

Parsons Film Club
Season 1, Fall 2018
John L. Tishman Auditorium
Free admission

The New Wave (French: La Nouvelle Vague) was a blanket term coined by critics for a group of French filmmakers of the late 1950s and 1960s, influenced by Italian Neorealism and classical Hollywood Cinema. Although never a formally organized movement, the New Wave filmmakers were lined by their self-conscious rejection of classical cinematic form and their spirit of youthful iconoclasm. Many also engaged in their work with the social and political upheavals of the era, making their radical experiments with editing, visual style and narrative part of a general break with the conservative paradigm. French New Wave was popular roughly between 1958 and 1964, although New Wave work existed as late as 1973. The socio-economic forces at play shortly after Word War II strongly influence the movement. Politically and financially, drained, France tended to fall back on the old popular pre-war traditions. One such tradition was straight narrative cinema,

specifically classical French film. The movement has its roots in rebellion against the reliance on past forms (often adapted from traditional novellic structures), criticizing in particular the way these forms could force the audience to submit to a dictatorial plot-line. They were especially against the French "cinema of quality", the type of high-minded, literary period films held in esteem at French film festivals, often regarded as "untouchable" by criticism. New Wave critics and directors studied the work of western classics and applied new avant garde stylistic direction. The low-budget approach helped filmmakers get at essential art form and find what was, to them, a much more comfortable and hon-est form of production. Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles, Howard Hawks, John Ford, and many other forward-thinking film directors were held up in admiration while standard Hollywood films bound by traditional narrative flow were strongly criticized.

Jacques Rivette

Sept 17

Paris Belongs to Us: one of the original critics turned filmmakers who helped jump-start the French New Wave, Jacques Rivette began shooting his debut feature in 1958, well before that cinema revolution officially kicked off with The 400 Blows and Breathless. Ultimately released in 1961, the rich and mysterious Paris Belongs to Us offers some of the radical flavor that would define the movement, with a particularly

Rivettian twist. The film follows a young literature student (Betty Schneider) who befriends the members of a loose-knit group of twentysomethings in Paris, united by the apparent suicide of an acquaintance. Suffused with a lingering post–World War II disillusionment while also evincing the playfulness and fascination with theatrical performance and conspiracy that would become hallmarks for the director, Paris Belongs to Us marked the provocative start to a brilliant directorial career.

Louis Malle

Sept 24

The Fire Within: after garnering international acclaim for such seminal crowd-pleasers as The Lovers and Zazie dans le métro, Louis Malle gave his fans a shock with The Fire Within (Le feu follet), a penetrating study of individual and social

inertia. Maurice Ronet (Elevator to the Gallows), in an implosive, haunted performance, plays Alain Leroy, a self-destructive writer who resolves to kill himself and spends the next twenty-four hours trying to reconnect with a host of wayward friends. Unsparring in its portrait of Alain's inner turmoil and shot with remarkable clarity, The Fire Within is one of Malle's darkest and most personal films.

Eric Rohmer

Oct 1

The Bakery girl of Monceau: a law student with a roving eye and a large appetiteSimple, delicate, and jazzy, the first of the "Moral Tales" shows the stirrings of what would become the Eric Rohmer style: unfussy naturalistic shooting, ironic first-person voice-over, and the image of the "unknowable" woman. A

law student (played by producer and future director Barbet Schroeder) with a roving eye and a large appetite stuffs himself full of sugar cookies and pastries daily in order to garner the attentions of the pretty brunette who works in a quaint Paris bakery. But is he truly interested, or is she just a sweet diversion?.

Jean-Luc Godard

Oct 8 / 15 / 22

Breathless: there was before Breathless, and there was after Breathless. Jean-Luc Godard burst onto the film scene in 1960 with this jazzy, free-form, and sexy homage to the American film genres that inspired him as a writer for Cahiers du cinéma. With its lack of polish, surplus of attitude, anything-goes crime narrative, and effervescent young stars Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg, Breathless helped launch the French New Wave and ensured that cinema would never be the same.

Contempt: Jean-Luc Godard's subversive foray into commercial filmmaking is a star-studded Cinemascope epic. Contempt (Le Mépris) stars Michel Piccoli as a screenwriter torn between the demands of a proud European director (played by legendary director Fritz Lang), a crude and arrogant American producer (Jack Palance), and his disillusioned wife, Camille

Agnès Varda

Oct 29 / Nov 15

Cléo from 5 to 7: Agnès Varda eloquently captures Paris in the sixties with this real-time portrait of a singer (Corinne Marchand) set adrift in the city as she awaits test results of a biopsy. A chronicle of the minutes of one woman's life, Cléo from 5 to 7 is a spirited mix of vivid vérité and melodrama, featuring a score by Michel Legrand and cameos by Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina.

Le Bonheur: though married to the good-natured, beautiful Thérèse (Claire Drouot), young husband and father François (Jean-Claude Drouot) finds himself falling unquestioningly into an affair with an attractive postal worker. One of Agnès Varda's most provocative films, Le bonheur examines, with a deceptively cheery palette and the spirited strains of Mozart, the ideas of fidelity and happiness in a modern, self-centered world.

François Truffaut

Nov 12 / 19

400 Blows: François Truffaut's first feature is also his most personal. Told from the point of view of Truffaut's cinematic counterpart, Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), The 400 Blows (Les quatre cents coups) sensitively re-creates the trials of Truffaut's own childhood, unsentimentally portraying aloof parents, oppressive teachers, and petty crime. The film marked Truffaut's passage from leading critic to trailblazing auteur of the French New Wave.

Jules and Jim: hailed as one of the finest films ever made, Jules and Jim charts, over twenty-five years, the relationship between two friends and the object of their mutual obsession. The legendary François Truffaut directs, and Jeanne Moreau stars as the alluring and willful Catherine, whose enigmatic smile and passionate nature lure Jules (Oskar Werner) and Jim (Henri Serre) into one of cinema's most captivating romantic triangles. An exuberant and poignant meditation on freedom, loyalty, and the fortitude of love, Jules and Jim was a worldwide smash in 1962 and remains every bit as audacious and entrancing today.

