

ARMY OF SHADOWS

- RIALTO PICTURES -

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Director
Jean-Pierre Melville

Screenplay
Jean-Pierre Melville

Based on the novel by Joseph Kessel

Producer
Jacques Dorfmann

Cinematography
Pierre Lhomme

Art Director
Theobald Meurisse

Editor
Françoise Bonnot

Music
Eric de Marsan

English translation/subtitles (2005)
Lenny Borger

Restoration (2004)
StudioCanal/Beatrice Valbin-Constant
under the supervision of cinematographer Pierre Lhomme

Original French release September 12, 1969

France 1969 Color
Aspect ratio 1:1.85
Dolby SR/SRD
In French with English subtitles
Running time: 145 minutes

A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE

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CAST

Philippe Gerbier
Lino Ventura

Mathilde
Simone Signoret

Luc Jardie
Paul Meurisse

François
Jean-Pierre Cassel

Le Masque
Claude Mann

Felix
Paul Crauchet

Le Bison
Christian Barbier

The barber
Serge Reggiani

“Colonel Passy”
Himself (André Dewavrin)

Commander of the camp
Alain Mottet

Dounat
Alain Libolt

Baron de Ferte-Talloire
Jean-Marie Robain

Charles de Gaulle
Adrien Cayla-Legrand

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CRITICS, WRITERS AND EDITORS,
PLEASE NOTE:

“ARMY OF SHADOWS” HAS NEVER
BEFORE BEEN RELEASED IN THE
UNITED STATES.

PLEASE DO NOT REFER TO IT IN YOUR
PUBLICATION AS A REVIVAL, RE-
RELEASE OR REISSUE.

THE NEGATIVE HAS UNDERGONE AN
EXTENSIVE RESTORATION OF PICTURE
& SOUND, SO THE WORD
“RESTORATION” IS CORRECT.

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SYNOPSIS

Resistance agent Philippe Gerbier (Lino Ventura) is interned in a Vichy camp. Before he can escape as planned, he is transferred to the Hotel Majestic, Gestapo headquarters in Paris, from which he escapes by killing a guard. He hides in a barber shop, run by a member of the Resistance (Serge Reggiani), who gives Gerbier money and an overcoat. Gerbier joins his comrades Felix (Paul Crauchet) and Le Bison (Christian Barbier) in Marseilles and, together with Le Masque (Claude Mann), executes Dounat, a young traitor who had denounced him.

A new recruit, Jean-François Jardie (Jean-Pierre Cassel), delivers a radio transmitter to Mathilde (Simone Signoret) in Paris and visits his older brother Luc (Paul Meurisse), who, unknown to him, is the head of the entire network. Gerbier uses a Lyons theatre agency as a front. On the Mediterranean coast, they help conceal British and Canadian pilots. He and Luc Jardie board a submarine bound for London.

In London, Gerbier and Jardie meet General de Gaulle who decorates Jardie. Felix is arrested in Lyons. Gerbier is parachuted back into France, taking temporary refuge in a chateau. Mathilde devises a plan in which she, Le Masque and Le Bison, disguised as Germans, will rescue Felix from the Gestapo hospital; the plan goes without a hitch but to their dismay Felix is too badly tortured to be moved. Jean-François gets himself arrested to reach Felix but it is too late. He too is tortured.

Gerbier is arrested in a Lyons restaurant. Mathilde helps him escape from a Gestapo "shooting gallery." Wounded, he hides in an isolated safe house. Mathilde is arrested. Fearing the Germans will use her daughter to make her talk, Jardie and Gerbier decide Mathilde must die. They gun her down near the Arc de Triomphe.

A post-script reveals that Gerbier, Le Masque, Le Bison and Jardie have all died in action or under torture.

-- Adapted from *Jean-Pierre Melville* by Ginette Vincendeau (BFI Publishing, 2003)

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WHAT THE CRITICS IN 2006 SAY...

“A rare work of art that thrills the senses and the mind...Worthy of that overused superlative MASTERPIECE!”

-- Manohla Dargis, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"THE TIGHTEST THRILLER IN TOWN! Lovers of cinema should reach for their fedoras, turn up the collars of their coats, and sneak to this picture through a mist of rain... FOR THE FIRST, AND MAYBE THE ONLY, TIME THIS YEAR, YOU ARE IN THE HANDS OF A MASTER." -- Anthony Lane, *THE NEW YORKER*

“EXTRAORDINARY! MY GREATEST MOVIE TREAT AND SURPRISE THIS YEAR!” – David Ansen, *NEWSWEEK*

“It’s hard to say what your worst fear is when you set out for the multiplex: that you won’t get in or that you will. There is, however, an alternative this year. It’s called *Army of Shadows*... ONE OF MELVILLE’S MOST CHARACTERISTIC WORKS. AND ONE OF HIS GREATEST.” – Richard Schickel, *TIME*

"***! (four stars) AN INTIMATE EPIC! EXCRUCIATINGLY TENSE AND NEVER LESS THAN HEARTBREAKINGLY HUMAN! ALREADY ON MY YEAR'S 10 BEST LIST!" -- Glenn Kenny, *PREMIERE***

“A STUNNING LOST MASTERPIECE! ... An expert mix of political intrigue and explosive action!” – *TIME OUT NEW YORK*

“AWESOME! A TENSE, UNDERSTATED THRILLER WITH A GRITTY SENSE OF COOL!” – *NEW YORK MAGAZINE*

“A FILM TO BE SEEN AND SAVORED!” – Andrew Sarris

“*** (4 stars)! A WHITE-KNUCKLER ALL THE WAY!” – Jami Bernard, *NEW YORK DAILY NEWS***

"A LOST MASTERPIECE... NOT JUST ONE OF THE GREAT FILMS OF THE 60s, BUT ONE OF THE GREAT FILMS – PERIOD. The chance to discover it at the beginning of the 21st century, in an era when we think we've seen it all, is an unquantifiable privilege!" – Stephanie Zacharek, *SALON*

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MELVILLE ON ARMY OF SHADOWS

- Excerpted from *Melville on Melville* by Rui Nogueira (New York: The Viking Press, 1971); translation revised and annotated by Bruce Goldstein (2005)

When did you first read Kessel's book¹?

I discovered *Army of Shadows* in London in 1943 and have wanted to film it ever since. When I told Kessel in 1968 that my old dream was going to come true at last, he didn't believe anyone could pursue an idea so tenaciously for twenty-five years.

Although you've been very faithful to the spirit of the book, you've again made a very personal film.

This is my first movie showing things I've actually known and experienced. But my truth is of course subjective and has nothing to do with actual truth. With the passing of time we're all inclined to recall what suits us rather than what actually happened. The book written by Kessel in the heat of the moment in 1943 is necessarily very different from the film shot cold by me in 1969. There are many things in the book -- wonderful things -- that are impossible to film now. Out of a sublime documentary about the Resistance, I've created a retrospective reverie, a nostalgic pilgrimage back to a time that profoundly marked my generation.

On October 20, 1942, I was twenty-five years old. I'd been in the army since the end of October 1937. Behind me were three years of military life (one of them during the war) and two in the Resistance. That leaves its mark, believe me. The war years were awful, horrible and . . . marvelous!

So the quotation from Georges Courteline², which opens Army of Shadows, is a reflection of your own feelings: "Unhappy memories! Yet be welcome, for you are my distant youth."

Precisely. I love that phrase and I think it's extraordinarily true. I suffered a lot during the first months of my military service, and I thought it hardly possible that a man as witty, intelligent and sensitive as Courteline could have written *Les Gâtés de l'Escadron*³, but of course he too had been very unhappy during his

¹ *Army of Shadows* by Joseph Kessel (1944, Alfred A. Knopf); see Kessel bio on page 20

² Courteline (1858-1929) was a French dramatist and novelist known for his satiric wit.

³ a satire on military life, published in 1886

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service. Then one day, thinking over my own past, I suddenly understood the charm that “unhappy memories” can have. As I grow older, I look back with nostalgia on the years from 1940 to 1944, because they’re part of my youth.

Army of Shadows is considered a very important book by members of the Resistance.

Army of Shadows is the book about the Resistance: the greatest and the most comprehensive of all the documents about this tragic time in the history of humanity. But I had no intention of making a film about the Resistance. So with one exception -- the German occupation -- I excluded all realism. Whenever I saw a German I always used to think, “Whatever happened to all those Teutonic Aryan gods?” They weren’t these mythical blond, blue-eyed giants; they looked very much like Frenchmen. So in the movie I ignored the stereotype.

Did you have a technical adviser for the German uniforms?

I saw to everything myself with the assistance of my costume designer, Madame Colette Baudot, who had done a great deal of research on the subject. One day, while we were filming the shooting range sequence, the French army captain serving as technical advisor told me that there was something wrong with the SS uniforms. So I summoned Mme. Baudot and the captain said to her, “I’m from Alsace, Madame, and during the war I was forcibly enrolled in the SS. So I can assure you that an SS member always wore an armband with the name of his division on his left arm . . .” “No, sir,” Mme. Baudot replied, “You must have belonged to an operational division; the SS in the film are from a depot division.” And the captain had to admit she was right.

Some critics in France accused you of presenting the Resistance workers as characters from a gangster film.

It’s absolutely idiotic. I was even accused of having made a Gaullist film! It’s absurd how people always try to reduce to its lowest common denominator a film which wasn’t intended to be abstract, but happened to turn out that way. Well, hell! I wanted to make this movie for twenty-five years and I have every reason to be satisfied with the result.

The Resistance people themselves like the film very much, don’t they?

Yes, I’ve had wonderful letters, and when I arranged a private screening for twenty-two of the great men of the Resistance, I could see how moved they were. They were all Gerbiers, Jardies, Felixes.

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"As leader of the *Combat* movement⁴," Henri Frenay told me, "I was obliged to return to Paris in December 1941, even though I had no wish to see the city under occupation. I got out of the Métro at the Etoile station, and as I was walking towards the exit I could hear the sound of footsteps overhead . . . it was a curious feeling keeping in step with them. When I came out on the Champs-Élysées I saw the German army filing past in silence, then suddenly the band struck up . . . and you reconstructed the scene for me in the first shot of your film!"

For that scene, you know, I used the sound of real Germans marching. It's inimitable. It was a crazy idea to want to shoot this German parade on the Champs-Élysées. Even today I can't quite believe I did it. No one managed it before me, not even Vincente Minnelli for *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*⁵, because actors in German uniform had been banned from the Champs-Élysées since the First World War. One German was anxious to buy the footage from me at any price, because all they have in Germany is a black and white version of the parade.

To do this shot, which may well be the most expensive in the history of French cinema -- it cost twenty-five million Old Francs⁶ -- I was first allowed to rehearse on Avenue d'Iéna. At three o'clock in the morning, with all traffic stopped and the Avenue lit entirely by gas lamps, men in uniform began to march past. It was a fantastic sight. Wagnerian. Unfilmable. I swear to you that I was overwhelmed. Then I was afraid . . . I began to wonder how it would go at six in the morning when I was shooting on the Champs-Élysées.

You know, of all the shots I've done in my life, there are only two I'm really proud of: this one, and the nine-minute, thirty-eight-second shot in *Le Doulos*⁷.

Where did you shoot the opening concentration camp scenes?

In a former concentration camp which was completely in ruins and which I partially reconstructed for the film. Alongside this old camp there was another one, brand new, clean . . . waiting. It had been built two years before. All over the world there are camps like this one. It's fantastic. Terrifying.

⁴ A resistance group founded by Henri Frenay (1905-1988) and others; Frenay also edited an underground newspaper by that name. Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre were also *Combat* members.

⁵ released by MGM in 1962

⁶ the equivalent of 250,000 New Francs; approximately \$50,000

⁷*Le Doulos* (1962), a gangster film starring Jean-Paul Belmondo; the shot referred to by Melville is a 360-degree pan in a room full of reflecting glass. *Le Doulos* will be re-released by Rialto Pictures next year.

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The Commandant of the camp is physically very different from the one Kessel describes in his book.

Yes, mainly because I didn't want him to be unsympathetic. I made him a rather dry character, wearing the Pétain insignia, *La Francisque*. The emblem of the Fascist Party, in other words.

Why in the film, unlike the book, are Luc Jardie and his brother Jean-François each unaware of the other's clandestine activities?

I wanted to avoid melodrama. You don't see it? Perhaps you're right. But go and see *Army of Shadows* at your local cinema. The moment the big boss comes down the ladder into the submarine and they realize he's Jean-François's brother, the audience can't help going "Aaaahhh!" The two brothers' failure to meet is made all the more remarkable by the fact that Fate is shuffling the cards for all time: shot under a false name by the Gestapo, Jean-François will die without ever knowing that Saint-Luc is the head of the Resistance, and Saint-Luc will never discover what happened to his brother. The circumstances make the disappearance of Jean-François all the more tragic.

Why, in the film, does Jean-François send the Gestapo the anonymous letter denouncing himself?

This is one of those things I never explain, or don't explain enough. When Felix meets Jean-François in Marseilles, he says, "Well, still enjoying *baraka*?" When a man has *baraka* -- a divine grace bringing good fortune, according to the Arabs -- he feels immune to adversity. Jean-François isn't afraid to send the letter which will mean his arrest because he's convinced he's got enough *baraka* to save Felix and to get away himself. But he's got only one cyanide pill... the one he gives to Felix.

When Jean-François goes to see Saint-Luc, they have their meal in that sort of glass cage installed in the middle of the library . . .

There was no coal left during the war, and fuel oil wasn't used for heating in Paris. So apartments were freezing cold, especially in old houses with huge rooms; and people built these little wooden living spaces to go inside rooms, where they could eat or read and be more or less sheltered. You can't imagine what life in France was like at that time. People often slept fully dressed, shoes and socks included, because there was nothing you could do about the cold.

Things weren't much better where food was concerned. Hunger became an obsession. You thought of nothing else. I can still remember the indescribable joy

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I experienced one day when I managed to make a sort of sandwich with lard and garlic. In the mornings, to get the circulation going, we would drink a kind of old sock juice made out of roasted peas. Because I didn't want to make a picturesque film about war, I didn't go into any of these details.

As the story proceeds, my personal recollections are mingled with Kessel's, because we lived the same war. In the film, as in the book, Gerbier represents seven or eight different people. The Gerbier of the concentration camp is my friend Pierre Bloch, General de Gaulle's former Minister. The Gerbier who escapes from Gestapo Headquarters at the Hotel Majestic in Paris is Rivière, the Gaullist Deputy. As a matter of fact it was Rivière himself who described this escape to me in London. And when Gerbier and Jardie are crossing Leicester Square with the Ritz Cinema⁸ behind them advertising *Gone With the Wind*, I was thinking of what Pierre Brossolette⁹ said to me in the same circumstances: "The day the French can see that film and read the *Canard Enchaîné*¹⁰ again, the war will be over. "

Why did you remove all the details explaining why the young man, Dounat, becomes a traitor?

To explain them would have been to detract from the idea of what a betrayal means. Dounat was too weak, too fragile . . . he reminds me a little of the young liaison officer -- he was fifteen -- we had at Castres for the *Combat* movement. One day I had been warned by Fontaine, the Political Commissioner for Vichy, that the Gestapo was preparing a raid, and I sent him to warn the Resistance group at Castres. Although he assured me he was carrying no compromising papers, a sort of instinct made me search him and I found a notebook full of addresses. A few moments later he got himself arrested by the Germans. Despite his position, Commissaire Fontaine was a genuine Resistant. Later, he too was arrested. He was deported and never came back.

What did you do during the war before you went to London?

I was a sub-agent of BCRA¹¹ and also a militant with *Combat* and *Libération*. Then I went to London. Later, on March 11, 1944, at five o'clock in the morning to be precise, I crossed the Garigliano below Cassino with the first wave. At San Apollinare we were filmed by a cameraman from the U.S. Army Signal Corps. I

⁸ The Ritz was an actual London cinema, which had the distinction of playing *Gone With the Wind* for most of the war years (July 11, 1940 through June 8, 1944), the second longest run in a single West End cinema. Melville was lucky to film the Ritz marquee during the film's 1969 reissue.

⁹ Pierre Brossolette (1903-1944) was a socialist, journalist and member of the Resistance; captured by the Germans, he jumped to his death from Gestapo headquarters

¹⁰ literally, "Chained Duck," a French satirical magazine still being published today.

¹¹ *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action*, the Free French military intelligence unit.

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remember hamming it up when I realized we were being filmed. There were still Germans at one end of the village, and Naples radio was playing Harry James's *Trumpet Rhapsody*.

I was also among the first Frenchmen to enter Lyons in uniform. Do you remember the spot where the scene between Gerbier and Mathilde takes place, beside the pigeon house? It was there, on that little Fourvière promontory belonging to the bishopric, that I arrived in a jeep with Lieutenant Gérard Faul. Lyons lay at our feet still full of Germans. We left that same evening after installing an observatory on Fourvière's little Eiffel Tower . . . When I think of everything that happened in those days, I'm amazed that the French don't make more films about the period.

Do you know when I saw Faul again? One Sunday morning in February 1969: the day I had the German army marching through the Arc de Triomphe. When the scene was in the can I went to the Drugstore des Champs-Élysées with Hans Borgoff, who had been the administrator of "Gross Paris"¹² during the four years of the Occupation, and whom I had brought from Germany to come and help me shoot this scene. While I was breakfasting with the man who used to march every day at the head of the German troops, I recognized a youthful old man sitting nearby: it was Lieutenant Faul, the man I had fought under in Italy and in France. Twenty-five years later the wheel had come full circle.

Why did you interpolate the scene where Luc Jardie is decorated in London by General de Gaulle?

Because in Colonel Passy's¹³ memoirs there's a chapter about the *Compagnon de la Libération* insignia being awarded to Jean Moulin¹⁴, and Luc Jardie is based, among others, on Jean Moulin. I also thought it would be interesting to show how de Gaulle decorated members of the Resistance in his private apartments in London so as not to jeopardize their return to France.

Does the hotel room in London mean something particular to you?

It's an exact replica of the hotel room given to every Frenchman who came to London on business concerning the Resistance. Every time I meet a member of the Resistance, he asks how I knew what his room was like.

¹² "Gross Paris" was the German administrative designation for the greater Paris region

¹³ "Coloney Passy" was the pseudonym for André Dewavrin (1911-1998), head of the BCRA and one of the chief architects of the French Resistance movement; Passy plays himself in *Army of Shadows*

¹⁴ Moulin (1899-1943) was a legendary Resistance fighter. He was captured and tortured to death by Klaus Barbie. Moulin's ashes were transferred to the Panthéon in 1964.

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You end the film with a post-script telling of the deaths of the four leading characters. Is that what actually happened?

Of course. Like Luc Jardie, Jean Moulin died under torture after betraying one name: his own. Since he was no longer able to speak, one of the Gestapo chiefs, Klaus Barbie, handed him a piece of paper on which he had written "Are you Jean Moulins?" Jean Moulin's only reply was to take the pencil from Colonel Barbie and cross out the "s."

A lot of people would have to be dead before one could make a true film about the Resistance and about Jean Moulin. Don't forget that there are more people who didn't work for the Resistance than people who did. Do you know how many Resistants there were in France at the end of 1940? Six hundred. It was only in February or March 1943 that the situation changed, because the first *maquis*¹⁵ date from April 1943. And it was the proclamation by Sauckel¹⁶ about sending young people to Germany that made a lot of people prefer to go underground. It was not a matter of patriotism.

How did Kessel react to your film?

Kessel's emotion after the first screening of *Army of Shadows* is one of my most treasured memories. When he read the words telling of the deaths of the four characters, he couldn't stop himself from sobbing. He wasn't expecting those four lines which he hadn't written and which I hadn't put into the script.

Do you think the film was well received in official circles?

I don't know. I was at a screening at the Ministry of Information before an audience which included everybody who was anybody in the Parisian smart set. Among the two hundred people present there was only one Resistant, and he was the only one to remain transfixed in his seat after the screening. It was Friedman, the man who, one night in April 1944, killed Philippe Henriot¹⁷ at the Ministry of Information.

Do you remember the moment in *Le Deuxième Souffle*¹⁸ when Lino Ventura crosses the railway line after the hold-up? When we shot that scene, Lino said to

¹⁵ the dominantly rural guerrilla bands of the Resistance

¹⁶ Fritz Sauckel (1894-1946), a senior German government official in charge of forced labor. He was convicted at the Nuremberg Trials for crimes against humanity and hanged.

¹⁷ Henriot was the Vichy government's Secretary of State for Information and Propaganda.

¹⁸ Melville crime thriller released in 1966; Ventura played a character called Gustave Minda, nicknamed "Gu".

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me, "I've got it, Melville. Today I am Gu!" "No," I told him, "today you are Gerbier!" It took me nine years to persuade him to accept the role. When we shot the scene in *Army of Shadows* where he crosses the railway line in the early morning, we hadn't been on speaking terms for some time, but I am sure that at that moment he was thinking of what happened at Cassis railway station while we were filming *Le Deuxième Souffle*.

SIMONE SIGNORET ON *ARMY OF SHADOWS*

- Excerpted from *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be* by Simone Signoret (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978)

I see there's a book lying on that small table -- Les Memoires d'un Revolutionnaire, by Victor Serge. A bedside book, or a film project?

"Although this book is lent by Jean-Pierre Melville, that doesn't in any way imply that he no longer owns it." That's what is written on the flyleaf of this book salvaged from a fire, the one that destroyed his Rue Jenner studio¹⁹. The reason it's on that table is because we'd set it aside to give back to Melville one day when he was due for lunch here to discuss with Montand²⁰ a film they intended making together. He never came to lunch; he died the previous night. The date was August 2, 1973. We've never changed the book's place.

Montand made Le Cercle Rouge with him and you Army of Shadows. What did playing Mathilde, the Resistance heroine, represent for you?

It didn't stir up any memories, because I had done nothing fabulous or heroic. I never experienced the sort of things that happened to her. I could only correlate my references to what I'd been told. I'd come into contact with women like Mathilde, but at the time I knew nothing of what they really were. On the other hand, I can say that she seemed to me "manifest," that woman, during the entire time I played her; the more so as on the set we had a real "Mathilde." Maud Begon had put in nineteen months' captivity, from fort to camps. She made us up — that is, she improved me and she disfigured those who'd supposedly been subjected to torture.

For the latter, she undoubtedly called on her memories to do her job well. She didn't relate her memories; still, now, she keeps them to herself. Maud is frail and

¹⁹ Melville's studios on Rue Jenner in Paris burned down in June 1967.

²⁰ Film star Yves Montand was Signoret's husband

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gay. She only wears her Legion of Honor rosette when the traffic is likely to be particularly dense. The police are more lenient on illicitly parked cars driven by people with decorations.

I could tell you peripheral stories about the film, as I could about Melville and about Lino Ventura, who was on bad terms with Melville right from the first day's shooting. They didn't speak to each other for three months. I believe this was wonderfully beneficial: one completely believes in the utter loneliness of the character played by Lino, faced with his responsibilities, precisely because on the set he was an isolated man.

Melville was a director who didn't give actors any hard and fast instructions; you were directed by him without realizing it. At the end of the film, Mathilde is gunned down on the Avenue Hoche. We had a technical run-through of this fairly complicated sequence. Under my raincoat I was loaded with little bags of stage blood, designed to burst as the bullets hit me. It was an incredible session; we were on location and there must have been well nigh four hundred onlookers gawking while the plumbing operations proceeded, the tubes being coiled all over me so the blood would spurt from the holes provided for the purpose. I was ashamed at taking part in this public preparation of a sauce recipe. I was to come out of Gestapo headquarters and walk up the avenue. We rehearsed. I exited, walked with eyes glued firmly to the ground. Melville came toward me, saying: "That was fine. Don't change a thing. Your walk's great." And I, who never want to explain anything, somehow felt compelled to add: "Well, maybe . . . still, she's just betrayed her pals." "Who told you she's betrayed them?" "I've read the script." "So what! I wasn't there! I don't know if she gave them away!" "Nonetheless, they're going to kill her!" "Yes, they will kill her, but that doesn't prove that it was she who talked too much...." That's a fantastic indication, full of ambiguity. When the camera pans on those four guys in the car, for a fraction of a second there's this look exchanged between Mathilde and her pals: she realizes they are going to kill her.

If Melville hadn't talked to me the way he did just before the take, that look would never have existed: a mingling of surprise, terror and complete understanding. That's the way Melville directed: a word or two tossed into the conversation. Indications like these work wonders!

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BACKGROUND

- Excerpted from *Jean-Pierre Melville* by Ginette Vincendeau (BFI Publishing, 2003)

Released on September 12, 1969, *Army of Shadows* completed Melville's triptych about the Occupation and Resistance²¹: "Now I have said everything about the war," he told *Paris-Presse*. Although in color, *Army of Shadows* is an exceptionally dark film, a twilight vision of the Resistance, supported by powerfully restrained performances, especially by Lino Ventura in the lead. Today *Army of Shadows* is Melville's best-known and highest-rated war film, but it was not always so. The film's critical reception was split and box office considered disappointing. However, if popular success did not quite match up to expectations created by the film's high budget of 8,175,000 Francs, starry cast and famous source novel, its so-called "failure," reiterated by most commentators, has been greatly exaggerated. The film actually sold 1.4 million tickets -- a more than respectable figure. *Army of Shadows* needs to be understood in relation to Melville's own past, to the book on which it is based and to the moment of its making and release.

Melville started his own military service in the colonial cavalry in 1937. He was still a conscript when World War II began. In September 1940, his regiment got caught in Belgium. Melville was evacuated to England and repatriated to France. On his return, he moved to Castres in the south of France and joined the Resistance networks *Liberation* and *Combat* under the name Cartier, and later Melville.

After the Allied landing in North Africa in November 1942, "Cartier-Melville" tried to reach London via Algiers. His ship was stopped, and he was jailed in Spain for two months. At some point in 1942-1943 Melville spent some time in London, where he says he worked as a sub-agent for the Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action, a French intelligence agency initially headquartered in England. Melville reached Tunisia in autumn 1943, where he joined the First Regiment of Colonial Artillery of the Free French. At first assigned as a colonel's chauffeur, he took part in the Italian and French liberation campaigns. His regiment was awarded the *Croix de la Liberation* in 1945.

These are the facts, as far as they can be ascertained, of Melville's war and

²¹ *Le Silence de la Mer* (1947), Melville's first feature film, and *Leon Morin, Prêtre* (1961) were the director's previous films set during the war. *Léon Morin*, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, is a future Rialto Pictures release.

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involvement with the Resistance. Some dates are hazy and testimonies contradictory. This does not signify that the claims he made were false or incorrect, since by definition records of underground movements are scanty. Two things in any case are certain. On the one hand, there is no doubting Melville's bravery in joining the Free French, however modest his part and however much he played it down (he claimed that "being in the Resistance if you're a Jew is infinitely less heroic than if you're not"). The second, and to us today particularly important, certainty is the deep impact the experience left on [him]. Melville's experience of the war, Resistance and German occupation provided the backbone for his work.

Melville had thought of adapting *Army of Shadows* ever since the publication of Kessel's book in 1943. The scale of the project, other film offers and Lino Ventura's unavailability delayed him until the late 1960s. When Melville started the film in early 1969, de Gaulle was still in power, but by the time it came out the General had retired from politics after a vote of no confidence in the referendum which followed the events of May 1968. Sarcastically dubbed "the first and greatest example of Gaullist film art" by *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Army of Shadows* appeared (to some) out of date, a last stand against the tide of history.

These reactions make sense in the post-1968 context. Georges Pompidou, de Gaulle's successor, was leading France into a new age, and attitudes to the war were about to take a U-turn. From serious historiography to literature and the movies, new voices were exploding the Resistentialist myth which, for Rousso²², had reached its apogee between the end of the Algerian war and May 1968. Soon the four-and-a-half hour documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity*²³ would put the final nail in the coffin of the old-style Resistance myth by documenting a nation not only split between collaborationists and resisters, but largely composed of uncommitted or indifferent *attentistes*. Mentalities were changing fast, and it would seem that, as Rousso puts it, *Army of Darkness* "arrived on the scene too late."

To call Melville's film "Gaullist film art" as *Cahiers* did, is, apart from the calculated insult, a gross simplification. With *Army of Shadows*, Melville certainly produced a deeply felt tribute to the Resistance and de Gaulle, but it was also a profoundly ambivalent one. Its pessimistic narrative and bleak minimalist style turn it into a reflection on solitude and on the tragic futility of war, life and death. No wonder contemporary reactions were split.

²² University professor Henry Rousso, a WWII specialist

²³ Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971) probed the once-taboo subject of French collaborationists.

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JEAN-PIERRE MELVILLE (Writer/Director)

Jean-Pierre Melville was born Jean-Pierre Grumbach in Paris in 1917, the son of a Jewish wholesale merchant. (He would later adopt the name Melville in homage to the author of *Moby Dick*.) His father gave him a 9.5mm movie camera when he was six years old; he graduated to 16mm at age 12. An avid moviegoer in his childhood and youth, his other passions were the theater, the circus and the music hall. Like the New Wave generation which would consider him a mentor, Melville learned about cinema by watching the films of others, mostly Hollywood directors.

Melville started his military service in 1937 and was still in uniform when the war broke out. Information on his activities during the early years of the Occupation are contradictory²⁴, but he fled to England in 1943, where he joined the British Army, then the Free French, with whom he took part in the invasion of Italy and the liberation of Lyons.

Demobilized in October 1945, Melville was determined to be a filmmaker. But the doors to the heavily corporate industry remained closed to him. Unable to get a professional card, Melville created his own production company. After a documentary short about the famous circus clown Beby, he wrote, produced, directed and edited *Le Silence de la mer*, an austere, strikingly faithful adaptation of the famous French Resistance novel, secretly published in 1942. It brought him the grudging respect of the film industry — which still fined him heavily for shooting without a permit. The film also launched the career of his great director of photography, Henri Decaë.

Melville also drew praise from none other than Jean Cocteau, who entrusted him with the film adaptation to his famous 1929 novel, *Les Enfants terribles* (1950). Although Cocteau worked on the screenplay and imposed the casting of his then-lover, Edouard Dermithe, Melville made it very much his own film. It influenced several of the later New Wave directors, Truffaut and Chabrol in particular.

The next few years were lean ones for Melville. He made *Quand tu liras cette lettre* (1953), an implausible melodrama starring Juliette Greco, which he agreed to do to prove he was not a cinematic dilettante or art house intellectual.

Melville entertained hopes of directing *Rififi*, promised to him by the producer, who finally passed him over in favor of expat American Jules Dassin.

²⁴ see page 8 for Melville's own account of his wartime activities

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Nonetheless, the success of *Rififi* allowed him to make *Bob Le Flambeur*, for which he obtained the collaboration of *Rififi* author Auguste Le Breton.

Melville himself acted in his next film, *Deux Hommes Dans Manhattan* (1958), a tale of two French journalists investigating the disappearance of a diplomat in New York, which was partially shot on location. His next film, *Léon Morin, prêtre* (1961), starred New Wave sensation Jean-Paul Belmondo as an enlightened young Catholic priest.

Le Doulos (1962) was the first of his highly stylized appropriations of film noir conventions and stereotypes, which again cast Belmondo. That same year Melville filmed his adaptation of Georges Simenon's novel *L'Ainé des Ferchaux* (1962), which co-starred Belmondo and the great character actor Charles Vanel.

The gangster epic *Le Deuxième Souffle* (*Second Breath*, 1966), with Lino Ventura as one of the great Melvillian heroes, came next. He followed that a year later with *Le Samourai* (1967), a hieratic thriller about a betrayed contract killer, played with icy, impenetrable grace by Alain Delon. Melville then paid a moving homage to the heroism and sacrifice of the French Resistance in *Army of Shadows* (*L'Armée des ombres*, 1969), starring Lino Ventura, Simone Signoret, and Paul Meurisse. Melville's next film proved to be the greatest hit of his career: *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970), a fatalistic caper drama with Delon, Yves Montand and Gian-Maria Volonté as three outlaws and beloved funnyman André Bourvil in one of his few straight dramatic roles as the pursuing cop.

Melville's last film was another thriller with Delon, *Un Flic* (1972), which co-starred Catherine Deneuve and met with only partial success. Melville was at work on the script of his 14th feature when he died suddenly of a stroke on August 2, 1973. He was 55.

Melville's maverick status within the French film industry and his then unorthodox methods of independent production (which even included his own facility, Jenner Studios, in southern Paris, where he shot the interiors for most of his films) served as a model and inspiration for many of the New Wave directors. Many later-day directors, among them John Woo, have declared their debt to Melville.

In *Breathless*, Jean-Luc Godard paid special tribute to Melville. In one scene, a cop tells Jean-Paul Belmondo that his friend Bob Montagné is in jail – a reference to the title character of *Bob Le Flambeur*. *Breathless* also boasts a memorable cameo appearance by Melville himself, as the pretentious best-selling novelist interviewed by Jean Seberg:

Seberg: "What is your greatest ambition in life?"

Melville: To become immortal... and then die."

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LINO VENTURA (Gerbier)

Born Angelo Borrini in Parma, Italy in 1919, Lino Ventura emigrated with his family to France at the age of eight. He found his first calling as a professional wrestler and fight manager. Ventura's success in his debut appearance in *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi* (1955) immediately brought him other screen parts, often as a heavy opposite Jean Gabin. In 1956, his popularity continued its upward arc when he embodied a muscle-bound French secret agent nicknamed The Gorilla in the first of a popular series of commercial spy thrillers. In 1957 he played the ice-cool Inspector Chériet in Louis' Malle's debut film, *Elevator To the Gallows* (now in theatrical re-release throughout the U.S.). Two years later the young Claude Sautet cast him in the lead of his first feature, the superb film noir *Classe Tous Risques* (released in November 2005 by Rialto Pictures, for the first time in its original French version) in which Ventura began to show the instinctive talents that would make him one of France's best-loved stars. He became a certified French movie star with the 1961 war movie *A Taxi for Tobruk*.

Though often restricted to roles of gangsters and tough guys, Ventura displayed depth and subtlety behind his gruff, chunky exterior. He even moved easily into tongue-in-cheek comedy in Georges Lautner's *Les Tontons Flingueurs* (1963) and two Claude Lelouch films, *Money Money Money (L'Aventure c'est L'Aventure)*, 1971) and *A Pain in the A...(L'Emmerdeur)*, 1973), in which he played the stone-faced foil to Jacques Brel's suicidal schlemiel.

In addition to *Army of Shadows*, Ventura had another of his finest roles working for director Melville in *Le Deuxième Souffle* (1966). He also turned in memorable performances in Francesco Rosi's *Illustrious Corpses* (1975), Claude Miller's *Garde à Vue* (1981) and in the same year a fine Jean Valjean in Robert Hossein's *Les Misérables*.

Ventura died in 1987. A square in Montmartre bears the Italian-born actor's name.

SIMONE SIGNORET (Mathilde)

Born Simone Kaminker to French parents in Wiesbaden, Germany in 1921, young Simone was raised in Paris during the Occupation, when she got her first film work as an extra. By 1946, Signoret was a leading actress, usually under the direction of first husband Yves Allegret. Her career spanned 40 years, from romantic prostitutes and molls in Allegret's *Dédée d'Anvers* (1948) and Jacques Becker's *Casque d'Or* (1952) to later films in which she

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embodied no-nonsense matrons and crusty professional women. She co-starred in several films with her second husband, singer-actor Yves Montand, including *Les Sorcières de Salem* (1957, a French adaptation of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*), and two films by director Costa-Gavras, *The Sleeping Car Murders* (1965) and *The Confession* (1970). Her performance in *Room at the Top* (1959), one of her many English-language roles, won her a Cannes Film Festival award and the Academy Award for Best Actress. She won France's César and Italy's David di Donatello award for *Madame Rosa* (1977). She died in 1985.

PAUL MEURISSE (Luc Jardie)

Born in 1912, Meurisse began his film career in 1941, alongside his then-fiancée Edith Piaf in *Montmartre-sur-Seine*. Meurisse steadily built his reputation, working with some of France's finest directors, including André Cayatte, Georges Franju, Julien Duvivier, Jean Renoir, Georges Lautner, and Marcel Carné. Perhaps his most famous screen role was as the seemingly-murdered husband in Henri-Georges Clouzot's thriller *Diabolique*.

JEAN-PIERRE CASSEL (Jean François Jardie)

Born 1932 in Paris, Cassel was discovered by Gene Kelly, who cast him in his film *The Happy Road*. Following Anatole Litvak's *Act of Love*, Cassel went on to establish himself in a series of comedies directed by Phillippe de Broca and developed his persona as a romantic leading man playing opposite Jean Seberg in *Five Day Lover*, Brigitte Bardot in *The Bear and the Doll*, Catherine Deneuve in *Male Companion*, and Stéphane Audran in *The Twist*. Cassel established himself further as an international star working with Luis Buñuel in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, Sidney Lumet in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Richard Lester in *The Three Musketeers* and its sequel, Joseph Losey in *The Trout*, and Robert Altman in *Vincent & Theo*. Still as popular as ever on stage and screen in France, his more recent credits are Claude Chabrol's *La Cérémonie*, Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter*, Benoît Jacquot's *Sade*, and Mathieu Kassovitz's *The Crimson River*.

SERGE REGGIANI (barber)

Born in Italy in 1922, Serge Reggiani attended acting school in France, where he was discovered by Jean Cocteau, who cast him in a wartime stage production of *Les Parents Terribles*. Reggiani's film credits include Marcel Carné's *Les portes de la nuit*, Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Manon*, Max Ophüls' *La Ronde*, Jacques Becker's *Casque d'or*, Melville's *Le Doulos*, and Visconti's *The Leopard*. In 1965, with the help of Simone Signoret and Yves Montand, he began a second career as a singer, becoming one of the most acclaimed performers of French *chanson*. He died in 2004.

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PIERRE LHOMME (Cinematographer)

Born in a suburb of Paris in 1930, Lhomme (there is no apostrophe in his surname) began his career as camera operator on films by Chris Marker, Philippe de Broca, and Eric Rohmer, as well as assistant to the great cinematographer Ghislain Cloquet. As director of photography, he has worked with many of the world's great directors, including Robert Bresson (*Four Nights of a Dreamer*), de Broca (*King of Hearts*), Jean Eustache (*The Mother and The Whore*), Dusan Makavejev (*Sweet Movie*), and James Ivory (four films, including *Jefferson in Paris* and *Le Divorce*). Nominated seven times for a César, he earned the Best Cinematography Award for his work on Bruno Nuytten's *Camille Claudel* and Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which also won him a Grand Prize for cinematography at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. Mr. Lhomme, who worked closely with StudioCanal on the current restoration of *Army of Shadows*, lives in Paris and is available for interviews.

ERIC DEMARSAN (Composer)

Born in Paris in 1938, Demarsan began his career as an assistant to composer Michel Magne in the early 60s. Graduating to orchestrator, on films by Duvivier (*Diaboliquement Votre*) and Melville (*Le Samourai*), he was then chosen by Melville to write the scores for both *L'Armée des Ombres* and *Le Cercle Rouge*. Demarsan has worked with many other prominent directors, including Costa-Gavras and Patrice Leconte. He lives today in Paris.

FRANÇOISE BONNOT (Editor)

Daughter of editor Monique Bonnot (who cut Melville's *Bob le flambeur* and *Le Doulos*), Françoise Bonnot started her career as an assistant editor on Melville's *Two Men in Manhattan*. A frequent collaborator of Costa-Gavras, she received an Academy Award for her work in *Z* (1969) and a British Academy Award for *Missing* (1982). Other notable credits include Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon*, Polanski's *The Tenant*, and Henri Verneuil's *Any Number Can Win*. She lives today in California.

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JOSEPH KESSEL (novel)

A member of the Academie Française, Joseph Kessel was born in Argentina in 1898, the son of a Lithuanian Jewish physician. Kessel pursued his secondary studies in France and served as a lieutenant in the French Air Force during World War I, an experience that inspired his first novel, *L'Equipage* (1923). He was decorated with the Croix de Guerre for heroism.

Moving between reportage and literature, Kessel worked regularly as a war correspondent and covered various fronts and revolutions until the fall of France in 1940. He joined the active French resistance in 1941. It was in the *maquis* that he and fellow resistance fighter and author Maurice Druon penned the lyrics for the famous Resistance anthem "Le Chant de Partisans." Following the war, the song was proposed as a new French national anthem. It became the country's unofficial anthem, alongside the official "La Marseillaise."

In 1943, Kessel fled to England, where he joined de Gaulle's Free French Forces and wrote *Army of Shadows*. An instant bestseller, it was published by American publisher Alfred Knopf the following year.

Many of Kessel's novels were adapted for the screen. *L'Equipage* was filmed three times: by Maurice Tourneur in France in 1928, and twice by his close friend Anatole Litvak, first as a French talkie in 1935, then as a Hollywood remake in 1937 (*The Woman I Love*). His 1928 novel *Belle de Jour* was famously adapted by Luis Buñuel in 1967, with Catherine Deneuve starring as a bourgeois Parisian housewife who daylights as a prostitute.

Other Kessel novels that became movies included *The Lion and The Horsemen*, filmed by Jack Cardiff in 1962 and by John Frankenheimer in 1971. As a dialogue writer, Kessel also contributed to *Mayerling* (1936), *An Act of Love* (1953) and *The Night of the Generals* (1967), all directed by Litvak, and documentaries such as Frédéric Rossif's *A Wall in Jerusalem* (1970). He died in Paris in 1979.

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Described as “the gold standard of reissue distributors” by Los Angeles Times/NPR film critic Kenneth Turan, Rialto Pictures was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric Di Bernardo became the company’s National Sales Director.

Rialto’s past releases have included Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed’s *The Third Man*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders* and *A Woman is a Woman*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Melville’s *Bob le Flambeur* and *Le Cercle Rouge*, the latter released for the first time in its uncut European version. In 2002, the company released the critically acclaimed first-run film *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters, starring Sylvie Testud.

Rialto’s 2004 slate included the original 1954 Japanese version of Ishiro Honda’s *Godzilla*, never before released in the U.S.; Peter Davis’s Oscar-winning 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds*; and Gillo Pontecorvo’s groundbreaking *The Battle of Algiers*, which became one of the year’s top-grossing foreign films.

Recent releases have been Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows*, Godard’s *Masculine Feminine*, Claude Berri’s *The Two of Us*, Bresson’s *Mouchette*, and Claude Sautet’s rarely-seen film noir classic *Classe Tous Risques*. A favorite of both Melville and John Woo, it stars Jean-Paul Belmondo and *Army of Shadow*’s Lino Ventura. The company’s most recent release is Carol Reed’s rediscovered masterwork *The Fallen Idol*, starring Ralph Richardson and Michèle Morgan.

In 1999 Rialto received a special Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics, and in 2000 received a special award from the New York Film Critics Circle, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau. The two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

Pressbook edited and annotated by Bruce Goldstein
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