Malle, Louis (1932-1995)

Louis Malle (30 October 1932-23 November 1995) was a French filmmaker associated with the French New Wave of the 1950s and 1960s. He directed dozens of films in both French and English in a variety of genres and styles, from documentaries (*Le Monde du silence* [*The Silent World, 1956*]) to crime drama (*Ascenseur pour l’échafaud* [*Elevator to the Gallows, 1957*]) to screwball comedy (*Zazie dans le metro, 1960*). His willingness to explore different cinematic styles and genres sometimes put him outside of the New Wave as defined by the critic-filmmakers of the influential journal *Cahiers du cinema.* Nevertheless, his emphasis on narrative ambiguity, personal storytelling and taboo-breaking are in keeping with the interests of that cohort of filmmakers. His films are well-known for their thematic controversy (as in *Pretty Baby, 1978*) and narrative experimentation (as in *My Dinner with André, 1981*). His film soundtracks often featured jazz, most famously in *Elevator to the Gallows*, for which Miles Davis improvised the score. Malle sometimes incorporated surrealist elements in his films, a good example being *Black Moon* (1975). His final film, *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994), is arguably more postmodernist than modernist. It intertwines scenes of a rehearsal of Anton Chekhov’s play *Uncle Vanya* with behind-the-scene interludes, in a redeployment of the play’s Russian concerns about environmental and social instability to contemporary American anxieties about urban and artistic decay.

PARATEXTUAL MATERIALS

-Louis Malle. The Criterion Collection. http://www.criterion.com/explore/136-louis-malle

-Miles Davis’s Recording Session for *Ascenseur pour l’échafaud*, including interview with Malle in French. YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-XVlrauLxc.[I do not know who the rights holder is.]

-Photo of Louis Malle [Corbis, via www.allocine.fr]



MIT Museum Collection: People. Images of Louis Malle and other crewmembers of Jacques Cousteau’s documentary team working with underwater cameras and equipment. http://webmuseum.mit.edu/detail.php?type=related&kv=14624&t=people

SELECTED LIST OF WORKS (directorial credits)

*Le Monde du silence* (*The Silent World*; 1956) (co-director with Jacques Cousteau)

*Ascenseur pour l’échafaud* (*Elevator to the Gallows*, a.k.a. *Frantic*; 1957)

*Les Amants* (*The Lovers*; 1958)

*Zazie dans le métro* (1960)

*Vie privée* (*A Very Private Affair*; 1961)

*Vive Le Tour (*1962) (documentary short)

*Le Feu follet* (*The Fire Within*; 1963)

*Bon Baisers de Bangkok* (1964) (documentary short)

*Viva Maria* (1965)

*Le Voleur* (*The Thief of Paris; 1967*)

*Histoires extraordinaires,* “William Wilson” episode (*Spirits of the Dead*; 1968)

*Calcutta* (1969) (documentary)

*L’Inde fantôme* (*Phantom India*; 1969) (television documentary)

*Le Souffle au coeur* (*Murmur of the Heart*; 1971)

*Humain, trop humain* (*Human, All Too Human*; 1974) (documentary)

*Lacombe, Lucien* (1974)

*Place de la république* (1974) (documentary)

*Black Moon* (1975)

*Pretty Baby* (1978)

*Atlantic City* (1980)

*My Dinner with André* (1981)

*Crackers* (1983)

*Alamo Bay* (1985)

*God’s Country* (1985) (television documentary)

*And the Pursuit of Happiness* (1986) (documentary)

*Au revoir les enfants* (1987)

*Milou en mai* (*May Fools*; 1990)

*Damage* (1992)

*Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994)

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