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I N A U G U R A L
French Film Festival
St. Louis



AUGUST 28 THROUGH AUGUST 30 2009 WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SAINT LOUIS

Cinema St. Louis French Film Festival

Co-presented by the Washington University Program in Film and Media Studies

Sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

August 28 -30 2009

Washington University
Brown Hall Auditorium

Corner of Forsyth Boulevard and Chaplin Drive
(Two blocks west of Skinker Boulevard)

Cinema St. Louis, presenter of the annual St. Louis International Film Festival, is pleased to celebrate the city's Gallic heritage and France's continuing cinematic vitality with its first annual French Film Festival.

This inaugural fest includes a trio of recent French films and a pair of highly anticipated revivals by two film masters, Max Ophüls and Jean-Luc Godard.

Tickets are \$10 each; \$8 for students with valid and current photo ID, Cinema St. Louis members with valid membership cards, and Alliance Française members.

Tickets can be purchased in advance by calling the Cinema St. Louis office at 314-289-4153; tickets will be available for pickup at will call at the screening. Phone sales are limited to full-price tickets only; discounts can be obtained in person at the box office, because ID is required.

For more information, please visit www.cinemastlouis.org or call 314.289.4150.

The French Film Festival is co-presented by Washington University's Program in Film and Media Studies and sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

All films are in French with English subtitles.
All films are screened from 35mm prints.

Images of Lola Montès and Made in U.S.A.
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Front cover edit taken from a promotional poster for Lola Montès.

Program design courtesy of Grizzell & Co., St. Louis.

Friday August 28

7.00 pm
Captain Ahab (Capitaine Achab)
Philippe Ramos
2007, 97 min.



A French take on an American classic, "Captain Ahab" fills in the biographical and psychological background of the monomaniacal whaler of Herman Melville's "Moby Dick." Told in five stylized

chapters, the film begins with Ahab's birth, details important sequences in his life, and concludes with the story of his death.

The Hollywood Reporter says: "French director Philippe Ramos uses 'Moby Dick' for only the last fifth of his film 'Captain Ahab,' choosing to invent a backstory that's more Mark Twain than Herman Melville. There's much to like in the sweeping tale of how a resourceful orphan grew up to become the fearless harpoonist and seeker of the great white whale. Virgil Leclair has terrific screen presence as the young Ahab and, being new, his tale is more engrossing than the familiar story of the fated captain."

9.15 pm
La France
Serge Bozon
2007, 102 min.



Troubled by a letter from her husband, a soldier in World War I, young wife Camille disguises herself as a teen boy and sets off to find him, joining soldiers mobilized to the front. "La France," how-

ever, is by no means a typical war film, as this band of brothers (and sister) periodically breaks into song. "La France" earned director Bozon the coveted Prix Jean Vigo, which has been given since 1951 to directors for a spirit of independence and extraordinary style, and stars two of the principals of "La vie en rose," Sylvie Testud and Pascal Gregory.

Variety's Scott Foundas writes: "Audacious in concept but superbly controlled in execution, what might easily have seemed a genre-bending stunt instead registers as a highly sensitive, inspired approach to the subject of men - and one woman - confronting the dehumanizing effects of war." Nathan Lee in the "Village Voice" echoes the praise: "'La France' invents a curious and confident hybrid mode to accommodate, even reconcile, disparate

modes and strategies: war film and musical, elegiac and avant-garde, cerebral and poignant, rigorous and flexible. This is something new - and, as yet lacking a distributor, not to be missed."

Saturday August 29

7.00 pm
Made in U.S.A.
Jean-Luc Godard
1966, 90 min.



Never available on 35mm or released on video in the U.S., "Made in U.S.A." makes its much-belated St. Louis debut. A key work by New Wave icon Jean-Luc Godard, the film is a byzantine, politicized Cold War quasi-thriller. Loosely based on Donald Westlake's "Nothing in the Trunk" and partially inspired by Howard Hawks' "The Big Sleep," the film more provocatively references the "Ben Barka affair," the disappearance/murder of a left-wing anti-colonialist Moroccan who was abducted by the French secret police. "Made in U.S.A." stars Godard's muse/ex-wife Anna Karina and regulars Jean-Pierre Léaud and László Szabó, with a cameo by singer Marianne Faithfull, doing an a cappella rendition of the Stones' "As Tears Go By." Raoul Coutard contributes the gorgeous CinemaScope color cinematography.

The New York Press' Armond White declares that "the chance to see 'Made in U.S.A.' on the big screen again provides an opportunity to rescue movie art and revive film enthusiasm." Describing the film as "beautiful, goofy and explosive," former Chicago Reader critic Jonathan Rosenbaum concludes: "Anna Karina was never lovelier in dazzling color and scope, and Godard's ultimate statement about his love/hate for the aesthetics/politics of American movies/life is an event to be savored and celebrated."

9.15 pm
Towards Zero (L'heure zero)
Pascal Thomas
2007, 109 min.



In this breezily entertaining adaptation of a highly regarded (if lesser known)

Agatha Christie mystery, an extended family gathers for a reunion at a manse in contemporary Brittany, with murder the inevitable result. The owner, a dowager aunt, is played by Danielle Darrieux, a grande dame of French

film whose career began in 1931. The exceptional cast includes comedian François Morel (as crime-solving Inspector Bataille) and a host of young talents (Laura Smet, Chiara Mastroianni and Melvil Poupaud).

Variety enthuses: "Agatha Christie fans - and anyone who likes an old-fashioned whodunit, blithely played - will come away clucking from 'Towards Zero,' Gallic helmer Pascal Thomas' second stab at the Queen of Christie's oeuvre. Pic has the same low-key retro fun as his 2005 local hit, 'By the Pricking of My Thumbs,' and while thoroughly French, remains very faithful to the spirit of Christie, an author Thomas reveres alongside Balzac and Simenon."

Sunday August 30

7.00 pm
Lola Montès
Max Ophüls
1955, 115 min.



The Cinémathèque Française offers a stunning restoration of "Lola Montès," a late masterpiece by legendary director Max Ophüls ("The Earrings of Madame de ...," "Letter From an Unknown Woman," "La Ronde") and a movie that critic Andrew Sarris calls,

"in my unhumble opinion, the greatest film ever made." Based on the tumultuous life of the 19th-century dancer and courtesan - lover of both Franz Liszt and King Ludwig of Bavaria - "Lola Montès" recounts the adventuress' romances in flashback, a series of tableaux vivants narrated by the ringmaster of the circus at which she now works. Originally released in three languages - French, German and English - the mega-production features an international cast that includes Peter Ustinov, Anton Walbrook, Oskar Werner and France's proto-sexpot, Martine Carol, as Lola.

Shot in CinemaScope, the film is visually ravishing, with enraptured critics describing "Lola Montès" in unprecedented terms. Nathan Lee declares it "one of the most beautiful movies ever made. When the first image hit the screen, I caught my breath." Phillip Lopate asserts that "Ophüls uses color with a dazzling, kaleidoscopic imagination," and Dave Kehr says the film is "among the most emotionally and visually ravishing works the cinema has to offer." And David Thomson says simply that "Lola Montès" is "one of the essential films ... beautiful and heartbreaking."