

LOUIS MALLE'S

ELEVATOR TO THE  
GALLOWS

RIALTO PICTURES PRESSBOOK

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## ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS: CREDITS

Director  
**Louis Malle**

Producer  
**Jean Thuillier**

Screenplay  
**Louis Malle**  
**Roger Nimier**

Based on the novel by **Noël Calef**

Cinematography  
**Henri Decaë**

Cameraman  
**André Villard**

Art Directors  
**Rino Mondellini**  
**Jean Mandaroux**

Sound  
**Raymond Gauguier**

Editor  
**Léonide Azar**

Music  
**Miles Davis**

Music Performed by  
**Miles Davis (trumpet)**  
**Barney Wilen (tenor sax)**  
**René Urtreger (piano)**  
**Pierre Michelot (bass)**  
**Kenny Clarke (drums)**

Soundtrack available on  
**Verve ([vervemusicgroup.com](http://vervemusicgroup.com))**

Subtitles (2005)  
**Lenny Borger**

**Filmed September 23 – November 15, 1957**

Exteriors

**Paris and vicinity; Normandy (motel scenes)**

**Original French release January 29, 1958**

**Original U.S. release June 12, 1961**

**France, 1957 B&W running time: 91 min.  
aspect ratio: 1.66:1 In French with English subtitles**

**A Nouvelles Editions de Films (NEF) production  
A Janus Film**

**A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE  
rialtopictures.com**

### **AWARDS**

**PRIX LOUIS DELLUC FOR BEST FRENCH FILM, 1957<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABOUT THE TITLE**

Originally released in the U.S. as *Frantic*, Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* was soon re-titled *Elevator to the Gallows*. However, the re-titling is inaccurate as "l'échafaud" literally means "scaffold," the place where one is guillotined. As the guillotine was the punishment for capital crimes in France until 1981 (when the newly elected Socialist president, François Mitterand, abolished the death penalty), a more accurate translation would be *Elevator to the Scaffold* (in the U.K., it has always been known as *Lift to the Scaffold*).

We have kept the title by which the film has been known and written about for the past 40 years, but have included an image of a guillotine in our advertising, to remind audiences what the true consequences were for Julien and Florence.

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<sup>1</sup>The Delluc Prize, one of France's oldest and most prestigious film awards, was created in 1937 and named after the pioneer French film critic Louis Delluc (1890-1924). First awarded to Renoir's *The Lower Depths*, its laureates have included such classics as Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*, Tati's *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*, Clouzot's *Diabolique*, and Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. This year's winner was Arnaud Desplechin's *Kings and Queen*.

## ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS: CAST

Julien Tavernier  
**Maurice Ronet**

Florence Carala  
**Jeanne Moreau**

Louis  
**Georges Poujouly**<sup>2</sup>

Véronique  
**Yori Bertin**

Simon Carala  
**Jean Wall**

Horst Bencker  
**Ivan Petrovich**

Frida Bencker  
**Elga Andersen**

Inspector Chérier  
**Lino Ventura**

His colleague  
**Charles Denner**<sup>3</sup>

Christian Subervie  
**Félix Marten**

The building porter  
**Gérard Darrieu**

A motel client  
**Jean-Claude Brialy**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Five years earlier, at age 12, Poujouly had played one of the two main characters in René Clément's unforgettable *Forbidden Games*.

<sup>3</sup> A popular French character actor, Denner is best known for his appearances in Truffaut films, including the lead in *The Man Who Loved Women* (1977). He played the father of the young Jewish boy in Claude Berri's *The Two of Us* (re-released earlier this year by Rialto Pictures).

<sup>4</sup> Brialy the same year played a major role in Chabrol's debut film *Le Beau Serge* and by the mid-1960s was one of France's most popular stars. A few years later, he would co-star with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina in Godard's *A Woman is a Woman*.

## ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS: SYNOPSIS

It is a summer Saturday evening in Paris. The city is virtually deserted.

Businessman Julien Tavernier (Maurice Ronet), ex-paratroop officer and veteran of colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria, is on the phone from his office building with his lover, Florence Carala (Jeanne Moreau). The two passionately make plans to meet a half-hour later. After he's "done," she declares, they'll be "free."

At 7:05 pm, Julien finds out from the building's phone operator that everyone else has left the office building. He tells her he still has some work to do and should not be disturbed for any reason.

Julien pulls out a pair of gloves and a gun from his desk drawer, also removing a rope and hook, which he uses to climb to the floor above him. He is soon face to face with Florence's husband, his boss Simon Carala, a munitions manufacturer and war profiteer. Julien points the gun against Carala's forehead.

Downstairs, the operator's phone rings loudly. Carala is now dead. Julien puts the gun in his hand to make it look like suicide, then climbs back to the floor below. In his haste, he forgets to retrieve the grappling hook from outside.

Julien goes to his car, parked in front of the local florist shop. Véronique, a shop assistant, swoons to her boyfriend, Louis, about the amount of flowers Tavernier has purchased lately. But Louis is interested only in Tavernier's cool convertible.

Just as Julien gets into his car, his eyes are drawn to the office building: he's left the rope and hook swinging on the balcony.

Julien sneaks back into the building and gets into the elevator without being seen. Moments later, the super switches the building's power off. The elevator stops and the lights go out. Julien realizes he's stuck.

A few minutes later, Véronique and her boyfriend, spotting the keys in the ignition, decide to go for a joy ride in Tavernier's car. In the glove compartment, they find his gloves, raincoat, gun and a mini-spy camera.

Waiting at a café, Florence sees her lover's car zoom by, with the young florist in the passenger's seat. Not recognizing the driver, she thinks Julien has run off with the young girl.

In shock and disbelief, Florence calls home from the street. Her maid informs her that no one has called. At 8:30, she walks to the office building and desperately tries to open the main gate. The incapacitated Julien hears her, but is helpless.

Louis races Tavernier's American sports car to a modern motel on the highway, where they meet Herr and Frau Bencker, two German tourists. The Benckers invite Véronique and Louis to join them in their room. They snap photos of each other using Tavernier's mini-camera.

Long into the night, Florence searches for Julien in every neighborhood hangout.

Louis decides he wants to leave the motel in Mr. Bencker's even faster sports car. Just as the two teens get into the car, Bencker comes out with a gun. But Louis quickly produces Tavernier's gun and shoots both Bencker and his wife dead.

Back in Paris, Véronique, romanticizing their deed, decides that suicide is the only way out for the doomed couple. The two swallow sleeping pills.

Early Sunday morning, Florence is taken to a police station, where Inspector Chérier (Lino Ventura) gives her the third degree about Julien. Florence says she knows him slightly and that she saw him last around 7 pm the evening before, driving in his car with a girl.

Chérier informs her that Tavernier is accused of the murder of two Germans and that his car, his raincoat and his revolver were found at the scene.

The super arrives at the office building with two police officers. He switches the power back on and Julien is finally able to leave the elevator. As he sneaks out of the building, the police find Carala's body.

Julien, famished, goes to his local bar and wolfs down a croissant and coffee. He spots a newspaper with his picture on the front page, naming him as the murderer of the two Germans. Soon after, he is arrested.

Florence instinctively knows that Julien didn't kill the Germans. She tracks down Véronique and Louis at the girl's walk-up apartment and finds the couple drowsy from the pills, but still very much alive. In a desperate attempt to retrieve some of the evidence from the night before, Louis races back to the motel on his motorcycle, with Florence close behind in her car.

When Louis and Florence arrive at the motel, Inspector Chérier is there to greet them. The pictures from Tavernier's mini-camera are just developing. These link Louis to the murders and he's taken away by the police.

But there are still other pictures developed from the film in Julien's camera. They are of Julien and Florence caught in happy, intimate moments together. Chérier tells Florence that, thanks to these pictures, Julien will only be accused of her husband's murder and that he will probably spend just a few years in prison. But, as for her, he doesn't think the jury will be so lenient. He predicts a sentence for her of ten to twenty years.

## LOUIS MALLE ON “ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS”

In the spring of 1957 my friend Alain Cavalier bought a book called *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* [literally, “Elevator to the Scaffold” – see page 3] from a station newsstand. He read it and said to me, “You know, the plot is really interesting. It could be the starting point for a film noir.” The *policier* [thriller] was a genre that had always been popular in France. I went to see Jean Thuillier, who produced Bresson’s *A Man Escaped*, and said, “Read this book. Maybe I could adapt it.” There was something exciting about it, it was a good thriller. And he said, “Yes, if we can come up with a cast and sell it to a distributor.” I chose to collaborate with a writer whom I admired, Roger Nimier, a young novelist...when he read *Elevator* he said, “This book is stupid”. “Yes, but the plot is good.” He said “All right, but let’s start from scratch.”

From the beginning we literally invented what people remember of the film today – the character of Jeanne Moreau. It hardly existed in the book. When you think of it, she is not really necessary to the plot. She just floats around trying to find her lover in Paris. But we made her part of the plot at the end. Once we started working on the adaptation things went very fast, and we signed Jeanne Moreau...

Now people often say, “You discovered Jeanne Moreau.” I didn’t - she was already a star then, a B movie star<sup>5</sup>. Also, she was recognized as the prime stage actress of her generation. She had been at the Comédie Française; she had worked with Gérard Philippe. But in films she had never come true, except in those B movie thrillers with Jean Gabin<sup>6</sup>, where her roles were not terribly interesting. But she was a commercial plus. In fact, the distributor insisted that we cast Jeanne Moreau...suddenly they discovered that she was potentially a big film star. Up until then people used to say that although she was a great actress, and very sexy, she was simply not photogenic.

I had this great cameraman, Henri Decaë, whom I knew from the early Melville films. I, as well as those in the New Wave, admired Decaë tremendously. He started me, he started Chabrol, and then Truffaut<sup>7</sup>, and then a number of others. When we started shooting, the first scenes we did with Jeanne Moreau were in the streets, on the Champs-Élysées. We had the camera in a baby carriage, and she had no light – it was black and white of course; we were using this new fast film, the Tri-X, which serious film makers thought too grainy. We did several long tracking shots of Jeanne Moreau...she was lit only by the windows of the Champs-Élysées. That had never been done. Cameramen would have forced her to wear a

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<sup>5</sup> Not quite true – she’d already been featured in several A films.

<sup>6</sup> As Gabin was a major star, none of his movies would be considered B pictures, in the American sense. Moreau appeared with him only twice: as one of the molls of Jacques Becker’s film noir masterwork *Touchez-pas au grisbi* (1953) and as his co-star in the forgotten *Gas-Oil* (1955).

<sup>7</sup> See Decaë’s biography on page 15.

lot of make-up and they would put a lot of light on her because, supposedly, her face was not photogenic.

That first week there was a rebellion of the technicians at the lab after they had seen the dailies. They went to the producer and said, "You must not let Malle and Decaë destroy Jeanne Moreau." They were horrified. But when *Elevator* was released, suddenly something of Jeanne Moreau's essential qualities came out: she could be almost ugly and then ten seconds later she would turn her face and would be incredibly attractive. But she would be herself. And, of course, it was confirmed by *The Lovers*, which I did almost right after. So I contributed to making her into a star, but she had already made something like seven or eight films<sup>8</sup>.

The book – and the film - is about a man who commits the perfect murder, stupidly gets stuck in the elevator of the building, and two kids steal his car, go to a motel outside Paris and commit a murder – all the evidence is that he committed that second murder when actually he...well, that was the trick, the gimmick of the book. In the screenplay we extended the plot to his love affair. We didn't want it just to be about the two crimes... we thought it would be much more interesting if he was supposed to meet a woman immediately after he commits the first murder, she looks for him all over the place, but they never meet...we hesitated a lot, I remember, while we were working on the screenplay, wondering if we should have them meet at some point. We decided not to, except that at the very end there's the scene, one of the best in the film, when she's finally arrested. The photographer is developing the photos and she sees the two of them in love, in the big enlargements in the water, and so they are reunited. But they are never together. For us, that seemed very romantic.

When I did *Elevator* I consciously chose to start from this book, which was a thriller, aware that I would have to make something that could be sold to people in the industry as a B movie. Of course, I was very ambitious, and the fact that I worked with Roger Nimier instead of with the screenwriters that were recommended to me, the fact that I took somebody who was a very respected writer at the time, indicated that I had great ambitions for the project. But if I had had my way, I would have preferred – and if I had made my first feature three years later I would probably have been able to do so – to have done something more autobiographical. I realize now when I look at *Elevator* that I managed to inject – because we had the plot but the plot was like a skeleton – a number of themes that were, probably unconsciously, close enough to me that they would re-appear in my work. But I also wanted to make a good thriller. The irony is, I was really split between my tremendous admiration for Bresson and the temptation to make a Hitchcock-like film. So there's something about *Elevator* that goes from one to the other. In a lot of scenes, especially inside the elevator, I was trying to emulate Bresson...At the same time I was emulating Hitchcock in trying to do, even if slightly ironically, a thriller that works. The suspense, the surprises. And of

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, by this time she had already appeared in 20 films. She began her movie career in 1949.

course, stylistically, apart from the fact that it was my first film and as such full of clumsy things, I was closer to Bresson. So I was split.

On top of that I was trying to portray a new generation through the characters of the teenagers (in those days they were called *blousons noir* because they all wore black leather, those kids from the suburbs) – a description of the new Paris. Traditionally, it was always the René Clair Paris that French films presented, and I took care to show one of the first modern buildings in Paris. I invented a motel – there was only one motel in France and it was not near Paris, so we had to shoot it in Normandy. I showed a Paris, not of the future, but at least a modern city, a world already somewhat dehumanized. I was not aware, making *Elevator*, that I was doing something personal. I saw it almost like an exercise.

When I started *Elevator*, I felt I was pretty much prepared technically but I had this huge hole in my apprenticeship – dealing with actors. I'd no experience of that: I'd been filming fish for four years!<sup>9</sup>

I didn't feel I should take any risks, so the cast of *Elevator* was – with the exception of the young girl – entirely professional...I was scared to death of actors, just because I had no experience of dealing with them...From my very first film I realized I was probably, of all the directors of my generation – apart from Alain Resnais – the one who was technically the best prepared, but at the same time I had to learn everything else, which in a way was more important, especially the human element. It took me several films to learn.

-- excerpted from *Malle on Malle*, edited by Philip French, 1993

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<sup>9</sup> He had co-directed the underwater documentary *The Silent World* with Jacques Cousteau

## ON WORKING WITH MILES DAVIS

I was crazy about jazz<sup>10</sup>, and at the time I was listening a lot to Miles Davis – he was at his most creative. When I was shooting the film it seemed inconceivable to me that I could have a score by Miles Davis, but in the room of the teenage girl, by her bed, there was the sleeve of a Miles Davis album very much in evidence. Then by a bizarre coincidence, when I was editing and was about to make the choice of music, Miles Davis came to Paris. He came on his own, without his usual musicians, to play in a club for something like three weeks. And I literally jumped on him. I got a lot of help from a writer called Boris Vian, whom I knew and was also a trumpet player...he was the director of the jazz department at the Phillips record company, and Miles Davis was under contract to them in Europe. I called Boris and he arranged a meeting. Miles Davis was reluctant because he didn't have his musicians. He was playing with good musicians in Paris, but not the people with whom he was used to recording. I managed to convince him. I showed him the film twice, only twice. We agreed on the parts where we felt music was needed. And we took advantage of the one night off he had from the club. We rented a sound studio in Paris on the Champs-Élysées, and started working, as jazz musicians do, very slowly. We worked from something like ten or eleven that night until five in the morning. In that one night, the whole score was recorded – I think that makes the score of *Elevator* unique. It's one of the very few film scores which are completely improvised; I don't think Miles Davis had had time to prepare anything. We would run those segments that we had chosen for music, and he would start rehearsing with his musicians.

The music is ever present in *Elevator*, but if you add up how many minutes, it's something like eighteen maximum<sup>11</sup>; it's not that much. What he did was remarkable. It transformed the film. I remember very well how it was without the music, but when we got to the final mix and added the music, it seemed like the film suddenly took off. It was not like a lot of film music, emphasizing or trying to add to the emotion that is implicit in the images and the rest of the soundtrack. It was a counterpoint, it was elegiac – and it was somewhat detached. But also it created a certain mood for the film. I remember the opening scene; the Miles Davis trumpet gave it a tone which added tremendously to the first images. I strongly believe that without Miles Davis's score the film would not have had the critical and public response that it had.

-- excerpted from *Malle on Malle*, edited by Philip French, 1993

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<sup>10</sup> Malle's love of jazz is also much in evidence in *Murmur of the Heart*, in which the young protagonist is also jazz-crazy, with a particular passion for "Sharlie Par-KAIR" (Charlie Parker).

<sup>11</sup> The soundtrack was reissued in France in 2003 with the addition of almost 40 minutes of unused takes. Verve Records will soon be re-releasing the same CD in this country. The soundtrack (including unused tracks) can also be downloaded from Verve's website, [vervemusicgroup.com](http://vervemusicgroup.com) (search "ascenseur pour l'échafaud" or "Miles Davis" from their homepage).

## LOUIS MALLE (Writer/Director)

*When people say, "You've made all those films in so many different directions, what do they have in common?" All I can answer is "Me."*

Born on October 30, 1932 in Thumeries, into one of France's wealthiest industrialist families, Louis Malle had an austere Catholic education that culminated in studies at the Jesuit College at Fontainebleau. He then studied political science at the Sorbonne, but gave up after the second year.

He finally managed to convince his family to let him study filmmaking at the I.D.H.E.C. film school<sup>12</sup>. He attended the school from 1951 to 1953, directed a five-minute short influenced by Beckett and Ionesco, and later decided he would not learn anything there because "it was too theoretical."

When famed underwater explorer Jacques Cousteau went to I.D.H.E.C. looking for a student to accompany him on a voyage of his ship, the *Calypso*, Malle made sure to be that student. He thus co-directed with Cousteau the celebrated underwater documentary *The Silent World* (1956) and operated the camera on some scenes. The film was awarded the Palme D'Or at Cannes and introduced both men to the international film scene. After directing two shorts and working as an assistant to director Robert Bresson on *A Man Escaped* (1956), Malle made his first solo film, *Elevator to the Gallows* (1957), which won the prestigious Prix Louis Delluc.

With *The Lovers* (1959), Malle gained notoriety for bringing to the screen, through beautifully fluid tracking shots, what were at the time considered graphic sex scenes. In America the film pushed the boundaries of censorship; fortunately, its underlying message -- an attack on the vacuity of the French bourgeoisie -- was not lost on some critics and the film earned the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival.

Malle's third film, *Zazie dans le Métro* (1960), adapted from Raymond Queneau's bestselling novel, is a gleefully impertinent comedy about a foul-mouthed young provincial girl on the loose in a Paris paralyzed by a Métro strike.

Malle again raised eyebrows in the US with 1962's *A Very Private Affair*, a study of the rise of a film star, supposedly based upon the life of its star, Brigitte Bardot.

Once more demonstrating his versatility as a filmmaker and the broad range of his concerns and style, Malle next turned out *The Fire Within* (1963), the alternately

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<sup>12</sup> Institut Des Hauts Etudes Cinématographiques, France's prestigious national film school founded in 1943; it was succeeded in 1984 by FEMIS.

repellent and fascinating account of the last days in the life of an alcoholic (played by Maurice Ronet). As with *Elevator to the Gallows*, it was enhanced by a strong musical score, borrowed from the haunting piano compositions of Erik Satie. Again Malle won the Special Jury Prize at Venice.

Shifting gears one more time, Malle then directed *Viva Maria* (1965), which co-starred the two great icons of French movies, Moreau and Bardot.

At the end of the 1960's Malle embarked on a six-month voyage to India, which resulted in a feature-length documentary, *Calcutta* (1969), and a seven-part TV series, *Phantom India*, broadcast internationally to great acclaim and later shown in movie theaters.

Malle returned to fiction film with *Murmur of the Heart* (1971), a comedy which gently handled its delicate theme of incest, and *Lacombe Lucien* (1973), a dissection of France under Nazi occupation.

*Pretty Baby* (1978), Malle's first American film, starred Susan Sarandon, with newcomer Brooke Shields as a 12-year-old New Orleans prostitute. *Atlantic City* (1980) was widely hailed as Malle's best American film, featuring topnotch performances from Burt Lancaster and Sarandon. It won numerous international honors and received five Oscar nominations (Best Movie, Best Director, Best Screenplay Best Actor, Best Actress).

Similarly acclaimed was *My Dinner with André* (1982), a filmed dialogue between experimental theater director André Gregory and actor/playwright Wallace Shawn.

Malle closed his American chapter with two disappointing films, *Crackers* (1984) and *Alamo Bay* (1985). His career seemed to be in an irreversible eclipse when he came back to great acclaim in 1987 with *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, based upon his own experience as a young boy at a Catholic boarding school that harbored Jewish children in Nazi-occupied France.

Malle directed his last film, *Vanya on 42nd Street*, an unorthodox adaptation of Chekov's play, in 1994.

He died of cancer on November 23, 1995.

-- Adapted from *The All Movie Guide* and Ephraim Katz's *Film Encyclopedia*

## JEANNE MOREAU (Florence Carala)

*"It was Louis Malle who introduced the world to Jeanne Moreau's incredible way of walking. When she walks, her foot trembles a bit on its high heel, suggesting a certain tension and instability."* – Luis Buñuel (from his memoir *My Last Sigh*)

*"There is no actress in Hollywood who can match the depth and breadth of her art. There is no personality in films so able to withstand the long, lingering look of the movie camera, no one whose simple presence on the screen evokes such a variety of moods. Her love scenes are among the most intense ever filmed, her suffering agonizingly acute. She is an actress of infinite complexity and conviction."*  
-- *Time Magazine* cover story, 1965

*"With the exception of Marilyn Monroe, no actress since Garbo has been relentlessly dissected in all the best journals. She was the arthouse love goddess."* -- David Shipman, *The Great Movie Stars*

A graduate of the Paris Conservatory of Dramatic Art, Moreau made her stage debut in 1948, followed shortly by her screen debut. But while her theatrical career was gaining momentum almost from the start, with the Comédie Française and later with the Theatre National Populaire, she remained a lower-rung screen actress for 10 years. It was Louis Malle who launched her into true stardom with *Elevator to the Gallows* in 1957 and *The Lovers* in 1958. She soon became the screen's incarnation of French femininity, projecting both worldly sophistication and earthy sensuality, in a wide range of roles.

Nobody has ever worked with a more diverse and acclaimed array of international filmmakers. In addition to Malle, Moreau's directors have included Orson Welles (*The Immortal Story*), François Truffaut (*Jules et Jim* and *The Bride Wore Black*), Luis Buñuel (*Diary of a Chambermaid*), Jean Renoir (*The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir*), Jacques Becker (*Touchez pas au grisbi*), Peter Brook (*Moderato Cantabile*), Michelangelo Antonioni (*La Notte*), Joseph Losey (*Eva and Mr. Klein*), Jacques Demy (*Bay of Angels*), John Frankenheimer (*The Train*), Tony Richardson (*Mademoiselle* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar*), Philippe de Broca (*The Oldest Profession in the World*), Marguerite Duras (*Nathalie Granger*), Elia Kazan (*The Last Tycoon*), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Querelle*), Luc Besson (*Nikita*), Wim Wenders (*Until The End Of The World*), and many others

Still very active in film and television, she recently appeared in François Ozon's *Le Temps Qui Reste*, which was presented at this year's Cannes Film Festival. She has received lifetime achievement awards from the Berlin and Venice film festivals and in 2003 received an honorary Palme d'or at Cannes.

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

## **MAURICE RONET (Julien Tavernier)**

Born Maurice Robinet in Nice in 1927 to actor parents, Maurice Ronet studied acting with Jean-Louis Barrault and attended the Paris Conservatoire. After appearing on the Paris stage, he was discovered by director Jacques Becker, who gave him one of the leads in his bittersweet chronicle of post-war Parisian youth, *Le Rendez-vous de Juillet* (1949). He appeared in a number of films throughout the fifties, but only came into his own with *Elevator to the Gallows*. The 60s was his richest period, book-ended by two thrillers in which he co-starred with Alain Delon: René Clément's *Purple Noon* (1960) and Jacques Deray's *La Piscine* (1968). His finest performance remains that of the world-weary playboy in suicidal detox in Louis Malle's masterpiece *The Fire Within* (1963). He was ignored by most of the French New Wave with the exception of Claude Chabrol, who cast him in several of his minor films but also in the classic *La Femme Infidèle* (1969). His other films of note include Jules Dassin's *He Who Must Die* (1957), Roger Leenhardt's *Le Rendez-vous de minuit* (1962), Carl Foreman's *The Victors* (1963), Alexandre Astruc's *The Pit and the Pendulum* (made-for-TV, 1963), Roger Vadim's *La Ronde* (1964) and Marcel Carné's *Trois chambres à Manhattan* (1965). He made his last appearances in the 80s in Bertrand Blier's *Beau Père* (1981), Bob Swaim's *La Balance* (1982) and Roger Vadim's *Surprise Party* (1983). An occasional director, he made two features, *Le Voleur de Tibidabo* (1963) in which he costarred with Anna Karina, an adaptation of Herman Melville's *Bartleby* (1978, made for TV but released theatrically), TV adaptations of two Edgar Allan Poe stories, *The Gold Bug* and *Ligeia* (both 1981), as well as a documentary short *Vers l'île des dragons* (1974). He was married twice to actresses, first to Maria Pacôme, then to Josephine Chaplin. Ronet died of cancer in 1983 at age 55.

## **LINO VENTURA (Inspector Chérier)**

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 *Grisbi* immediately brought him other screen parts, often as a heavy opposite 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. Two years later the young Claude Sautet cast him in the lead of his first feature, the superb film noir *Classe tous risques* (to be re-released next year by Rialto Pictures), 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 the A... (L'Emmerdeur, 1973)*, in which he played the stone-faced foil to Jacques Brel's suicidal schlemiel.

Two of Ventura's finest roles came under Jean-Pierre Melville's direction, in *Le Deuxième souffle* (1966) and the great French Resistance epic, *Army of Shadows* (1969). He also turned in memorable performances in Francesco Rosi's *Illustrious Corpses* (1975), Claude Miller's *Garde à vue* (1981) and was a fine Jean Valjean in Robert Hossein's *Les Misérables* (1981).

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

Later this year, Ventura will be seen on screens again as the star of Melville's *Army of Shadows*, which Rialto Pictures will be releasing in this country for the very first time.

## **HENRI DECAË (cinematographer)**

Hailed as the other great cinematographer of the French New Wave (along with Raoul Coutard), Henri Decaë shot the debut films of François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Louis Malle, and all but one of Jean-Pierre Melville's 13 feature films.

Born outside Paris in 1915, Decaë had a camera at early age and was making amateur movies in his teens. He studied at one of France's first film schools and directed, photographed and edited documentary and industrial shorts and publicity films before, during and after the war. Decaë's technical mastery and pictorial perfectionism—the antithesis of Coutard's rough-and-tumble reportage style—so impressed the new generation of French directors of the late 50s that he was sought out by Louis Malle, Claude Chabrol, and François Truffaut to lens their first feature films (respectively *Elevator to the Gallows, 1957, Le Beau Serge, 1958, The 400 Blows, 1958*). His other major credits of this heady period included René Clément's *Plein Soleil (Purple Noon, 1959)*, Serge Bourguignon's *Les Dimanches de Ville d'Avray (Sundays and Cybele, 1962)* and Joseph Losey's *Eva (1962)*.

Though remaining faithful to Melville, he gradually moved into the less adventurous mainstream, working with such local box office favorites as Gérard Oury, Henri Verneuil, Claude Zidi and Georges Lautner and Hollywood directors such as Sidney Pollack (*Castle Keep, 1967, and Bobby Deerfield, 1977*), George Stevens (*The Only Game in Town, 1968*), Jean Negulesco (*Hello and Goodbye, 1970*), Robert Wise (*Two People, 1972*), Franklin J. Schaffner (*The Boys from Brazil, 1978*), and Lewis Gilbert (*Seven Men at Daybreak, 1975*).

Decaë died in 1987.

## MILES DAVIS (music)

Born in Alton, Illinois in 1926, the son of a dentist, Miles Davis has been one of the most important figures in jazz since he participated with Charlie Parker in the formation of bebop in the late forties. As a bandleader and a highly influential improviser, he remained at the forefront of innovation through his pensive, subtle trumpet-playing, right up to his death in 1991.

Davis took up the trumpet at the age of thirteen and played briefly alongside Parker in Billy Eckstine's orchestra in 1944. The following year, he won a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music in New York, but soon dropped out to play with Parker, then leading the bebop revolution in jazz. Although at this stage technically unimpressive, Davis learned quickly and practiced hard, and already possessed the ability to compress emotional statement into short solos.

His first date as a leader came with *Birth of the Cool* (Capitol, 1949), a series of arrangements by Gil Evans (who would later arrange Davis's landmark *Sketches of Spain* and *Kind of Blue*) and Gerry Mulligan for a nine-piece band which was the precursor of a school of West Coast "cool" jazz in the fifties. During the early fifties, Davis recorded with a range of small groups, perfecting his sparse, staccato trumpet style.

The following year brought public recognition of Davis's commanding place in contemporary jazz. He was the hit of the Newport Jazz Festival and was signed by a major record company, Columbia, with whom he would be associated for the next three decades.

While on a European tour in 1957, Davis was approached by Louis Malle to record the soundtrack for *Elevator to the Gallows*, the first fully-improvised film score and now an acknowledged classic. Considered the most important jazz score ever, the soundtrack, complete with 40 minutes of unused takes, can now be downloaded from the Verve Music Group website at [vervemusicgroup.com](http://vervemusicgroup.com). Verve will soon be re-releasing the score on CD.

- adapted from *The Faber Companion to 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Popular Music*, by Phil Hardy & David Laing

## RIALTO PICTURES

Rialto Pictures, a company specializing in the re-release of classic films, was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric DiBernardo became the company's National Sales Director.

Rialto's releases have included Renoir's *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed's *The Third Man*; Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin's *Rififi*; Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D.*; Godard's *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders* and *A Woman is a Woman*; Melville's *Bob Le Flambeur*; Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel's *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid* (starring Jeanne Moreau), and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*; Clouzot's *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols' *The Graduate*; Mel Brooks' *The Producers*; and many others.

In 2002, the company released the first-run *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters, starring Sylvie Testud.

Rialto's 2003 slate included *Le Cercle Rouge*, a late noir masterwork by Jean-Pierre Melville, and Jacques Becker's French gangster classic *Touchez pas au Grisbi*, starring Jean Gabin and Jeanne Moreau. Other 2003 releases included Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* and Franju's *Eyes without a Face*.

Last year, Rialto released Gillo Pontecorvo's groundbreaking *The Battle of Algiers*, one of the biggest hits in the company's history; the original 1954 Japanese version of *Godzilla*, never before released in the U.S.; and the Oscar-winning documentary *Hearts and Minds*.

In addition to Godard's *Masculine Feminine*, Claude Berri's *The Two of Us* and Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows*, Rialto's 2005 releases will include *Army of Shadows*, Melville's epic of the French Resistance starring Lino Ventura and Simone Signoret, to be released for the very first time in the United States.

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. Rialto's two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

**Pressbook edited by Bruce Goldstein and Tommaso Cammarano**  
**Annotated by Bruce Goldstein**  
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