

AZUR ET ASMAR

AZUR AND ASMAR



Michel Ocelot, best known for 1998's *Kirikou and the Sorceress*, has proven himself to be one of the most gifted fabulists working in film today; his animated stories, though made for children, easily appeal to adults as well. Combining cut-out and CGI animation, Ocelot's fourth animated feature tells the story of two boys, the white, blue-eyed prince Azur, and the dark-skinned Asmar, both of whom are being raised by Asmar's mother. Separated by Azur's father, the boys meet up again several years later in an unidentified Arab country—where Azur's blue eyes terrify the locals, leading him to feign blindness—in order to free a magical fairy. Deftly yet subtly addressing racism, intolerance, and superstition, *Azur and Asmar* also dazzles with its sheer beauty: Ocelot incorporates visual elements and techniques inspired by medieval illuminations and Arabic art, including mosaics and meticulously rendered architectural details. As a primer on cultural understanding, few animated films compare with *Azur and Asmar*, either in storytelling method or visual beauty.

"Although he is telling a simple children's tale, Ocelot, also touches on issues of class and cultural acceptance. No matter how much wealth we are born into, the movie suggests, any one of us can easily become a struggling stranger in a strange land."

Jen Chaney, The Washington Post

DIRECTOR

Michel Ocelot

SCREENPLAY

Michel Ocelot

VOICES

Azur: Cyril Mourali
Azur (child): Rayan Mahjoub
Asmar: Karim M'Ribia
Asmar (child):
Abdelselem Ben Amar
Jénane: Hiam Abbas
Crapoux: Patrick Timsit
Princess Chamsous Sabah:
Fatma Ben Khell

AWARDS

Kids Audience Award, *Munich Film Festival* (2007)

GENRE

Animated/Family

DISTRIBUTOR

Swank Motion Pictures

RUNNING TIME 90'

PRODUCTION France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, 2006

LANGUAGE French & Arabic

RATING Not rated

GAUGE DVD (Color)

COMME UN JUIF EN FRANCE

BEING JEWISH IN FRANCE



Yves Jeuland's sweeping documentary explores the rich and complex history of Jews in France - the first country to grant Jews citizenship. The film investigates the complex relationship that French Jews have had with the French Republic and, in turns, the multiple ways in which French society has dealt with its Jewish population over the course of history. Beginning with Revolutionary cries of *Vive la France* in Yiddish, the film explores well-known events, such as the explosive Dreyfus Affair and Vichy's murderous betrayal during WWII, as well as periods of history that have received less attention, such as the absorption into French society of Sephardic Jews from Arab countries in the 1960s. The film boldly continues into the 21st century, discussing charges of rising anti-Semitism and the country's complex attitudes toward Israel. *Being Jewish in France* includes interviews with leading French politicians, intellectuals and artists, who speak extensively of their own experience as Jews and their family's history in France. The film is beautifully presented and lushly illustrated with rare photographs, film clips and memorable music. At a time when France is often portrayed as one of the most anti-Semitic nations in Europe, *Being Jewish in France* represents a unique opportunity to better understand the history of Jews in that country.

"An impressive feat of scholarship, full of fascinating interviews, rare news footage and photos, film clips and colorful graphics."

Andrea Gronvall, World Jewish Digest

DIRECTOR/WRITER

Yves Jeuland

INTERVIEWS WITH

Robert Badinter, Elie Barnavi, Jean Benguigui, Paul Bernard, Rachel Cohen, Daniel Farhi, Bruno Fizon, Raphaël Draï, Jean-Claude Grumberg, Eva Labi, Marceline Loridan-Ivens, Théo Klein, Annette Wiewiorka

NARRATED BY

Mathieu Amalric

AWARDS

Jewish Experience Award, *Jerusalem International Film Festival* (2007); International Focal Award for Best Use of Footage in a Factual Production Category, *European Documentary Network* (2008)

GENRE

Documentary

DISTRIBUTOR

The National Center for Jewish Film

RUNNING TIME 185' (Part I, 73' Part II, 112')

PRODUCTION France, 2007

RATING Not rated

GAUGE Beta SP NTSC and DVD (color and B&W)

LA GRAINE ET LE MULET

THE SECRET OF THE GRAIN



This stunning film takes place in the Southern French city of Sète where Slimane, the patriarch of a large and vivacious North African family, is an elderly dockworker. When his job of many years is suddenly no longer secure, he decides to restore an old boat in the harbor, and turn it into a floating couscous restaurant. It's a wildly ambitious project, and the increasingly ailing Slimane will need the help of all of his family members in order to pull it off—from his ex-wife and their children, many who have families of their own, to his longtime lover and her quietly charismatic, determined daughter, Rym. But even if their conflicts can be patched together in time, will this immigrant family's energy and verve be enough to overturn the will of the powerful white townspeople who hold the bureaucratic keys needed to make Slimane's dream a reality? Writer and director Abdel Kechiche is a master at communicating the finest aspects of his colorful brood of characters. Vibrant cinematography and dynamic editing make this personal story all the more engrossing; each individual character is amazingly distinct, while their interpersonal dynamics are rendered with startling clarity and familiarity.

"An entire family chronicle, along with four decades of French social and economic history, is recapitulated as a lavish, hectic dinner, complete with music and belly dancing. It will leave you stunned and sated, having savored an intimate and sumptuous epic of elation and defeat, jealousy and tenderness, life and death, grain and fish".

A. O. Scott, New York Times

DIRECTOR

Abdellatif Kechiche

SCREENPLAY

Abdellatif Kechiche

CAST

Slimane: Habib Boufares
Rym: Hafsia Herzi
Karima: Faridah Benkhetache
Hamid: Abdelhamid Aktouche
Souad: Bouraouia Marzouk

AWARDS

Most promising Actress (Hafsia Herzi), Best Director, Best Film, *César Awards* (2008); Marcello Mastroianni Award (Hafsia Herzi); Special Jury Prize, *Venice Film Festival* (2008)

GENRE

Drama

DISTRIBUTOR

IFC Films

RUNNING TIME 151'

PRODUCTION France, 2007

RATING Not Rated

GAUGE 35mm, DVD (color)

ENTRE LES MURS THE CLASS



The winner of this year's Palme d'Or at Cannes was Laurent Cantet's unsparring, unsentimental film about a teacher and his students at a diverse Parisian junior high school. In an unusual example of art imitating life, the film was based on the best-selling book by real-life teacher François Bégaudeau, who also wrote the screenplay and stars in the movie as himself. Working with a cast of non-professional actors, Cantet filmed his "class" for over a year; the result is a hybrid documentary/narrative work that is wholly convincing. *The Class* is alive with spirited performances; viewers are also treated to a privileged perspective on discussions between teachers and parents, as well as among the teachers in their private meetings and amongst themselves. *The Class* raises deep, disturbing questions about the motives and prospects of its characters. As François attempts to teach the French language to his multi-ethnic students, many of whom hail from former colonized countries, he offers both the opportunity and the threat of modern cultural assimilation. No one is above reproach in this difficult and important new film, which is sure to spark spirited and thoughtful debate among viewers in post-film discussions.

"The Class" might have been set in any classroom in the Western world, and I believe most teachers would recognize it. It is about the power struggle between a teacher who wants to do good and students who disagree about what "good" is. The film is so fair that neither side is seen as right, and both seem trapped by futility."

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times

DIRECTOR

Laurent Cantet

SCREENPLAY

François Bégaudeau

CAST

François: François Bégaudeau
Nassim: Nassim Amrabt
Laura: Laura Baquela
Cherif: Cherif Bounaïdja Rachedi
Juliette: Juliette Demaille
Dalla: Dalla Doucouré
Arthur: Arthur Fogel
Louise: Louise Grinberg
Qifei: Qifei Huang
Wei: Wei Huang
Souleymane: Franck Keïta

AWARDS

Palme d'Or, *Cannes Films Festival* (2008); Best Writing Adaptation, *César Awards* (2009); Best Foreign Film, *Independent Spirit Awards* (2009); Best Film, *Lumière Awards* (2009)

GENRE

Drama

DISTRIBUTOR

Sony Pictures Classics

RUNNING TIME 128'

PRODUCTION France, 2008

RATING PG-13 (language)

GAUGE 35mm, DVD (color)

LES PLAGES D'AGNÈS

THE BEACHES OF AGNES



On the eve of her 80th birthday, Agnès Varda, often referred to as “the godmother of the French New Wave,” decided to make the autobiographical *The Beaches of Agnes*, guiding us through her extraordinary 55-year career and poignantly reminiscing about her husband, the filmmaker Jacques Demy (best known for *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*), who died of AIDS in 1990—information that Varda makes public here for the first time. Raising two children—costume designer Rosalie Varda and actor Mathieu Demy—and making some of France’s greatest movies from the 1960s, Varda and Demy traveled the world but appeared to have been most at home in the septième art. Or, as Varda puts it: “Cinema—I feel like I’ve always lived in it.” As Varda explains how a relatively shy, awkward young woman from Brussels first taught herself how to be a photographer and then a filmmaker, we marvel at her drive, determination, and endless curiosity about the world. Richly illustrating her documentary with clips from her (and Demy’s) films, Varda remains a constant, lively presence (much as she did in her documentary, *The Gleaners and I*), remarking of her on-screen persona, “I’m playing the role of a little old lady, plump and talkative.”

“If you have not seen a single film by Agnès Varda, it is best if you start with “The Beaches of Agnes.” You don’t need to know anything about her work. She has a way of never explaining very much, and yet somehow making it all clear. She does this by not treating her life as a lesson in biography, but as the treasured memories of friends.”

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times

DIRECTOR

Agnès Varda

SCREENPLAY

Agnès Varda

AWARDS

Best Documentary, *César Awards* (2009); Best Documentary, *Etoile d’Or, Prix de la Presse Française du Cinéma* (2009)

GENRE

Documentary

DISTRIBUTOR

The Cinema Guild

RUNNING TIME 110’

PRODUCTION France 2008

RATING Not Rated

GAUGE 35mm, DVD (color)