A FILM BY PHILIPPE GARREL

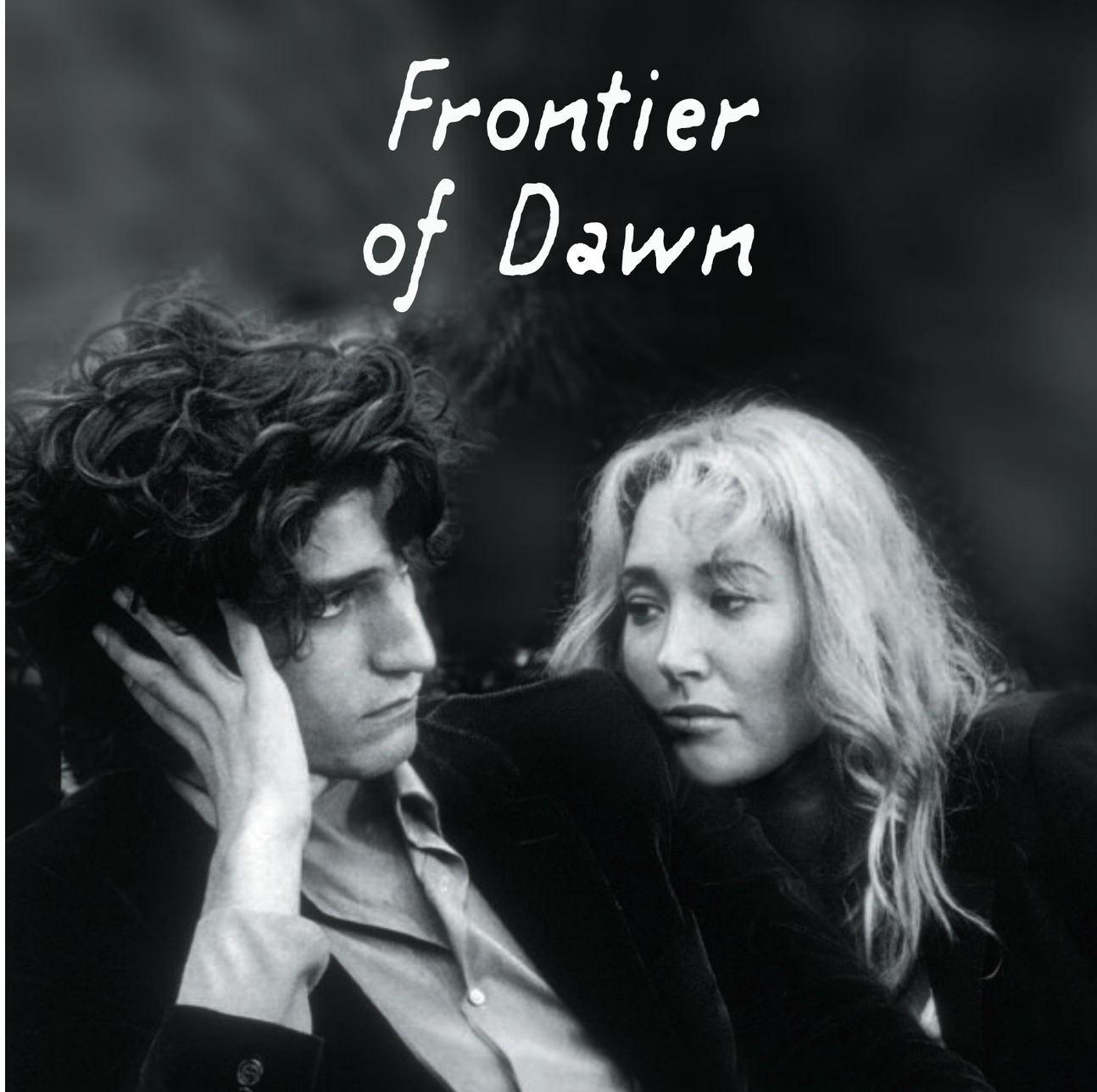


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COMPETITION

Frontier of Dawn



BENJAMIN BALTIMORE



Rectangle Productions and StudioUrania
present

Louis Garrel Laura Smet

Frontier of Dawn

La frontière de l'aube

A film by
Philippe Garrel

France – 105 min – B&W – 1.85 - Dolby SRD

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SYNOPSIS

Carole, a celebrity neglected by her husband, falls for François, a young photographer. Returning from a business trip the husband surprises them, and the lovers have to end their relationship. Carole gradually drifts into madness and commits suicide.
One year later, a few hours before his wedding, François has a vision. It's Carole, calling him from the other world...





INTERVIEW PHILIPPE GARREL

How do you explain the title, *Frontier of Dawn*?
While I was writing it, the film was called *Heaven of the Angels*, an expression I found in *Blanche ou l'oubli* by Louis Aragon. I liked it a lot but I was put off by the neo-Catholic side. And one night, at four in the morning, I came up with *Frontier of Dawn*, which evoked both the suicide and the ghost themes. I made the film with this title in mind and it gave me the key to each scene. Maybe the title is too deliberately poetic. I knew a director, Pierre Romans, who said an actor must never act poetic and to be poetic, you have to act in a realistic manner, with a trivial element. I agreed with him and ever since, I've been thinking that way about everything, including the way I compose shots. Poetry in cinema can only exist unconsciously. It comes out if the film has a soul.

Where does this story of an apparition come from?
My friend Frédéric Pardo, the late painter, gave me a novel by Théophile Gautier, *Spirite*, the story of a woman who appears in a mirror after killing herself and summons a man to the afterlife. In Gautier's story, she had never met the man. She fantasized about him, entered a convent and committed suicide the day she realized she would never have him. One day, when the man is about to get married, the woman appears to him and tells her story. I thought this tale of an apparition was very beautiful but at the same time, not very cinematographic. Then I started thinking about telling the story of a woman committing suicide, reappearing in a mirror and luring towards death the man she had an unhappy affair with. I am a rationalist but I think the supernatural is a rich vein in cinema, if it is used the way the surrealists used it. The supernatural is useful to make art flourish. If you make a film about tables turning, it works really well. I didn't want to use digital special effects or synthesis images. I preferred Jean Cocteau-style makeshift effects.

Why did you shoot in black and white?
Because of the apparitions! I couldn't make a film like this in color. Black and white takes you more easily into an imaginary world. We are more open to the idea of someone appearing in a mirror. I don't use black and white on a whim. For *Regular Lovers*, it was justified by the



difficulty of reenactment. You can't do May '68 in color! By choosing black and white, half the work was done.

How did you choose the actors?
My working method has developed a lot since *The Birth of Love*, in terms of directing actors. Cinema is great as long as the acting is good, which means good directing. It's at the heart of everything. If a scene doesn't work, if a film seems unconvincing, it is because the actors are bad, or there is a bad vibe on the set. Since 1995, I've started really working at a job that I had already touched on beforehand: teaching dramatic art. After five years at the Conservatoire and two years running a joint class between the Conservatoire and the Fémis, I worked at the TNS recently and next year I'm going back to the Conservatoire. I get them to play scenes in front of the camera, taking them out in the streets, to cafés, to real settings, to get them to understand that in natural settings, you can't act like you do in the theater, even if the acting method is the same. The pace is different. In the evening, we watch the rushes and talk about it. For them, it's essential. For me, it's like training. When I arrive on a set every two or three years, it's like I've never stopped shooting if I've been working with very good students. What I must be losing in my grip on the world (as you get older, you become more and more alienated), I compensate for by more sophisticated directing of actors. I think now I could work with anybody, whatever his or her experience… and before I didn't know that. But I haven't come up with anything new. During a conference at the IDHEC, Robert Bresson explained that each time he chose someone to play a part, he worked with the person every day for three months! When I worked with Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, I did the same thing, as if he was one of my students. It's nothing magic.

Clémentine Poidatz, the actress who plays Eve, is one of your students?
She's a girl from the Conservatoire. Like Julia Faure in *Wild Innocence*, which is when I started getting students to play several parts. In *Regular Lovers* all the roles were played by my students. It's the same for *Frontier of Dawn,* with the exception of Laura Smet. Even Louis [Garrel] was one of my students, which created this thing… the teacher's son… but it allowed us both to relate to each other in a simple, up-front way. For my last two films, I asked the production to rent me a theater rehearsal room and every Saturday afternoon, we rehearsed all the parts… So when I shoot, it's over fast.





One take is enough because they've been working on the part for a year! There's a method! They say my method is the opposite of Jacques Doillon's who does 15 takes when I do one. But it's because I get them to rehearse. This way of doing things has economic advantages. It's also a way of encouraging producers to let me shoot: It's cheaper.
The cost of *Frontier of Dawn* was one million eight hundred thousand euros.

This is the second time you have worked with your son, Louis Garrel. You have sometimes appeared in your films yourself. Has he become your alter ego?
I don't like acting. I did it in *Les Baisers de secours* because Doillon was supposed to play the part of the director and he pulled out at the last minute, three weeks before, saying, "Oh la la, I can't, I'm too caught up in my own film," which I understand because when people ask me to act I always say no. I hate it. For a while, I directed my father, Maurice. Now I direct Louis. It's also a way of dealing with time, passing things on between the three of us and from generation to generation. Louis is not just himself. He embodies his generation like I did mine at the same age.

And Laura Smet?
The film's producer, Edouard Weil, did *Eager Bodies* by Xavier Giannoli. One night, they gave me a DVD of the film and I thought she had a presence. It is as if I'd taken an actor from their troupe into my own. I asked to meet her to see if it would work with Louis, because when you direct actors, you have to know how to match people. When you put two actors together, either you have two individuals who can work and question each other, or you have two actors side by side and there's nothing you can do. You can work as much as you want, if two actors remain two actors, it's over. It is a question of chemistry and approach. Laura has become an extra student, except I soon saw that she is really an actress. She's good.

Carole, her character, goes through a session of electroshock therapy. Is this a reference to what happened to you in Rome when you were shooting *The Inner Scar*?
I had them reconstruct the room where I had electroshocks, from memory, with the straight-jacket and the lead table. A specialist confirmed that it happens exactly like that but inevitably, people tell me it looks fake, like something out of Fritz Lang! Yes, I identify with it. I feel implicated in what she is going through, when she is declared crazy as soon as she

becomes political. This has remained very contemporary: when people start adhering to the revolution, they're delirious! But these are just details. It's a very fictional story.

You are never caught in the act of immodesty in your films. You never film your actresses naked... What happens in the scene where François wants to photograph Carole in the bath and she says, "No, not like that!"
They are both sincere with no secret agendas. François doesn't mean any harm. It is the act itself that defiles something.

"You have a camera where your heart should be," said Anne Wiazemsky in *L'Enfant secret*...
When art is your whole life, you have to push a little to be able to create, to exercise that art and you can be a boor without meaning it, without realizing, even if you are really careful. Like I said, I don't like acting, but I know it is a really big deal, putting your body at the mercy of a camera! I know it's complicated. Psychologically, art is as dangerous as mountain climbing. Taking on a character, then leaving it to go back to your everyday life is a huge thing! It can be a dangerous experience. As well as rational teaching, you need to teach safety. In any case, whether it is on a psychological or physical level, I always feel responsible for the whole cast and crew when I shoot. I would never film a scene that involves the slightest risk. Art has to remain innocuous from that point of view.

A man, a woman, two women, the couple, creation, desire or fear of having a child: compared to your other films, what is the issue at stake in this story?
It is this intrusion of the supernatural, making a fantastical film like Franju. I fell flat on my face with the dream in *Phantom Heart*. I had written down my dreams and filmed the daily life of somebody, thinking if I showed these dreams it would be edifying. Yet the four dreams (that were too short) had no weight in the duration of the film and we couldn't see how the dream was a reflection of reality. So I gave up on dreams in favor of the supernatural, to continue my exploration of the relationship between the real and the imaginary. The apparition in the mirror allows me to move into the waking dream. The fantastical winds up a story. I tell a real story that suddenly, in the final reel, is totally



thrown into question. What I love so much in *Rosemary's baby* by Roman Polanski is when the heroine realizes that all the characters she has met since the start are part of the devil's cult: her husband, her doctor, her neighbors, etc. We see the film in a new light because of it. It takes everything we've seen to a new level. It's mind blowing. Polanski's film set off a paranoia attack in me. I went home hugging the walls (like I did after seeing the vision in Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* due to a slightly delirious interpretation. I understood that in this city, absolutely everyone worked for the police). I was looking for something like that. An event in the final reel that reveals the rest, the reason the story is being told.

Why does Carole fall in love with François, and vice versa? Are there already hints of their separation when they meet? Eve, like Carole, is a very fragile young woman with a painful past. François is attracted to this type of woman.
Yes but he is about to start a family with one and with the other, he only has a lover's relationship. It is clearly not the same thing. In the first story, there are two loners clinging to each other. The second is more serious.

What is behind the fear of having children?
François loses his grip. He goes crazy. He has fallen in love with the apparition and starts loving her more than when she was alive. It has to show in the way the actor plays it. Once he has seen the apparition, his acting has to be hallucinatory, moving from impressionism to expressionism. So to avoid having a child, he jumps out the window... Nobody knows why people commit suicide.
I remember a screening of *Night Wind*, followed by a debate in which women were mad at me for showing Catherine Deneuve attempting suicide. It was as if I had blasphemed. People couldn't accept a *roman noir* that was truly dark. It's unseemly. But I think art is a field where anything goes because it's all pretence. I don't think a suicide in cinema incites people to do it. On the contrary. But if you want to commit suicide and you come across a film that talks about it, the film has to tell it like it is, not shy away from it and then I think it is more like a vaccination. It should not cover up the unsaid. I don't like clinical films, but tragedy is beautiful. Art makes you want to live. It stops young people doing stupid things... I will never commit suicide but it's



tragic art that saved me. When I was young, I had a very violent life and I made films that hid this violence, that were remedies.
Now that I have a solid family life, I can make violent films because I don't have a problem with balance.

What about that comment about the day the last concentration camp survivor dies?
I understood only recently what Sartre and Beauvoir said about why existentialism came about: after the holocaust, the horror of Nazism, we could no longer believe in mankind and all the philosophies that had previously been argued no longer held up. A new doctrine for daily life had to be invented.

How do you approach the music?
When you direct an actor, if you want him to be funny or moving, he has to focus on anything but being funny or moving. He has to be sincere. Music is the same thing. Before I add the music, my films are not moving. You just have to add three notes and what is latent is revealed. That's what it's for. It paints emotions. I do it in an auditorium in front of the screen. We project the film and I have it played over the footage, with musicians, live: a pianist and a violinist. Without music, there is the risk of the film being too cerebral, considered, dry and cold. The music is made to measure, to reintroduce emotions and classicism. I infuse it instinctively. It is like painting. When you take to a canvas with a paintbrush, there is no going back. It is gestural.

Is it the last creative act, after editing?
I shoot in chronological order to create scenes from one day to the next so the character plays his role with no contradictions. And I edit while the film is being made, gradually, like they did during the Nouvelle Vague. That way, if I get something wrong, I can shoot it again immediately. The last four films were made that way. The great thing about it is when you realize, after the third or fourth shot of the film that you've found the door to your set again, you get back the pleasure and the right to be an artist, as if you had lost it between two films...



Philippe Garrel

2007 La Frontière de l'aube (Frontier of Dawn)

2004 Les Amants Réguliers (Regular Lovers)

Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival 2005

Louis Delluc Prize 2005

Lumières Prize 2006

César award for Most Promising Young Actor for Louis Garrel in 2006

International Critics' Prize at the European Film Academy

2001 Sauvage Innocence (Wild Innocence)

International Critics' Prize at the Venice Film Festival 2001

1998 Le Vent de la Nuit (Night Wind)

1995 Le Cœur Fantôme (The Phantom Heart)

1993 La Naissance de l'Amour (The Birth of Love)

1990 J'entends plus la Guitare (I Don't Hear the Guitar Anymore)

Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival 1991

1988 Les Baisers de Secours (Emergency Kisses)

1984 Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights...

1984 Rue Fontaine (sketch from Paris Seen By...20 Years Later)

1983 Liberté, la Nuit

1979 L'enfant Secret

Jean Vigo Prize 1982

1975 Le Berceau de Cristal

1974 Les Hautes Solitudes

1972 Athanor (short film)

1970 La Cicatrice Intérieure (The Inner Scar)

1969 Le Lit de la Vierge

1968 Le Révélateur

1967 Marie pour Mémoire (Marie for Memory)

1965 Droit de Visite (short film)

1964 Les Enfants Désaccordés (short film)



Louis Garrel

2007	La frontière de l'aube (Frontier of Dawn), by Philippe Garrel
2007	Actrices (Actresses), by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2007	Les chansons d'amour (Love Songs), by Christophe Honoré
2006	Un Lever de Rideau, by François Ozon (*short film*)
2006	Dans Paris (Inside Paris), by Christophe Honoré
2005	Les Amants Réguliers (Regular Lovers), by Philippe Garrel
	César award for Most Promising Young Actor 2005
2004	Ma Mère (My Mother), by Christophe Honoré
2003	Innocents, The Dreamers, by Bernardo Bertolucci
2002	La Guerre à Paris (The War in Paris), by Yolande Zauberman
2000	Ceci est mon corps (This is my Body), by Rodolphe Marconi

Director

2008	Mes copains (*short film*) Selected at Cannes 2008 Directors' Fortnight *Sélection Cannes, Quinzaine des Réalisateurs*



Laura Smet

2008 La frontière de l'aube (Frontier of Dawn), by Philippe Garrel

2007 L'heure zéro (Towards Zero), by Pascal Thomas

2006 Le Passager de l'Été, by Florence Moncorgé-Gabin

2005 La Demoiselle d'Honneur (The Bridesmaid), by Claude Chabrol

2004 La Femme de Gilles (Gilles' Wife), by Frédéric Fonteyne

2003 Les Corps Impatients (Eager Bodies), by Xavier Giannoli
Romy Shneider Prize 2004
Nomination for César award, Most Promising Young Actress





Cast

François	Louis Garrel
Carole	Laura Smet
Eve	Clémentine Poidatz
Jean-Jacques	Emmanuel Broche
Eve's father	Olivier Massart
François's Friends	Emmanuel Broche
	Jerôme Robart
	Cedric Vieira
Carole's Friends	Vladislav Galard
	Grégory Gadebois
Carole's Husband	Eric Rulliat
Nathalie	Juliette Delègue



Crew

Director	Philippe Garrel
Screenplay	Philippe Garrel, Marc Cholodenko
	Arlette Langmann
Cinematography	William Lubtchansky
Sound engineer	René levert / Alexandre Abrard / Daniel Dehays (music)
1st Asst. Director	Manuel Flèche
Set designer	Mathieu Menut
Costumes	Justine Pearce
Film editing	Yann Dedet
Soundtrack	Jean-Claude Vannier
Violonist	Didier Lockwood
Mixing	Thierry Delor
Sound engineer *(music)*	Daniel Dehays
Production Manager	Guillaume Favreau
Line Producer	Karine Petite
Produced by	Edouard Weil and Conchita Airoldi
Production	Rectangle Productions and StudioUrania

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