

Untitled Raouls Project.

Wr. Michael Bloom

EXT. STREETS OF SOHO - DAY

A reporter JEAN-PHILLIP COCTEAU (mid 20s) and his foreign sound man SANU don a serious demeanor as he addresses the camera.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Bonjour, and welcome. My name is Jean-Phillip Cocteau, French Auteur and Documentarian et today, I am in the United States for an insider look at the unique cuisine of Alsacienne France. Donc, we have been invited to New York Cities famous, Raouls, "Le Bistro de Soho". And given exclusive access, to find out, what it is about Alsacienne cuisine in the U.S. that makes it so successful. Together, with our international crew, we share no bias and leave no stone unturned as we continue our quest to discover the magic behind the world's greatest restaurants.

EXT. RAOULS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A compilation of shots ensues starting with the bistro's bustling night life and ending on the Raoul's Neon signage.

BEGIN: Black & White slideshow of the restaurant in the 70s & 80s.

JEAN-PHILLIP (V.O.)

But before we can understand what it's become we must first understand how it all started. We were granted spéciale permission to sit down with one of the restaurant's well known maitre'd's who helped open the restaurant in 1975.

END SLIDESHOW.

INT. RAOULS DINING ROOM - DAY

OTS LOOKING OVER EDDIE'S SHOULDER at a B&W photograph he's holding of himself at the bar in the early 80s.

A greying, kind and put together older man EDDIE HUDSON (early 60s) sits upright in a booth and squints curiously behind large thick-rim glasses. Hanging behind him a B&W photograph of a naked girl making love whilst cussing a man's cock.

EDDIE

That's me alright. When I started here in the early 80s it was a different time. I came in looking for a job as a bartender,  
(laughs)  
only thing was I'd never tended a bar before. Serg, the owner threw me to bar backing for a while until he got a call... the bartender Quit. Then and there that afternoon. And that was my first day of a job I held for the next twenty years.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Ah yes, quite the comédie, wow. Yes and how would you describe the food at Raouls?

EDDIE

Yeah... yeah... the food, sure. And when I tended bar here in the 90s, that's when all the wall street guys came through. They had this place packed. Every. Night. Good for business sure, but some of those guys got rowdy. Almost had to toss a few out.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Yes I can imagine. What history... And were you here when famous chef Paul Bocuse created the signature poivre?

EDDIE

And the chefs... Let me tell you, always a raucous bunch...

Leaning in as if in secret.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

... some of them asked for pinches here and there...

Leaning back.

EDDIE (CONT'D)  
Nothing crazy but enough not to go  
un-noticed.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes, I can imagine... And the //  
food?

EDDIE  
Yeah, at the time when we were  
still able to have guests in our  
garden room - Coppola, Scorsese,  
they all had meetings here... There  
was one time Scorsese nearly  
destroyed his monitor because the  
actor was ad libbing the scene.  
Nice guy but let me tell y'a...  
Wouldn't want to be on that guys  
bad side

A long beat.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Thank you.

INT. RAOULS KITCHEN - NIGHT

A busy kitchen at the height of service. Two rows of tickets,  
food taking off down the line and grill cooks moving quickly.

JEAN-PHILLIP (V.O.)  
What better person to talk to then  
the Master Chef, Monsieur David  
Honeysett.

INSERT: David's Food Handling License Photo hanging above the  
kitchen doors.

BACK.

The kitchen seems overwhelmed. Master Chef David receives a  
salad plate he doesn't like.

DAVID  
(To the salad cook)  
Miguel, what is this?

The salad cook looks at him coldly, with eyes as hard as  
oysters on the half shell.

David TAKES the plate and SLIDES the salad off and into the trash. He SLINGS the plate behind him and it lands on the dishwashing station.

A beat.

Nobody says a word.

INT. RAOULS DINING ROOM - DAY

Master Chef David sits in a booth across from us on the phone with one of his suppliers.

DAVID  
(to the phone)  
60 gallons milk, 12 quarts butter,  
20 pounds peppercorn... Yes ...  
Yes, the bread was *short* last week  
so we're ordering more... Yes -  
well if I don't rely on you to  
supply the count I'd rather have  
more than not // enough. Forty  
five...  
(Looks to us, dryly)  
How kind of you.

JUMP CUT:

DAVID. SAME.

DAVID  
We do steak frites and salads. Our  
beef comes in from Upstate and our  
shellfish is in it's winter  
rotation...

The camera PANS to Jean-Phillip, cautious to press on while for the first time showing the small production crew behind the scenes.

CAMERA PANS BACK TO David.

RING. RING.

His phone lights up on the table.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

He looks away to take the call.

INT. RAOULS KITCHEN BASEMENT - LATER

SAÏD (early 60s), an old Algerian Sous Chef, takes us on a tour.

SAÏD  
Ok, you want to see how it's made -  
let's go.

We follow him down the narrow hallway where he suddenly stops to show us a latino man chopping vegetables.

SAÏD (CONT'D)  
This is for the salads -- come.

We pan back and he's already walking ahead of us, we rush to keep pace.

We stop in another section of the hallway that opens to a room assembled with racks holding pots and pans - a prep cook is crouched eating his lunch.

SAÏD (CONT'D)  
Hey! You!

The cook pics up his plate and quickly scurries away past camera.

SAÏD (CONT'D)  
Not Here. Come On, You Know Better.  
(shaking his head to us)  
These guys.

He continues on.

He takes us to another section of the hallway where a man is slicing and sorting frisée.

SAÏD (CONT'D)  
Here, more salad. Come.

He continues on and shows us into a walk in refrigerator where server FRANKIE GIUSTANNI (30 y/o) is SMOKING A CIGARETTE. He immediately puts it out and walks out past camera.

SAÏD (CONT'D)  
Come on. What are you? Idiot?

FRANKIE  
Alrightttt...

Saïd takes a breath. Then,

SAÏD

This is everything ok -- our meats,  
vegetables, it all comes here  
before prep and then - the plate,  
yes?

JEAN-PHILLIP

Yes, but erm what is it // that you  
think...

SAÏD

Yes? Ok. Now, I have plenty of work  
to do. So. If you don't mind.

He walks out past the camera leaving Jean-Phillip standing  
there.

A beat.

He blinks at the camera.

INT. RAOULS OFFICE - DAY

Complete Silence.

WIDE of Jean-Phillip sitting in a manilla folder stacked  
office next to a landline phone while SANU hangs a boom over  
his head and struggles with his audio equipment.

JEAN-PHILLIP

(To camera, no sound)

Ouais, ok.

SANU punches a button on his audio vest.

The subtle noise of the office fades in.

SANU

Yes!

Jean-Phillip puts the phone on speaker and dials a number...

An answer, shuffling, and a voice.

VALENTIN

Bonjour Jean-Phillip ça va?

JEAN-PHILLIP

Oui, bonjour er... avais vous un  
moment?

VALENTIN

Yes...

JEAN-PHILLIP

Listen, er, your contacts for the restaurant, they do not seem to want to speak with us // they are not cooperating.

VALENTIN

Mais non Jean-Phillip there is nothing wrong with the contacts I assure you, they are personal friends.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Yes but erm we seem to have a problem... we might need more time.

VALENTIN

Noo, Jean-Phillip, this is not our problem... It is you who talks of this grande cuisine de l'Alsace -- pff. Regardless of the food it is a famous restaurant. You have the week.

Jean-Phillip looks disheartened at camera.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Yes but er, if we could only have more time // I think...

VALENTIN

More time? More money. Do not talk of more time - no... The Week. Get what you will. The Week Jean-Phillip, and nothing more.

CLICK.

DIAL TONE.

A beat.

Jean-Phillip tries to hide his disappointment.

Sanu pats Jean-Phillip on the back.

SANU

It's okay Jean-Phillip



EXT. RAOULS SIDEWALK - DAY

CEM, an unamused and disinterested gay (mid 40s) looks off nostalgically, lazily perched at a white table smoking a long cigarette.

CEM

Oh, how this neighborhood has changed...

JEAN-PHILLIP

Mmm, yes, how so?

CEM

Pff... how Not so? When I started here in the 80's everyone in this neighborhood looked beautiful completely naked. Now look at them...

We see and elderly woman barely making it down the sidewalk.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Hello

CEM

Yes, hello, ça va - ça va.

BACK.

CEM (CONT'D)

Us? We try our best you know -- the food, l'art, the little witch woman upstairs... but for what? It's sickening.

JEAN-PHILLIP

You mentioned the cuisine, can you tell us a bit more about it?

CEM

Pff... mais non... Not my département, *besides* the beauty here does not lie in the food... UP and DOWN the city is good food, non, if you want to know about (gesturing) *this* place, you must take your caméra - out the kitchen.

Something down the block grabs Cem's attention.

CEM (CONT'D)

SEE, YOU SEE!? Look look look...

CAMERA PANS AND ZOOMS to see an old woman's little dog shitting in the street. She walks away. CEM dutifully walks into frame shaking a can of spray paint. He paints the poop gold. He walks back.

CEM (CONT'D)  
Voilà! You see? Modern art.

A beat.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN.

EXT. RAOULS SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Moving across the pavement we walk past a line of guests, through an exterior vestibule and into...

INT. RAOULS DINING ROOM - SAME

We slowly move through the dining room in between guests and busboys dodging us as we pass and come to a service station where a waitress, NAOMI (early 40s) and waiter JAFFAR (early 50s) are working

JEAN-PHILLIP  
(to Naomi)  
Pardon madam, how long have you //  
worked at Raouls?

NAOMI  
OH FUCK OFF JESUS CHRIST!

She goes.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
(to Jaffar)  
Pardon monsieur...

JAFFAR  
No - No - not tonight.

He goes.

O.C.  
Hey -- buddy.

JOHNNY (mid 20s) a latino bar back with a ponytail and glasses leans across the service bar.

JOHNNY

Look, it's cool if you want to be here, but you're freakin' people out man.

JEAN-PHILLIP

I see you're meaning... Would it be easier if I waited // until tomorrow to introduce myself...?

JOHNNY

Nah - nah - nah. You don't got to do all that, but... You're just askin' too much too soon.

Frankie enters.

FRANKIE (O.C.)

Ey Johnny, we got some skiers on 103.

Rubbing his hands together, Johnny gives a big smile.

JOHNNY

Aww yeah. Early for a Thursday...  
FRANKO!

He holds up three fingers. FRANKO the tall bartender (mid 50s) down the bar grabs something out of the register and slides it to Johnny behind his back, Johnny handshakes it to Frankie under the service bar. Frankie goes.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

As I was saying, take your tiime... get to know us first... then once you got that, we got you baby. One step at a time.

A ticket registers out at the service bar. Johnny takes it and looks.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Titos...? This bitch... 86 two hours ago...

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - SAME

Moving through the dining room we land on Frankie Giustanni taking an order at a table.

FRANKIE

No, no dairy but they are fried in the same batter of something that has dairy... uh huh... uh huh... And yes sir. I'm gonna grab that bottle for yuh *right* now.

Taking the menus, he shoots the camera a glare.

INT. KITCHEN POLISHING AREA - SAME

Frankie, greased back hair and thick Italian eyebrows, is ripping a cigarette while a Latino busboy polishes silverware behind him.

FRANKIE

Yeah hey how y'a doin. So this fuckin' bitch tells Me, she comes to a french fuckin' restaurant and she can't eat dairy? Meanwhile I got this Florida boat-shoes bumblin' fuck trying to explain to me the grapes of Bordeaux.

Dropping and stubbing his cigarette he grabs the wine bottle he just sold and holds it firmly in between his legs.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Imma tell 'em I got her cream and his grapes right 'ere...

INT. DINING ROOM - SAME

Looking over the espresso machine at the bar crowd we PAN TO, FRANKO on the other side of the espresso machine making a coffee.

FRANKO

I'm gonna need to get in here babe.

Camera falls, knocking against the machine.

ESPRESSO MACHINE - SAME

Franko, stands across the machine talking to us.

FRANKO

I've been bar at this place for going on 20 now.

(MORE)

FRANKO (CONT'D)

Best joint in town if you ask me,  
something about the energy in this  
room on a friday night - you can't  
explain it. Old timers, the local  
girls, wall street boys, race car  
drivers, guitar players, they all  
come through here...

O.C.

Excuse me.

We turn to see a beautiful twenty year old girl in a slip  
dress gently jostling by to get up the stairwell behind us.

BACK.

JEAN-PHILLIP

Yes this is an interesting  
perception, and I hear you're quite  
the basketball player. Do your  
children play?

Franko, acknowledging us but simultaneously being distracted  
by something behind and above us.

FRANKO

Uh huh.

Giving us his full attention now.

FRANKO (CONT'D)

Yeah, we get a lot of them too,  
Basketball, baseball, we get all  
the sports.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Jaffar, a large Moroccan man with round shoulders and keen  
golden eyes welcomes us to speak with him.

JAFFAR

My friend... my friend... have you  
talked to William?

JEAN-PHILLIP

Mais non.

JAFFAR

Ahh what luck, he's just there.

Jaffar gestures through the kitchen door window, we peak  
through to see a busy kitchen and a latino man, WILLIAM (mid  
40s) expediting food.

Back to Jaffar.

JAFFAR (CONT'D)  
A Famous chef, Executive chef  
William... I already have talked  
with him my friend and he is  
waiting for you.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Why, thank you.

JAFFAR  
Of course of course.

Jaffar ushers us into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

WILLIAM  
No, no, what is this... GET OUT OF  
THE KITCHEN JEAN-PHILLIP!

William pushes our camera away and back through the doors we  
came.

CUT TO.

EXT. RAOULS SIDEWALK - THE NEXT DAY

LONG SHOT - Jean-Phillip is pacing down the block on the  
phone seemingly getting bad news...

He walks up to the camera, the boom mic dips down and he  
pushes it away from his head.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
They say till the end of the day  
tomorrow. Then, that's it.

SANU  
No...

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes... what more can I... et  
ensuite - poof... c'est fini.

A beat.

Jean-Phillip more downtrodden than ever stands in depressed  
contemplation.

SANU  
We can finish.

Jean-Phillip smiles.

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes.

Nodding his head now.

JEAN-PHILLIP (CONT'D)  
Yes... maybe...

SANU  
We can finish!

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes... With the right editing and  
the right new material... which  
will really depend on this last day  
but...

SANU  
We can finish!

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes...

SANU  
Yes we can!

JEAN-PHILLIP  
Yes! Yes! We can!

Now giddy with victory, a beat.

Then realizing, Jean-Phillip quickly goes to turn off the  
camera.

JEAN-PHILLIP (CONT'D)  
Save film - save film!

CUT TO BLACK.

DARK SPACE.

JEAN-PHILLIP (O.C.)  
We are rolling?

SANU (O.C.)  
Rolling!

JEAN-PHILLIP (O.C.)

Sound?

SANU (O.C.)

Yes! -- oh.

The dark space rotates and disappears. Sanu removes the lens cap and light illuminates our scene...

RAOULS OFFICE - NIGHT - SAME

We see the camera crew in the reflection of mirrored office doors: Sanu strapped to an audio vest holding up a large boom, Jean-Phillip behind the camera and LUCIEN (early 30s) black french man holding cables. Jean-Phillip reaches for the door knob. We step into...

RAOULS UPSTAIRS BATHROOM LOUNGE - SAME

A fortune teller omnipotently displays her cards next to a fish tank spilling neon light. Voices and Saturday Night Fever era disco echoes from the dining room downstairs while guests abraded against the bathroom doors ignore a drunk couple in carnal embrace.

We move past and make our way down a descending spiral stairwell.

RAOULS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As we descend down the stairwell the room erupts into a shoebox of neon lights, disco, mindful eyes and idle men. White shirts move elusively amongst the crowd. FRANKO looks up coldly as we're ushered by coat check to the ground floor.

UNDER CRANK (6 fps) STEP-PRINTED: We move through the dining room as a myriad of colors and blurred shapes graze by our frame. Delicate blues, purples and reds wash by as white shirts move about bussing plates and taking orders. WE SUDDENLY BUMP INTO -- ROB OPPENHEIMER (mid 50s)

Back to (24 fps)

ROB

OH WHAT THE FUCK...

Realizing.



ROB (CONT'D)  
Oh, I'm sorry. Are you the camera crew? I've been looking for you guys.

INT. DINING ROOM BOOTH - SAME

Rob, a slender manager in an oversized suit leans across the table and graciously shakes our hand.

ROB  
(to the crew)  
Hi, Rob... Rob Oppenheimer... Nice -- nice to meet you.

Smiling.

ROB (CONT'D)  
Where y'a been? Practically turned this place upside down looking for you guys...

Camera PANS TO Jean-Phillip looking very optimistic. BACK TO Rob.

ROB (CONT'D)  
So, what do you guys want to know?

Frankie enters.

FRANKIE  
Rob I think we might need the epipen 209 got the Halibut and I didn't tell them about the ganache.

ROB  
Is this urgent?

FRANKIE  
Her fucking lungs are closing man I don't know?

A beat.

Rob and Frankie rush out of frame.

A long beat.

KARIM (mid 40s) sits down across from us in the booth.

KARIM  
Excuse me, Jean-Philippe?

JEAN-PHILLIP

Oui.

KARIM

Karim Raoul.

Shaking his hand.

KARIM (CONT'D)

I was looking for you guys,  
Valentin told me that you had  
problems with your questions? I  
made a few calls, are you available  
tomorrow?

JEAN-PHILLIP

I'm sorry but today is our last //  
day...

SANU (O.C.)

Yes!

KARIM

Awesome. There are some people I  
would like you to meet...

Shaking his hand again.

KARIM (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you.

Camera PANS TO Jean-Phillip, optimistic.

INT. RAOULS DINING ROOM - DAY

Camera points down at the floor tracking over shoes, sandbags  
and cables. A film set.

KARIM (O.C)

Bonjour

ELDERLY VOICE (O.C.)

Hello... hi...

We look up to see an elderly couple making formalities.

RAOULS BOOTH INTERVIEW - SAME

Mr. & Mrs. Thornton (mid 80s) sit across from us in their  
best Sunday clothes, lastingly in love.

MRS. THORNTON

When we first came here forty years ago he was still working for the governors office, Hugh Carey.

MR. THORNTON

Carey - then Cuomo.

MRS. THORNTON

And I was a law clerk in the court house. He took me here for our first date - proposed to me right under that painting... forty years later we still come back.

MR. & MRS. SPENCER

MR. SPENCER

She was an Upper east side girl and I lived downtown. I knew the only way I could get her down here is if I called her a cab, so I called her apartment and I told her, I'm calling you a cab and we're going to Raouls... And she couldn't say no.

MRS. SPENCER

How could I say no to that...

MR. SPENCER

How could she say no to that...

MR. & MRS. YURKIE

MR. YURKIE

I went to school with Karim at NYU back when his dad ran this place, he was director and I was a cinematographer. We used to shoot music videos on the roof and he'd pay me in steaks and fries. After we graduated we keep in touch here and there but me and my wife have been coming here ever since.

SERG & GUY RAOUL

GUY

It was just me and my brother and  
this hole in the wall place that  
was very cheap in a neighborhood  
that was very dangerous.

JEAN-PHILLIP

And what made you guys want to open  
a restaurant?

GUY

Well it was his idea and I could  
cook and it's always something we  
talked about so we figured, ok.  
Let's do it.

MR. & MRS. YURKIE

MR. YURKIE

Time has definitely seemed to wash  
over this neighborhood but this  
place is just the way we left it --  
more than forty years ago...

A beat.

FADE TO.

INT. KITCHEN DISHWASHING STATION.

Camera holds over the wash basin of the dishwashing station.  
Wine is dumped mixing with the water and creating water  
circles as it washes away. Someone comes and dumps a cup of  
coffee. Then the ice from a coke, a martini, this  
continues...

ROLL CREDITS.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.