

Document Citation

Title	Au hasard Balthazar
Author(s)	
Source	<i>New Yorker Films</i>
Date	
Type	press kit
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	6
Subjects	Bresson, Robert (1907-1999), Bromont-Lamothe, Puy-de-Dôme, France
Film Subjects	Au hasard Balthazar (Balthazar), Bresson, Robert, 1966

From: New Yorker Films
2409 Broadway
New York, N.Y.

New Yorker Films presents

AU HASARD BALTHAZAR

a film by Robert Bresson

France/Sweden 1966

Production Company	Parc Film/Argos Films (Paris) Swedish Film Institute/ Svensk Filmindustri (Stockholm)
Producer	Mag Bodard
Director	Robert Bresson
Screenplay	Robert Bresson
Photography	Ghislain Cloquet
Editor	Raymond Lamy
Art Director	Pierre Charbonnier
Sound	Antoine Archimbaud and Jacques Carrere
Music	Franz Schubert and Jean Wiener

Cast

Girl (Marie)	Anne Wiazemsky
Boy (Gerard)	Francois Lafarge
Father	Philippe Asselin
Mother	Natalie Joyaut
Friend	Walter Green
Tramp	J.C. Guilbert
Corn merchant	Pierre Klossowski

A New Yorker Films Release.

Running time: 95 minutes

For further information
contact Jose Lopez
EN 2-6330 or TR 4-9189

Synopsis

The donkey is seen as an important animal in the Creation, having always played a major role in it (the flight into Egypt, Palm Sunday, Medieval Christmas pageants, etc.), but he is primarily the long-suffering and enduring creature, who, underneath a ridiculous and touching exterior, incarnates the personage of the vagabond --- like Charlie Chaplin.

In Balthazar's life we discover the stages in a human life: the delightful child loved and caressed, the stark awakening of adulthood and hard work, success, and then the mystical period which comes just before death.

Balthazar, with the eye of a judge, will encounter different groups of men, each representing a particular vice --- greed, drunkenness, sloth, etc. His existence will become entangled with that of a lost girl, which will intensify the drama. He will be the little one whose mother carries the shepherds' tents up in the mountains. A group of children on a trip pass by and become infatuated with him. Their parents buy the newborn donkey and carry him away in their arms. During the summer vacation, he is admired, pampered, and played with; he is allowed to do anything he wants. The vacation ends. The country house is abandoned. The shades are drawn...and will be opened again the following summer. As soon as the children come back, they ask for their donkey. An enormous hairy beast, which they don't recognize and which frightens them, is brought to them.

Betrayed by the children of men, Balthazar is sold. Then his apprenticeship to life begins. They tie him up. They put a strap around his neck. They beat him hard. Stick. Whip. They put heavy loads on his back. His harness hurts him. He protests. He kicks. He bites. The blows rain down on him. Finally, he gives in. He accepts.

He has become the compliant donkey. A vagabond, he goes from master to master, doing his task for the good as well as the bad ones, submitting to each one's moods, getting paid only with ingratitude. Then he finds success. He becomes famous. He is the performing donkey in a circus. He is applauded by men, and despite the mockery mixed with their applause, it is a happy time. But it doesn't last long. The circus folds, and the donkey is bought by evil masters who treat him brutally.

A happy accident saves him. He becomes the donkey who carries the holy relics in a religious procession. When he passes, they unroll the carpet, they throw palm branches beneath his feet. They bow down before him. From this moment on, he is considered a saint, and no one dares to make him work. And besides, he is old and perhaps he will be able to die gently among men after having suffered for them all his life.

But one night, while sleeping peacefully in his stable, he is brutally dragged out, driven far away, loaded up with a heavy burden, and pushed in the direction of the mountains. He climbs up.

His kidnappers are smugglers of gold. He carries the sin of men on his back. Shots ring out. The smugglers run away. He is left alone, easy to see, bathing in the moonlight. Bullets whistle around his long ears. He turns around. He wanders through the night. His flank is pierced and bleeding.

In the morning, the shepherds who were present at his birth find him -- in the prairie where long ago the children first came to him. He is trembling, his frail legs hardly able to hold him up. He collapses and dies.

#

Robert Bresson had this to say about AU HASARD BALTHAZAR:

"Au Hasard Balthazar" is our restlessness, our passions with regard to a living creature who is all serenity, all tranquillity, all saintliness, and which happens to be a donkey. It is the pride, the greed, the need to cause suffering, the random sensuality of the masters through whose hands the donkey passes, who cause him suffering, and because of whom he finally dies.

This character of the donkey is a little bit like the Charlie Chaplin of his early films, but he is, all the same, an animal which inspires eroticism. We find him on the columns of hundreds of Romanesque churches and cathedrals, and he occupies one of the most important places among the animals of the Creation, and also in both the Old and New Testaments.

Bresson Filmography

Les Affaires Publiques, 1934. Short.

Features

Les Anges du Péché, 1943.

Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, 1945. Brandon Films.

Diary of a Country Priest, 1950. Brandon Films.

A Condemned Man Escapes, 1956. New Yorker Films.

Pickpocket, 1959. New Yorker Films.

Trial of Joan of Arc, 1962. Contemporary Films.

Au Hasard Balthazar, 1966. New Yorker Films.

Mouchette, 1967. New Yorker Films.

Une Femme Douce, 1969. Paramount Pictures.