

## Document Citation

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New Yorker FILMS Library  
**CONTEMPT**

Directed by Jean-Luc Godard

Cast: Brigitte Bardot, Michel Piccoli,  
 Jack Palance, Fritz Lang, Giorgia Moll.

France, 1963.  
**Restored 1997.**

In French, Italian, German, and  
 English with English subtitles.

103 mins. Color.

Rental: Apply.

**New Release**

Godard's sublime meditation on movies, marriage, and modernism—misunderstood and mismarketed in its initial release—was acclaimed as a masterpiece when restored and rereleased in 1997. **Contempt** is Godard's most entertaining and sensually appealing film, its amenities including a stunningly beautiful Brigitte Bardot in her finest film performance, a famously haunting music score by Georges Delerue, and sun-drenched Mediterranean settings in dazzling widescreen Technicolor. The hero, screenwriter Paul Javel, is hired to rewrite a film of Homer's *Odyssey*, shot in Rome and Capri, directed by the legendary Fritz Lang (played wonderfully by Lang himself), and produced by the crass Jeremiah Prokosch (a hilariously vicious caricature by Jack Palance). Paul loves the cinema, and he loves his wife Camille, but he betrays them both. Rationalizing miserably, he sides with Prokosch against Lang and abandons Camille to the unwelcome attentions of the lecherous producer. The film draws an audacious parallel between the death of a marriage and the death of classicism (encompassing the long-gone age of Homer and the dying classical cinema of Lang, Hawks, and Hitchcock). Both are eaten away by the worm of self-consciousness—the inability to act spontaneously, to accept without analyzing. The film's centerpiece is a 30-minute tour-de-force, set against the bare walls of the couple's unfinished apartment, in which Paul obsessively probes the reasons for Camille's coolness, burying their marriage under the weight of overanalysis and causing momentary anger to freeze into unshakable contempt.

**"One of the key modern films—brilliant, romantic, and genuinely tragic."**  
 – Martin Scorsese.