

## Document Citation

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# BETTY

(FRENCH)

Variety 4/6/92

An MK2 release of an MK2 Prods.-CED Prods.-FR3 Films co-production with the participation of Canal Plus. (Intl. sales: MK2.) Produced by Marin Karmitz. Directed, written by Claude Chabrol, based on Georges Simenon's novel. Camera (color), Bernard Zitzermann; editor, Monique Fardoulis; music, Matthieu Chabrol; art direction, Jean-Pierre Lemoine, Pierre Galliard; set design, Françoise Benoit-Fresco; costumes, Cristine Guegan; sound, Jean-Bernard Thomasson, Maurice Gilbert. Reviewed at Pathe Marignan Concorde, Paris, Feb. 7, 1992. Running time **100 MIN.**

Betty . . . . . Marie Trintignant  
Laure . . . . . Stéphane Audran  
Mario . . . . . Jean-François Garreud  
Guy Etamble . . . . . Yves Lambrecht  
Mme. Etamble . . . . . Christiane Minazzoli

Also with: Pierre Vernier, Nathalie Kousnetzoff, Thomas Chabrol.

**C**laude Chabrol's recent heroines have gotten the guillotine ("Story of Women") and gobbled arsenic ("Madame Bovary"), but, as the title character in "Betty," Marie Trintignant makes a strong impression as a woman who chain-smokes, overdrinks, cheats on her husband and is basically rewarded for her behavior.

Adapted from a Georges Simenon novel, ferociously accurate portrait of two women who no longer fit the bourgeois mold could click as an art house item.

Well-dressed but disheveled Betty staggers out of a Paris bar with a peculiar man who drives her to an after-hours dive in Versailles. There she is befriended by stately and sympathetic Laure (Stéphane Audran), who takes the very drunk femme back to her posh hotel. Laure invites her to stay until she's feeling well again, which is convenient, since she has no place else to go.

Film alternates between hotel scenes and flashbacks. Betty, 28, caught in the act with an illicit suitor, was banished from home, husband and children in exchange for a generous allowance. Laure, a widow in her late 40s, was once happily married but has been living at the hotel and drinking at the dive for years. Her major source of joy seems to be trysts with the bar's proprietor.

Trintignant and Audran are compelling in their good manners (they never waver from the formal "vous," however intimate their confessions) and slightly twisted comportments. Under Chabrol's unforgiving glare, Trintignant's husband and in-laws are delectably pious. Mother-in-law announces that she saw a film about abortion that she didn't care for one bit — a self-mocking reference to Chabrol's "Story of Women."

Pic is a slightly deconstructed portrait of a free spirit boxed into the tedious, passionless confines of a bourgeois marriage. Story's tension springs from the fact that, as Laure extends greater kindness, Betty becomes more predatory.

Chronology juggling is engaging at first, but flashbacks and memory snippets eventually grow tiresome, despite convincing thesping. Literary sense of closure is marred as the last 15 minutes or so run out of visual steam, and helmer states the obvious in a wrapup voiceover.

— Lisa Nesselson