

# **GODARD'S CONTEMPT**

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## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Director  
**Jean-Luc Godard**

Screenplay  
**Jean-Luc Godard (based on the novel by Alberto Moravia)**

Producers  
**Georges de Beauregard Carlo Ponti**

Cinematography  
**Raoul Coutard**

Original Music  
**Georges Delerue**

Costume Design  
**Janine Autré**

Editor  
**Agnès Guillemot**

Sound  
**William Sivel**

Original French release: December 27, 1963  
U.S. release: December 18, 1964

France/Italy Technicolor Aspect ratio 2.35:1 (Franscope)  
In French with English subtitles  
Running time: 103 min.

**A Rome-Paris Films (Paris) - Films Concordia (Paris) -  
Compagnia Cinematografica Champion (Rome) production**

**A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE**

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## **CAST**

Camille Javal  
**Brigitte Bardot**

Jeremy Prokosch ("Jerry")  
**Jack Palance**

Paul Javal  
**Michel Piccoli**

Francesca Vanini  
**Giorgia Moll**

Fritz Lang  
**Fritz Lang**

The Assistant Director  
**Jean-Luc Godard**

Siren  
**Linda Veras**

Cameraman  
**Raoul Coutard**

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## SYNOPSIS

*CONTEMPT* opens at Rome's Cinecittà studios, made empty by the economic crisis of Italian (and European) cinema. An American producer, Jerry Prokosch, is eager to engage a young French playwright, Paul Javal -- who'd previously worked on the hit movie *Totò Against Hercules* -- to re-write a screenplay of *The Odyssey*, which Prokosch is currently shooting with the great German director Fritz Lang. Prokosch's *Odyssey* is no sword and sandal epic: he wants a modern psychological love story fit for the masses. But Lang wishes to catch on film the classical art of Greece.

As the three men watch the rushes together with a translator, Francesca Vanini -- the producer delighted only by the shots of nude mermaids -- it becomes clear that Prokosch has no time for Lang's untroubled classical serenity; he's determined to buy Paul's talents in order to wrest control of the film. After the screening, Paul meets his beautiful young wife Camille. Prokosch is struck by her and invites the couple to his villa, offering Camille a ride in his two-seat Alfa Romeo. Camille is reluctant, but Paul insists, and goes by taxi. When he arrives late, Camille is furious. But Paul, unmindful, hands her off to Prokosch and makes a perfunctory pass at Francesca.

The action moves to Paul and Camille's new, not-yet-furnished apartment, a reminder of the financial burden that makes Prokosch's offer so attractive. Paul speaks desperately to Camille, hoping to reverse the bad feelings. At the same time he pleads with her to join Prokosch and the rest of the crew in Capri. The situation worsens as they continue to argue. Suddenly, it seems Camille has nothing but utter contempt for him.

Camille will not explain the change in her regard for him. Paul believes she's jealous of Francesca; he begs for an explanation, but she declares simply that she no longer loves him. Bewildered and desperate, Paul is determined to find the reason for Camille's contempt.

Jerry invites the couple to stay at his rented villa, in Capri, during the filming. Hoping to rekindle her love, Paul persuades Camille to make the trip.

Lang and Paul, once at work, disagree on the approach to *The Odyssey*. The director is committed to a classic vision, while Paul has come around to Prokosch's interpretation, conceiving the story as a romantic adventure and reading his own troubles into the story. Their heated discussions reveal the conflict between Paul, Camille and Jerry -- whom Paul now feels is his rival --

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as a psychological parallel to the legend of Ulysses, with Paul as Odysseus, Camille as Penelope, and Prokosch as Poseidon.

One evening, Paul sees Jerry kissing Camille, who knows that her husband has been watching them. When he confronts her, Camille admits she has stopped loving him because he was prostituting her to Prokosch. Paul protests that Camille has completely misinterpreted his relationship with the producer, and to prove his claim, he decides to quit the film. When he asks Camille to return with him to Rome, she says it doesn't matter whether or not he quits -- she's no longer capable of loving him. "Because you are not a man," she declares.

Camille leaves a note and abruptly departs for Rome with Jerry, in order to leave Paul and resume her former career as a typist. On the way, the Alfa Romeo crashes between two oil-tankers, killing both Camille and Prokosch.

On Capri, Paul bids farewell to Lang, who is framing a shot of the returning Odysseus gazing upon his homeland. This shot, noisily prepared by Lang's assistant (played by Godard himself), closes the film.

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## **PHILLIP LOPATE ON *CONTEMPT***

In 1963, film buffs were drooling over the improbable news that Godard -- renowned for hit-and-run, art-house bricolages like "Breathless" and "My Life to Live" -- was shooting a big Cinemascope color movie with Brigitte Bardot and Jack Palance, based on an Alberto Moravia novel, "The Ghost at Noon." Then word leaked out that Godard was having problems with his producers, Carlo Ponti and Joseph E. Levine, who were upset that the rough cut was so chaste. Not a single nude scene with B. B. -- not even a sexy costume! Godard obliged by adding a prologue of husband and wife (Michel Piccoli and Bardot) in bed, which takes inventory of that sumptuous figure through color filters. While she asks for reassurance about each part of her body, he reassures her ominously, "I love you totally, tenderly, tragically."

Beyond that "compromise," Godard refused to budge, saying, "Hadn't they ever bothered to see a Godard film?"

The irony is that "Contempt" itself deals with a conflict between a European director (Fritz Lang playing himself) and a crude American producer, Jerry Prokosch (performed with animal energy by Palance), over a remake of Homer's "Odyssey." Prokosch hires a French screenwriter, Paul (Piccoli), to rewrite Lang's script. Paul takes the job partly to buy an apartment for his wife, the lovely Camille (Bardot), but in selling his talents, he loses stature in her eyes. Camille also thinks her husband is allowing the powerful, predatory Prokosch to flirt with her. Piccoli, in the performance that made him a star, registers with every nuance the defensive cockiness of an intellectual turned hack who feels himself outmanned.

According to the director Pascal Aubier, who served as Godard's assistant on "Contempt" and many of his other pictures in the 60's, "it was a very tormented production." Godard, unused to working on such a large scale, was annoyed at the circus atmosphere generated by the paparazzi who followed Bardot to Capri. B. B., then at the height of her celebrity, arrived with her latest boyfriend, the actor Sami Frey, which further irritated Godard, who liked to have the full attention of his leading ladies.

The filmmaker was also not getting along with his wife (and usual star), Anna Karina, and seemed very lonely on the shoot, remembers Aubier. "But then, that's not unusual for him," Aubier said. "Godard also has a knack for making people around him feel awkward, and then using that to bring out tensions in the script."

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He antagonized Jack Palance by refusing to consider the actor's ideas, giving him only physical instructions: three steps to the left, look up. Palance, miserable, kept phoning his agent in America to get him off the picture. The only one Godard got on well with was Fritz Lang, whom he idolized.

No sign of the shooting problems mars the implacable smoothness of the finished product. Godard famously stated that "a movie should have a beginning, a middle and an end, though not necessarily in that order." "Contempt," however, adheres to the traditional order; it is built like a well-made three-act tragedy.

The first part takes place on the deserted back lots of Rome's Cinecitta studios and at the producer's house. The second part -- the heart of the film -- is an extraordinary half-hour sequence in the couple's apartment: a tour de force of psychological realism, as the camera tracks the married couple in their casual moves, opening a Coke, sitting on the john, taking a bath in each other's presence, doing a bit of work, walking away in the middle of a sentence. Meanwhile, they circle around their wound. Paul feels that Camille's love has changed since that morning -- grown colder. She is indeed irritated by him, but still loves him. With the devastating force of Ibsen characters, they keep arguing, retreating, making up, picking the scab and find themselves in a darker emotional place.

The third part moves to Capri -- the dazzling Villa Malaparte, stepped like a Mayan temple by Le Corbusier -- for a holiday plus some "Odyssey" location shooting. Capri is an insidious "no exit" Elysium where luxury, caprice and natural beauty all converge to shatter the marriage.

Part of the special character of "Contempt" is that it exists both as a realistic story and a string of iconic metaphors, connecting its historical layers. Palance's red Porsche sweeps in like Zeus's chariot. When he hurls a film can in disgust, he becomes a discus thrower ("At last you have a feeling for Greek culture," Lang observes drily). Bardot donning a black wig seems a temporary stand-in for both Penelope and Karina. Piccoli's character wears a hat in the bathtub to look like Dean Martin in "Some Came Running" (though it makes him resemble Godard himself). Piccoli's bath towel suggests a Roman toga. The monocled Lang, a walking emblem of cinema's golden age, invokes Dietrich and run-ins with Goebbels. The Villa Malaparte is both temple and prison.

Meanwhile, the Cinemascope camera observes all; approaching on a dolly in the opening shot, it tilts down and toward us like a one-eyed Polyphemus.

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What makes "Contempt" a singular viewing experience today, even more than in 1963, is the way it stimulates an audience's intelligence as well as its senses. Complex and dense, it unapologetically accommodates discussions about Homer, Dante and German Romantic poetry, meditations on the fate of cinema and the role of the gods in modern life, the creative process, the deployment of Cinemascope. (Lang sneers that it is only good for showing "snakes and funerals," but the background-hungry beauty of the cinematographer Raoul Coutard's compositions belies this.)

It is also a film about language, as speakers of English, French, Italian and German fling their words against an interpreter, Francesca (Georgia Moll), in a jai alai of idioms that presciently conveys life in the new global economy. More practically, the polyglot soundtrack was a strategy to prevent the producers from dubbing the film.

"Godard is the first filmmaker to bristle with the effort of digesting all previous cinema and to make cinema itself his subject," wrote the critic David Thomson. Certainly "Contempt" is shot through with film-buff references, and it gains veracity and authority from Godard's familiarity with the business of movie making. But far from being a self-referential piece about films, it moves us because it is essentially the story of a marriage. Godard makes us care about two likable people who love each other but seem determined to throw their happiness away.

Godard is said to have originally wanted Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak for the husband and wife. Some of Novak's musing "Vertigo" quality adheres to Bardot. In her best acting performance, she is utterly convincing as the tentative, demure ex-secretary pulled into a larger world of glamour by her husband. Despite Godard's claim that he took Bardot as "a package deal," he tampered with the B. B. persona in several ways. First he toyed with having her play the entire film in a brunet wig -- depriving her of her trademark blondness -- but eventually settled for using the dark wig as a significant prop. More crucial was Godard's intuition to suppress the sex kitten of "And God Created Woman" and "Mamzelle Striptease," and to draw on a more modest, prudishly French-bourgeois side of Bardot without diminishing the shock of her beauty.

When she puts on her brunet wig in the apartment scene, she may be trying to get Paul to regard her as more intelligent than he customarily does -- to escape the blond bimbo stereotype. (Her foil, Francesca, the dark-haired interpreter, speaks four languages and discusses Holderlin's poetry with Lang.) At one point

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Paul asks Camille, "Why are you looking so pensive?" And she answers: "Believe it or not, I'm thinking. Does that surprise you?" The inequalities in their marriage are painfully exposed: he sees himself as the brain and breadwinner, and her as a sexy trophy. Whatever her new-found contemptuous feelings may be, he has from the start made clear his condescension. "Why did I marry a stupid 28-year-old typist?" he blurts out.

Underneath the injustice of her implicit accusation (that Paul had pandered by leaving her alone with his employer) is a legitimate complaint: he would not have acted so cavalierly if he were not also a little bored with her. Camille says she liked him better when he was writing detective fiction and they were poor, before he fell in with that "film crowd." His screenwriting does put him in a more abasing position, because the profession amounts to a school for humiliation.

More important, she has come to despise his presumption that he can analyze her mind. Not only is this unromantic, suggesting she holds no further mystery, but insultingly reductive. She is outraged at his speculation that she's making peace for reasons of self-interest -- to keep the apartment. As the camera tracks between them, pausing at a lamp, Paul guesses that she is angry at him because she has seen him patting Francesca's bottom. Camille shakes her head in an astonished no, then catches herself. She scornfully accepts his demeaning reading of her.

More than anything, the middle section traces the building of a mood. When Paul demands irritably, "What's wrong with you, what's been bothering you all afternoon?," he seems both to want to confront the problem (admirably) and to bully her out of her sullenness (reprehensibly). We see what he doesn't: the experimental, tentative quality of her hostility. She is "trying on" anger and contempt, not knowing exactly where it will go. Her grudge has a tinge of playacting, as if she fully expects to spring back to affection at any moment. Paul is a man worrying a canker sore. Whenever Camille begins to forgive, to be tender again, he won't accept it: he keeps asking her why she no longer loves him, until the hypothesis becomes a reality.

All through the 60's, Godard was fascinated with the beautiful woman who betrays (Seberg in "Breathless"), withdraws her love (Chantal Goya in "Masculine Feminine"), runs away (Karina in "Pierrot le Fou") or is faithless (Bardot in "Contempt"). What makes "Contempt" an advance over this masochistic obsession with the femme fatale is that here, Godard shows complete awareness of how much at fault the man may be for the loss of the woman's love.

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The film explores the mutual complicities inherent in contempt. Paul responds both ways to his wife's harsh judgment: he agrees with her, out of the intellectual's stock of self-hatred, and he considers her unjust, which leads him to lash out in a fury. He even slaps her -- thereby further undercutting her shaky esteem for him. In any film today, a man slapping a woman would end the scene, but in "Contempt" we keep watching the sequence for 25 more minutes, as the adjustments to that slap are digested.

Pascal Aubier told me point-blank, "Godard was on Camille's side." In that sense, "Contempt" can be seen as a form of self-criticism: a male artist analyzing the vanities and self-deceptions of the male ego. (And perhaps, too, an apology -- what the cinematographer, Coutard, meant when he called the film Godard's "love letter to his wife," Karina.)

Godard spoke uncharitably about "The Ghost at Noon," the novel he adapted for "Contempt," calling it "a nice, vulgar read for a train journey." In fact, he took a good deal of the psychology, characters and plot line from the book by Moravia. Perhaps Godard's ungenerosity toward the author reflects an embarrassment at this debt, or a knee-jerk need to apologize to his avant-garde fans.

The exigencies of making a movie with a comparatively large budget and stars, based on a well-known writer's novel, limited the experimental-collage side of Godard and forced him to focus on getting across a linear narrative, in the process drawing more psychologically complex, rounded characters. Godardians regard "Contempt" as an anomaly, the master's most orthodox movie. The paradox is that it is also his finest. "Pierrot le Fou" may be more expansive, "Breathless" and "Masculine Feminine" more inventive, but in "Contempt" Godard was able to strike his deepest human chords.

If the film is a record of disenchantment, it is also a seductive bouquet of enchantments: Bardot's beauty, primary colors, luxury objects, nature. "Contempt" marked the first time that Godard went beyond the jolie-laide poetry of cities and revealed his romantic, unironic love of landscapes. The cypresses on Prokosch's estate exquisitely frame Bardot and Piccoli. Capri sits in the Mediterranean, a jewel in a turquoise setting. The last word in the film is Lang's assistant director (played by Godard himself) calling out, "Action!" -- after which the camera pans to a tranquilly static ocean. The serene classicism of sea and sky refutes the thrashings of men.

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## **CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR CONTEMPT**

**“ONE OF THE MASTERWORKS OF MODERN CINEMA,** a singular viewing experience... A seductive bouquet of enchantments... a many-layered odyssey of intelligence and sensuality.” – **Phillip Lopate, *The New York Times***

**\*\*\*\* (FOUR STARS - HIGHEST RATING)** “A film anyone interested in the cinema as other than popcorn entertainment should see.”  
-- **Derek Malcolm, *The Guardian (London)***

**“SPLENDID, PROPHETIC, VISUALLY RAVISHING...** This pop-art masterpiece is still light years ahead of its time.” -- **J. Hoberman, *Vanity Fair***

**“GODARD’S RAVISHING MASTERPIECE...**a meditation on classicism and modernism; an exploration of the phenomenon ‘BB’; a parable about prostitution, love and communication; and a study in beauty. **JUST GREAT.**”  
-- **Geoff Andrew, *Time Out (London)***

**“THRILLING IN ITS STYLISTIC FREEDOM,** hilarious in its dry wit... *Contempt* remains as vital and challenging as the day it was made.” – **Dave Kehr**

**“GODARD AT HIS MOST CONCISE AND BRUTAL,** confronting his two obsessions, love and movies.” -- ***The Independent (U.K.)***

**“HAS THE GLOW OF GREATNESS...** An acid satire, an act of worship... Sports the nimbleness of comedy, strolls defiantly in the direction of the tragic... Why this should break the heart I have no idea, but it does.” – **Anthony Lane, *The New Yorker***

**“GODARD CONJURES UP SEQUENCES OF SURPASSING BEAUTY...** Has a movie ever been funnier or more frightening about the megalomania and mythologizing of film?” – **Quentin Curtis, *The Telegraph (London)***

**“ASTONISHING...** one of the most gorgeous, giddy movies ever made.” – **Richard Flood, *Artforum*.**

**“THE GREATEST WORK OF ART PRODUCED IN POST-WAR EUROPE.”**  
-- **Colin McCabe, *Sight & Sound***

**“BARDOT+ GODARD = MOVIE GREATNESS.”** – ***Time Out New York***

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## GODARD ON CONTEMPT

Moravia's novel is a nice, vulgar one for a train journey, full of classical, old-fashioned sentiments in spite of the modernity of the situations. But it is with this kind of novel that one can often make the best films.

I have stuck to the main theme, simply altering a few details, on the principle that something filmed is automatically different from something written, and therefore original. There was no need to make it different, to adapt it to the screen. All I had to do was film it as it is: just film what was written, apart from a few details; for if the cinema were not first and foremost film, it wouldn't exist. Méliès is the greatest, but without Lumière he would have languished in obscurity.

Apart from a few details. For instance, the transformation of the hero who, in passing from book to screen, moves from false adventure to real, from Antonioni inertia to *Laramiesque* dignity. For instance also, the nationality of the characters: Brigitte Bardot is no longer called Emilia but Camille, and as you will see she trifles nonetheless with Musset. Each of the characters, moreover, speaks his own language which, as in *The Quiet American*, contributes to the feeling of people lost in a strange country. Here, though, two days only: an afternoon in Rome, a morning in Capri. Rome is the modern world, the West; Capri, the ancient world, nature before civilization and its neuroses. *Contempt*, in other words, might have been called *In Search of Homer*, but it means lost time trying to discover the language of Proust beneath that of Moravia, and anyway that isn't the point.

The point is that these are people who look at each other and judge each other, and then are in turn looked at and judged by the cinema -- represented by Fritz Lang, who plays himself, or in effect the conscience of the film, its honesty. (I filmed the scenes of *The Odyssey* which he was supposed to be directing, but as I play the role of his assistant, Lang will say that these are scenes made by his second unit.)

When I think about it, *Contempt* seems to me, beyond its psychological study of a woman who despises her husband, the story of castaways of the Western world, survivors of the shipwreck of modernity who, like the heroes of Verne and Stevenson, one day reach a mysterious deserted island, whose mystery is the inexorable lack of mystery, of truth that is to say. Whereas the *Odyssey* of Ulysses was a physical phenomenon, I filmed a spiritual odyssey: the eye of the camera watching these characters in search of Homer replaces that of the gods watching over Ulysses and his companions.

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A simple film without mystery, an Aristotelian film, stripped of appearances, *Contempt* proves in 149 shots that in the cinema as in life there is no secret, nothing to elucidate, merely the need to live -- and to make films.

-- from an interview in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, August 1963 (collected in *Godard on Godard*, edited by Tom Milne, Da Capo Press, 1986)

## GODARD ON CONTEMPT II

This was a commissioned film that I found interesting. It was the only time I felt I was able to make a feature film on a large budget. In fact, it was a small budget for the film because all of the money went to Brigitte Bardot, Fritz Lang, and Jack Palance. {In fact, 2.5 million of the 5 million franc budget went to Bardot.} There remained a bit more than double the amount I had for my other films. There was

\$200,000 left over, which for me at the time was a lot of money, but not a lot for a feature film..I had a contract with Ponti who didn't want to film with me, but once Bardot was willing, he was willing.

So why do it then? What interested me was that it was an opportunity for me to deal with classical cinema. In Moravia's novel, the character had been played by a German director. In his mind, Moravia was thinking about Pabst because Pabst had filmed a *Ulysses* or an *Odyssey*. I ended up keeping the idea of a German director but all of that was not my idea. The film stayed rather close to the novel which allowed me to tell a story of a classical film, as if cinema happened like that. I don't know if I believe that it happens that way.

I still had my own ideas about having a director that I admired act. [And so I cast Fritz Lang.] ...It's always a bit sad when I see him in the film... He was touched that the young filmmakers admired him, but it was mostly because he needed money that he accepted. At the time, he kept pretending to be something that he used to be—director of a big production. He didn't want to appear to be at the command of a producer... ["Is that a request or an order?," he asks, when barked at by Prokosch in the film.]

In some ways, I was the producer because I quickly realized that what is important in a movie is managing the money. By money, I mean, having the money, being able to spend it any way I please. I still remember when I used to ask my father for money, he would say, "Tell me what you want and I'll pay for it." That didn't work at all. What I wanted, and it has been my main effort, was first to acknowledge that even if I was not signing the checks, it all came down to the same thing. I used to say, "We're doing this" or "We're now doing that," or "We

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changed our mind,” or “We did not change our mind.” As soon as there is a lot of money involved, the real power is not the amount, but how it's spent.

Cinecittà...yes, it is a myth, a bit like Hollywood. I would have filmed in Hollywood if I could have, but the cost was too high. The Hollywood producer didn't have his own studio, otherwise we would have filmed there. In the studio, I applied my themes of cinema and then added a story about a couple. The producer's character was based on my experience and partly on the producer in Mankiewicz's *Barefoot Contessa*.

I've always tried to consider actors as real people, whose real nature had to be shown in a script.. That's why Brigitte Bardot wanted the best for us, because people were critical of her at the time. She had been criticized for the way she spoke in comparison to other actresses. They would say, “She doesn't know how to act” or “Her speech sounds fake.” We said, “But this fake way of speaking is her way of speaking. This is much more real than a bunch of so-called speakers who are in fact false and very academic.” – **from a 1978 interview**

## GODARD ON CONTEMPT III

Camille is very beautiful. She looks a bit like Eve from Piero della Francesca's painting. In general, she is grave, serious, very reserved, even self-effacing at times, with sudden changes of mood becoming childish or naïve.

Metaphors alone are not enough for cinema; but if they were, then Camille would be represented as a large, simple flower, mixed with somber petals and a bright and vivid petal in the center, creating a stunning contrast within a serene and limpid arrangement.

Throughout the film, one wonders what Camille is thinking about. When she lets go of her passiveness and begins to act, she's always unpredictable and unexplainable. In fact, Camille only acts three or four times in the film.

The entire film is shot indoors and outdoors in natural, true, and genuine settings.

The first part of the book takes place in Rome, while the second part takes place in Capri. Colors predominate all of the second part, showing the deep blue of the sea, the red of the villa, and the yellow of the sun. We thus find a certain tricolor combination rather close to that of true ancient sculpture...

As for their organization, the colors are brighter, more intense, more vivid, more contrasted, and also more severe. We could say that they have the effect of a

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Matisse or Braque painting within a Fragonard collection, or an Eisenstein scene in a Rouch film.

It's an Antonioni film made successful by filming it like Hawks or Hitchcock.  
-- from a 1963 interview

## **CONTEMPT: BACKGROUND**

**MICHEL MARIE (author of French book on *Contempt*):**

Godard turned Piccoli into a star. Before *Contempt*, Piccoli had been in a number of conventional roles in French films. Godard realized he had a wider range and cast him. The film put Piccoli on the map.

Godard's conflictual relationship with Palance ultimately benefitted the Prokosch character. He was very nervous, aggressive...Palance didn't understand Godard's directing methods at all.

Carlo Ponti had bought the rights to the novel and originally wanted Mastroianni and his own girlfriend, Sophia Loren, who was not yet his wife. Godard refused and made a counter-proposal. He suggested Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak. He liked Sinatra in Minnelli's films like *Some Came Running*, which is quoted by Piccoli in the film. Godard liked the character of the alcoholic novelist. As for Kim Novak, he liked her in *Vertigo* and wanted a rather placid and enigmatic actress.

As is often the case with casting, it remained vague for several months. Then once, in an interview, Bardot said she wanted to make a New Wave film with Godard. [French producer] Georges de Beauregard heard it and immediately jumped on the opportunity and the production was in gear. As soon as Bardot was on board, Godard insisted on Piccoli.

**CHARLES BITSCH (assistant director):**

For a Godard film, it was shot in rather usual conditions. I don't think there was anything different; the crew was small, etc. Once in production, we ran into the usual money problems. As the assistant director, my task was to take care of Bardot, Lang and Palance. Godard was actually the one with the lowest maintenance. But as is often the case, almost every night Godard and I had to solve financial problems. I had no time to take care of Bardot, who was very high maintenance. It was not so much because of her status as a star, but she required a lot of assistance. On that level, I'll never forget Piccoli who totally

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relieved me and almost took over as co-assistant director.

For Bardot, shooting a film was like a big party and she wanted to have fun. We all lived together in the same hotel and, at night, she wanted to make beds with short sheets, or hang garlands made with toilet paper in the hallways. She also liked to sing and play the guitar, which would have been perfect in camp, but not on a shoot.

As for Palance, he did not speak a word of French. The first few days in Rome were fine, but soon after, he started hating Godard. He would not speak with anyone and refused to understand anything. My English was limited, but, in the beginning, we managed to communicate. When things got bad, he pretended not to understand me at all. After eight to ten days, the only person he'd speak with was Fernand Coquet, the key grip, who spoke maybe three or four words of English and didn't understand a thing. I'd go up to Fernand and ask him what Palance had told him and he'd reply, "Oh, I'm not sure, he said, 'breakfast' and after that I couldn't understand."

You see, in the beginning, Palance was full of good intentions and was actually making suggestions to Godard about his role. He had his own beefs against Hollywood producers and wanted to make additions to the part, but Godard did not take any of them into consideration and refused everything. At first, Palance was enthusiastic about the film because he thought he'd be able to settle the score with Hollywood, but soon, Godard and he were in complete disagreement.

### **RAOUL COUTARD (Cinematographer):**

[In *Contempt*, the characters are often shot facing walls or the camera, without depth of field. This was part of Godard's visual scheme and it was lengthily discussed by Coutard and Godard.] Godard was more approachable to discuss things in those days. However he was in a horrible mood during the production. The only one he was charming with was Fritz Lang whom he greatly admired. With Palance, things did not go well. Bardot was not a morning person, so they always started shooting in the morning with Palance. Palance, who was not naive, soon realized what was going on, that Bardot did not want to get up early to work. As was customary with Godard, he would not discuss the part or explain his direction on the set with the actors.

For his very first scene with Palance, Godard instructed him on how to walk down a staircase: "You go down three steps, look left, then right; then you go down another four steps, look left, go down another six steps, stop, go down again."

Palance did not follow Godard's instructions and completely messes it up.

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Godard tells him it was not correct and starts telling him again how to go down the staircase. Again, Palance goes completely against Godard's instructions and

messes it up. Godard goes up to Palance and asks him if he did not understand his instructions. Palance replied that, yes, he understood them very well, but wanted to know WHY he had to do it that way! Godard answered, "I don't know it myself, and that's why I'm asking you to do it!"

I think that Godard was bothered by the size of the production. It was different from his low-budget shoots, where there were about ten people on the set.

### **MICHEL MARIE:**

Prokosch and Camille speak only their own languages, while the translator translates some but not all of what is being said. It's a response to all of the co-productions where everything was dubbed into one language: it was a device used to prevent it from being dubbed into other languages. But in the Italian version, *everything* was dubbed, making these interplays meaningless. The translator repeats everything in the same language, making the dialogue absurd. And Ponti changed the music to a very light Nino Rota-like score. It was ridiculous.

## THE NUDITY

*When the producer Carlo Ponti and American distributor Joseph E. Levine were shown the rough cut of Contempt, they were struck by the total absence of what had made Bardot famous: no nude shots, not even any skimpy outfits. They demanded that Godard shoot the opening sequence with Bardot naked, so Godard took over as a producer and submitted a budget that he thought would be too high to be acceptable; to his surprise, it was accepted. Said Assistant Director Charles Bitsch, "We never thought we'd get so much money for an eight-day shoot." Alain Levant was brought in to photograph the sequence.*

### **ALAIN LEVANT (opening sequence cinematographer):**

During the first couple of days, the two producers were standing behind the camera to make sure that the scene was actually being photographed. Instead of shooting one scene after another, we had to wait until the producers saw some of the rushes. The mood was very tense and it went on this way for five days, the producers and Godard not speaking.

I didn't realize that Godard would later filter the entire sequence through red, white and blue, colors he later matched in the montage of Bardot on the rug.

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### **MICHEL MARIE:**

The opening scene ["Do you like my knees, thighs, ankles, ass...?" she asks him.] announces the loss of paradise between Camille and Paul. He basically enunciates each part of her body piece by piece...bit by bit in terms of what each part of her body is worth. He's playing it very materialistically, which is what the producers were demanding of Godard. This theme is evoked later on when Prokosch, Fritz Lang and Piccoli are on the boat together and Piccoli says, "There's nothing like the movies...Women wear dresses, but as soon as they're in the movies, you see their ass."

### **AGNES GUILLEMOT (editor):**

Even with the added sequence, the U.S. producers complained of the lack of erotic scenes. To Godard, the scene of her naked on the bed was an advertisement or trailer for the movie; "I don't mind doing a trailer, but I have to do it myself." The equivalent of a tv ad. The sequence was very painful to him.

Godard fought continually with Ponti; he didn't want to change anything. Carlo Ponti was representing both the Italian and U.S. side. At one point, Ponti was so frustrated that he kicked some reels of the film, just as Palance does in the movie. And then he asked me to pick them up, just as Palance had done in the movie. Godard forbade me to pick them up.

## **FRITZ LANG & CONTEMPT**

[Godard] was in the process of adapting an Italian bestseller by Alberto Moravia, *A Ghost at Noon*, for which producers Carlo Ponti and Joseph Levine had pledged Godard's first multimillion-dollar budget...The adaptation would be called *Le Mépris (Contempt)*. In Godard's version, the two main characters would become a French couple, the producer a vulgar American, and the director — well, Godard sought someone of international distinction whose real-life identity would force audiences to think about an artist forced to prostitute himself. Godard asked Jean Cocteau, but Cocteau declined (in ill health, he would die in 1963). Then Godard thought of Lang — though, ironically, in Moravia's novel, the director is a German by way of Hollywood described as "not in the same class as the Pabsts and Langs."

Godard's reverence for Fritz Lang was explicit. Among Godard's writings was an essay where he had listed Lang above D. W. Griffith, von Stroheim, Abel Gance, even Eisenstein, as someone whose greatness was demonstrated by his facile

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transition to sound -- and by his ability to play the Hollywood game, according to Godard, "without cheating."

Everything about the offer -- the prestige associated with a Godard film, the featured billing, his actor's salary -- sounded good. Lang, who had never really acted professionally, readily accepted, and flew to Italy. During the spring and summer of 1963, he worked on location with a group that included Michel Piccoli as the writer, Brigitte Bardot as his wife; and Jack Palance as the American producer.

It was a thoroughly agreeable, familial experience. Lang felt comfortable with Piccoli and Bardot, chatting endlessly with the latter about animals and pets. Surprisingly, the director also felt at ease with the unorthodox Godard, and vice versa.

A novelist couldn't have invented more incompatible filmmakers than these two, whose careers bookended the history of cinema. Godard used his scripts merely as springboards for improvisation. His lighting was undramatic. He was interested in "effects, not action," and sought a Brechtian detachment from the material. His actors were encouraged to act with sangfroid.

"More amused than baffled by Godard's unconventional methods, Lang shares with his younger colleague only the cigar habit and an unbounded love for the motion picture," reported *The New York Times*. "In fact, Lang's working methods are diametrically opposed; the seventy-three-year-old veteran, who recently completed *The 1,000 Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* in Germany and who returns to direction with his upcoming . . . 'And Tomorrow Murder,' is strictly a desk-bound creator, who only rarely makes a script change during shooting..."

Godard himself would portray an assistant director in a couple of scenes, positioning himself as Lang's disciple. "I think," Lang was quoted as saying about the innovative filmmaker, "he's trying to continue what we were all like at the beginning -- the day when we started to make our first films, only his approach is different." For his part, giving a location interview, Godard described the seventy-three-year-old director as "an old Indian chief, tranquil and serene, who had meditated at length and finally understood the world, and who has given up the warpath to younger and more turbulent poets."

In the film Lang would wear his monocle and a blue pinstripe double-breasted suit. Encouraged to come up with his own dialogue, the director wrote some of his lines as the camera rolled -- speaking off the cuff, the way he had always done his best writing.

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The *nouvelle vague* was fond of film buff in-jokes, and some of Lang's scenes were intentionally ironic. The character he plays, who is called Fritz Lang in the scenario, favors pretentious photography of statuary, while the producer demands nudity and blood. (Godard's own producers were pressing him for more nude footage of Brigitte Bardot.) Lang is allowed to quote Dante and Holderlin, holding forth on the eternal fight of the individual against fate and the gods. He makes a reference to CinemaScope (and, indirectly, to *Moonfleet*) as not "meant for human beings. Just for snakes... and funerals." His oft-told anecdote about Eddie Mannix and *Fury* – how his direction elevated that script beyond the ability of MGM's front office to recognize it – is recycled into a diatribe by the *Odyssey's* producer, making the same complaint about Lang.

At one point Michel Piccoli's character remarks to Lang how much he and his wife enjoyed watching *Rancho Notorious* with Marlene Dietrich on the television one night. The director forthrightly replies that he himself prefers *M*. This was also Godard's joke on himself. Not only did the *Cahiers du Cinéma* crowd champion his Hollywood films above the Berlin ones, but Godard had actually written that *M* was "the least good film of Lang's."

"This [film] is an anti-*Cahiers* position on Lang's own career," wrote Andrew Sarris when *Contempt* was released, "and Lang's description of CinemaScope as a process suitable for photographing snakes and funerals is aesthetically reactionary enough to make [French film theorist] André Bazin roll over in his grave. Lang's kind words for [producer] Sam Goldwyn are the final confirmation that Godard has allowed Lang to speak for himself, rather than as a mouthpiece for Godard."

One of *Contempt's* scenes showed Brigitte Bardot sitting in her bath, while perusing Luc Moullet's 1963 book *Fritz Lang*, one of the first published about the director's career. This is accompanied by a voice-over, a citation from the book, in which Lang mused on the subject of murder, as he liked to do in interviews and conversations: "The crime of passion is pointless. I am in love with a woman... she is unfaithful to me ... I kill her... well now, what do I have? I have lost my loved one, since she is dead. Or, if I kill her lover, she detests me . . . And I lose her just the same. Killing can never solve anything."

The scene provided a noteworthy publicity still of Bardot in the bathtub with Lang's name slyly advertised on the book's cover. The meaning of some of the scenes, including the ending, eluded Lang -- and endings were important, after all. Lang had a talk with the director, trying to puzzle it out. In the final shot, the writer's wife and the producer are glimpsed lying dead in a sports car on the highway. No people around them and traffic is passing by. Lang didn't

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understand that. "Have they had an accident?" Lang wondered. "In which case, why no people? Are they dead, sleeping, or what?"

.... Younger critics generally [found] Godard's work, among other things, a heartfelt tribute to one of his idols. The world of cinema will be forever indebted to Godard for this Fritz Lang swan song. One elegiac image -- a few moments really, sans dialogue -- spoke volumes: The director is seen lighting up a cigarette, after others have exited a scene; the camera tracks beside the elder statesman of film as he walks slowly along a street, alone, apparently lost in thought. Godard's camera watches him contemplatively while, in the background, Georges Delerue's eloquent score rises on a gorgeous note.

Several critics on New York's *Village Voice* (among them the intellectual essayist Susan Sontag and Lang's old friend Herman Weinberg) listed Godard's film among the year's Top Ten. "What is so moving about *Contempt*?" wrote Andrew Sarris in his *Village Voice* column. "Simply the spectacle of Fritz Lang completing a mediocre film with a noble vision in his mind and at the edge of his fingertips. ... Where Mastroianni in Fellini's *8 1/2* is an artist who just happens to be a movie director, Lang in *Contempt* is a movie director who just happens to be an artist."

*Contempt* was a fitting capstone to a magnificent career.

- Excerpted from *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast* by Patrick McGilligan 1997, St. Martin's Press

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## JEAN-LUC GODARD (Director/Writer)

Born December 3, 1930 in Paris, the son of a doctor and a banker's daughter, Godard had his elementary and high school education in Switzerland and in Paris, then enrolled at the Sorbonne, ostensibly to study ethnology. During his university days he developed a passionate devotion to the cinema, spending endless hours at Left Bank cinema clubs and at the Cinémathèque Française, where in 1950 he met the critic André Bazin and future filmmakers François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol, with whom he would later form the nucleus of the French New Wave. Godard began contributing articles and film criticism for *La Gazette du Cinéma*, then *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

In 1951, Godard toured North and South America. Supporting himself with a variety of odd jobs, he continued watching films at a fanatical rate, and his articles for *Cahiers* began reflecting an enthusiastic admiration for little-known American directors of action films and at the same time a deep contempt for the traditional cinema, especially the commercial French film.

In 1954, Godard returned to work as a laborer on a dam project. With his earnings he bought himself a 35mm camera and made his first film, *Opération Béton*, a 20-minute short about the construction of the dam.

Following four more shorts, Godard stunned the world with his first feature film, *Breathless*, released early in 1960. The film marked a significant break from orthodox cinema techniques, reshaping the traditional film syntax with its astonishing jump cuts and unsteady hand-held moving shots. It was a spontaneous, impulsive, vibrant, and totally original film that reflected the director's enchantment with the immediacy of the American gangster movie and his impatience with the traditional techniques of "quality" cinema. It immediately established Godard as a leading spokesman of the Nouvelle Vague.

Godard's next film, *Le Petit Soldat*, was a savage exposition of the Algerian conflict and also the first of seven features to star his future wife Anna Karina. Karina next played a stripper in his *A Woman Is a Woman* (1961, re-released by Rialto Pictures in 2003) and a Paris prostitute in *My Life to Live* (1962). *Les Carabiniers* (1963) was an anti-war allegory that provoked violently hostile reaction from audiences. Its grainy dreariness stood in sharp contrast to the wide-screen color cinematography of *Contempt*.

With *Band of Outsiders* (1964, re-released by Rialto Pictures in 2001), Godard returned to the world of the gangster. *A Married Woman* (1964) was the study of

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an alienated Parisian woman. *Alphaville* (1965), Godard's only excursion into science fiction, was followed in the same year by *Pierrot le Fou*, with Belmondo and Karina.

Godard's impact on the cinema of the 60s was monumental and sweeping. He used the camera inventively, re-writing the syntax of films along the way. *Masculine Feminine* (1966, re-released by Rialto in 2005) was a free-form study of the mores of Parisian youth. *Made in USA* (1966) was based on an American potboiler. *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967, re-released by Rialto in 2006) told the story of a Paris housewife who moonlights as a prostitute. *La Chinoise* (1967) featured in the leading role actress Anne Wiazemsky, who became Godard's second wife.

After *Week End* (1968), a new Godard surfaced, a revolutionary, didactic filmmaker who became obsessed with the spoken word and increasingly apathetic to cinema as a visual medium. He dedicated himself to making "revolutionary films for revolutionary audiences." In the late 70s Godard underwent yet another metamorphosis, rediscovering himself and his love of film. He refocused his sights on themes of universal humanistic concern in *Every Man for Himself* (1980), *Passion* (1982), and *First Name: Carmen* (1983). He even paid a renewed homage to American cinema in *Déetective* (1985), but caused massive controversy with his *Hail Mary!* (1985).

*King Lear* (1987) was an unsuccessful attempt to film Shakespeare. *Soigne ta droite* (1987), *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) and *Hélas pour moi* (1994) all featured top stars, but his *For Ever Mozart* (1997), with its typically Godardian disquisition on art and war, was the best received of the four. In 1998, Godard completed his long-gestating *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, a highly personal meditation on 100 years of cinema, which was released on video and in book form. Other works of the 90s include *Germany Year 90 Nine Zero*, the self-portrait *JLG/JLG* (1995).

In 2003, he made *In Praise of Love*, a surprisingly moving study of art, history, madness and exploitation, and, in 2004, *Notre Musique*, shot on location in Sarajevo. *Morceaux choisis* (literally, "choice bits"), a 90-minute re-edit of his *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, was shown in 2004 at the Pompidou Center in Paris and was the opening night film of the re-opened Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Among his many prizes and honors, Godard won the best director award at the Berlin Festival for *Breathless*, a Berlin Jury Prize for *A Woman Is a Woman*, and Venice's Golden Lion (Best Film) for *First Name: Carmen*. In 1986, he was honored with a Special French César Award for lifetime achievement.

***Adapted from Ephraim Katz's Film Encyclopedia; updated by Lenny Borger***

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## BRIGITTE BARDOT (Camille Javal)

The daughter of an industrialist, Brigitte Bardot studied ballet from early childhood. At 15, she posed for the cover of France's leading women's magazine, *Elle*, and her pouting child-woman image brought her to the attention of Roger Vadim, then assistant to director Marc Allégret. She and Vadim were married in 1952, divorced in 1957. In 1952, she made her film debut in Jean Boyer's *Le trou normand (Crazy for Love)*, and then played a variety of secondary roles, graduating to leads in 1955. In 1956 her appearance in Vadim's first film as director, *Et dieu créa la femme (And God Created Woman)*, brought her international fame. The success of the film was astounding. Under her husband's guidance, she emerged as a new type of sex symbol, a child of nature responding to the call of sensuality, a playful kitten to whom the supreme commandment is love. Box-office receipts the world over announced the birth of a new superstar; the greatest impact was in the U.S., where "BB" single-handedly brought French films out of the small arthouses and into the major theatres.

The new Bardot "sex kitten" image was maintained in most of her subsequent films. Clad in a breakaway towel, nude, or in abbreviated underwear or bathing suits, she kept packing audiences in from Afghanistan to Zanzibar. Her private life became the subject of world interest and church condemnation. Transitory romances, marriages, and divorces (Vadim, Jacques Charrier, millionaire playboy Gunther Sachs) made world headlines. Since 1960, with her appearance in Clouzot's *La Vérité (The Truth)*, she has also been taken more seriously by critics as a capable actress. Still glamorous long after retirement from the screen in the early 70s, Bardot remains a popular figure and the subject of frequent reports in French and foreign publications. In 1976 she established the Foundation for the Protection of Distressed Animals, a cause that has kept her visibly active ever since. In 1987 she raised \$500,000 for the foundation by auctioning off her jewels. In 1985 she was awarded the French Legion of Honor. Among several books on her life and career is a famous treatise by Simone de Beauvoir, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* (1960).

Her tell-all autobiography *Initiales B.B.*, an extraordinarily frank and bitchy saga, was published in France in 1996. It was the country's No. 1 bestseller for five weeks and once again made its author France's most in-demand celebrity.

-- adapted from *The Film Encyclopedia* by Ephraim Katz

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## **MICHEL PICCOLI (Paul Javal)**

From his first substantial role as a young coal miner in Louis Daquin's *Le Point du jour* (1949), French leading man and character actor Piccoli, born in 1925, is still going strong in a risk-taking career that has included collaborations with such world-class directors as Jean Renoir, Luis Buñuel, Jean-Luc Godard, Costa Gavras, Louis Malle, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Demy, Agnès Varda, Claude Sautet, Marco Ferreri, Jacques Rivette, Raoul Ruiz, Manoel de Oliveira, among many others. He won best acting honors at Cannes in 1979 for Marco Bellocchio's *Leap into the Void* and at Berlin for Pierre Granier-Deferre's *Une étrange affaire* in 1982. Originally a stage actor, Piccoli also appeared in numerous TV productions, including Marcel Bluwal's now classic adaptation of Moliere's *Don Juan* (1965). Piccoli has also directed two features.

## **JACK PALANCE (Jeremy "Jerry" Prokosch)**

Born in Lattimer, Pennsylvania, in 1919, the son of a coal miner, Palance worked briefly in the mines before turning to school athletics and professional boxing. The crash of a bomber that he was piloting during WWII resulted in severe burns and plastic surgery, which gave his features the gaunt, taut-skinned look familiar to filmgoers since 1950. Arriving in Hollywood after several years on stage, he made a memorable debut as a gangster carrying the bubonic plague in Elia Kazan's *Panic in the Streets*. He was cast at first almost exclusively as a sinister heavy but revealed an anguished, soulful side of his personality in some of his later films. He was nominated for an Oscar as best supporting player for *Sudden Fear* (1952) and *Shane* (1953), winning one in 1991 for *City Slickers* -- his outrageous appearance on the Oscar telecast, during which he did one-handed push-ups, was memorable. A lover of the American West, Palance runs a 150-cattle ranch -- Land of Big Acorn -- in California's Tehachapi Mountains. He once mentioned working with "some French director" on *The Tonight Show*.

## **RAOUL COUTARD (Cinematographer)**

"My friend Raoul Coutard, France's most brilliant cinematographer," says the hero of Godard's *Le Petit Soldat*. Between 1959 and 1967, Godard's friend shot all but one of his first 15 features (the exception was *Masculine Feminine*) and returned to shoot *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* in the early 80s. The definitive New Wave cinematographer, Coutard began his career in photojournalism, first as part of his military service, then for such magazines as *Paris Match* and *Life*.

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This experience and his early work in documentaries fed directly into his innovative use of hand-held camera and natural lighting techniques. He shot most of Truffaut's 60s classics, beginning with *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Jules and Jim*, along with Jacques Demy's debut feature, *Lola* (1960). With Pierre Schoendoerffer, he made the Indochina War fiction feature, *La 317e Section* (1964) and *Le Crabe tambour*, for which he won a César in 1977. Other major credits include Jean Rouch's cinema vérité-style *Chronique d'un été* (1961) and Costa Gavras' *Z* (1969). Coutard personally directed two films: *Hoa Binh* (1970), an evocation of the Indochina War, and *La Légion saute sur Kolwezi* (1980), a recreation of a true paramilitary operation in Africa.

## **GEORGES DELERUE (Music)**

Georges Delerue, one of the most prolific and innovative composers in the history of cinema, was born in March 1925 in Roubaix, France. He won a scholarship to the Paris Conservatory and studied under the great composer Darius Milhaud. He worked as an orchestra leader on French television before scoring short films and several documentaries for Alain Resnais and Agnes Varda. He would eventually write scores for some of the most important French films of the 1960s, including Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960) and *Jules and Jim* (1961), and Godard's *Contempt* (1963). Among the many other masterworks he scored were Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970) and many other films by Truffaut including *Two English Girls* (1971), *Day for Night* (1973), and *The Last Metro* (1980). He was Oscar nominated for many of his British and American scores, including *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969), *The Day of the Dolphin* (1973), *Julia* (1977), and *Agnes of God* (1985). He finally won an Oscar for *A Little Romance* (1979). Delerue died in 1992.

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## ABOUT RIALTO PICTURES

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* and *The Fallen Idol*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Two or Three Things*, *Band of Outsiders*, *Masculine Feminine*, *A Woman is a Woman* and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; Claude Berri’s *The Two of Us* (and his Oscar-winning short *Le Poulet*); Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Claude Sautet’s *Classe Tous Risques*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Jean-Pierre 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 celebrated a record-breaking 2004 with the previously unreleased, original 1954 Japanese version of Ishiro Honda’s *Godzilla*; Peter Davis’s Oscar-winning and newly-restored 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.

In 2006, Rialto released Melville’s 1969 epic masterpiece *Army of Shadows* for the very first time in the United States. *Army of Shadows* became the most critically acclaimed film of the year, topping many Ten Best lists, including those in *The New York Times* and *Premiere*, and was named Best Foreign Film of 2006 by the New York Film Critics’ Circle, in addition to receiving special awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics and National Film Critics associations.

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Rialto's re-release of Alberto Lattuada's *Mafioso*, a dark comedy from 1962 starring Alberto Sordi, was the unqualified highlight of the 2006 New York Film Festival.

2007 re-releases included Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Doulos*, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, and Jean-Jacques Beineix's "second wave" thriller *Diva*.

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 Critic's 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.

2007 marked Rialto's tenth anniversary, a milestone that was celebrated with a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Similar tributes were held at George Eastman House, in Rochester, New York; the AFI Silver Theater in Washington, D.C.; and the SIFF Theater in Seattle.

Rialto is currently enjoying a phenomenal success with Alain Resnais's 1962 arthouse classic *Last Year at Marienbad*, which is creating the same kind of buzz it had over 45 years ago. This year, the company is also re-releasing Robert Hamer's rediscovered masterwork of "Brit Noir," *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

**Pressbook edited by Bruce Goldstein, Adrienne Halpern and Tommaso Cammarano**  
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