

ADELAIDE CINÉMATHÈQUE



THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FILM SOCIETY DEVOTED TO SCREEN CULTURE

Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent (1971)

DIRECTOR: François Truffaut
WRITER: François Truffaut, Jean Gruault
PRODUCER: François Truffaut
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Nestor Almendros
EDITOR: Yann Dedet
ORIGINAL MUSIC: Georges Delerue
CAST: Jean-Pierre Léaud, Kika Markham, Stacy Tendeter
PRODUCTION COMPANY: Les Films du Carrosse.
YEAR OF RELEASE: 1971
RUNNING TIME: 124mins
FORMAT: 35mm



RECOMMENDED LINKS:

www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/08/47/deux-anglaises-continent.html

"I wanted to squeeze love like a lemon", François Truffaut told the press after making this film. If the bitterness and sourness of love as what Truffaut sought in this adaptation of Henri-Pierre Roché's 1956 novel, then *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent* (also known under two other titles - *Two English Girls* and *Anne and Muriel*) is a remarkably prescient film that marks a major turning point in the development of Truffaut's narrative and aesthetic style.

It is one of his most tantalising romances, and begins in Paris, at the beginning of the 1900s. Claude Roc (Truffaut regular Jean-Pierre Léaud) is a young middle-class Frenchman who meets Englishwoman Ann Brown (Markham), a young Englishwoman. When she invites Claude to spend the holidays with her family, she meets Ann's younger sister Muriel (Tendeter). The three become very close and Claude gradually falls in love with Muriel. Yet complications ensue, love affairs, betrayals, and depressions consume the relationships, and the rest of the film charts the development of a love triangle that consumes the threesome for the next twenty years. The *ménage à trois* dynamics and the *belle époque* settings make the film a natural companion piece to the earlier *Jules et Jim* (1961). Both films are shot through with an exuberant romanticism, but their period settings also contain nostalgic and melancholic undertones. Geoff Andrew has written that this is a film not so much about feelings, but feelings about feelings. This is a comment perfectly applicable to Truffaut's later oeuvre, in which art and emotional sacrifice, introspection and passion are depicted with irony and sadness. The sisters christen Claude "le Continent", for he embodies in their eyes the decadence and sensuality of European culture that polite English girls have been taught to avoid. Yet despite the *amour fou* running throughout the film, Claude winds up alone. A bachelor on the verge of middle age, he contemplates his fading youth in a mirror. "My God!" he says, "You're starting to look old." Not only does this film mark the move into early-middle age for Léaud (gone now is the insouciance of *Les 400 Coups* and *La Chinoise*), but also the sense of youthful idealism that typified the May '68 generation has started to go sour.

"*Les Deux Anglaises* warns us that everybody, sooner or later, has to grow up. That is scarcely a popular notion. Least of all in the cinema, an art form dedicated to prolonging adolescent fantasies as long as possible. It is unlikely that Truffaut – who believed in the myth of cinema with a fervour that few have ever equalled – could have survived *Les Deux Anglaises* with any of his ideals intact. For a small number the summit of his career, it was also the beginning of the end." (David Melville)

François Truffaut

RECOMMENDED LINKS:

'François Truffaut',
<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/truffaut.html>

RECOMMENDED READING:

François Truffaut, *The Films in My Life*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1994
Antoine de Baecque & Serge Toubiana, *Truffaut: a Biography*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1999



Born: February 6, 1932, Paris, France
Died: October 21, 1984, Neuilly, France

Influential film critic, leading New Wave director and heir to the humanistic cinematic tradition of Jean Renoir, François Truffaut made films that reflected his three professed passions: a love of cinema, an interest in male-female relationships and a fascination with children.

After a troubled childhood, Truffaut joined the French army, deserted and was sentenced to a prison term. Film critic André Bazin helped secure his release and encouraged his interest in film. In Bazin's influential film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Truffaut published "Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Français" ("A Certain Tendency in French Cinema") in 1954, proposing what came to be known as the auteur theory. A reaction against the bloated "Tradition of Quality" cinema in France, the article was a plea for a more personal cinema and an informal manifesto for the New Wave, which had not yet broken on the shores of French film. His influential debut *Les 400 Coups* ('The 400 Blows') in 1959 ushered in the French New Wave, a film movement that revolutionized film and whose influence is still being felt nearly fifty years later.

A semi-autobiographical childhood story, *Les 400 Coups* featured the trials and tribulations of a troubled adolescent, Antoine Doinel. Truffaut went on to chronicle Doinel's youth and young adulthood in the "Antoine and Colette" episode of *Love at Twenty* (1962), *Stolen Kisses* (1968), *Bed and Board* (1970) and *Love on the Run* (1979), all films featuring the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, as Antoine. Léaud became an extension of Truffaut's own persona, and his appearance in these and other films blurs the boundaries between art and reality, and hints at the warm humanism that one finds in all Truffaut's work. His most well-known – *Jules and Jim* (1961), *Day for Night* (1973), *The Last Metro* (1980) – remain bona fide masterpieces, while his late 60s noir thriller stage masters Hitchcockian themes and turns the films (*The Bride Wore Black* [1968] and *Mississippi Mermaid* [1969]) into startling interrogations of sexual tension, obsession, and vengeance.

Always concerned with the process as well as the product of his profession, Truffaut maintained his role as critic and commentator throughout his filmmaking career, as proud of his books as he was of his films. Among his publications is a book-length interview with Hitchcock, *Hitchcock-Truffaut* (1967), a perennial critical classic which he revised in 1983, shortly before his death.

"Artists like Truffaut endure in the memory of those that love them and those that, without knowing them, admire them. For this reason when a film touches our soul, when it speaks to our heart in a whisper and gives us answers, let it be a happy opportunity to remember that once a man existed, over there in France, that constructed a world from cinema and knew how to decorate it—and here is the secret—with his entire soul." Juan Carlos González



Australian Government



Government of South Australia
Arts SA



Produced by Ben McCann, Adelaide University