of heroin addiction. At which point the film does not so much advance as gently shift to Paris, 11 years later, where we encounter Pamela as a quietly self-possessed young teenager (Constance Rousseau, an incandescent first-time actress), as she begins to reconnect with her long lost father. Unlike almost every other first-time director in current cinema, Hansen-Løve (known to American audiences for her appearances as an actress in Olivier Assayas' *Les Destinées* and *Late August, Early September*) trusts in her story, her settings, and her actors. She has a lovely and winning patience as a director, which gives the final passages of *All Is Forgiven* a heartbreaking beauty. The co-winner of the 2007 Prix Louis Delluc for Best First Film.

Fear(s) of the Dark / Peur(s) du noir

Blutch, Charles Burns, Marie Caillou, Pierre Di Sciullo, Lorenzo Mattotti & Richard McGuire, France, 2008; 78m

WRT: Sat Mar 8: 9:00pm; Sun Mar 9: 1:30pm

IFC: Sat Mar 1: 9:30pm

As seen most recently in *Persepolis*, animation has become an important part of contemporary French film and visual culture, as it has in so many countries. Six cutting edge comic book artists joined together to make this unnerving, provocative work, shot in shimmering black and white and filled with images and ideas guaranteed to make at least a few of your neck hairs stand on end. Rather than compiling six short films, *Fear(s) of the Dark* allows each of its tales—which range from sci-fi to horror to the fantastic—to move in and out of the others in a dreamlike fashion. Direct from its world premiere at Sundance, *Fear(s) of the Dark* is not for the squeamish, but not to be missed.

The Feelings Factory / La Fabrique des sentiments

Jean-Marc Moutout, France, 2008; 104m

WRT: Tue Mar 4: 8:45pm; Wed Mar 5: 4:00pm; Sun Mar 9: 6:15pm

IFC: Sun Mar 2: 8:45pm

Attractive, educated and successful, Éloïse (Elsa Zylberstein) has it all—except for a stable, long-term romantic relationship. Now in her mid-30s, she can hear a certain clock ticking loudly. So she enrolls in a speed dating program. Seven men, seven women, pre-screened for compatibility. You have seven minutes to take the measure of each other before you both move on to other candidates. *The Feelings Factory* is a remarkable look at one variation of modern romance, a streamlined notion of courtship that gets past all the awkward

preliminaries that seem to capsize such encounters. Zylberstein is perfect in the role: her self-assurance and intelligence—not to mention her sense of humor—can always be felt, even as she reveals bits of her needs and vulnerabilities to potential suitors. With Bruno Putzulu and Jacques Bonnaffé.

The Grocer's Son / Le Fils de l'épicier

Eric Guirado, France, 2007; 96m

WRT: Wed Mar 5: 6:30pm; Thu Mar 6: 3:15pm; Fri Mar 7: 6:30pm

IFC: Tue Mar 4: 7:00pm

Hitting 30 and still not settled into a job or a relationship, Antoine (Nicolas Cazalé) heads home after his father has a heart attack. It falls to him to take over the family business: a mobile grocery store that travels around the south of France. Uncomfortably settling back into his old homestead, Antoine brings everything from eggs to laundry soap to the mainly elderly inhabitants of tiny rural hamlets, many no bigger than a dozen houses and a church. Accompanying him on some of his rounds is Claire, a friend from Paris interested in a break from her studies—and possibly in Antoine as well. A surprise box-office hit last summer in France, this sensitive, quietly observant film captures the texture of a vanishing world barely still in existence in this time of super-stores and the Internet. Cazalé is terrific, creating a moving portrait of a young man who has rejected his roots while not having found a real alternative to them.

Heartbeat Detector / La Question humaine

Nicolas Klotz, France, 2007; 144m

WRT: Fri Feb 29: 3:30pm; Sun Mar 2: 8:45pm

IFC: Sat Mar 1: 3:45pm

Mathieu Amalric plays Simon Kessel, an in-house psychologist for a giant Franco-German chemical company. The upper brass, represented by Karl Rose (Jean-Pierre Kalfon), gives Simon a special assignment: to prepare an assessment of the local Parisian company manager, Mathias Jüst (Michael Lonsdale, superb), who they claim has been acting strangely. Simon attempts to establish a rapport with Jüst through his love of music, but the more he burrows into Jüst's background, the more shocked he becomes at the company's past, reaching back to its conduct during the war. Adapted from the novel by François Emmanuel by director Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval, *Heartbeat Detector* offers a chilling look at how the structures of modern big business are often built on buried crimes.

Her Name Is Sabine / Elle s'appelle Sabine

Sandrine Bonnaire, France, 2007; 85m

WRT: Sat Mar 1: 1:30pm; Wed Mar 5: 8:45pm

IFC: Sun Mar 2: 3:30pm

Sandrine Bonnaire first burst into prominence with her heartbreaking performance in Maurice Pialat's *À nos amours*. Since then, she's worked with Agnès Varda, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol and many other top-tier French directors. But throughout her acting career,

Bonnaire has also been filming her younger sister, Sabine. Called crazy by her schoolmates and diagnosed as problematic by the authorities, Sabine moved in and out of schools until, in her late 20s, she was put in a mental institution. Bonnaire's very moving, enlightening film finds Sabine at 38, living in an adult care facility after having finally been diagnosed as autistic five years earlier. An exposé of the ignorance that has plagued the treatment of autism, the film is even more centrally about the relationship between Sandrine and Sabine—the care, the closeness, the feelings of guilt and especially the frustration as one sister feels helpless to stop the other's decline.

Let's Dance! / Faut que ça danse!

Noémie Lvovsky, France/Switzerland, 2007; 100m

WRT: Fri Feb 29: 1:00pm; Sat Mar 1: 9:15pm

IFC: Sun Mar 2: 1:00pm

One of the finest talents of her generation, writer-director (and occasional actress) Noémie Lvovsky makes in *Let's Dance!* one of the most original studies of older characters seen in years. Her new film centers around Salomon Bellinsky (Jean-Pierre Marielle), a Holocaust survivor just about to turn 80. He separated from his wife Genevieve (Bulle Ogier) years ago, but the two maintain a perfectly cordial relationship—that is, until recently, when it's become increasingly clear that Genevieve's mind is going. Salomon knows that the end is coming, but he knows just as well that it hasn't arrived yet—something that is especially clear once Violette (Sabine Azéma) becomes part of his life. Meanwhile, Salomon and Genevieve's daughter, Sarah (Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi), just can't seem to settle down, and she wonders if having a baby might help. The performances are all first-rate, and the stories of each character move seamlessly through each other, providing accents and insights to what we've seen.

Love Songs / Les Chansons d'amour

Christophe Honoré, France, 2007; 95m

Sun Mar 2: 1:00pm; Tue Mar 4: 1:00pm and 6:15pm

IFC: Mon Mar 3: 7:30pm

One of the most promising directorial talents in France, Christophe Honoré again defies expectations with this bold, affecting look at a group of twenty-somethings in contemporary Paris. Ismael (Louis Garrel) has slipped into a comfortable ménage à trois with his longtime girlfriend Julie (Ludivine Sagnier) and his co-worker Alice (Clotilde Hesme). After a sudden tragedy, these young people must deal not only with the reality of loss but also with the fear that love might never return. For Ismael, that process will lead him to Erwann (Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet), a college student whose affection and innocence might offer Ismael another kind of future. Buoyed by 13 songs composed by Alex Beaupain and ably performed by the cast, *Love Songs* powerfully captures the welter of emotions through which these characters pass, creating a decidedly contemporary update to the film musicals Honoré so clearly admires.

Paris

Cédric Klapisch, France, 2008; 130m

WRT: Sat Mar 1: 6:15pm; Tue Mar 4: 3:15pm

IFC: Sun Mar 2: 5:45pm

While waiting for a heart transplant that could save his life, Pierre (Romain Duris) has his world invaded by his sister Elise (Juliette Binoche) and her three children. The growing awareness of his impending mortality, as well as the re-discovery of his sister and her life, gives Pierre a very different sense of how he might spend the time still left to him. Meanwhile, a respected professor, Roland Verneuil (Fabrice Luchini), hopes for one more great romance in his life, while a vendor at an open-air market (Albert Dupontel), wonders what life is left for him now that he's split from his wife—even though they continue to work together each day. A cinematic love letter to the city that seems to hide a story behind every shop window, small alley, street market or grand apartment building.

A Secret / Un secret

Claude Miller, France, 2007; 105m

WRT: Sat Mar 1: 3:45pm; Sun Mar 2: 6:00pm

IFC: Fri Feb 29: 7:30pm

As a child in the '50s, François could never live up to the expectations of his robust, gymnast father. Frail and sickly, he was sure that somehow he didn't belong, that there was something amiss with his otherwise picture-perfect family. When a neighbor tells François the secret behind his family, the film transports us back to months right before the outbreak of the war. It was a moment in which France's Jewish community was divided between those who believed that a German invasion would spell disaster and those who believed their "Frenchness" would protect them. Adapting Philippe Grimbert's novel (soon to be published in the U.S.), Claude Miller (with Natalie Carter) employs a complex flashback structure that also features sequences set in 1985 to show how the tides of history and family memory continue to affect the present. *A Secret* shared the award for Best Film at the 2007 Montreal World Film Festival and was a major box-office success in France last year. With Mathieu Amalric, Ludovine Sagnier, Cécile De France, Julie Depardieu and Patrick Bruel.

Shall We Kiss? / Un baiser s'il vous plaît

Emmanuel Mouret, France, 2007; 100m

WRT: Fri Mar 7: 4:00pm; Sat Mar 8: 1:30pm; Sun Mar 9: 8:45pm

IFC: Thu Mar 6: 7:00pm

Gabriel (Michaël Cohen) and Émilie (Julie Gayet) meet on the streets of a provincial capital. He offers her a ride, and the ride turns into a pleasant dinner with clearly romantic overtones. But when Gabriel attempts to plant a good night kiss, Émilie pulls back—even one kiss, she admonishes him, can have unexpected consequences. Cut to Émilie's friends in Paris, Judith (Virginie Ledoyen) and Nicolas (director Emmanuel Mouret), and the story of her reluctance to accept even just one kiss. Wry, observant and also quite touching, *Shall We Kiss?* is a very contemporary meditation on the wages of infidelity. Mouret's intelligent, successful characters deluge their emotions and instincts with very open speculation as to why they're doing what they're doing, trying to appear as if they're in control while it's clear to

everyone else they haven't been for a while.

Those Who Remain / Ceux qui restent

Anne Le Ny, France, 2007; 94m

WRT: Thu Mar 6: 1:00pm; Sat Mar 8: 6:30pm; Sun Mar 9: 3:45pm

IFC: Sat Mar 1: 1:45pm

Every afternoon, Bertrand (Vincent Lindon), a high school German teacher, goes to visit his wife in the cancer ward of a local hospital. He meets Lorraine (Emmanuelle Devos), a graphic artist whose boyfriend is a patient on the same ward. Gradually, the two share coffees and sneak rooftop smokes. Each grows dependent on the other's support as their lives become increasingly haunted by the specter of impending death. Veteran character actress Anne Le Ny makes an extraordinarily impressive debut as a writer-director with *Those Who Remain*. Her rendering of her two lead characters is fresh and supple, revealing the full range of needs each feels along with their lingering guilt just for being healthy.

Trivial / La Disparue de Deauville

Sophie Marceau, France, 2007; 103m

WRT: Thu Mar 6: 8:15pm; Fri Mar 7: 1:30pm

IFC: Wed Mar 5: 7:30pm

Since the suicide of his wife, detective Jacques Renard (Christophe Lambert) hasn't been able to pull it together, each day seemingly as much of a drudge as the day before. When a mysterious woman advises him to check out the Hotel Riviera in Deauville, Renard discovers that the hotel's owner, Antoine Bérangère (Robert Hossein), has been missing for two days, according to Antoine's son and wheelchair bound second wife (Marie-Christine Barrault). A terribly disfigured corpse turns up at the local morgue, and the police and the family declare the mystery of Antoine's disappearance solved—but Renard's not buying it. Sophie Marceau, one of France's most popular actresses, devises for her second film as a director an intriguing thriller filled with supernatural overtones gleaned from a century of movie mysteries. Each time the movie's direction appears to be clear, it unexpectedly veers off into uncharted territory.

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