

The Main Feature

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Switzerland 2018 96 minutes cert 12

Director and writer Petra Volpe
 Writer Nicholas Martin
 Cinematography Judith Kaufmann
 Editor Hansjörg Weißbrich

Cast

Marie Leuenberger as Nora Ruckstuhl
 Maximilian Simonischek as Hans Ruckstuhl
 Rachel Braunschweig as Theresa
 Sibylle Brunner as Vroni
 Marta Zoffoli as Graziella
 Bettina Stucky as Magda

Switzerland – what do you think of when that country is mentioned? Neutrality? Mountains? Clocks? Cheese? Probably not films as this is the first we've shown from that country.

But how about these unknown facts

It wasn't until 1981 that Swiss voters even approved an equal rights amendment to the constitution. And, until 1985, women had to legally obtain their husband's approval if they wanted to get a job.



This is an entertaining, exciting and engaging film. The director, who also wrote it, spoke about it:

This film came up in a conversation I had with my producer talking about movies we want to make, topics that are dear to our hearts, and he said: nobody's ever made a movie about the women's right to vote in Switzerland. And the more we talked about it the more we realized that it's been a chapter in Switzerland's history that was very much swept under the rug, which is very typical for women's history. We kind of don't exist in the history books, especially school books because they're written from a very male perspective.

One very important encounter was with Marthe Gosteli. She dedicated her whole life to fighting for rights for women and the fight for the vote and she founded an archive in Switzerland, the one and only women's archive. She felt it was important to collect women's history and preserve it because otherwise it just gets lost. So she has documentation for the whole struggle for the vote in her archive, pictures and posters and the petitions at the time. She was almost a hundred years old when I met her and she was still a fierce feminist. She gave me an interview where she told me a lot about the times and the resistance they met.

The fight for the right to vote is the driving engine of the movie but underneath that it's very much about fundamental human rights that women don't have and still to this day don't have. It's really about women were oppressed in every single aspect of their life. They weren't free and they were treated like objects, not like subjects. They weren't taken seriously as full people. So I wanted to show the different ways that affected their lives. Women were discriminated against at every single level of their professional lives, private lives, sexual lives. That's something of course some of those laws have changed and women can work without asking their husbands for permission but as you can see now with what's happening in

Hollywood, which is just a mirror of reality because its mirroring what's happening to women in all workplaces, is how women are still being treated as objects. There's still a long way to go.



How does it feel to release the movie in a political climate that feels more pertinent to the film's subject matter?

It had made the movie even more timely than it was when we started out. We couldn't have anticipated that how extremely timely, eerily timely it would be. This movie had its premiere in January and two days later there were Women's Marches in New York and America where women were holding up the same signs as they

were holding up in our movie. Women had to fight for those very basic rights and now they might be taken away again.

And also what's happening right now in Hollywood, with the sexual harassment coming to the surface that has always been there but it's just been hidden. Or the fact that Nora is just one single woman who steps up and helps set fire to an oppressive system and that's what's happening right now in Hollywood with women coming forward. So I hope the film encourages people to be courageous, especially women to keep up the fight for our rights.

We thought this was such an important part of our history because Switzerland always claimed it was the oldest democracy

Because it was a big box office success in Switzerland and that means a lot to me, because it meant that people went to see a movie that's really dear to my heart with a topic that's highly relevant. It's about equality and single courage and democracy. And it's great to make a political movie that actually brings people to the cinema. My whole team and my producers and my actors, we are so thrilled about this – that the people really love the movie and that festivals love the movie. You make movies for the people! So people go to the cinema and so far the reception of the movie was so great, and people reacted so emotionally and so graceful, especially in Switzerland. A lot of women were just so grateful that finally their story was told. And of course now that we are Switzerland's entry for the Oscar is like the cream on our cake.



It's a bit naive to think that movies can change a society. But movies can raise awareness and that is always at the beginning of change. And I think the movie is really a pledge for single courage. It's a pledge for you as an individual in society, you can stand up and fight for equality and justice. That's something, and democracy is not a given. It's something we people have and create every day. It's not something that is just a gift and you can lean back and not go vote. People have been fighting, women have been fighting for the right to vote all over the world

and there are people fighting to vote today. And we've gotten very lazy. And we take it for granted and we have to get our asses off the sofa and go to the ballot, you know. It's true. I'm very happy with the reactions to the film, because people are very moved and they feel mighty afterwards. They feel like yeah, right, we have to continue this and it was such a struggle and the struggle is not over and it's worth it, because the world is getting better for men and women when there's more equality.

Iain McGlashan



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Belgian-born film-maker Agnes Varda has died at the age of 90.

Guardian Film critic Peter Bradshaw paid tribute:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/mar/29/agnes-var-da-french-new-wave> 29.3.19

For me, Agnès Varda was the greatest of that great and long-lived generation of the French New Wave. She was a master of personal cinema and essay cinema, drama, satire, documentary and romance, and her work had a distinctive richness and wisdom. Her debut feature, *La Pointe Courte* (1954), is a study in contemporary relationships with a poetic poise that surpasses *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (whose director, Alain Resnais, worked on *Pointe Courte* as editor). Her early masterpiece *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1961) is news that stays news: a thrillingly urgent, intensely sexy and melancholy despatch from the epicentre of the 60s Parisian zeitgeist, which is far more interesting and conceptually supple than Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*

Jacquot de Nantes (1991) is a stunningly moving and complex homage to her husband, Jacques Demy, mixing dramatised reconstructions of his memories with clips of his movies and heartwrenchingly intimate documentary footage of him at the end of his life. There are clear elements of François Truffaut, Louis Malle and Godard in this remarkable film, but it is ultimately in a class of its own, fusing cinephilia and emotional gentleness in a moving and original act of love.

Varda's control of the interrelationship between drama and documentary realism was apparent from her very first film, the brilliantly shot *La Pointe Courte*, in which Silvia Monfort and Philippe Noiret play a couple returning to his hometown, a Mediterranean fishing village, after four years together in Paris. Their complex, fraught dialogue scenes – with something of Bergman as well as Resnais – are an anti-courtship; an anatomy of a failing relationship, as well an attempt to revive it. They are interspersed with gripping scenes of real life in the actual village, captured with poetic flair.

Cleo from 5 to 7 is still electrifyingly good after all these years: a dazzlingly audacious vérité adventure in the streets of Paris, using real shots of real people as they stare amused or astonished into Varda's camera. In real time, from 5pm to 7pm (traditionally when Frenchmen met their mistresses, between the end of the working day and the time when a man might be expected back at the family home) we follow the beautiful singer and glamorous woman-about-town Cléo (Corinne Marchand). But this is also the time in which she must wait for the results of a cancer test. She is surrounded by amusing, talented and besotted men, including her piano accompanist, played by Michel Legrand, but there is no one she can really rely on: all she has is her beauty and loneliness. Varda's script for this movie is brilliant – easily as good as Jacques Prévert – and the incidental lines are wonderful.

Le Bonheur (1965), or *Happiness*, deserves to be almost as well-known. It is an eerily calm, sunlit satire of modern society's expectations of monogamy and romantic love. The real-life husband-and-wife actors Jean-Claude and Claire Drouot play married couple François and Thérèse, who are blissfully content until François falls in love with someone else. Instead of behaving as we might expect him to – with agonised self-doubt, say, or secretive roué defiance, or tragic determination to minimise the pain to his wife – François tells his wife the truth and simply expects them both to be as happy as they once were. Even more so, in fact. Things do not turn out that way. Could *Happiness* be a film that challenges the piety of relationships, or might it speak to a new 21st-century generation for whom the idea of polyamory is not alien?

Varda's *Vagabond* (1985) is her mature masterpiece, a rebuke to the callous misogyny of French society. It is a story told indirectly, like *Citizen Kane*, but with incomparable artistry and decisiveness. Sandrine Bonnaire plays Mona, a young transient woman who drifts through the countryside, sleeping in fields and on roadsides. Her dead body is discovered by a farm worker and then the film pieces together her life in retrospect, with quasi-documentary interviews with various people she met. It is an almost religious film, in its way, a parable for the martyred loneliness of the marginalised and the dispossessed.

To the very end, Varda had incomparable vitality and creativity – and accessibility. Her 2017 documentary *Faces Places*, about her work with the photographer and installation artist JR, entranced everyone and earned her an Oscar nomination. Her work was not commercial in any generally accepted sense, but her ideas were crucially lucid and available. Audiences young and old loved her.

In *The Beaches of Agnès* she said: "Imagining oneself as a child is like walking backwards. Imagining oneself ancient is funny, like a dirty joke." It is difficult to imagine Varda old. She artlessly kept the same gamine hairstyle all her life. She was a young soul, and a great one.

Comments and reactions to: **Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool**

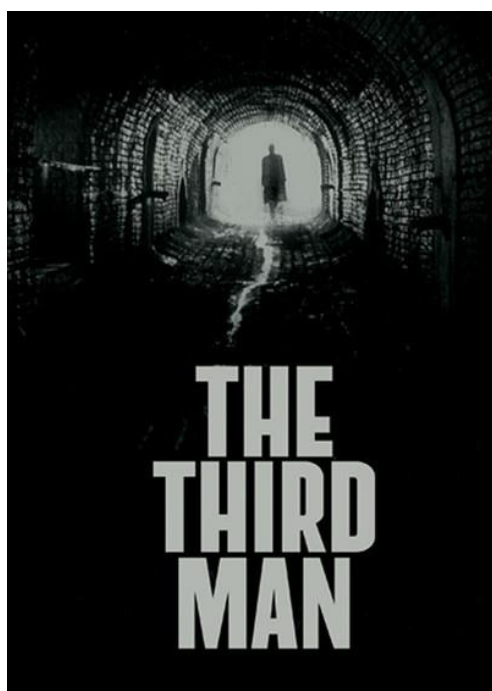
Score **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**
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No of reaction slips received = 27

Average Score = 7.37

Good choice. What an unusual film *Tedious*
Love the chemistry between the two main actors ***Poor contrast of characters***
Painful Beautiful Tragic. Love knows no bounds *A true love story*
Very fine performance by Jamie Bell ***That Jamie Bell, he's fit!***
Terrific cast, very well produced. What's not to like? *Excellent film very well acted*
Extraordinary acting; beautifully shot ***Beautifully acted. So sad***
Very moving but rather too long. Acting excellent
How unexpected. What a fine film. Well done WNCC.
A beautifully made film. Superb acting and a great sound track.
A very unusual, sensitive British film with fine acting and scene setting.
Great acting but rather confused plot and unclear speech – sad ending.

| Position | Film | Average Score |
|-------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 st | Darkest Hour | 8.08 |
| 2 nd | The Post | 7.66 |
| 3 rd | Guildford in the Great War | 7.56 |
| 4 th | Florence Foster Jenkins | 7.47 |
| 5 th | Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri | 7.4 |
| 6 th | Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool | 7.37 |
| 7 th | The Violin Teacher | 7.2 |
| 8 th | Revanche | 7.0 |
| 9 th | L'homme du train | 6.71 |
| 10 th | Piccadilly | 6.41 |
| =11 th | Bar Bahar (In Between) | 6.26 |
| =11 th | Death of Stalin | 6.26 |
| 13 th | The Levelling | 5.6 |
| 14 th | Phantom Thread | 5.16 |



Next on 9 May:

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