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**CLAUDE
LELOUCH**

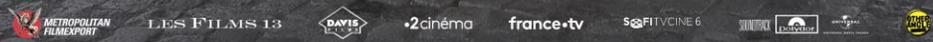


OFFICIAL SELECTION
OUT OF COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

*The best years
of a life*



WITH MARIANNE DENICOURT SOUAD AMIDOU ANTOINE SIRE WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MONICA BELLUCCI
ORIGINAL MUSIC: FRANCIS LAI CALOGERO ORIGINAL SONGS PERFORMED BY NICOLE CROISILLE CALOGERO ORIGINAL SONGWRITER DIDIER BARBELVIEEN
DIRECTED BY CLAUDE LELOUCH
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROBERT ALAÏA AND SIMONE PERROTTI PRODUCERS SIMONE CALOGERO PABLO MARLON JEAN CHAPONNIER JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT CHRISTOPHE VINCIGUERRA
COPRODUCERS CHRISTOPHE VINCIGUERRA AND CLAUDE LELOUCH
COSTUME DESIGNER CHRISTOPHE VINCIGUERRA
EDITED BY MICHAEL PERROTTI
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR FANNY LEBLANC
COSTUME DESIGNER CLAUDE LELOUCH
PRODUCTION MANAGER GÉRALDINE BÉGIN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEAN-PAUL DE VINGT PRODUCERS SAMUEL HENRIOT VICTOR HUBERT CLAUDE LELOUCH
PRODUCED BY LES FILMS 13 DANS FILMS FRANCE 2 CINÉMA
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS IN ASSOCIATION WITH SÉRIEVISION
WRITTEN BY CLAUDE LELOUCH
DIRECTED BY CLAUDE LELOUCH



Metropolitan Filmexport

presents

A Les Films 13, Davis Films, France 2 Cinéma production

With the participation of France Télévisions in association with Sofitvciné6

A film by Claude Lelouch

THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE

(“Les Plus Belles Années d’une Vie”)



OFFICIAL SELECTION
OUT OF COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

Anouk Aimée - Jean-Louis Trintignant

Marianne Denicourt - Souad Amidou - Antoine Sire

With the participation of **Monica Bellucci**

Original soundtrack by **Francis Lai** and **Calogero**

Original songs performed by **Nicole Croisille** and **Calogero**

Original songs/lyrics: **Didier Barbelivien**

Original screenplay: **Claude Lelouch**

In collaboration with **Valérie Perrin**

Produced by **Samuel Hadida, Victor Hadida, Claude Lelouch**

Length: 90 minutes

Distribution

METROPOLITAN FILMEXPORT

29, rue Galilée - 75116 Paris

Tel. +33 01 56 59 23 25

Fax +33 01 53 57 84 02

Mail info@metropolitan-films.com

International sales

OTHER ANGLE PICTURES

8, avenue des Ternes - 75017 Paris

Tel. +33 9 83 37 53 44 / + 33 6 67 51 28 29

Mail otheranglepics@gmail.com

International Press Relations

MAXINE LEONARD PR

7461 Beverly Blvd, Suite 302

Los Angeles, CA 90036

Tel. 323 930 2345

Jennifer Nguyen

Mail jennifer@maxineleonard.com / Cell +1 949 300 8685

Maxine Leonard

Mail maxine@maxineleonard.com / Cell +1 310 404 1746

The Story

They knew each other long ago: a man and a woman whose dazzling and unexpected romance, captured in the now-iconic film, revolutionized our understanding of love.

Today, the former race car driver seems lost in the pathways of his memory. In order to help him, his son seeks out the woman his father wasn't able to keep but whom he constantly talks about. Anne reunites with Jean-Louis and their story picks up where they left it...

Interview with Claude Lelouch

Claude Lelouch is always on the hunt for emotion. Each of his films explores new ways of communicating what's most important to him. He is a lover of life, and celebrates it in all its most powerful, unexpected aspects. He is a master at immortalizing these moments on screen, moments that seem stolen from reality.

THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE is an unprecedented film, the first to bring together the same pair of iconic actors and have them pick up where their world-famous story left off, fifty years ago. But it's also much more than that. Claude Lelouch's forty-ninth work is, above all, a singular take on the most important aspects of our lives by a unique and passionate filmmaker. It is neither a conclusion nor an epilogue, but something entirely new.

A NEW BEGINNING

So much had to happen for this film to exist. First was the image, more than half a century ago, of a woman and her dog in the morning, in the distance, on Deauville Beach. It was an image of life itself, one that led me to create so many others. A graceful film was needed, a film that wouldn't disappear from memory. I had to rush across Paris at dawn to produce the memory of a rendez-vous. I had to fall and pick myself up again; I had to go through failure and success. I needed the freedom to do exactly as I saw fit. I needed the two timeless faces of Anouk and Jean-Louis. I needed to capture a perspective on life through the journey of two characters, played by two exceptional actors.

THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE draws its authenticity from a reality that has left its traces with us. Images of the past combine with present ones to produce a lively back-and-forth. This is what makes THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE universal.

The characters get a new start. I find it deeply moving to see Jean-Louis and Anouk fifty-two years later, in the space of a second. It's a second of eternity that rips a hole in time. Emotions are brought full circle. The images of Jean-Louis and Anouk from two different eras only intensify our emotions.

A FREE AND INDEPENDENT FILM

This isn't a sequel. I knew the film needed to engage even those who haven't seen *A MAN AND A WOMAN*. It needed to stand on its own two feet, and be self-contained.

The film picks up a love story that took place in 1966, and which left its mark. It's a film about the traces we leave on one another. In the first flashback, Anouk Aimée sends a telegram to Jean-Louis that says, "I love you." It's a declaration that ends up turning their lives upside-down. Everything begins with the extraordinary moment when a woman has the courage to say, "I love you." It's the most difficult thing there is to declare to someone, and once you've said it, or heard it said to you, your life suddenly takes on meaning. All at once, you feel like being born was the right thing to do; that all the blood, sweat, and tears were worth it. Those three little words, "I love you," make up for everything. I built the film on this idea. All these images are much more than movie clips — they've become a part of our own memories. They belong to us, as if we had experienced that romance ourselves. One "I love you" belongs to the whole world.

THE THIRD QUARTER

During the party for the fiftieth anniversary of *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, I noticed Jean-Louis and Anouk talking to each other. Pierre Barouh and Francis Lai were still with us. Everyone was laughing and having a good time. It was wonderful for us all to get together again. It was as though something had been left unfinished, and none of us wanted it to end. That day I saw what made Anouk and Jean-Louis still so wonderfully unique after all these years. I thought to myself that it would be fantastic to bring them

back together again, like a pair of eternal fiancés that had yet to say their final words — words that could also be their first.

I thought that pushing things into overtime, in utter freedom, could be the greatest gamble of my career. At our age, I could have Anouk and Jean-Louis say pretty much anything. Like me, they're in the third quarter of their lives. We can finally say what we really think, whereas in daily life, one tends to moderate one's words.

A few months later, I saw Jean-Louis again, and again, I told myself that I absolutely had to film this man. It had become an imperative. Everything's written on his face, everything that's been said and left unsaid. So I went ahead and told him about my crazy idea: "Would you like making one more film together?" He was afraid it would be one film too many. I told him that if we didn't like it, we would never release it. His eyes lit up. He held out his hand and said, "Okay, you're on!" And I took off running.

Anouk said yes right away, because she just can't say no to me. But she had some misgivings, like Jean-Louis, and I did, too, for that matter. But I knew that we had to try. When you're the only one convinced of something, that's when you're closest to the truth.

When I showed them the first shots a few months later, both of them told me, "We have to release it."

THE SCENE OF A LIFETIME; A LIFETIME IN A SCENE

Once they agreed to the idea, my co-writers, Valérie Perrin and Pierre Uytterhoeven, and I began writing the scene in which the two characters reunite. They're sitting close to each other; it's a tragic, futile, furtive, and yet vital meeting. When I came up with this scene, I knew that the film would be worth making, just for that scene alone. If it ended up being a twenty-minute short, then so be it: those twenty minutes would be worth a lifetime. But what came after — the situations, the emotions, and the promise of interaction — took me far beyond those twenty minutes.

Condensed into that first encounter is all the emotion, surprise, destruction, humor, and contradiction that lie at the heart of all love stories. As complicated as life is, I love it more and more. If you ask me, even its imperfections are downright photogenic. I started with their reunion: what they say to each other, what they can't say, and everything they represent for each other. I started with the idea that nothing could come to a halt. The film is also about our collective history. Truthfully, preciously, memory whispers in our ear that there's no such thing as a coincidence in life; there are only meetings. And so many meetings had to happen for this film to come into being.

A MAN AND A WOMAN

I was twenty-six years old when I made A MAN AND A WOMAN. Anouk and Jean-Louis were already stars: Anouk from her work with Fellini, and Trintignant from his work with Vadim. Oddly enough, I was in the same mindset making that film as I was making this one.

I had released six films in a row that were commercial failures. So I made A MAN AND A WOMAN as though it would be my last. When you do something for the last time, you give it everything you've got, since you have nothing left to lose. I had written thirty pages of the script and hadn't found any takers. Not a single producer or distributor would take me up on the idea. The first James Bond movies were coming out at that time, and that was the only kind of movie anyone wanted to make. So I struck out on my own and dug myself into debt. I knew that if the film tanked, I'd have to find another line of work.

I wanted to film a man and a woman, not an actor and an actress. That was the important distinction, as I made clear to Anouk and Jean-Louis. Every day something happened that I was able to capture on camera. When all was said and done, we thought that perhaps, we had made a good film -- but certainly not one that would become famous the world over!

All those who ever suffered in love saw something of themselves in A MAN AND A WOMAN. The film became a kind of user manual for the wonderfully difficult thing that is love.

We took home a Palme d'Or, an Oscar, and some forty other international awards. It was an immediate and global success. In an instant, the film had touched the hearts of audiences around the world. A MAN AND A WOMAN changed my life and the lives of everyone who took part in its creation. You're not the same after something like that.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

After the success of A MAN AND A WOMAN, I started getting incredible offers from American studios. They're what allowed me to get some perspective on the success I was having. I would have had the chance to film with Steve McQueen and Marlon Brando, two actors that almost embody cinema itself. But as time went on, I realized that what these studios were really proposing was that I become the producers and the script's prisoner, a position entirely devoid of creative freedom. The numbers of lines and close-ups for this or that actor were actually contractual. That's not what I call cinema. I politely declined their offers and started back down the path that had opened up to me, questing after those nuggets of truth. That's what interests me. I created a cinema based on spontaneity, and my success has afforded me the chance to be a free man. Each of my films is an experiment. I've made forty-nine films, and forty-nine times, I've gone back to school. Forty-nine times I've tried to find out what kind of story can be told with a camera.

THIRTEEN DAYS IN THE SUN

We shot THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE in thirteen days, in a mad dash. I knew we had to film fast and capture the moments as they happened, rather than getting bogged down in rehearsals or straying off track. I didn't want to prepare ahead of time. Anouk and Jean-Louis were uneasy enough as it was. I went into the film the way I drove the car in my first

short, C'ETAIT UN RENDEZ-VOUS: like a metaphor for existence, tearing through life like I tore through Paris in 1976. Run all the red lights, take all the risks, face down the dangers, and come out the other side... or not. The success of this film didn't depend on me directing the actors. We were way past that. This was life itself, and life put on one hell of a show.

When I showed up for the first day of shooting, I felt like I was being led to the gallows. But the noose never tightened. To the contrary, I was pardoned and set free. But it was still the scariest moment of my life.

First of all, there was no lack of light, and that's essential. I saw the sun, and since we were planning on filming outside, it was imperative that I get the best possible backlighting of Anouk's hair.

The first scene we filmed took place in Anouk's character's store. Jean-Louis's son (Antoine Sire, the same actor from A MAN AND A WOMAN) goes to see the one that got away, the one woman his father still thinks about. Souad Amidou (the same actress from A MAN AND A WOMAN, who plays Anouk's daughter) is also in this scene. The two little children from the first film are now fifty-two years older. That's almost certainly what makes the characters' interactions with one another so authentic and close to the truth.

The second day, we shot the scene in which Anouk and Jean-Louis are reunited. It's nineteen minutes long and in real time. There's almost no improvisation. They move through the script as I whisper it to them while they're on stage. They discover the script, and I capture the moment on screen. I wanted this reunion to be as spontaneous as possible. They had no rehearsal. That morning, during makeup, I gave them a few notes to look over, but I didn't want to tell them too much. We did three takes. It was a real moment of reunion. That's what I love in cinema, and it's what cinema can offer. I shot a nineteen-minute scene in nineteen minutes.

When I came home that evening, I almost broke down crying. I felt as though I had just filmed what was possibly the most beautiful scene of my career.

We shot the film in chronological order, so the energy that comes back to Jean-Louis throughout the film, as he shares the stage with Anouk, was coming back as we filmed. The movie feeds on what was going on in real life, as though we were documenting their reunion — but with a very precise script. I knew that the dialogue would be central to the film. What they were going to say to each other would be crucial and fundamental.

FIFTY-TWO YEARS AND A ROOM

In the end, I was extraordinarily lucky to have waited fifty-two years to make this film. Good things come to those who wait. The feeling of surprise and spontaneity are central to the film. I feel like I had no hand in it whatsoever, as though I had simply said to Anouk and Jean-Louis, “Meet me in Normandy on this day.” After the reunion scene, that same sense of spontaneity carried us forward, as though Luck was smiling on us. If we had rehearsed beforehand, they would have gone through those emotions before we started filming. I knew I had to capture it all day by day, I had to wear them out and not give them a chance to analyze or intellectualize things.

When Anouk brings Jean-Louis into their hotel room in Normandy, where they made love for the first time in *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, I saw their reactions. It was like I had brought them back to the scene of the crime. That room has been turned into a sort of museum, by the way. I could tell that they were a little unsettled — that beyond the pair of actors were a man and a woman.

When I took them to the train station or out onto the beach, to this or that place where their story had developed, I could see from their expressions that something was happening. No director can make such a moment happen. No filmmaker can create such a moment. It’s all happening someplace else. And I found myself filming what represents, unconsciously, fifty-two years of work. That’s why I say it’s a miraculous film.

FEAR BECOMES HAPPINESS

All of a sudden, what had scared us became a game. We had fun. Depending on your temperament, life is a game of chess or a game of poker. The desire to keep playing never leaves us.

I was also blessed to have a group of exceptional actors playing small but important roles. Monica Bellucci plays Jean-Louis's daughter, Elena, and without the intensity she brought to the role in such a short time, the character wouldn't have come across so strongly. Marianne Denicourt brings further humanity to the film; kind and lively; she's a guiding light.

I'm struck by Anouk's beauty, which hasn't lost a whit of its charm and elegance. When I see Jean-Louis's humor and his perspective on life, I think about everything he's gone through. I'm grateful for the folly that allowed me to capture the humanity he's drawn from his experience. He's nourished himself on that experience. I went to see him at the theater. I've never seen anything so beautiful on a stage. When he recites a poem, he conjures up moments of extraordinary grace. His voice holds all the truth of the world, and his smile all its charm. Next to him, Anouk is radiant. She embodies his luck, his memory, his energy.

This film, this reunion of two characters, is the portrait of a woman and a scamp: a man who loved women and life, who was unfaithful, with all the shortcomings in the world. It's the portrait of a rascal who remained in the camp of humor and comedy, who was never afraid of anything. She, on the other hand, is a true lady, a woman who believes in fidelity and one true love.

Death isn't a part of this film — only hope. I've never seen the two of them so beautiful. It's both heartwarming and poignant to see them walk off together at the end, like a pair of adventurers. I had tears in my eyes while I was filming.

THE PRESENT, JUST BEFORE THE FUTURE

Love is the art of the present, and the present is all we have. It contains every virtue. Even if the heroes of my film only have an hour left to live, that hour will be the best. That's why I borrowed Victor Hugo's phrase, "The best years of a life are those that haven't yet been lived." I've been obsessed with this phrase, and it has crept into many of my films. There really is nothing better than the present.

MUSIC!

When I mentioned the film to Francis Lai, he, too, had his misgivings. I told him I needed his best musical theme yet. The songs were integral to A MAN AND A WOMAN. The best commentary on a film is a beautiful song. I told him I wanted to have two: "The Best Years of a Life" and "My Love." They're the last two theme songs Francis ever wrote, and they're absolutely devastating.

I asked him whom he had in mind for the orchestration, and he suggested Calogero. The timing was good, since I had just shot a music video with him. He's an incredible, wonderful human being. We went to Francis's place, and Francis played his two compositions for him. Calogero was totally blown away, and he said yes on the spot.

So I set to work with Francis and Calogero. Didier Barbelivien, another one of my close collaborators who knows my work and the way I think, wrote the lyrics. Nicole Croisille was kind enough, once again, to lend us her unique voice and style. I wanted to combine Nicole's and Calogero's voices. Together, those two tones of voice perfectly capture timelessness.

Francis Lai was there for the recording before he left us. He was really moved, and just thrilled by Calogero's orchestration.

Calogero paid me a visit afterwards, and very modestly mentioned that he had composed a piece that might fit the movie. I listened to it: it was a wonderful waltz that immediately found its place in the film. He was also very touched to re-orchestrate the

theme from A MAN AND A WOMAN. The theme is incredibly dense now, as though it were written today.

THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE

During the editing process, I'm the first person who gets to watch my films. When I saw Jean-Louis's face for the first time, slowly revealed by the camera like a memory rising to the surface, and Anouk's face, looking simultaneously lost and clear-headed, I cried. It was as though I was rediscovering their faces and the traces time had left on them. The scenes from their first encounter, filmed fifty-two years earlier, came back to me. A half-century. I cried again watching the reunion scene.

I've mixed past and present many times, but here I felt as though I had achieved something I could only dream of. I filmed the present and the distant past with the same people at their true ages in each period. No makeup, no actors playing the characters' younger or older selves. The same pair of faces, worked over by Time. You can read their life's work on their faces. Real life and its mythology — what we know and what we imagine about Anouk and Jean-Louis — commingle with the fiction, which itself draws on reality. It's a deeply moving metadrama, but one that's also full of humor, like a final defiant act against the passing of time.

Interview with Anouk Aimée

“Every time Claude has asked me to work with him, I’ve always been happy to say yes, even if it was just for a brief appearance on screen. Claude means a lot to me. He’s like family. That said, I had some doubts when he first suggested this film. On the one hand, I really wanted to shoot with him, but on the other, I wondered what the film would be like. How do you come back to such a momentous film? It’s not every day that someone asks you to pick up where you left off fifty years ago. It’s a historic moment: this is the first time that actors have taken up the same roles fifty-two years later. I put my trust in him and followed him, because the director has always been what’s most important to me. They’re the ones who earn the trust I place in them. A director’s personality and charisma are decisive factors for me. In this case we decided very quickly to go ahead with things, and I haven’t regretted it.

When Claude came up with the idea for *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, it’s what he told us, rather than the few pages of the script, that convinced us. I remember meeting him for the first time at Jean-Louis and Nadine’s place. Nadine was a friend of mine. He literally brought the film to life for us, and I was tempted by the idea. I knew Jean-Louis a little because we had worked on the same film in Italy, but we hadn’t really acted alongside each other.

Claude has a very organic and dynamic relationship to the camera. I’ve worked with Alexandre Astuc, who also has a very unstructured approach, but Claude is something else. I had worked with Jacques Demy, who has his own thing going on. I had also worked a lot with Italian directors, who have a livelier, more dynamic approach than French directors. But Claude is unique. He’s come up with shots that have become iconic. It’s impossible to define the way he has us work. First and foremost, it’s a way of living. He’s inclusive and familial, lively and enthusiastic. With him, everything is unexpected and

spontaneous. What makes Claude unique is the enthusiasm and incredible passion that's still with him.

No one could have predicted the phenomenal success of A MAN AND A WOMAN. It was an amazing, a wonderful surprise. A dream comes true. I'll always remember the night Claude won the Oscar. When he walked on stage to receive it, everyone in the room stood up. Hollywood gave him a standing ovation. There was something surreal in that moment after everything we'd been through making the film. We carried the gear ourselves. I did my own makeup. The hairdresser doubled as the dresser. Everything was being done on a tight budget, so when we ended up at the Oscars — it was unreal. That's a very important memory for me.

Fifty-two years later, Claude comes to tell me about this new film. I follow him unquestioningly. No rehearsals, as usual. We meet up in Normandy. The first scene we shoot is in the store, with the children — the real children from the first film. I listen to what Claude tells me and I do it. I don't think about it. I trust him completely. With Claude, you dive in, and if something's not right, he'll tell you. You let him guide you. You're in the moment, listening. You try to express something, and then begin again.

My first scene with Jean-Louis is our conversation on the grounds of the retirement home, when I go to visit him. He remembers me a little, but he doesn't really recognize me. He tells me about this woman he loved more than anything, and he finds things about me that remind him of her, down to the smallest gesture. When I arrived, and he looked at me... it was overwhelming! To think that he was the person I had known, and yet all I brought up for him was a memory... It was quite extraordinary.

From time to time, Claude whispers our lines to us. Sometimes he lets us go on. We know what our lines are, but he feeds us more ideas as they come to him, as he

watches our faces and our expressions. So we have to play along, in every sense of the term.

Playing this character again brought up many different emotions. First was the feeling of rediscovering Jean-Louis and myself, *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, face to face. He's no longer exactly the same man, and I'm no longer quite the same woman — as in the film. Both of us have changed. In the film, it's more him who's changed, since his character doesn't recognize me. I pick up from where the story left off more directly than he does. I just remind him of someone, whereas I know who he is. I have to forgive him a little for the past and understand his present.

After all these years, the character of Anne Gauthier has come back into my life. She's surely been imbued with all manner of things lived, observed, learned, and absorbed, about myself and the rest of the world. But I'm not trying to analyze things; I'm just living them in the moment — like in real life. Like Claude, I cultivate a taste for spontaneity.

Claude took us to the locations of the first film in order to get a reaction from us. It was almost like emotional ambushing, but I'm used to that, and I wasn't afraid, because I trust him. When I was in the hotel room with Jean-Louis, I wasn't over-thinking things. If I analyze too much, it's not coming from my gut anymore. It's not about acting — it's about emotion. That's what Lelouch's cinema is about! Claude puts me in a situation, and I simply exist according to the script. That's why working with him is a pleasure. It's a joy to live and experience, in the moment, the situations he comes up with. The camera is there to capture what you give it. The camera loves me, and I return the favor. On stage, it's different — every night you sit down and analyze what you've done. But if I went looking for an explanation, I would lose that sense of surprise. It would become too intellectual, and less visceral. I need to be surprised, even when I'm acting. Claude is really my ideal filmmaker. He's constantly bringing me to the edge of surprise or instability.

We shot everything in less than two weeks. Claude's the only one who can make this happen. Every time I've worked with him, it's been the same thing. A MAN AND A WOMAN was also shot very quickly. What took the longest was traveling to the different locations.

Paradoxically, even though Claude has changed, his cinema hasn't. The Claude we know today was already there in A MAN AND A WOMAN. But things have changed. Life has evolved, and so have the techniques. In the first film, Claude was carrying a camera that weighed several pounds. Now it's a lot lighter. The technical ability we have today has made shooting easier, and as a result, it has freed acting and directing, even though ultimately we're still in front of a camera.

Above all, the film is a wonderful artifact of human experience. A successful film is like a great love story. It's always hard to explain why we love someone. It's when it goes badly that you look for the reasons why, and in this case I don't see any."

Interview with Jean-Louis Trintignant

“The first time Claude told me about his idea, I asked him why he wanted to do it. I wondered who would be interested in it, but he insisted, and in the end he won me over. That’s Claude’s power: he leads people, both in his projects and his films. And that was it. We did it, and I don’t regret it, because I’ve rarely done anything so enjoyable.

When we shot *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, more than fifty years ago, I already had forty films to my name, many of them Italian. But that film was the biggest surprise of my acting career. I had already seen a few of Claude’s films. They were already very good, but something was still missing. I was friends with Pierre Barouh, the songwriter, and he’s the one who put me in touch with Claude. I thought this Lelouch guy was pretty weird... Us, we slept in. He would get up bright and early. He went jogging; he didn’t drink; he didn’t smoke. He was very different from us. He already displayed an unusual discipline. To this day, I’ve only seen him do something if he really believes in it. He has a real strength that I haven’t seen in many other people. In the end, he deserves the success he’s had. In spite of everything he’s encountered, fighting for his freedom, he’s always stayed optimistic.

When we shot *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, I discovered the way he filmed, which is very instinctive and unique. I’ve never seen anyone else work that way. *A MAN AND A WOMAN* was perhaps my greatest experience in cinema, but I never expected to return to it.

This new film was a little like a dream for me, and a nice one, at that! I let Claude guide me. There are, of course, many things in my character and in the film itself that are similar to me — that come from me.

I had the script, but it was short: just fifteen pages. Claude further developed a lot of the scenes. He films a lot, even if not everything makes the final cut. He loves that. He has to be filming every second. In an eight-hour day, we were filming for seven hours. It was very active!

I would follow Claude to the end of the world. He brings something else out of me. He's so lively, and so inventive. I've never felt so close to another filmmaker. He has such a love for filming... For him, it's the joy of life itself; it's wonderful. And he doesn't get hung up on the little things. In cinema, we often spend a lot of time focused on details. With him, it's different. He has an idea; we shoot it; we experience it together, without wasting time or energy. I always hope for everyone I love — and those I don't — to get the chance to make a film with Lelouch. It's an actor's dream come true.

Reconnecting with Anouk fifty-two years later was also great. I like her a lot; she's a wonderful friend. Taking up the same role fifty-two years later is a unique experience. I don't think it's ever been done.

For the younger generations, *A MAN AND A WOMAN* is a cinematic monument that's a bit distant. It's a love story that became iconic for that era, and now it's back. The flashbacks to the first film are deeply moving, because our faces tell the story of all the life that's gone by, and in a tone that's lighter and freer than what was possible back then. In *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, our characters were seeking each other out; they were looking for love; they were discovering life. This time, they reunite around the things that have left their mark on them. That's quite an achievement.

Claude shot everything very quickly, which is something actors love. It was a magical, incredible experience. It's another extraordinary feat. No other filmmaker in the world can shoot a feature-length film in ten days. This kind of cinema is very personal to Claude Lelouch. I was in Haneke's last two films. Before doing this one, I asked Claude

which filmmakers he likes, and he mentioned Haneke. That made me really happy, because it's a style that's very different from his, but which he still likes, because Claude is crazy about filmmaking, in all its styles, as long it's sincere.

I don't really feel like making films anymore. If this one is my last, that's fine by me. I'm happy, because I didn't think I was going to have another success — and I'm sure this will be one. Then again, I wasn't crazy about making films fifty years ago, either.

All in all, I didn't really want to be an actor. I think I would have been happier in a career outside of the spotlight — like a volcanologist, or a musician. I would have been happier. This line of work can be very satisfying, but it's always a surprise. I've made more than 110 films. There are a few success stories in there, but they're few and far between. I should have made eleven films instead of 110.

Every time I've been offered a part, I responded sincerely that there were others who would probably be better than me. But producers would insist and say they needed me, and in the end I would do it. But I talk a lot of nonsense sometimes: I really have been quite happy to be an actor. And I'm very happy to be in this film.

Moviemaking has changed. I'm not saying that because of how old I am, but because films aren't made the same way anymore. There's just too much focus on the technical aspects and the trickery. But there are still very good actors out there, especially in France. Before, a stunt double would perform amazing feats for a movie; now it's all done digitally. They film eight actors and make it look like eight thousand. Everything has become so much easier technically that it's created an atmosphere of constant one-upmanship that doesn't mean much of anything anymore. Nowadays, people aren't asked to risk their lives for a film, and that's what movies were about. It's what audiences would seek. It was wonderful, I think, risking our lives like that, even if we weren't actually taking

that big of a risk. Now the computers can outdo us. Fortunately, for those who want to risk something, there's still the theater.

Those real moments of authenticity that the camera captures are the only things that resisted this onslaught of technicality. And that's what Claude does. He's always on the hunt for that, and that's why *THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE* succeeds. It's a film about two older characters, but it's a hopeful film. It's not the end of something. It's a continuation, and the beginning of something else: the beginning of a new relationship between the two of them.

This film did me a lot of good personally. I hadn't seen Claude for years, and I regret it, because he's a guy that deserves to be seen. He's a great guy. I think his film will do audiences some good as well. Claude is very optimistic, and he's right to be."

Original Music Francis Lai & Calogero

Interview with Calogero

“Lelouch is one of those rare filmmakers who doesn’t leave anyone indifferent. He stirs up people’s emotions. Whether you love him or hate him, everyone respects him and recognizes his sincerity. Personally, I love his films. I’ve always admired the way he manages to draw something new out of his actors. In his films, the actors we think we know always reveal some hitherto-unseen facet of themselves. With Claude Lelouch, I even found Bernard Tapie touching! (*Bernard Tapie: French businessman and politician who’s also acted for Lelouch*). He also has his finger on the pulse of things, and he’s never afraid to hire newcomers. There is a particular life force in Claude Lelouch and in his writing. He is a passionate lover of film who has worked with the greatest in the field.

The first time I worked with Claude was when I asked him if he would be interested in filming a music video for one of my songs, “Fondamental.” We didn’t know each other at the time, but he immediately agreed. The video he made was wonderful. He recreated the apartment in Echirrolles where I grew up, with all the instruments we had there, the posters, and the records I used to listen to. As often with Claude, the idea he started out with led him to another, and so on and so forth, until he wound up with something that no one had foreseen but which fit the vibe we were going for perfectly. When Claude Lelouch comes up with an idea, it’s actually a thousand ideas. His work is effusive and all over the place while at the same time carefully curated. It’s as though he’s both a master filmmaker and a child.

When we made the music video, he got a chance to learn more about my music. I learned music by listening to Ennio Morricone, who was a perfect model. He’s a genius

composer, and I'd always dreamed of composing a film score like he had. What happened next was a series of coincidences, the kind that Claude loves. A few months later, Lelouch gets in touch with me and says, "I have a crazy idea." He runs through the whole scenario for the film. The sequel to A MAN AND A WOMAN! I point out that the music for that film is Francis Lai, whose work I really love. When I was a kid, the theme to "Étoiles du cinema" (*playing before the Sunday night movie on French TV*) literally seeped into my DNA. At the time I didn't know that it was one of Francis' melodies, but it was a great source of inspiration for my brother and me. Claude said to me, "We'll give him a call. He already wrote two songs, and I want you to orchestrate them, arrange them, and sing them." Right after that, I met Francis. What I didn't know was that he himself wanted to collaborate with me. Claude filmed the moment we met each other, capturing all the admiration I have for Francis and how much we wanted to meet each other.

Francis played the pieces he had written and told me it'd be great if I wrote another to accompany the two he had written. I'll never forget that moment, at his place — me listening to him play, and him looking like a kid. His eyes were filled with wonder, like a child's. He was so happy to play his pieces for me. I had tears in my eyes, and he saw that. He was eighty-six years old. He had wondered whether I was going to like it. His music was wonderful, absolutely magnificent. And so a real collaboration emerged from that: I arranged and orchestrated Francis Lai's songs and melodies, and I composed another piece, a waltz, "Le bal du Moulin de la Galette," which appears throughout the film.

I saw A MAN AND A WOMAN for the first time just five years ago, but it's a film that's a part of you, whether you've seen it or not. It has spread throughout the collective unconscious. I had seen clips of the film in Pierre Tchernia's show about cinema; I saw so many clips from A MAN AND A WOMAN that it had become a part of me. It's a part of all of us. It's an incredible film because so much happens in it, and at the same time nothing happens at all. It's as subtle as life itself: an assortment of little nothings that sketch out

entire destinies. That's the power of that film. We can all identify with the characters. When Claude asked me to work on the new film, it was all the more moving for me that the entire original team was going to be a part of it — the actors, certain members of the crew, Nicole Croisille, Francis, etc. For me it felt like Claude and Francis were welcoming me into a family I always wanted to belong to.

The theme music for A MAN AND A WOMAN is very powerful. Francis was able to describe life itself with just a few notes. The theme is as potent as the smell of coffee in the morning. The odor of coffee is an emotional marker, a sentimental reference point that intimately transports us into our own past. It means something for everyone, even if that something is different for each of us. It's a little detail that brings us back to our own lives. It's impossible to imagine a world without the smell of coffee. It's the same thing with this music: Francis Lai succeeded in writing music that has become a part of our personal histories.

We worked together a bit like I work with my brother when he writes music and I arrange it. Francis gave me the music he had written on accordion, and I went home right away to start working on the arrangements. He was very happy with the results. He had asked me to write a new piece that would be part of the arrangement, but I wanted to bring back the iconic theme that everyone knows, "Dabadabada". Francis hadn't planned on using it at first, but he loved the result. We worked back and forth like that until the extraordinary moment came: the recording. Francis came to the studio. We didn't know it, but it would be his last session. I could feel that he was happy and confident and very satisfied with the work I had done.

I've seen THE BEST YEARS OF A LIFE twice, and each time I had the same reaction. I'm very moved by the two actors' performances. They're incredible. They hold up the film, and Claude captures it. He films them with great humility. He sets the camera up and lets them just fill up the space. He's a spectator, admiring what he's witnessing. He's not

asking the actors to be what they were fifty years ago; they're simply asked to *be*, with all that they've lived through. That's the power of cinema. It's also the power of the loyalty that allowed Claude to bring together a team that's been with him for fifty-two years, along with some newcomers like myself.

This is my first true film score. I've had some experience writing for films in the past, but I was never really satisfied. I turn down a lot of projects because I want things to be done hand-in-hand, and above all I want people to come to me to for *my* music, my world, my sensibility, and not for my success. I want to be able to work in an atmosphere of trust. That's what happened with Claude and Francis, and it was a unique experience for me. It was the kind of entry into the world of film music that I had been dreaming of since I was a kid."

CAST

Anne Gauthier Anouk AIMÉE
Jean-Louis Duroc Jean-Louis TRINTIGNANT
Françoise Gauthier Souad AMIDOU
Antoine Duroc Antoine SIRE
Supervisor at the *Domaine de l'Orgueil* Marianne DENICOURT
Elena Monica BELLUCCI
Françoise's daughter Tess LAUVERGNE
Singer Vincent VINEL
Front desk clerk Laurent DASSAULT
Drugstore manager Françoise COUPEL
Police officers Laurent PRUDHOMME
..... Jean-Yves CRESSEVILLE
..... Bernard WARNAS
..... Rémi BERGMAN
..... Benjamin PATOU

CREDITS

A production of LES FILMS 13

..... DAVIS FILMS

..... FRANCE 2 CINÉMA

With the participation of FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS

In association with SOFITVCINE 6

Written by Claude LELOUCH

Adaptation and dialogue..... Valérie PERRIN

..... Claude LELOUCH

Additional dialogue Pierre UYTTERHOEVEN

Quotes Grégoire LACROIX

Original music..... Francis LAI

..... CALOGERO

Arranged and performed by CALOGERO

Orchestration Brice DAVOLI

Original songs sung by Nicole CROISILLE

..... CALOGERO

Lyrics for original songs.....Didier BARBELIVIEN

Director of photography Robert ALAZRAKI (AFC)

Camera operator BERTO (AFCF)

Sound engineer Harald MAURY

Sound editor Jean GARGONNE

Live sound editor.....Jean-Noël YVEN

Mixing.....Christophe VINGTRINIER
Editing Stéphane MAZALAIGUE
Assistant editor Sarah CARIÉ
Set design Bernard WARNAS
Head of wardrobe Christel BIROT
Makeup Mina MATSUMURA
Hair Cédric CHAMI
First assistant director Michaël PIERRARD
Script continuity Fanny LEDOUX-BOLDINI
Production supervisor Carol ORIOT-COURAYE
General manager.....Philippe LENFANT
First assistant cameraMaxime HÉRAUD
..... Flavio MANRIQUEZ
Production director Rémi BERGMAN
Executive producer Jean-Paul DE VIDAS
Produced by Samuel HADIDA
..... Victor HADIDA
..... Claude LELOUCH
A film by Claude LELOUCH