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THE WORLD OF JACQUES DEMY

(L'UNIVERS de JACQUES DEMY)



a documentary by AGNES VARDA

After doing a fiction film about Jacques' childhood (JACQUOT DE NANTES), my idea was to make a documentary -a relatively objective one -about Jacques Demy, as adult and filmmaker. I recorded reminiscences and asked for reactions. I provided some of my personal memories and documents about him but I often was relayed by his friends, his entourage, the actors and actresses who had worked with him, as well as "fans" and three demoiselles who never met him but who move naturally through his world. A.V.

Direction and narration	Agnès VARDA
Camera	Stéphane KRAUSZ et Georges STROUVÉ
Editing	Marie-Jo AUDIARD
Music	Michel LEGRAND, Michel COLOMBIER

Running time : 90 min. Color and B&W. Screening ratio 1:66

Official Selection at the 1995
Venice Film Festival

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THE WORLD OF JACQUES DEMY

with the friendly participation of : (in alphabetical order)

Anouk AIMÉE * Richard BERRY * Nino CASTELNUOVO *
Danielle DARRIEUX * Catherine DENEUE * Françoise FABIAN *
Harrison FORD * Claude MANN * Marc MICHEL * Jeanne MOREAU *
Jacques PERRIN * Michel PICCOLI * Dominique SANDA *
Jean-François STEVENIN * Anne VERNON *

on the bench the three demoiselles of Raffet Alley
Caroline BONGRAND
Marine LANDROT
Camille TABOULAY

at the piano the two composers of Jacques Demy's films :
Michel LEGRAND
Michel COLOMBIER

with the reminiscences of :
Gérald AYRES * Didier BARON * Claude BERRI * Jean-Pierre BERTHOMÉ *
Mag BODARD * Christian CHAUDET * Anne-Marie COTRET *
Hélène DEMY * Mathieu DEMY * Annie DUPEYROUX *
Bernard EVEIN * Louise-Françoise HERVIEU * Henri JANIN *
Martine JOUANDO * Patricia L. KNOP * Emmanuel MACHUEL *
Anne MAUREL * Dominique PAÏNI *
Anne-Marie RASSAM * Bertrand TAVERNIER *
Bernard TOUTBLANC-MICHEL * Claude-Marie TRÉMOIS *
Rosalie VARDA-DEMY * Gérard VAUGEOIS

A CINE-TAMARIS PRODUCTION

with the participation of
NATIONAL CINEMA CENTER, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CANAL+,
CANAL+ Belgium, CANAL+ Spain, DOCSTAR, La Sept/ARTE
and in association with SOFICA VALOR 2

AGNES VARDA ON THE FILM

The creation of The World ?

You'll have to ask the scientists, my good friend Coppens or the mystics.
But if you mean **THE WORLD OF JACQUES DEMY**, it's a documentary of his world which I try to evoke, a microscopic — and vast— world, like that of any artist.
It's the third part of my trilogy about him.

In 1990, I start filming Jacquot's childhood, in Jacques presence. This became *Jacquot de Nantes*, ("Jaccquot" in the U.S.) a fiction feature acted by children.

I was already entertaining the idea of doing a documentary on the adult Demy, the filmmaker.

In-between these two films came *Les Demoiselles ont eu 25 ans*, which I made during the festivities held by the city of Rochefort for the film's anniversary.

(And also because I'd come across with the 16mm film I shot on the set of *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* in 1966).

So, now I've finished the three films.

Three different approaches to Jacques and his work.

DEMY and his films

Jacques Demy wasn't talkative about his work. I had trouble coming up with interviews with him, despite my combing everywhere with Chaudet*: everything I could find at INA, the archives of France 3-Nantes and agency documents. And a Canadian documentary too. Fortunately, Jacques had talked a little about each of his films with Laurent Billard (and Laurent Bourdieu) in a video documentary, *Jacques Demy ou l'Arbre Gémeau*, which proved very valuable to me.

I listened to a good deal of radio interviews, where Jacques was less inclined to be shy and discreet. He was always sincere with the person interviewing him, but he didn't provide many keys to his films. He was very bad at selling himself, he didn't hog the spotlight. That's what makes him so sympathetic. As he didn't say much, I found other voices to speak for his work. Some men and women talked about him with amazing finesse.

The documents

For *Jacquot de Nantes*, all of Jacques' producers had kindly provided me with 13 or 14 second clips of his films. At the time, I had also asked for their authorization to use longer clips for a documentary. I was already thinking about.

A documentary like this is costly... and with no commercial future.

The research is long, the shooting as well, in several section over a two-and-a-half year span. Thanks to the producers of Demy's films, who were open to the project and generous, the Americans included, we got all the clips. Yes, clips from ALL of Jacques' films.

The documents (...)

We also photographed hundreds of documents, photos, manuscripts, post cards, scores... I found footage I had shot with a small amateur movie camera (in Super 8): for example, of **Jim Morrison** on the lawn at Chambord during the shooting of *Peau d'âne* (*Donkey Skin*) in 1970, and **Harrison Ford's** screen tests when he was 20, when Jacques wanted to cast him in *Model Shop*...

The interviewees

No one goes and says things like: "*He was a good buddy, we'd go down to the bistro and have a good time.*" Even if they were friends of Jacques, the participants talk about his films and their work together. Actors and actress relate and make comments.

Anouk Aimée admits that between *Lola* and herself, she can no longer tell who was imitating whom... **Catherine Deneuve** gives a fine reading of the cake scene in *Peau d'âne* ("*Donkey Skin*")... **Françoise Fabian** describes the Chekhovian side of Jacques' characters (all those women with a lost love, who, out of love or timidity, failed to seize their chance...) **Michel Piccoli** talks about the secret side of the provincial characters... As for the composers: **Michel Legrand** is splendid when describing his teamwork with Jacques, and he plays the piano (sometimes heard off-screen), while **Michel Colombier** plays the love theme from *Une Chambre en ville*. (*aA Room in Town*)...

We also hear **Gérard Vaugeois**, a film buff and friend of Jacques. We filmed him on the TGV headed toward Nantes. He says he's on the train taking him towards a friend and towards the town of *Une Chambre en ville* (*A Room in Town*) . He talks about the rapport between *La Colonelle* (Danielle Darrieux) and *François*, the worker (Richard Berry). He describes the chasm between the social classes, a problem that lies at the heart of Demy's cinema.

People are always saying that Demy was a sentimentalist who made love stories. Vaugeois stresses the fact that these romances are always unhappy because of the irreconcilable social classes or wars that keep the lovers apart.

Beside the personalities, actors and collaborators (of course, I haven't forgotten **Bernard Evein**, the production designer), I tried to record more unusual memories from inhabitants of the Val-de-Loire, where people were very fond of Jacques. For instance, I met the municipal gardener of La Chapelle-Basse-Mer, who, in homage to Jacques, arranged an amazing floral clog-maker in the middle of a bed of 2,000 begonias.

When I make a documentary, I enjoy to going after details that are as charming as the subject I'm dealing with. I didn't want to erect a monument to Jacques, but evoke the filmmaker who lived with the idea that life has charm.

Maybe that explains why his films often arouse charming reactions.

Three demoiselles (*)

The film opens with a young girl reading a letter to Jacques.

We come back to this girl in the company of two other demoiselles in the last part of the film. They never met Jacques, but chance - which he believed in - brought them to me. Two of them had written to him shortly before his death, but he never had the chance to read their letters. The third came up to me in the street one day. All three have loved the films of Demy since they were eight or nine years old, and they're in the film to talk about them freely.

They sat on a bench, relay one another, moving from one idea to another with plenty of vivacity. They are characters right out of Demy's films. That how he probably would have recognized them as such. In any case, they move graciously through his universe.

(*) The young ladies are:

Caroline Bongrand, novelist ("Le Souigneur")

Marine Landrot, critic for the entertainment weekly *Télérama*

Camille Taboulay, critic for the monthly review *Cahiers du Cinéma*

Association of ideas

By making this documentary, I wanted to give Demy's fans a treasure trove of amusing, interesting, touching items concerning Jacques. For those who weren't especially film buffs, I wanted to retrace a life in the cinema, in all its unpredictability and radiance.

I didn't respect the chronology of the films. I wanted to remain open to what people were saying so as to jump from one film to another as the conversations dictated. Sometimes, something is mentioned in passing and that suggests a transition. So when our son Mathieu (Demy) says that Jacques went from *La Baie des Anges* ("Bay of Angels") to the bay of Los Angeles, we see a post card of Nice and a post card of Los Angeles, then we cut to a woman who collects angel sculptures who happens to be the L.A. screenwriter of *Lady Oscar*...

With Marie-Jo (Audiard), who did a good number of films with me, we tried to edit the material in such a way as to tie together the scattered material around a fanciful spine, a clever montage to maintain the meaning.

Cleverness is what we needed because it's thankless situation finding yourself with shifts in tone and sound, different period footage on a variety of stocks: some old 9.5mm footage, a video we had to transfer, interviews shot in 1993, films clips in a variety of formats, including Scope....Meaning was our priority.

We tried to make it so that this prism, this collage produce a discreet portrait, a film that give you the desire to see or see again Jacques Demy's films.

In a way, we've put together a *catalogue raisonné*... not reasonable.

Agnès... and memory...

I started this film in 1993, but I was sidetracked by the centenary of the cinema and the adventure of *Les Cents et Une Nuits* ("Hundred and One Nights ") (an old man, Monsieur Cinema, tries to recall all the films he loved).

True, in the past 10 years, all my films revolve around memory.

I'm a little tired of making efforts to remember... and of making films where you have to collate old documents.

All that is going to change after *The World of Jacques Demy*.

My idea is to start forgetting... peacefully.

...and Jacques

This film about Jacques is something I was adamant about doing. There are things I alone know, and maybe I won't be around five years from now to talk about them. I sort of feel this obligation to talk. And it was a pleasure to make this film and put it together like embroidery. We kept hearing Jacques' voice in the editing room, we talked about him...

At the same time, I tried to be as discreet as possible. Sure, I'm the one who's making the film, I tell anecdotes but I tried to limit my commentaries.

Actually, I only come in at the beginning of the film and when there's no one to there is talk about such or such a thing. In a way, I appear when there is a breakdown. The more the film develops, the more I relay to others, to younger people, fans of today.

The future of *The World of Jacques Demy* ?

I like the choice of the two films by Jacques that Canal+ is going to broadcast in October, on the same evening as my documentary:

La Baie des Anges ("Bay of Angels") (with Jeanne Moreau as the gambler), an underestimated film because it's rarely shown - but that's going to change - and:

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg ("The Umbrellas of Cherbourg ") (the *en-chanted* film), a classic where Jacques is identifiable and identified.

The World of Jacques Demy has been selected for the Venice Film Festival.

Which is nice. I'll use the occasion to visit the Biennale.

A theatrical release is also planned for the spring of 1996.

The "Saint-Germain-des-Près" theater plans to screen my trilogy on Jacques along with several Demy films. That would be great because I know my films about Demy create the desire to see his again, and this would be the chance to do it.

(interview conducted on August 2 1995 by Philippe ROUYER

and translated by Lenny BORGER)

WHAT THEY SAID

JACQUES DEMY

I daydreamed here so much during my adolescence...

I was crossing (*the Pommeraye arcade*) in this diaphanous light and I knew that in Nantes I could shoot another 10 films.



ANOUK AIMEE

Jacques gave me Lola, it was a marvelous gift... She's so much part of me that I can't tell where she leaves off. She and I have become girlfriends. We mimic each other.

JEAN MARAIS

If I'd been a millionaire, I'd have stopped working, but if I'd been a millionaire, I'd still have done this film. (*Peau d'Ane*)

CATHERINE DENEUVE

He was the first real filmmaker I met. It was really very important to have met him when I was so young and to have been formed in that mold

(*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*)



ANNE-MARIE RASSAM

Jacques is the *Pied Piper*...

He leads you off without say where, so as not to scare you,
and that's what a child wants.

If I were a child, I'd want to have Jacques Demy as a father.

MICHEL PICCOLI

He asked me to do the film like a lunatic, while singing, while pretending to sing,
and you (Dominique Sanda) naked.

I was like a fish in water! (*Une Chambre en Ville*)

JEANNE MOREAU

When Jacques said, during
costume preparations,

"the guepière, the
guepière!",

I knew there had been one
in "Lola." It was white
there, and I thought:

"Well, if that makes him
happy.."

(*La Baie des Anges*)



JEAN-FRANCOIS STEVENIN

He'd keep smiling at everyone but remained inflexible.

Deep down he was a sword."

MARINE LANDROT

In school, whenever I was told I spoke too quickly, I'd say I'd never manage to speak
as fast as the *Demoiselles of Rochefort*, the Dorléac sisters....

CAMILLE TABOULAY (reading a letter)

Dear sir,

Your films make one want to run out into the street and repaint it with one's eyes.

I love life, thanks to your films, because life in them is both exalted and seen right
through, as cruel and enchanted.

You give expression to a world both true and reinvented. A reality both simple and
embroidered. I just wanted to say, Thank you. Camille.

EXCERPTS FROM DEMY'S FILMS

(alphabetical order)

LOLA (1960)

(ANOUK AIMÉE, MARC MICHEL)

Merci à Bela Productions

TROIS PLACES POUR LE 26 (1988)

(YVES MONTAND, FRANCOISE FABIAN, JEAN MARAIS, MATHILDA MAY)

Merci à Renn Productions

PEAU D'ÂNE (1970)

(CATHERINE DENEUVE, DELPHINE SEYRIG, JEAN MARAIS, JACQUES PERRIN)

Merci à CinéMag

L'EVÈNEMENT LE PLUS IMPORTANT... (1973)

(CATHERINE DENEUVE, MARCELLO MASTROIANNI)

Merci à U.G.C. D.A.

UNE CHAMBRE EN VILLE (1982)

(DOMINIQUE SANDA, DANIELLE DARRIEUX, MICHEL PICCOLI,

RICHARD BERRY, JEAN-FRANCOIS STEVENIN)

Merci à Progefi

LE SABOTIER DU VAL DE LOIRE (1955)

ARS (1959)

LE BEL INDIFFÉRENT (1957)

Merci à Pathé

LES PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG (1963)

(CATHERINE DENEUVE, ANNE VERNON, NINO CASTELNUEVO)

MODEL SHOP (1968)

(ANOUK AIMÉE, GARY LOCWOOD)

Merci à Columbia Pictures

IMAGES DE FRANCE (1987)

(MATHIEU DEMY)

Merci à C9 i Communication et au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères

LE JOUEUR DE FLûTE (1971)

(DONOVAN, DORA DOLL, JOHN HURT, CATHRYN HARRISON)

Merci à Sagittarius

LA LUXURE (1961)

Merci à U.G.C. D.A.

PARKING (1985)

(FRANCIS HUSTER, MARIE-FRANCE PISIER, JEAN MARAIS, KEITO ITO)

Merci à C.D.A.

LA BAIE DES ANGES (1962)

(JEANNE MOREAU, CLAUDE MANN)

LADY OSCAR (1975)

(CATRIONA Mc COLL, GEORGES WILSON, MARK KINGSTON)

Merci à Kitty Production et Filmlink Int.

LA NAISSANCE DU JOUR (1980)

(DANIÈLE DELORME)

Merci à Technisonor

LES DEMOISELLES DE ROCHEFORT (1966)

(CATHERINE DENEUVE, FRANCOISE DORLEAC, DANIELLE DARRIEUX,
JACQUES PERRIN, MICHEL PICCOLI, GENE KELLY, GEORGES CHAKIRIS, GROVER DALE)

Merci à CinéMag et Madeleine Films

AGNES VARDA BIOFILMOGRAPHY

Born in 1928 of a Greek father and a French mother. Early childhood in Belgium. Adolescence in Sète on the Mediterranean coast of France, then in Paris. School "du Louvre". Sorbonne Faculty. Evening courses at a Photo school. No degree.

Photographer of Jean Vilar's Avignon Festival and T.N.P. (National Popular Theatre) (with Gérard Philipe, Philippe Noiret and so on).

Commissioned by magazines for stories and portfolios in Spain, China, Cuba...

Personal exhibition in a court-yard in 1954 (and again since 1985).

The same year, Agnès VARDA made her first film "LA POINTE COURTE" with neither filmtraining nor technical knowledge beside lenses.

Since the film was shot four years before the explosion of the French New Wave, she has been called "the Grand-mother of the New Wave".

Her film company CINÉ TAMARIS has produced most of her films. In 1961, she got attention with the internationally acclaimed "*CLEO FROM 5 TO 7*". In 1985, "*VAGABOND*" ("SANS TOIT NI LOI") got her the Golden Lion at the Venise Film Festival. Since 1990, she has completed a trilogy around Jacques Demy.

Short films :

O SAISONS O CHATEAUX (1957) - L'OPERA- MOUFFE (1958) -
DU COTE DE LA COTE (1958) - SALUT LES CUBAINS (1963)- ELSA LA ROSE (1966) -
UNCLE YANCO (1967) - BLACK PANTHERS (1968) REPONSE DE FEMMES (1975) -
PLAISIR D'AMOUR EN IRAN (1976) - ULYSSE (1982) - UNE MINUTE POUR UNE IMAGE
(1982) - LES DITES CARIATIDES (1984) - 7 P., CUIS., S. DE B... (1984) -
T'AS DE BEAUX ESCALIERS, TU SAIS... (1986).

Features :

1954	:	LA POINTE COURTE
1961	:	CLEO DE 5 A 7 (" <i>CLEO FROM 5 TO 7</i> ")
1964	:	LE BONHEUR (" <i>HAPPINESS</i> ")
1966	:	LES CREATURES
1969	:	LIONS LOVE (... and LIES)
1970	:	NAUSICAA
1975	:	DAGUERREOTYPES
1976	:	L'UNE CHANTE L'AUTRE PAS (" <i>ONE SINGS THE OTHER DOESN'T</i> ")
1980	:	MUR MURS (" <i>MURAL MURALS</i> ")
1981	:	DOCUMENTEUR (" <i>AN EMOTION PICTURE</i> ")
1985	:	SANS TOIT NI LOI (" <i>VAGABOND</i> ")
1987	:	JANE B. PAR AGNES V.
1987	:	KUNG-FU MASTER (" <i>DON'T SAY IT</i> " or " <i>LE PETIT AMOUR</i> ")
1990	:	JACQUOT DE NANTES (" <i>JACQUOT</i> ")
1993/95	:	LES DEMOISELLES ONT EU 25 ANS (" <i>THE YOUNG GIRLS TURNED 25</i> ")
1994	:	LES CENT ET UNE NUITS (" <i>ONE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS</i> ")

Agnès VARDA has two children, Rosalie, born in 1958, and Mathieu, born in 1972. She was married to the late Jacques DEMY, and lives variously in Paris and wherever her films take her. She lived twice in Los Angeles, California.

She has written a book VARDA par AGNES (Cahiers du Cinéma Publishers 1994).