

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Masculin féminin</b>
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Masculin-féminin, Godard, Jean Luc, 1966

## MASCULIN FÉMININ, France/Sweden, 1966

*Cert:* X. *dist:* Gala. *p.c.:* Anouchka Films/Argos-Films (Paris)/Svensk Filmindustri/Sandrews (Stockholm). *p.manager:* Philippe Dussart. *d:* Jean-Luc Godard. *assistant d:* Bernard Toublanc-Michel, Jacques Barratier. *sc:* Jean-Luc Godard. Based on two stories, *La Femme de Paul* and *Le Signe*, by Guy de Maupassant. *ph:* Willy Kurant. *ed:* Agnès Guillemot. *a.d.:* (none). *m:* Francis Lai. *sd:* René Levert. *l.p.:* Jean-Pierre Léaud (*Paul*), Chantal Goya (*Madeleine*), Catherine-Isabelle Duport (*Catherine*), Marlène Jobert (*Elizabeth*), Michel Debord (*Robert*), Birger Malmsten (*The Man in film-within-film*), Eva Britt Strandberg (*The Woman in film-within-film*), Brigitte Bardot and Antoine Bourseiller (*Couple rehearsing play in café*), Chantal Darget (*Woman in Métro*), Elsa Leroy (*"Mademoiselle 19 ans"*), Françoise Hardy (*Friend of American Officer in Car*). 9,355 ft. 104 mins. *Original running time:* 110 mins. *Subtitles.*

Paul is in Paris, fresh from his military service and in need of a job. He meets Madeleine, who helps to get him one on the magazine where she works—though her real ambition is to succeed as a pop-singer. Paul is a member of the Party, and spends much of his time with his friend Robert signing petitions on behalf of intellectuals imprisoned in Baghdad or Brazil, painting pro-Vietcong slogans on U.S. army cars, and putting up posters for the coming elections. When he loses his lodgings he moves into the flat Madeleine shares with Catherine and with Elizabeth, with whom it seems she has earlier been on more intimate terms. The girls have little time for the boys' political ideas, and Madeleine becomes obsessed with a new record she is making. Then suddenly Paul is dead, having fallen from the new apartment he is buying with inherited money, after quarrelling with Madeleine over Elizabeth. Madeleine is left pregnant and considering an abortion.

Calvin Coolidge was once asked about a two-hour sermon just delivered by a distinguished Bishop. "It was about Sin", declared the President after due reflection. "And?" "He's agin it". Jean-Luc Godard is, fairly predictably, "agin" the war in Vietnam, the re-election of the General, the non-communist trade unions, *Le Figaro*, homosexuals, and cinemas which project films in incorrect ratio. He too takes nearly two hours to say so, which with almost any other director would be unendurably tedious. *Masculin Féminin* is rarely that. True much of the action takes place off-screen and there is even less conventional plot than usual. But then Godard is not really very interested in telling stories any more, as this film finally proves by its distinctly cavalier treatment of the two Maupassant stories which nominally inspired it. He is interested in portraying the predicament of a particular generation at a particular moment in time. The time is December 1965, midway between two rounds of the elections upon which the Left set such store but which resulted in the return to power of General de Gaulle. The generation is that of "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola", living in the world of James Bond and Vietnam, of the Bomb and the Pill, of Bob Dylan, napalm, Black Power and plastic do-it-yourself guillotine kits. Godard chooses to do this by means of an intellectualised comic-strip technique, a series of tableaux or conversation pieces of varying length and interest, ranging from the occasionally boring to—as for example the brief encounter between the two young communists and the negroes in the Métro—the wholly riveting. The pilgrimage of Paul, our Werther of the Age of the Automat, takes him through the Army and the Party to the bed of his pretty little yé-yé singer, in search of understanding, meaning, and "la tendresse". Clumsy (witness his repeatedly unsuccessful cigarette trick), disillusioned with his job and doubtful of the tenets of the Party, he is unable to find any really satisfactory basis for his life. Even his love for Madeleine is only half-reciprocated as she becomes increasingly concerned with her singing career, and it is finally spoiled by the jealousy of her lesbian (?) friend Elizabeth. The quarrel which follows precipitates Paul's death, possibly by suicide, and ironically made possible by money left him by his mother. Apart from the complexity of its construction, there is little that is immediately striking cinematically in the film, whose interest is largely sociological. Godard leaves untouched few aspects of contemporary life as it concerns his chosen generation—military service as a fitting prelude for commerce ("money has much the same rhythm as marching"), the destructive effects of modern life and its pressures on personal relationships, and the morality of manipulating public opinion by advertising and opinion polls. Some of what he says may be platitudinous and some profound, but mostly it is at least interesting. Of his players, Jean-Pierre Léaud—now a sort of mascot of the international New Cinema—and Chantal Goya, a real-life pop-singer, pretty in the fashionable new anonymous style, are true and touching, while

Marlène Jobert gives a nice performance of jealous possessiveness. The photography of Willy Kurant proves that the *nouvelle vague* was not all Raoul Coutard. And the remaining unreconciled anti-Godardites may draw consolation from the fact that while it took Saint Mark sixteen chapters to write his, the shortest of the Gospels, Godard contrives to do the job in only fifteen.

*Suitability:* A.

J.I.