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10 To Watch — Akerman



Les années 80

Chantal Akerman

France/Belgium 1983, 85 minutes

Producer: Marilyn Watelet

Screenplay: Jean Gruault, Chantal Akerman

Cinematography: Michel Houssiau

Editor: Nadine Keseman

Music: Marc Herouet

Principal Cast: Daniela Bisconti, Warre Borgmans, Anne-Marie Cappeliez, Amid Chakir

"Goofily hypersophisticated", one critic called "Goofy formalism", wrote another. "Goofy deconstruction of the musical"; "minimalist vaudeville with peppy ye-ye music"; "Jacques Demy meets Arthur Freed", crowed a third, fourth, fifth. It all adds up, to everyone's delight, to a playful pleasure. The first hour, shot on video, is a montage of auditions for parts in a musical comedy. Songs and choreography are rehearsed, repeated and revised by actors responding to offscreen direction from Akerman. "Between a script and a movie, one must go through a whole landscape," says Akerman. "*Les années 80* covers the time spent in this landscape." The second part, shot in 35mm, is the wonderful, wholly satisfying pay-off: a musical extravaganza set in a shopping mall, a prelude for her next film, *La galerie*.

J'ai faim, j'ai froid 12 minutes. Akerman directed this Chaplinesque girls' adventure film for the longer *Paris vu par . . . 20 ans après* in 1984.



Un jour Pina m'a demandé

L'homme à la valise

Chantal Akerman

France 1983, 60 minutes

Production Company: Institut national de la

Communication audiovisuelle

Screenplay: Chantal Akerman

Un jour Pina m'a demandé

France 1983, 57 minutes

Production Company: INA/Antenne 2/RM Arts/RTBF/SSR

L'homme à la valise presents the filmmaker and her own Paris flat in another of her one-set apartment films. After sub-letting to friends for a few months, Akerman returns to find a man still occupying the premises. Increasingly obsessed by his presence, she cloisters herself in one room, charting his coming and goings, and eventually installs a video camera to record his movements. The form is as austere as ever (static camera, symmetrical framing, precise structure, exaggerated sound-effects), but the formalism here only deepens the deadpan comedy.

Un jour Pina m'a demandé is a documentary about the legendary German dancer/choreographer Pina Bausch. Akerman follows Bausch and her formidable troupe on a summer tour. Bausch's rivetting "dance-theatre" consistently deals with love/desire and relations between the sexes, often in terms which are harrowingly bleak, violent, or even sado-masochistic. The emphasis of the film is on the pieces themselves, but its subtext is a record of Akerman's changing relation to the material.



Director Chantal Akerman

Dis-Moi

France 1980, 45 minutes

Family Business: Chantal Akerman Speaks About Film

Britain 1985, 18 minutes

Lettre d'un Cinéaste

France 1985, 8 minutes

Untitled

France 1985, 8 minutes

These four short films will be a special video presentation. They were all made for French or British TV, three of them within the last year. None of them has been seen in North America before, not even the five-year-old *Dis-moi*.

After spending about six months in Los Angeles completing the screenplay and trying to raise money for her much-anticipated musical extravaganza, *La galerie*, Akerman contracted with Channel Four television to make a short film about working in Hollywood. *Family Business* was made for the "Visions" series, and its simple subtitle indicates its substance: Chantal Akerman Speaks About Film.

Lettre d'un Cinéaste was conceived as a two-part film, the first shot in 16mm and the second in black & white 35mm. Only the first part has been shown on French TV in their series of that title. Akerman has suggested that these two films are the best work she has done in years.

The untitled second portion will be finished especially for the retrospective, which will be the first ever to show Akerman's complete works.