



LEOS CARAX'S PIONEER WORK
A DREAMLIKE, POETIC FILM
ONE OF CINEMA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL HYMNS TO LOVE



**A FILM BY
LEOS CARAX**

STARRING DENIS LAVANT & MIREILLE PERRIER

IN THEATERS
PREVIOUSLY UNSEEN RESTORATION
COMING SOON

Distribution

CARLOTTA FILMS US

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**THE BIRTH OF A MOVIE POET!
DISCOVER THIS FLAMBOYANT WORK
IN A RESTORED DIGITAL VERSION
SUPERVISED BY LEOS CARAX**

Paris by night. Alex, 22, wants to become a filmmaker. He is fascinated by first times and his girlfriend, Florence, has just left him for his best friend, Thomas. First break-up, first attempted murder: Alex tries to strangle Thomas, but gives up and wanders the streets. That evening, Mireille, a girl from provincial France who has come up to Paris to make commercials, is left by her boyfriend. Alex witnesses this separation. These two tormented souls run into each other at a party...



"Here we are still alone... It is all so slow, so heavy, so sad... Soon I will be old and it will at last be over."

Boy Meets Girl

LEOS CARAX'S MOVIE EDUCATION

Alex Christophe Dupont was born on November 22, 1961 in Suresnes, a suburb to the west of Paris. The youngest of four children, he is the son of Joan Dupont, the American journalist and film critic at the *International Herald Tribune*, and the French science journalist Georges Dupont. We don't know very much about his childhood, and Carax's declarations are rare, evasive, and deal more with a personal mythology about his relationship with cinema. He saw a lot of films during his high school years: he admired, among others, silent movies with Lillian Gish, *The Crowd* by King Vidor, the films of Lubitsch and Nicholas Ray, and he developed a boundless passion for Jean-Luc Godard. Having secured a science diploma – or maybe he left school at 16 –, he decided to make movies, mainly to invent female characters. At 17 years of age, he invented the name Leos Carax, an anagram of Alex Oscar, as the name could also be read as "Le Oscar à X" ("The Oscar at X"). At the Sorbonne Nouvelle University, he sat in on the cinema classes of Serge Daney and Serge Toubiana who at the time were the editors of *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*. He approached the latter to ask him how to get grants for his first short film. Toubiana suggested he wrote a few notes for *Les Cahiers*. At 18, Carax wrote a text defending *Paradise Alley* by Sylvester Stallone and co-directed with Alain Bergala a report on the shoot of *Every Man for Himself* (*Sauve qui peut (la vie)*) by Jean-Luc Godard. Toubiana very soon put an end to their collaboration when Carax suggested an article against the magazine's editorial policy. At the same time as his writing, the young man, quite independently, embarked upon his first feature film, *La Fille rêvée*. Unfortunately, the shoot was halted when a spotlight exploded and set fire to the restaurant they were using for a scene. Unperturbed, he completed *Strangulation Blues* in 1980, and it won the Short Film Grand Prize at Hyères Festival in 1981. Carax met the producer Alain Dahan who liked *Strangulation Blues* and offered him financial support for a first feature film.



AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORK



This first feature film became *Boy Meets Girl* and was released in 1984. The film tells the story of a young man tormented by an unhappy love affair who, the day before starting military service, meets a suicidal young woman who was also abandoned by her lover. The young man is called Alex, he wants to be a filmmaker, and he listens to David Bowie as he wanders around Paris by night... We understand that Alex is the onscreen

embodiment of Leos Carax, played by the fantastic Denis Lavant, a year younger than him. He became his alter ego in almost all his films. A lot of aspects of *Boy Meets Girl* no doubt come from the real life and fantasies of the young Leos Carax, aged 23 at the time the film

was shot, from his attitude which was both disenchanted and full of hope in himself, in life, art, other people, and love. The dialogue gives a clear – but never simplistic – glimpse of the view of the world of a very young artist and of his partners as certain lines were written by the actors themselves. *Boy Meets Girl* is a sincere work emanating from the turpitudes of young artists who were very representative of their era, the great disenchantment of the 1980s. Self-fulfillment by political action was no longer the solution, the big community movements were falling apart, and we were seeing a renewal of individuals' internal oppositions and the barriers life put in their path.

A FIRST FILM WHICH IS BOTH VERY YOUNG AND VERY OLD

Boy Meets Girl paints the portrait of young people who are already old, solitary, and weary. The characters' profound discontentment is largely due to the fact that their lives seem already over to them before they have begun, as was the love affair between Alex and Mireille. They have an external view of themselves, talk about themselves as if they were already dead



before they'd accomplished anything, and they like to see life as a biography that is already written, like something already played out. For Alex, the only interesting experiences are first times, events he notes on a map of Paris in his room: the first kiss, the first break-up, the first attempted murder, etc. He doesn't think anything has any taste after that. And yet Mireille is the second woman he falls in love with. Leos Carax's characters, whatever their age, are melancholy, feel tossed between extreme youth and the proximity of death, as the somewhat gloomy child's voice states at the start of the film, writing in the dark in his room: "Here we are still alone... It is all so slow, so heavy, so sad... Soon I will be old and it will at last be over." Carax thus seeks to mix actors of various ages to show that this sensation of being tossed between youth and old age is present in everyone: "I wanted to put all ages in the film. The youngest actor was about four months old and the oldest 85. The idea of the film is that the main character goes through an illusion of *déjà vu*. Ages are a bit like the sexes. We say that we're half male, half female. I think we also have all ages within us at all times. I remember on my ninth birthday, sitting on the stairs in my pajamas and I really felt like I was 50. Even today, I feel like an infant, and sometimes it's terrible to get up, as if I were a bedridden invalid."

BOY MEETS GIRL: BETWEEN INNOVATION AND TRADITION

In his review of the film published in *Les Cahiers du cinéma*, Alain Bergala wrote: "Look closely at these images from Leos Carax's film. They're not like other film stills which are all more or less alike. (...) *Boy Meets Girl* is directly connected to the present, but without making the slightest concession to the "current climate". He shows – and it was a long time coming – that you can be a young filmmaker, hypersensitive to the form, and make the most topical of films without being cinematographically amnesiac. *Boy Meets Girl* is a film in

black and white, entirely nocturnal, funny and painful, very young and very old, cold and moving, direct and secret, a filmmaker's film." This association of tradition and modernity is clearly visible in the director's cinematographic style. He is both very modern in his division into vignette scenes teeming with visual finds and stylistic effects which were sometimes criticized by his commentators who categorized Carax as "style cinema", the somewhat hollow formal showiness of this era influenced by the esthetics of advertising and video clips. But this richness of form, which also gives the film its sincerity and its lyricism, seems like the vision of the artist's life: giving everything before it is too late, living one's dream as Bowie sings during the magnificent passage on the Pont-Neuf in *When I Live My Dream*. The visual profusion is very controlled and shows great maturity in Carax's sense of framing and the relationship between images and sound. Carax is a movie buff and his youth is counterbalanced by his great integrity of tastes and ideas: "I think I made films, because film was the only thing that didn't give me complexes. As a child, there was always this question of taste at school and everywhere: Do you like it or not? I never knew. When I saw a film, I always had the absolute certainty of its integrity or not. When you're on your own in a dark movie theater at 16 years of age with this certainty, being alone and being certain gives you incredible strength. It helped me enormously and it still does."

So, there are multiple references in Carax. The most obvious echoes Godard, with those long discussions between characters who are somewhat absent to themselves, talking about love, and the very New Wave title, *Boy Meets Girl*. We also find links to Philippe Garrel, in the onscreen presence of the filmmaker's alter ego hero as well as in the poetry of the images which sometimes



slides towards Cocteauesque fantasy. Also noteworthy is the almost explicit reference to silent movies, as symbolized by the "conversation" between Alex and an old stagehand from the days of silent movies who is himself silent. Fabrice Revault d'Allonnes picks up on even older references in Carax's esthetics: "We discover in *Boy Meets Girl* attention to the relationship between face and background which was largely lost over the course of the classical age – mask faces against dark backgrounds", which greatly contribute to the film's beauty exalted by the sublime black and white of Jean-Yves Escoffier's photography. Mention should also be made of Carax's literary erudition – he is an admirer of Céline and Ramuz whose very carefully written, literary, philosophical, funny, sharp dialogue honors the quotation: "A line by Ramuz can feed an entire film. My writing is the link with other people's words." We also observe that not only is the photography skillfully crafted, but also that the dialogue reveals a very stylized work on content and form, a search for beauty and precision which is the mark of this perfectionist young director.

THE BIRTH OF AN AUTEUR

This first feature film did not go unnoticed. Serge Daney wrote about it at the Cannes Festival – where it was shown at Critics Week and won the Youth Prize –: "A frail phantom haunts the



whole festival". Critics were unanimous in seeing in Carax's first film an *auteur* who was both of his time and on the margins of contemporary productions. "Yesterday we saw *Boy Meets Girl*, the first feature film by Leos Carax. It's a real first film and – I'll lay odds on it – he is a real *auteur*." Daney was right. Today, despite a switchback career, Leos Carax is one of French cinema's greatest *auteurs*. Always true to himself and his

very personal, inventive style in all his films, long and short – *Mauvais Sang* in 1986, *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* in 1991, *Pola X* in 1999, and *Merde* in 2008 –, Leos Carax continued to make waves, particularly recently with the triumph of the extraordinary *Holy Motors* in 2012, which established him once again as a genuine esthete and a first-rate film buff filmmaker, always perfectly consistent with his early masterpieces.

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A WORK PRAISED BY THE PRESS!

"*Boy Meets Girl* is an intermittently charming first feature by **Leos Carax**, a young French director who seems to have seen and remembered every film made during the early years of the New Wave. **Mr. Carax** is 24, but *Boy Meets Girl* looks like the work of a talented 18-year-old, someone who still spends more time inside the Cinematheque Francaise than outside it. (...) In *Boy Meets Girl*, one recognizes a bit of Jean-Luc Godard here, something of Francois Truffaut there, and every now and then one hears what may be the faint, original voice of **Mr. Carax** trying to make himself heard around and through the images of others."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"The meteoric first film by the French director **Leos Carax** (...) Ecstatic cinema and ecstatic living join together in a pressurized promise of glory and misery, a flameout waiting to happen."

THE NEW YORKER

"**Carax** demonstrates a very personal, subtly disorienting sense of space in his captivating black-and-white images, and the sound track has been constructed with an equally dense expressivity."

THE CHICAGO READER

"*Boy Meets Girl* is a wonderful movie about a disastrous personality, directed with such an exacting eye that even its excesses take on a kind of charm."

NEW YORK NATIVE

"If there is a direct French heir to Truffaut's legacy, it may be **Leos Carax**."

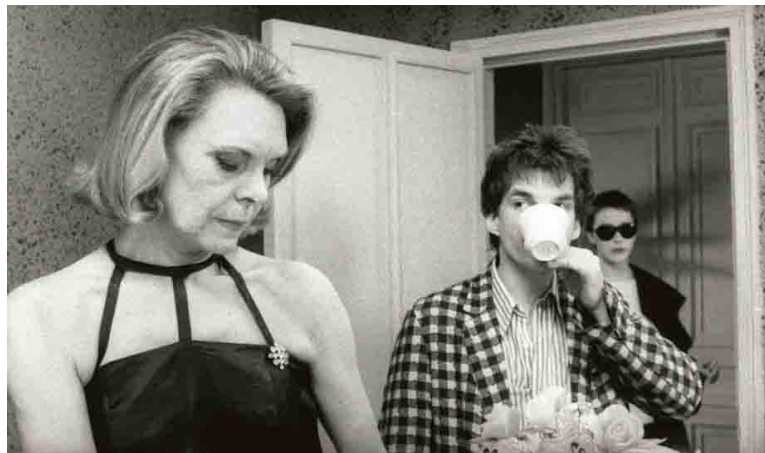
FRANCE TODAY

"The unruly upstart, **Leos Carax**, with *Boy Meets Girl*, manages to make, as if from inside an unvisitable tribe, a genuine young people's film, breathtaking and unbearable like all adolescent sensations: navel-gazing, paranoia, narcissism and megalomania, all these things which are usually so badly portrayed have become disturbing fictional elements. Short on funds, but full of those subtle, delightful, indefinable little things that he likes to play with."

LE MONDE

"There is also something of our time in the way **Carax** initiates the autobiographical cinema of the New Wave (from Godard to Garrel, but also from Skolimowski to Bertolucci). We're no longer in the bright lights of a Paris freed from the studios that Coutard showed us, but in a nocturnal, dark Paris full of contrasts, at dusk, streaked with neon lights and dazzling reflections, the Paris of every filmmaker of his generation. (...) The mystery is in the soundness of the directing when it gives this unbearable feeling of precariousness, in the beauty of soliloquies uttered in a bold yet flat voice."

SERGE DANAY



BOY MEETS GIRL

(1984, France, 100 mn, Black & White, 1.66)

a film by Leos CARAX

starring Denis LAVANT, Mireille PERRIER
and Carroll BROOKS, Elie POICARD, Maïté NAHYR

director of photography Jean-Yves ESCOFFIER

editors Nelly MEUNIER, Françoise SANDBERG

sound Jean UMANSKI

design Serge MARSOLFF, Jean BAUER

music Jacques PINAULT

line producer Alain DAHAN

executive producer Patricia MORAZ