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Day for Night (1973- mn)

Day for Night (la Nuit américaine) 1973

Directed by Truffaut. Written by Truffaut, Jean-Louis Richard and Suzanne Schiffman. Music by Georges Delerue. With: Jacqueline Bisset (Julie), Valentina Cortese (Severina), Alexandra Stewart (Stacex), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Alphonse), Francois Truffaut (Ferrand).

In his films, Truffaut dealt with his life, or with books he liked so much that he adapted them to the screen. And now for the first time, Truffaut has made a movie about himself and cinema together. Day for Night tells the story of the emotional relationship between an artist and his art; it is sentimentalistic and nostalgic because cinema for Truffaut is dying, he feels that it is a means of expression of another age. Meet Pamela, the film within the film, is a production shot at the period of the first international co-productions and the franco-italo-american actors decide about everything in it.

Truffaut enjoys showing us the mysteries of cinema: how to simulate night during the day, how to make rain and snow; Day for Night is the name for the special effect used to shoot the night during the day. The filter put between reality and the image seen by the spectator, reduces the amount of visual information allowed to pass and so changes the lighting. And when Truffaut presents the heroes of Hollywood mythology, he does it with the exaltation of a young man; clichés and stereotypes pass in front of us. But he deprives them of their false prestige and gives us a vision of them which is more down-to-earth. Day for Night also illustrates the making of a film as a collective creation, where everybody, actors and engineers, participate. Truffaut himself plays the part of the director of Meet Pamela. This is unusual for Truffaut who before this thought a movie revolved around its author ("politique des auteurs"); it shows an evolution in his personality. He explains in the Bulletin du Festival de Cannes, that "people who visited movie sets for a few hours feel confused and do not understand what is going on. They come with the hope of finding an answer to the question: "How is a film made?" but they leave unsatisfied. It was of them, that Jean-Louis Richard, Suzanne Schiffman and I, thought when we wrote the scenario of Day for Night."