

Bande à Part [The Outsiders]



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Directed by: Jean-Luc Godard

Year: 1964

Certificate: PG

Country: France

Language: French

Running time: 92 mins

Keywords: representation of youth, 1960s France, crime, French New Wave, Godard

SUITABLE FOR: KS4/5 Media/Film Studies, French

SYNOPSIS

Bande à Part (The Outsiders) is Godard's tribute to the Hollywood pulp crime movies of the forties. Franz and Arthur, a couple of streetwise chancers, team up with the shy Odile (Anna Karina) to plan a robbery. As the trio of misfits roam the streets of Paris, the suspicion grows that this is one heist that is not going to go according to plan.

BEFORE VIEWING

Introduction

Refer to the 'French Nouvelle Vague' learning resource at the Film Education website www.filmeducation.org/pdf/resources/secondary/FrenchNouvelleVague.pdf for further background information, case studies and activities related to the New Wave.

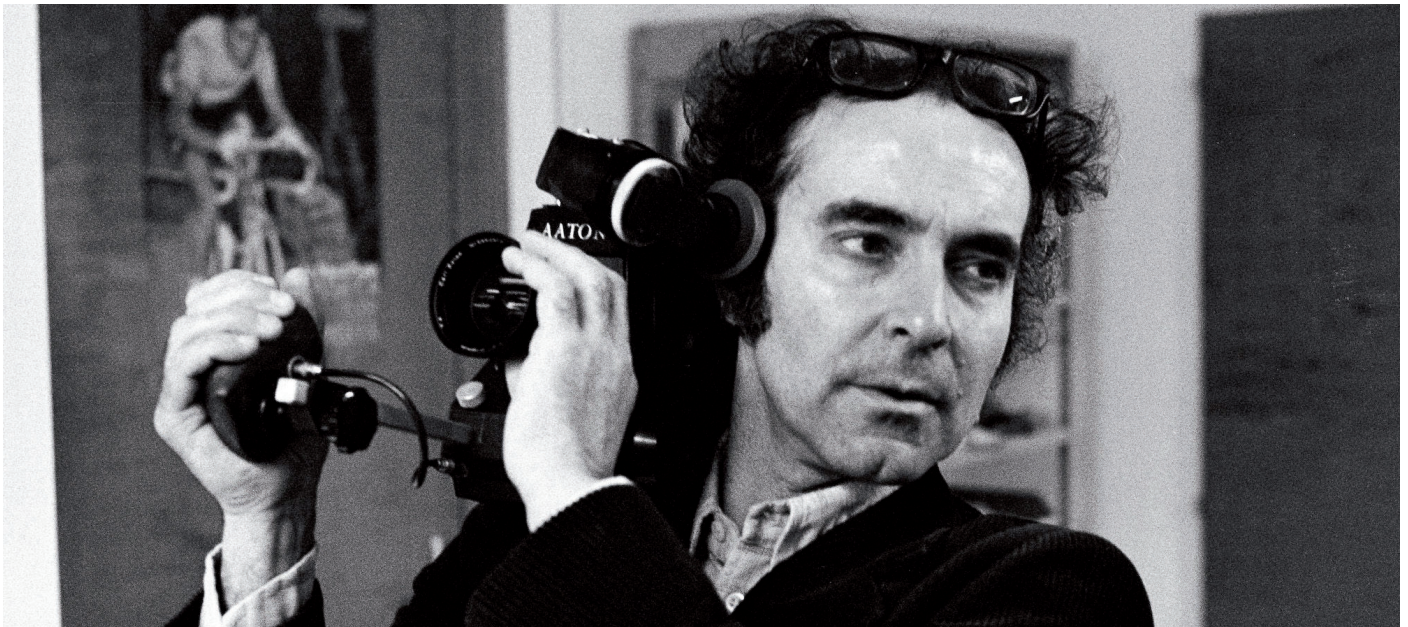
The Nouvelle Vague was born out of dissatisfaction with French filmmaking. But what kind of cinematic tradition was the New Wave movement really emerging from? It is important to understand the nation's film industry before the explosion of the New Wave in order to truly appreciate the unprecedented impact it had and the influence it continues to exert.

Work in small groups to research answers to the following:

- Why do you think French cinema may have flourished more than usual during WWII? Investigate the nation's political and social situation at the time in order to find out.
- After the Germans were defeated in the mid 1940s what types of films do you think dominated French cinemas and enthralled the public?
- What was the Blum-Byrnes Agreement and how did it affect the exhibition of French film product?
- Which nation united with France to pool their resources and create a series of co-productions throughout the 1950s and 1960s?
- Why did Godard and François Truffaut want an *Auteur* cinema?
- What events in Paris in May 1968 had a profound effect upon French cinema?



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Godard

Jean-Luc Godard was a critic at the hugely influential magazine *Cahiers Du Cinéma* in the early 1950s. He found that the traditions of French cinema at the time (which he believed favoured an established set of directors and actors and were not reflective of the political concerns of the young) were outmoded and irrelevant. He felt the films appealed only to the bourgeoisie, so he and many other critics made their own films. These films heralded the arrival of the 'New Wave', or *Nouvelle Vague*. Films such as *À bout de souffle*, *Les quatre cents coups* and *Bande à part* contained then unconventional filmic elements such as handheld camerawork, non-professional actors, shooting on location, live sound and disregard for classical Hollywood film language like establishing shots and shot-reverse-shot.

Despite being radically subversive, these films were surprisingly popular and commercially successful across the world (at least until television's growing influence began to affect cinema). Godard and his contemporaries paved the way for exciting post-New Wave French filmmakers like Luc Besson and Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Godard still directs and makes an impact today – he has made nearly 100 films and he was awarded a lifetime achievement Oscar in 2010.

- Godard is considered to be one of the New Wave's 'Big Five' directors. Who are the other four, what stylistic tendencies set them each apart and how did their careers progress?
- Godard once wrote an article entitled 'Towards a Political Cinema'. What evidence is there in *Bande à part* of the director's desire to make films with wider socio-political meaning?

AFTER VIEWING

New Wave conventions In *Bande à Part*

A French New Wave film is easy to identify. A quick glance at even one frame of any of the films can be all you need to recognise the hand of Godard or Truffaut or Renoir at work. Remind yourself of the visual, auditory and narrative ‘conventions’ of the New Wave – how are they deployed in *Bande à Part*?

- New Wave films often reference classical Hollywood films. Which American or other cultural icons/traditions are referenced in this film?
- What is unique about the perspective of the film’s voiceover?
- As the camera pans the Paris streets at night just after the dance scene, what do many of the passers-by do?
- Find images of the female leads in *À bout de souffle*, *Bande à Part*, *Jules et Jim* and Warren Beatty’s 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*. How are all the characters similar in appearance?
- Discuss what impact the following cinematic devices have in the film:

Depth of field	Hand-held camera	Dialogue and conversations held off-screen	Actors talking to camera
Car-mounted camera	Long takes	Costume	Music/ Voiceover
Lack of shot-reverse-shot, establishing shots and other traditional and formulaic sequences			

Classic scenes and continuing influence

Many New Wave films (and certain scenes in particular) have been referenced, acknowledged and homaged in a number of contemporary films. Their influence is still felt today.

- What influence does the dance sequence in *Bande à Part* have on Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*? (and what is interesting about the name of Tarantino’s production company?)
- What influence does the famous ‘Louvre’ sequence have upon Bertolucci’s *The Dreamers*? (a startling video can be found online that contrasts the similarities between the two films)
- What is unique about the ‘use’ of diegetic sound during the ‘one-minute silence’ scene?

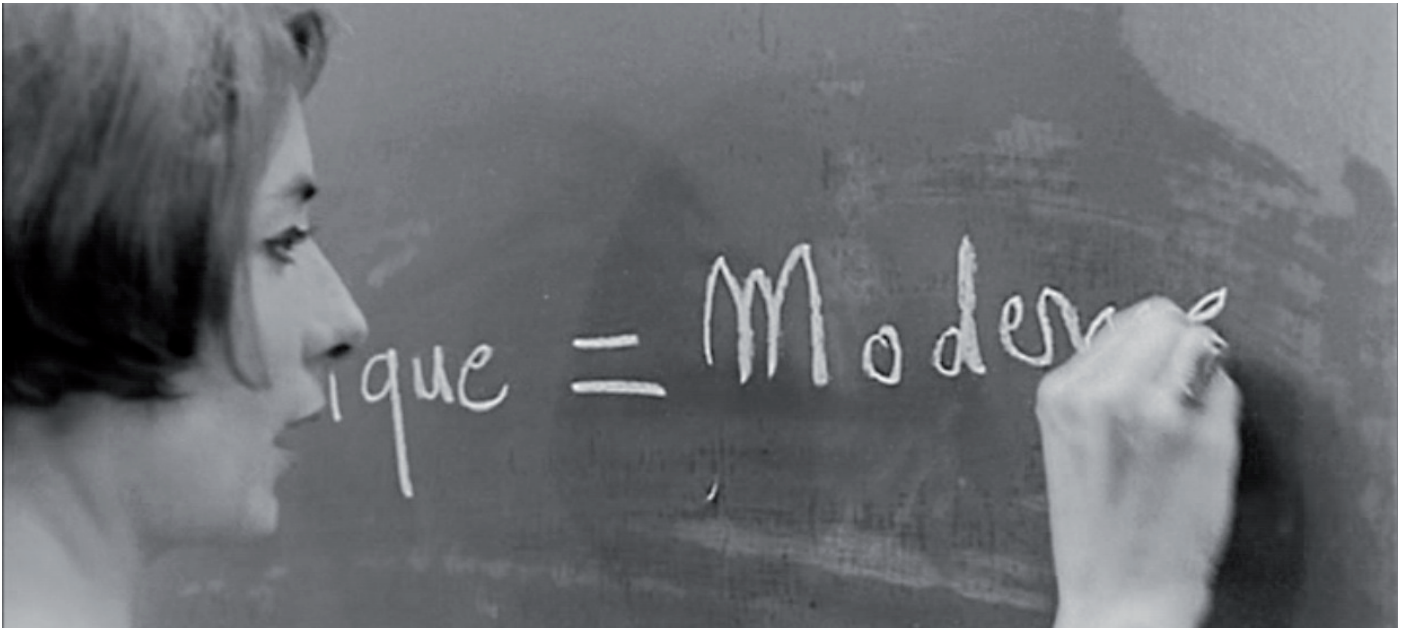


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The ending

New Wave films often have surprising, ambiguous or unresolved conclusions but *Bande à Part* blurs the line between genre convention and narrative subversion.

- To what extent is the ending conventional? Do you think it is a closed narrative?
- Do you think there is anything about the ending that might appeal to modern-day Hollywood's current trend for sequels and reboots?
- How does the voiceover allude to literary conventions in the final moments?
- What of the following crime movie elements does the ending feature? Is these what you would expect to see in this film?
 - Surprise twist
 - Gunplay
 - Lovers on the run
 - Death of a villain
 - Criminals getting away with the loot
 - The double-cross
 - Femme fatale



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Activities

- Pick a selection of clips from three different films to show to your class. What New Wave conventions are present in the sequences?
- Select some more Hollywood films or pre-1960 French films that are more classical in their film language. Film a recreation of a selected scene or a trailer that applies New Wave conventions to the shots.
- Conversely, pick a New Wave title and recreate scenes in a more classic manner. Do the scenes now have any more or less vitality and urgency?

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