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The MCC Cinema presents

Breathless (A Bout de Souffle)
(English dialogue)

Jean-Paul Belmondo (Michel Poiccard alias Laszlo Kovacs), Jean Seberg (Patricia Franchini), Daniel Boulanger (Police Inspector), Jean-Pierre Melville (Parvulesco), Liliane Robin (Minerche), Henri-Jacques Huet (Antonio Barrutti), Van Doude (The Journalist), Claude Mansard (Claudius Mansard), Michel Fabre (Plain-clothes Policeman), Jean-Luc Godard (an informer), Jean Domarchi (A drunk), Richard Baldwin (Tolmatchoff), Roger Hanin (Gawl Zombach), Jean-Louis Richard (a Journalist), Francois Truffaut, Andre S. Labarthe, Jacques Scallier, Michel Mourlet, Jean Douchet, Philippe de Broca, Guido Orlando, Jacques Serquine, Louiguy, Virginie Ullmann, Emile Villion, Jose Benazeraf, Madame Paul, Raymond Ravanbaz and a cast of thousands; directed by Jean-Luc Godard; script by Jean-Luc Godard based on an idea by Francois Truffaut; music by Martial Solal; photography by Raoul Coutard; artistic supervisor, Claude Chabrol; produced by Georges de Beauregard/Societe Nouvelle de Cinema (Paris). Running time, 90 minutes.

WE REGRET THAT TONIGHT'S PRINT OF BREATHLESS IS NOT IN FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES. THE DISTRIBUTOR HAD TO WITHDRAW THE SUBTITLED VERSION FOR REPAIR. WE RECOMMEND, BEFORE THE MOVIE BEGINS, SITTING WHERE YOU WILL HEAR THE SOUND TRACK OF THIS FILM - THE FRONT CENTER SECTION OF EITHER THE ORCHESTRA OR THE BALCONY.

In four weeks during August-September 1959, Jean-Luc Godard made his first feature length movie, A Bout de Souffle (Breathless) on a budget of a mere \$90,000. The film was made during a period when the French cinema was undergoing some radical changes. Young film-makers like Alain Resnais, Francois Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Philippe de Broca were making a reputation for themselves under the label, la nouvelle vague (the New Wave). Jean-Luc Godard completed the list of New Wave directors. Unlike Italian neo-realism, which we discussed in the program notes and saw at our last film, La Strada, the New Wave movement is almost impossible to define, except that all the directors were young men, all of them were open to using new techniques or techniques that had not been used recently in the cinema, and finally all were intelligently critical young film-makers.

Jean-Luc Godard, along with his friends, Francois Truffaut and Claude Chabrol were critics and founders of Les Cahiers du Cinema, one of the most famous film magazines in the world. So obviously the New Wave film-makers were mostly film critics turned film creators. Cahiers, like many young French film-goers, is devoted to the "noir americain" film - the cult of the American gangster film. Breathless, like Truffaut's Shoot the Piano Player (which we showed here two years ago), is a French take-off on the Hollywood "cops and robbers" film.

Indeed, Jean-Luc Godard had no direct knowledge of the French underworld. He has admitted to living a quiet, normal life, learning much about life from going to the movies. (French youth, on the average, attend the movies four or five times a week.) Godard, obviously, learned all he knew about the underworld from Bogart and Cagney films and the classic "noir americain" film, Scarface. Moreover, the brash, young hero-villain of Breathless, played by Jean-Paul Belmondo, admires Humphrey Bogart, which partly explains his wayward bravura.

Breathless was first shown in the United States in 1961. In the seven years since, Breathless has become a classic New Wave film. It made a first-rate reputation for Director Jean-Luc Godard and catapulted Jean-Paul Belmondo to stardom. What Godard did so well in this film, I believe, was his rapid style of cutting. While making the movie, he became bored with a discussion scene between Belmondo and Jean Seberg, so he cut the scene between the speeches. When he saw the rushes of the scene, he decided to use this technique throughout the film. Rapid cutting of the scenes helps speed up the action of the film. This technique of rapid cutting has been used so often since 1959 that film-goers hardly notice the jump cuts.