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les films du lendemain & my new picture present

asia argento
mathieu amalric
ON WAR
a film by
bertrand bonello


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Les Films du Lendemain & My New Picture present

Mathieu Amalric

Asia Argento

Guillaume Depardieu

Clotilde Hesme

ON WAR

a film by Bertrand Bonello

France - 2008 - Color - 130 mn - 35 mm - Dolby SRD

Download Photos : www.filmsdistribution.com/download/onwar

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If I wasn't Bob Dylan,
I'd probably think that
Bob Dylan has a lot of answers myself.

BOB DYLAN

SYNOPSIS

Bertrand, a film-maker approaching forty, slightly disconnected from the world, finds himself shut in a coffin for the night following a certain set of circumstances. In the morning, he is no longer the same.

He rethinks his life, and decides to follow a man to an isolated part of the world, The Kingdom, which is ruled by a mysterious and charismatic woman called Uma. There, people of all ages reside in a warrior-type hierarchy and seem to be living in a happy autarchy..



A conversation between
Bertrand Bonello and Mathieu Amalric

genesis / duality

BERTRAND

Joy, yes, I'm all for that. I may not look it, but I am.

For instance, I would like to film joy but I don't think I'm capable of it. At one point, I wanted to make a film about a guy madly in love with a woman.

Bertrand Bonello : To be honest, ON WAR, is the result of two failures, two abandoned films. (LA MORT DE LAURIE MARKOVITCH et MADELEINE D'ENTRE LES MORTS – a variation on VERTIGO).

The feeling that came over me, above and beyond the film that wasn't made, was the notion of being held back. Of being really stopped from achieving desired goals. So I started off from this idea, with the desire to turn it into **something that was enjoyable**. That is, to try and find cinematographic and jubilant answers to questions that I find contemporary and essential. That was the first thing.

Mathieu Amalric : It's true that you presented this project to me as a reaction to films that hadn't been made.

And then you said to me, here I've written something with you and Asia in mind. It was so moving.

Bertrand Bonello : That was the second thing. **Asia** and you. People close to me. I wanted all of the roles to be played by people close to me, even the extras are friends.





No casting agent, getting fully involved in the production, experiencing something with a circle of friends, and filming it, these were the basic elements. And also, I liked the idea of getting the two of you together, something that hadn't happened yet.

With Asia, we did a short movie in two days (CINDY, THE DOLL IS MINE), there was this frustration of not being able to work together for a longer period of time. As for you, Mathieu, apart from the fact that we've known each other for a very longtime, it's possibly also because you asked me to play you in an autobiographical film.

Mathieu Amalric : In LA CHOSE PUBLIQUE (Public Affairs)... You refused.

I really ended up playing quite a few **alter egos**. It's rather strange actually. By the way, that's how I was able to accept someone filming me. I would say to myself : here, with Arnaud Desplechin, I'm really playing Arnaud a bit. With Jean-Claude Biette, I was Biette... Even with Techné...

What liberated us, I believe, was the idea that it was totally asserted, even if you don't know whether or not it's the truth. I'm doing ON WAR with Laurent Lucas, and Laurent Lucas is playing Laurent Lucas... and on top of it I'm wearing your clothes....

Bertrand Bonello : Often the principle of **autofiction** is that you are really telling your life story, but you change the name. Here, it's the contrary.

We start with a real name in order to at a certain point, dive with it into the unreal. That freed me.

In the end, it's also a game, almost like a video game. We sign in with our names, and we find ourselves flung into adventures.



the kingdom

Bertrand Bonello : The third basic element, after the idea of desire and people close to me, was the **unique place**, which would become a place of fiction, thus cinema, and I set up this place which is called the Kingdom.

BERTRAND

I was in a place... where you feel good. It's peaceful. The people are nice. There are trees, you eat, you talk, you sleep, you dance. You have everything you need.

BERTRAND' MOTHER

An asylum was it ?

Bertrand Bonello : The Kingdom is cut off from the world. It's a place of freedom, in any case of free thought, a place where everything is possible. Afterwards, it becomes completely personal, from eroticism to horror, you can put anything that goes through your head there.

Mathieu Amalric : The architecture of the place is very particular, the Anglo-Norman style is quite far from the French chateau style, which means that you really don't know where you are. Sometimes it makes you think of a fairytale house, or other times of a horror film. It favours the imagination.

You had told me about the idea of this community. But when I read the script, I was immediately taken by something completely different. Something that speaks about this feeling that we aren't able to "live life to the fullest." That we're here, and we're not here...

The character played by Asia seems to be the opposite of the idea we have of pleasure, with a certain form of austerity. She's cast against her type. She usually plays on her sensuality or sexuality. Here she quickly asserts an idea of pleasure that requires something else, something much more demanding.





Bertrand Bonello : It's my most modest film sexually, while it had every possibility to be the most sexual. But I didn't want to reduce the idea of pleasure to that, I didn't want to associate the Kingdom with a sexual place. So the sex is off screen. Present, but off screen. The most sexual part of the film being the reading of a text, and a bestiary. The idea of pleasure is thus more intellectual, and I hope in the end, greater and stronger.

CHARLES

Either we take pleasure or we rest.

Mathieu Amalric : It's a **utopian community** created by a generation. And Louise's (Clotilde Hesme) perspective on it is very beautiful because it isn't judgmental. In the end she is the one who understands things best.

BERTRAND

We're companions. That's the word. You're my companion and I'm your companion. That doesn't sound like a couple. You're not my girlfriend or fiancée. You're my companion. You accompany me and I accompany you. We travel the road together.

Mathieu Amalric : **The return to reality** doesn't work the way he wants. The transition from one world to the other is more complicated. And when he returns, in the second part of the film, he no longer wants to be a spectator, but an actor. He's completely in it.

BERTRAND

*I just want some peace.
I want society off my back. No more forms. No more visits to the bank or the post office. I can't take it anymore.
Everything's repeating itself over and over again and I can't keep up. This continual routine, turning over and over is making me fade away. It's erasing who I really I am.
I'm disappearing !*





Bertrand Bonello : If we could recreate an area that concentrated within it all of life's propositions that most attracted us, would we be tempted by it ? Would we be ready to leave everything for it ? To finally be able to get rid of, temporarily, the very principle of reality and live a dream. I don't know...

1968 - 2008

CHARLES

I'm not older than you but I've had a good time. I mean, a really good time. I've met people who were funny, intelligent, deep and carefree. And now ? Where are they ? These days, there's no more grace. Everything's forced. If you see it all through, you have to stand aside, put up with loneliness, sluggishness, defeatism, give up. And I don't want to give up. I'm not dead yet.



Bertrand Bonello : The role of Charles was initially for someone much older – to be brief, someone who would have lived through the 60's. And then I thought of Guillaume, and the fact that these words coming out of his mouth, despite his young age, wouldn't sound ridiculous. He said to me : "Don't worry, I'm not 35, I'm 1035." It is true that Guillaume has lived through a 1000 wars. Interior and exterior.

CHARLES

It's just that our times no longer permit joy. Are there still things that can bring us pleasure ? In this society of ours, there are hardly any. Yet the world is full of them.



Bertrand Bonello : I think we can't be disconnected from May '68. I was born in 1968. Thus for me, **the question of pleasure and the time period** was bound to be fundamental.

I have the impression I was born into a generation that speaks seriously about things that are not very interesting, while I dreamt of intelligent things being said lightly.

The film also comes a great deal from that.

UMA

Today, pleasure is something you have to win, like a war.

So you have to fight like a warrior. But I'll help you.

You don't bother about anything here. You're going to think, make love, drink, play... You're going to win wars.

You want to be dazed by life? You will be.



Bertrand Bonello : In LE PORNOGRAPHE (The Pornographer), a son was speaking to his father about the difficulty of existing after an era when pleasure and desire seemed to be so present ; it wasn't being critical of 68, it was a legitimate question. Because we can neither live, nor replicate the same things. We can't live as if 40 years haven't gone by. So what do we do ? The cards we're dealt are different, and I think the film speaks about that as well.

So yes, on that level, ON WAR is a film made of fantasies.

Hence **the intervention of the war, and of Clausewitz's book.**

CHARLES

It's a military order, but not a belligerent one. Carrying that sword is a fine thing. When you manage it, it's beautiful. You'll see.



Bertrand Bonello : It's been lying on my desk for years. It's more a book of strategies and philosophy, than a glorification of war. In fact, it's the continuation of politics by other means.

Here, it's not war as a warlike act, but the idea that pleasure is not a given. It is earned. There must be expectations.

One speaks to you of pleasure, and you end up in a place that can seem austere. One slowly discovers, at the same time you do, that it is not going to be simple.

Mathieu Amalric : Today, we're supposed to make it alone, all of us. But then how does one do it ? Of course there's the myth of the economy... I don't know how traders live amongst themselves as a group, but I imagine it must be a certain type of community – one where they stick together, and at the same time, each one of them has to make it on their own.

BERTRAND

I spent a whole night in there. I don't want to live through that again. However, I'd like to experience the state I was in again. Return to that state but... in the open.

Mathieu Amalric : This feeling that haunts the character Bertrand, of being invisible, it's a recurrent nightmare for me. That's what shook me up.

I have no idea if the beginning is funny - the part in the funeral home. I remember having laughed a great deal while reading it.

Bertrand Bonello : I wanted to have scenes, well, **tragic-comic**, let's call them that. This proximity with death, this morbidness – because not to feel alive, is morbid – could be light.

The couple that you make with Guillaume for one thing, already has something quite burlesque about it.





the journey

Mathieu Amalric : When you were writing it, did you already have in mind all of the **purely sensorial aspect of the film**?

Bertrand Bonello : The physical aspect yes ; I was telling myself that [the movie] would be physically sensorial.

With the cinematographer (Josée Deshaies) we had started off [with the idea] of a film that was very, very sunny. In the end, it rained for two months, right in the middle of the summer, so that changed many things, notably on the sensorial level.

In any case, we wanted to adopt two different filming logics for Paris and the Kingdom. Paris was practically a team for a film short, very small, we only used a single lens, the 50, that closest to the eye, which is the most “ naturalistic ”. While in the Kingdom, everything was more extensive. Richer. Likewise, the lenses used weren’t the same, they were softer. These are things that are not very visible, but perceptible all the same, I believe.

And the relation to the physical is solely used in the Kingdom.

Physical sensations can end up transporting you... In the film, there is a kind of triangle that absolutely had to be respected : it was the intellectual, the mystical, and the physical.

Mathieu Amalric : We had a beautiful encounter with **the choreographer (Bernando Montet)**. During the filming of the military training scenes, or the trance, the actors in the film – not just the leading roles, but all of the extras – were saying : yes, I understand one or two





things about what it is to train for six hours and then afterwards go into the forest to dance. You put them in the sand for an evening, and then the next day you leave them there and you have them listen to an erotic text. It had an effect. Those who were there everyday questioned all the same this idea of “community” which allows you to find your inner self....

Bertrand Bonello : Yes, the preparation, that was fundamental.

Some of us, you, Asia, Guillaume, and some extras were sleeping at the chateau. We didn't leave. Asia pushed it to the point where, in order to feel Uma's isolation, she didn't even leave her room. There were moments where I really couldn't tell the difference between the scenes and what we were living. We ourselves were a bit filled by the experience.

During the dance sequence in the forest, we even brought a sound system, one as powerful as in a nightclub, and you completely let go of yourselves. These are quasi-documentary like passages. And there it becomes sensual because the notion of being filmed practically disappears.

On another level, the very end, when Bertrand's character is alone facing Kurtz, the sensorial is mental, off screen. The sound was more thoroughly written than the image.

Mathieu Amalric : In such scenes, you really have to make only the off screen come to life. So yes, I imagined shots in my head. The beast, you imagine it in your head. I was very, very concentrated at that moment. The pleasure of being alone, an extreme and selfish pleasure of being filmed and then you understand why you wanted to be an actor.



Bertrand Bonello : When you find yourself alone in the forest, with the mission to kill Marlon Brando, it's because we've all dreamed of American films. You have to admit it....

Mathieu Amalric : Making a film is also about doing everything that you don't have the right to do. That which you don't dare do. That which you are stopped from doing.

Bertrand Bonello : It's really what Guillaume says: you abandon all when you enter here.

CHARLES

Forget that. Disappearance. Anonymity. It's necessary.

No responsibilities. No fault. No guilt.

I don't mean abandon it all, just forget. For two weeks. You'll see.



Mathieu Amalric : **Disappearance.** It's probably the reason why we like making films. The time of the filming is a time of absolute irresponsibility. And if we have this drug, for a moment, we are so irresponsible that we really are a little bit ourselves.

Bertrand Bonello : That's what it is. The idea of getting together in a community isn't to hammer in an ideology, but to stay unique. It's very, very idealistic.

Mathieu Amalric : Hence Dylan...

Bertrand Bonello : Hence Dylan.



bertrand bonello

Bertrand Bonello was born in 1968. Educated as a musician before becoming a filmmaker, he made his first feature film in 1998, *Quelque chose d'organique* (*Organic*) for which he also wrote the screenplay and the music. The film was selected for the Berlin film festival in the "Panorama" section.

In 2001, his second film, *Le Pornographe* (*The Pornographer*) the portrait of a retired porno film maker interpreted by Jean-Pierre Léaud, was presented at the International Critics' week at the Cannes Film Festival and won the International Film Critics' Fipresci Prize.

In 2003, Bertrand Bonello directed *Tiresia*, which was in competition in the Official Selection at the Cannes Festival.

He returned to Cannes in 2005 with a film short in a special screening, *Cindy the doll is mine*, with Asia Argento, a homage to the artist photographer, Cindy Sherman.

In 2007, Bonello directed and produced a new project, *My New Picture*, an album of music presented in several different formats (CD, film, screening...).

Bertrand Bonello is the director, writer, composer, and producer of his latest opus, *On War*.



mathieu amalric

began his acting career with Otar Losseliani in **Les favoris de la lune** / *Favorites of the Moon*. He then played in Arnaud Desplechin's **Comment je me suis disputé...ma vie sexuelle** / *My sex life...or how I got into an argument* (1996), which launched his career and for which he received the César for most promising male performer. At the end of the 1990's he became a prominent screen presence in "cinema d'auteur" with directors such as André Téchiné, Olivier Assayas, Jean-Claude Biette, Benoît Jacquot, the Larrieu brothers, Serge Le Péron, Jeanne Labrune, Eugène Green and Bruno Podalydès. In 2005, he received the César for best actor for his role in the film **Rois et Reine** / *Kings and Queen*, a film by his favorite director, Arnaud Desplechin. Film director, Mathieu Amalric is also the author of an autobiographical film, **Mange ta Soupe** (literally "Eat your soup"), he then wrote **Le Stade de Wimbledon** / *Wimbledon Stage* with Jeanne Balibar (2001) selected for the Locarno festival. In 2003, he presented **La Chose publique** / *Public Affairs* at the Directors' fortnight in Cannes. After his latest highly remarked roles in films by Steven Spielberg, **Munich**, Xavier Giannoli, **Quand j'étais chanteur** / *The Singer*, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, **Actrices** / *Actresses*, Nicolas Klotz, **La question humaine** / *Heartbeat Detector*, Mathieu Amalric received a second César for best actor in 2008, for his role as the journalist Jean-Dominique Bauby, in Julian Schnabel's **Le Scaphandre et le Papillon** / *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007)

Mathieu Amalric is attending the Cannes festival this year with Bertrand Bonello's film **On War**, and Arnaud Desplechin's film **Un conte de Noël** (*A Christmas tale*)- in official competition.

He is presently filming a role in the next James Bond film - **Quantum of Solace** by Marc Forster - and will soon work with the director Alain Resnais.

asia argento

began her acting career when she was 9 years old. In particular, she has worked for Lamberto Bava (**Demons 2**) and Nanni Moretti (**Palombella rossa** / *Red Wood Pigeon*). She then regularly appeared in films directed by her father, Dario Argento, such as **Trauma** (1992) and **Le Syndrome de Stendhal** / *The Stendhal Syndrome* (1996). In 1999, Abel Ferrara chose her to play in **New Rose Hotel**. In 2000 she directed her first feature film, **Scarlet Diva**, the biography of a psychologically suffering star. Four years later she directed another film, the adaptation of a J.T. Leroy novel, **The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things**.

Faithful to her demanding artistic choices, Asia has acted notably in **Last Days** by Gus Van Sant (2005), **Land of the Dead** (2005) by George A. Romero, **Marie Antoinette** by Sofia Coppola (2006), **Transylvania** (2006) by Tony Gatlif, **Une Vielle maîtresse** / *The Last Mistress* (2007) by Catherine Breillat, **Boarding Gate** (2007) by Olivier Assayas, and **Go Go Tales** (2007) by Abel Ferrara.

She also worked with Bertrand Bonello in a film short, **Cindy, the doll is mine** (2006), a performance inspired by the work of artistic photographer Cindy Sherman.

She will soon be seen in Dario Argento's upcoming film, **Giallo**.

cast

BERTRAND	Mathieu Amalric
UMA	Asia Argento
CHARLES	Guillaume Depardieu
LOUISE	Clotilde Hesme
PIERRE	Laurent Delbecque
RACHEL	Elina Löwensohn
MARIE	Léa Seydoux
BERTRAND'S MOTHER	Aurore Clément
HIMSELF	Laurent Lucas
THE GREAT HOU	Michel Piccoli

crew

screenplay, music, direction production	Bertrand Bonello Kristina Larsen Bertrand Bonello
cinematographer	Josée Deshaies
editing	Fabrice Rouaud
sound	Olivier Le Vacon Nicolas Moreau Vincent Vatoux
production designer	Jean-Pierre Laforce
choreography	Antoine Platteau
executive producer	Bernardo Montet Kristina Larsen Bertrand Bonello
production director & assistant director	Christophe Jeauffroy
post-production	Christina Crassaris
production	Les Films du Lendemain & My New Picture
with the participation of	Centre national de la Cinématographie, Canal+, TPS Star.
international sales	Films Distribution

Film clips

“*eXistenZ*” by David Cronenberg “*Tiresia*” by Bertrand Bonello

Music

Uma - la cérémonie - Seven pianos - Tiresia - Apocalypse then
(Bertrand Bonello)

A Fuzz in my head (Bertrand Bonello) performed by JP Nataf

Additional music

Piano Concerto n° 21 en C majeur

II-Andante

Mozart

English Chamber Orchestra
directed by Daniel Barenboim

Untitled#1

Panda Bear

Memories

Robert Wyatt

She Belongs to Me

Bob Dylan

The book *ON WAR* by Carl Von Clausewitz is published by Gallimard.

photos © Jean-claude Lothar

design .soazig petit.