



PALME D'OR  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
1964



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2024  
CANNES CLASSICS

A movie poster for 'The Umbrellas of Cherbourg'. The background is a solid, vibrant pink. In the foreground, a young woman with blonde hair and bangs is looking off to the side with a serious expression. She is wearing a light-colored trench coat with a large wooden button. Behind her, a young man with dark hair is looking in the same direction, slightly out of focus. The overall mood is classic and cinematic.

# the umbrellas of cherbourg

# Why do I film?

Because I love it  
Because it moves  
Because it lives  
Because it cries  
Because it laughs  
Because at the cinema  
We're in the dark  
We're warm and cosy  
Between a guy playing kneesies  
And a gal moving hers away  
In front of a fool talking too loudly  
Behind a genius with tousled hair  
That prevent you from reading the subtitles  
Because it dances  
Because it sings  
So I float  
Because it's beautiful  
Because filming is like a woman  
It's like a man  
It can hurt  
It can scar  
Sometimes it's ugly  
But it's still good  
Because it zooms  
Because it tracks  
Because it's silence and action and cut  
Because you dream  
In twenty-four images per second  
And so it ploughs ahead in the dark  
In twenty-four six thousand four hundred images an hour  
And that the TGV is dying of jealousy  
Because it's white  
Because it's black and many other things besides  
Because I love it  
And because I don't know how to do anything else.

*Jacques Demy*



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Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo

# THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG

Directed by JACQUES DEMY

Music by MICHEL LEGRAND

FRANCE / 1963 / 92 min / Color / Panoramic / Visa n° 28.015

Restored in 4K by the laboratory **Éclair Classics**

The mix was carried out by **L.E Diapason**

With the support of



## CHANEL



## Summary

November 1957. Geneviève Émery lives with her mother, a widow who has fallen on hard times, who runs an umbrella shop in Cherbourg. Despite the disapproval of Mme Émery, Geneviève loves garage mechanic Guy Foucher. They swear eternal passion to one another and dream of the future.

Alas, Guy must do his military service in Algeria. Just before his departure, they make love. Two months pass. Geneviève, pregnant, awaits Guy's return. In the meantime, Roland Cassard, *Lola's* unhappy suitor, now a rich diamond cutter, frequents Mme Émery and Geneviève. He asks for the young woman's hand. Without news from Guy and at her mother's urging, Geneviève eventually accepts. Nearly a year later, Guy, wounded in Algeria, returns to Cherbourg. He learns of Geneviève's marriage, his aunt dies, and he loses his job. Saved from despair by the love of the gentle Madeleine, he sets up his own business and starts a family.

On the evening of 24 December 1963, Geneviève, now a bourgeoisie wife, stops by chance at Guy's petrol station. The former lovers exchange a few banalities, Guy refuses to see his daughter who is waiting in the car and lets Geneviève go, while Madeleine and their little boy are returning from their Christmas shopping.

# Distribution

A **MAG BODARD** production, distributed by **CINÉ-TAMARIS**  
written and directed by **Jacques DEMY**  
music by **Michel LEGRAND**

Fiction of 92 minutes in colour, filmed in 1963 – 35 mm – panoramic, visa n° 28.015  
with

**Catherine DENEUVE** (Geneviève ÉMERY)  
**Nino CASTELNUOVO** (Guy FOUCHER)  
**Anne VERNON** (Madame ÉMERY)  
**Marc MICHEL** (Roland CASSARD)

## Voices :

Danielle LICARI (Geneviève)  
José BARTEL (Guy)  
Christiane LEGRAND (Madame Émery)  
Georges BLANÈS (Roland CASSARD)  
Michel LEGRAND (Jean/The Postman)  
Jacques DEMY (The Lost Customer/The Waiter)

Cinematography : Jean RABIER - Sets : Bernard EVEIN  
Costumes : Jacqueline MOREAU - Editing : Anne-Marie COTRET

# Nominations

————— 1964 —————

## Palme d'or

at the Festival de Cannes and Prix Louis-Delluc

## ————— OSCARS NOMINATIONS —————

1964

**Best Film**  
in a foreign language

1965

**Best original script :**  
Jacques Demy (France)

1965

**Best Film music** (original score) :  
Michel Legrand  
and Jacques Demy

1965

**Best Film music** (Adaptation) :  
Michel Legrand

1965

**Best song :**  
Michel Legrand (music)  
et Jacques Demy (lyrics)  
for « I Will Wait for You »

## ————— GOLDEN GLOBES NOMINATIONS —————

1966

**Best Film in foreign language**

First theatrical release in Paris on 19 February 1964  
at the Publicis cinemas, Vendôme and Publicis Orly



Jacques Demy and Jean Rabier, cinematographer, on set

Can we describe *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* as a radical film choc?

As far as I'm concerned, absolutely!

Because the discovery of the film when I was a child was undeniably an emotional shock; the first time, too, that I cried in front of a screen. Jacques proudly screened the 16 mm copy for his family and friends... I was entitled to this every school holidays, and I don't remember having often protested about it. It was – I understood much later on – a way for him to convey something to me that he'd carefully developed, and that represented his vision of the world and human relationships. A modest and artistic education, in short.

The copy was so worn that almost nothing but the pink and yellow tonalities remained, while the sound crackled out of a little mono speaker. The old-fashioned quality of the screening didn't stop anyone from shedding torrents of tears, not due to the sadness of this love story, but the sadness of the very idea of love, since it is soluble in time, and can never be caught up. The second shock was visual, when I saw the film again after its first restoration in 1992, undertaken by Agnès for a theatrical release, the insane audacity of the colours was then revealed to me!

I may've seen the film a hundred times, but I'd never been able to admire the bright red dresses against fuchsia wallpaper, and the other follies devised by Jacques and his decorator Bernard Evein.

I remember trying to imagine what the first viewers of the film in 1964 might've felt... They also no doubt appreciated the extraordinary prowess of the staging that goes into making a film such as this, where the exact duration of each sequence is dictated by a pre-recorded soundtrack. It was completely mad and unprecedented.

The latest shock was very recent: just a few weeks ago, when I listened with Léon Rousseau to the previously unreleased sound elements, found at Universal Music Publishing for this new 4K restoration. Among the miraculously conserved magnetic tape recordings, a three-track mix with magnificent stereo emerged, revealing instruments that had always been buried within the orchestration, as well as the incredible nuances of Michel Legrand's arrangements... A treasure!

As I write these lines, the new sound and new 4K image have not yet met! ... I can't wait! Something tells me that this will not leave us indifferent, and that once again, the film will leap out at us.

So, happy sixtieth anniversary at Cannes for the Palme d'Or of *Umbrellas*!

*Mathieu Demy,*  
April 25<sup>th</sup> 2024



One July night in 1963, at the age of five, I had my first experience with cinema.

Jacques had a charming idea for the final scene of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. He would get Hervé Legrand's son Michel to play François, son of Guy, who has moved on after his heartbreak with Geneviève, and I would play Françoise, Guy and Geneviève's daughter, a love child...

Hervé and I were the right age for the parts. For Jacques, it may have been a way of capturing our young faces on film forever.

I remember that late-night shoot so well, feeling how special it all was...

I remember the fake snow on the ground, which was salt, and the fake flakes falling mysteriously from the sky...

I remember our Catherine, the prettiest lady I'd ever seen, and her mink coat.

I remember them letting Hervé and I take a swig of coffee...

To thank us for staying up all night, they gave Hervé a wooden service station, the same one we see in Guy's bedroom. I got a pink umbrella with a very colorful, flowery lining, and a little wooden store with fake miniature vegetables and fake products on its shelves and in its drawers.

Most of all, I remember how thrilled we were getting to stay up all night with the grown-ups!

I saw this film over and over in my childhood and teenage years, but I only really understood it once I'd had my heart broken for the first time, because people only die of love in cinema!

## *Rosalie Varda*

*April 25<sup>th</sup> 2024*







# Sixty Years Later...

By Thierry Frémaux,  
Managing Director of the Cannes Film Festival

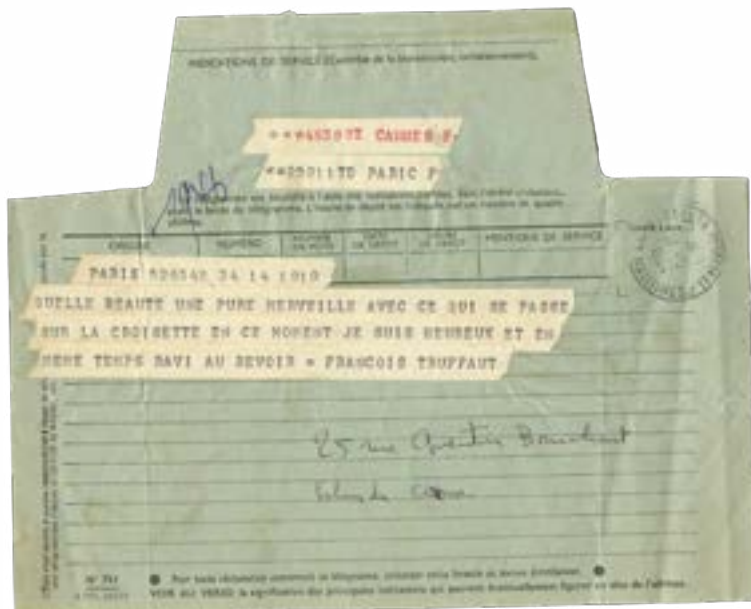
If there is one film that is emblematic of the work of Jacques Demy, it is surely *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, which associates the seriousness of its theme with a lightness of tone, in a palette of pastel shades that is indissociable with the Demy style, which burst onto the scene and made its mark on film history from the outset.

The film was presented at Cannes in 1964, wresting the Palme d'Or from the hands of Fritz Lang. The Festival can now boast of having contributed to the restoration of this beautiful work. It may now be discovered by a new generation of cinephiles, in the colours of its newfound youth.

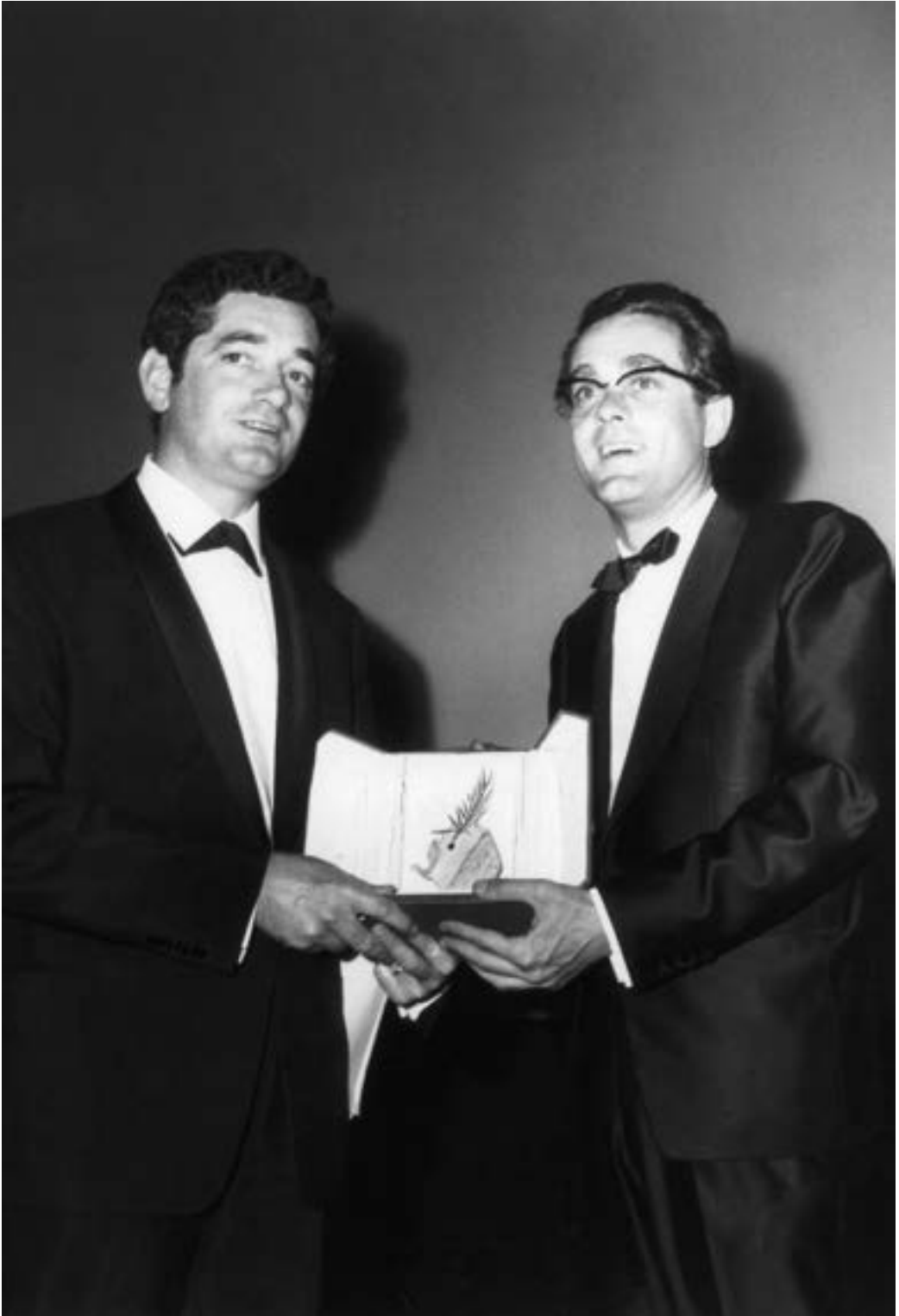
The Cannes Film Festival has long understood that its role extends beyond the duration of the event that bears its name and that, once a year, presents new films from across the globe. A festival must be an active hub of global cinephilia, that is, of the love of cinema. It also represents in the public's mind, as in that of the critics, the very idea of cinema as an art form.

The preservation of heritage masterpieces is part of the logical extension of the Festival's missions and even though it is impossible to save all the films in the world, we want to contribute to sustaining those that have had a major impact on its history, those that have won the Palme d'Or.

The restored 4K version of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* will be shown for the first time within the framework of Cannes Classics.



Telegramm sent by François Truffaut to Jacques Demy on May 14th 1964



Jacques Demy and Michel Legrand receiving the Palme d'Or in 1964 at the Cannes Film Festival



Since the creation of cinema, composers have set notes to directors' dreams. Palme d'Or at Cannes, nominated for the Oscars, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* possibly represents better than any other film the magic that is sparked when two geniuses meet. With Michel Legrand, Jacques Demy had found his alter ego and it has now been over sixty years since their images and music first toured the world. On a personal note, their films have always accompanied me.

At the Sacem, the home of authors' rights for both, protecting cultural heritage for future generations is part of our DNA.

So it was very naturally that, by supporting its restoration, we committed to helping this wonderful film continue its journey. It is an immense source of pride for us to now enable it to return to the Croisette.

*Cécile Rap-Veber*  
General Manager of the Society of Writers,  
Composers and Music Publishers



In 1963, how was it possible to evoke in images the Algerian War, the difficulties of youth, and particularly the social fragility of young women?

Jacques Demy dared to do so, and – impressively – did it in song, with the complicity of Michel Legrand, composing canvases in acidulous colours. The new 4K restoration of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* restores the full force of his original perspective of a period whose lethal complexity he anticipated. With this newfound film opera, a separation on a railway platform or a petrol station covered in snow take leave of the banality of everyday life to become icons.

### *Béatrice De Pastre*

*Director of the Archives collections  
at the National Centre for Cinema and the Moving  
Image*

# CHANEL

Ever committed to the seventh art, CHANEL is delighted to support the restoration of the cult film *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, a musical directed by Jacques Demy.

Released in 1964 and awarded the Louis-Delluc Prize and the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival the same year, along with several nominations at the Oscars, this film was a huge success both in France and abroad. With the character of Geneviève, it also gave Catherine Deneuve her first lead role, propelling her to the status of film icon.

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* tells the story of the romance between Geneviève Émery, a young woman working in her mother's umbrella shop, and Guy Foucher, a young garage mechanic called up for military service in Algeria. A long-standing friend of CHANEL and contributor to CHANEL N° 5's reputation – whose advertising campaigns she fronted in the USA – Catherine Deneuve revealed in an interview with Elle magazine how she wore several outfits from her own wardrobe for the film.

Thus, her apricot pink tweed coat from the CHANEL Spring-Summer 1962 Haute Couture collection was immortalised on screen by filmmaker Jacques Demy. For *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, Demy did an extraordinary job as a colourist, using a rich Technicolor palette that adds to the charm of the film and imbues this coat with a very special radiance.

CHANEL is proud to be supporting the 4K restoration of this great classic, a project initiated by Rosalie Varda and Mathieu Demy to promote their parents' films, and which is being led by the production company Ciné Tamaris.

This support reflects the House's commitment to preserving the cinematic masterpieces that have marked film history and that of CHANEL. Herself a huge fan of Jacques Demy's work and world, Virginie Viard chose to use the soundtrack from *Peau d'Âne* – another of his unforgettable films – to accompany the Fall-Winter 2020/21 Ready-to-Wear show.



Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo



Jacques Demy and Catherine Deneuve. Photo : Agnès Varda



# Singing Life into a Spell

By Serge Kaganski

When I'm asked to play this amusing, vain game that consists of establishing a list of my favourite films of all time, I always cite *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* in my top ten. Some titles can enter or leave this restrictive list depending on my mood of the day, but never this film by Jacques Demy, forever embedded within my personal pantheon. In my eyes, it's a perfect achievement: I see no flaws in it and I do not hear the slightest false note (even though it's a musical film!). The story, a love story that proves impossible? Heart-wrenching. The visual look? An enchantment of colour, variously unfolding in an emotional weather report, set to the tuning fork of the seasons. The music? Inspired, lyrical, pop, jazzy... incredible. The recitative? Simple, precise, aligned with everyday speech, but also sophisticated, elegant, sometimes even with a touch of humour. The characters? All are extremely elevated souls, untainted by the slightest hint of malevolence despite the cruel mechanics of the situation. Into this sombre tale of first love, an extremely advanced political and social dimension for the period is introduced: the toxic role of the Algerian War, "illegitimate" child, "girl-mother", and a pragmatic interplay of adults and social classes. Even the ending is perfect, ambiguous, a double-edged sword: amid the unfathomable sadness (irrepressible tears with every viewing), there is the timid ray of light of a happy family to be glimpsed across the snow-laden night of lost love, as well as the living presence of the fruit of the past love.

In 1961, after *Lola*, Jacques Demy evoked a scenario with Michel Legrand entitled *Infidelity* or *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. As with *Lola*, Legrand perceived a musicality in the situations and dialogues of this script. Demy wanted a film that would embrace all of the arts while modernising the codes of opera, which seemed to him to be too antiquated and grandiloquent for the contemporary period. He wanted to invent the filmic equivalent for opera of what jazz was for classical music: "Unlike opera, I still wanted the words to be understood. [We needed] to find a simple, modern, interesting expression." Demy and Legrand set to work, but getting started proved laborious.

As in American musical comedies, they alternated dialogues and sung segments, but it didn't work, the connection between spoken and sung struck them as artificial. To the point where Demy made a radical suggestion: either a 100% spoken film, or a 100% sung film. Legrand seized the ball on the volley, with a beautiful intuition: making an entirely sung film had never been done before, it would be revolutionary. So revolutionary that producers were fearful of engaging in this project; Georges De Beauregard even advised Demy to film this story in black and white with dialogues.

It took all of the tenacity and insight of the wonderful Mag Bodard to undertake the production of this film of a whole new genre.

**« Michel, I think we're onto something! The words and music seem to flow naturally. »**

Demy and Legrand thus went back to the drawing board with the idea of the sung film and, as the composer tells it, the breakthrough occurred on the weekend of 11 November '61, in Noirmoutier. "It was during the jeweller's shop sequence.

'We are in a difficult situation, Geneviève is grown up now and helps me as best she can...' Jacques exclaimed: 'Michel, I think we're onto something! The words and music seem to flow naturally.' It was like a reel of cotton: I'd found the end, so all I had to do then was pull." Whether it was in Noirmoutier or Rue Daguerre at the Varda-Demy's home, the duo's work was marked by playfulness and childhood. In their study, there was not just a typewriter and a piano, but also an electric train set and a circuit of little Scalextric cars!

Agnès Varda describes in her notes: "The two boys (who were over thirty) spent hours operating this double circuit... The pussycat played with her kittens, Rosalie played with her doll, the drafts played in the metal leaves of (Calder's) mobile and the two homebody artists played the piano, or with the train and the little cars... or at reducing an imaginary audience to tears. They played at imagining that they'd be successful."

They certainly played, but they worked hard as well. Melodic themes emerged from the creative fount, dialogues were adjusted to suit the music, then the movements of the characters and the camera were synchronised with the musical and sung passages or with silences: in a mixture of labour, inspiration, game, and pleasure, in a perpetual to-and-fro between the musician and the filmmaker (a kind of creative two-headed monster: Jacques-Michel DemyLegrand or Michel-Jacques

LegrandDemy?), the future masterpiece was developed, which at that point was only at the stage of an experimental film-in-progress.

A hybrid film combining film and music, sung dialogues, created by a hybrid pair, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* added another forked hybridization: that of the characters, resulting from the association of male and female actors with male and female singers. Geneviève Émery was played by Catherine Deneuve and Danielle Licari, Guy Foucher by Nino Castelnuovo and José Bartel, Roland Cassard by Marc Michel and Georges Blannès, Mme Émery by Anne Vernon and Christiane Legrand (Michel's sister). Since the music had been recorded before the shoot, the singers sometimes gave acting indications to the actor playing their role. Michel Legrand divulged a range of impressions regarding this process: "I felt a certain anxiety at having before me the two performers of Geneviève, her two chemical components. 50% Danielle and 50% Catherine was going to merge to form 100% of a new entity, a synthesised character who would escape both of them..." This fantastical dimension underpinning *Umbrellas...* (and that concerns all of the film's characters) has rarely been highlighted – all the more reason to do so here.

In 1986, Jacques Demy said: "I have always loved music and painting and I try to put all of that into my films. I tried to create a performance with these elements and tell stories with colour, music, poetry, and also choreography and ballet." Ballet would be integrated later, in *The Young Girls of Rochefort*, *Umbrellas'* luminous counterpart... but for all the other elements listed by Demy, the mission was splendidly accomplished in Cherbourg. Infused with Legrand's music, with an expressive chromaticism inspired by Matisse, by gracefully choreographed character and camera movements, *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* tells the story of first true love between Geneviève Émery and Guy Foucher, two young adults who have both lost their fathers (phantom paternity is not a banal detail in Demy's œuvre). A romantic affair that will be broken by war, but also by social conventions, and differences in social class. Under its rosy surface of an enchanted tale lies a film that is rather dark, with very political undercurrents. The daughter of a retailer (the boutique *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* that gives the film its name), belonging to the middle class, Geneviève soon finds herself faced with a Cornelian choice between her love for a mechanic and a "reasonable" marriage with a diamond cutter. This hesitation between sentiments and pragmatism is coupled with an oscillation between a descent towards the proletariat and social elevation



towards the upper bourgeoisie. But that's not all. To these sentimental and social strata, a social dimension is added: just before Guy's departure for Algeria, the two lovers sleep together, solidifying their union. Just as Guy is going away for an indefinite period, Geneviève is pregnant to him.

A solo mother, "a girl-mother", this was frowned upon in 1964, prior to the pill, Women's Lib, and the right to abortion. Giving in to her mother Mme Émery's injunction, who fears the "what will people say" and wants to "protect" her daughter (and probably also her business), Geneviève thus marries her rich suitor, Roland Cassard. His face and name seem familiar to us: he was the jilted lover in *Lola*, with Demy thus building fictional bridges between his films. Roland truly loves Geneviève and is open-minded enough to accept to raise the "illegitimate" child that she is carrying. .

As we said, there are no malevolent or guilty characters in this musical drama: precipitating and confirming the end of the romance between Guy and Geneviève, Cassard and Mme Émery also have their reasons, as in Renoir's films. But the principal cause of the young lovers' separation is the Algerian War, the film's central yet blind focal point. No scenes take place on the other side of the Mediterranean, no images of the war are shown, and yet, the events in Algeria govern the amorous fate of Geneviève and Guy. Maintaining constantly offscreen the situation that underpins the order of the narrative unfolding before our eyes is part of the purely cinematographic genius of this film. Moreover, the film's second part is entitled "Absence", and rarely has an absence (that of Guy, as well as that of the frontlines) been shown in such as present and vitally significant way.

**Maintaining constantly offscreen the situation that underpins the order of the narrative unfolding before our eyes is part of the purely cinematographic genius of this film**

The final sequence of the film is one of the most beautiful and moving in film history. Catherine Deneuve judiciously highlights that it resembles the end of Elia Kazan's masterpiece *Splendor in the Grass*. Several years after their painful separation, Geneviève and Guy find themselves by chance (?) where it had all begun: at a garage. Geneviève has thus married Cassard, joining the upper class, as her fur coat, sophisticated hairstyle, and big black car indicate. As for Guy, he married Madeleine, the young woman who was looking after his aunt and had always been in love with him. And he eventually achieved his professional dream of opening his own garage. While an employee fills the tank ("super or ordinary?"), even the most anodyne of dialogues bears meaning that, here, could concern as much life choices as gasoline ones), Geneviève and Guy exchange banalities while their gazes express something altogether different. Everything is charged with emotion and multiple meaning in this scene: Geneviève's grief following her mother's death is also a mourning for their love; from Anjou to Paris, the "detour" via Cherbourg is long and this ultimate encounter cannot be completely accidental; Guy and Geneviève's respective children are called Françoise and François; when Guy sings "yes, I am well" his face screams the contrary; as she goes to her car, Geneviève turns one last time

towards Guy... It would doubtless take very little to reignite their love, but they cannot avow it, because they have each individually built another life project. War, society, bourgeois values, adult "realism" have won out against post-adolescent romanticism. It is very sad and there is not a dry handkerchief in the room upon each new viewing of the film. But our misty eyes and stung heart have difficulty perceiving the double-edged sword of the film's conclusion, this strange unhappy/happy end dominated by the unhappy: the very last scene shows Guy happily playing with his son, then going inside with him and Madeleine (who has seen nothing of the final encounter with Geneviève) in the garage-candy shop under the Christmas snow. A happy family, despite it all? "Happiness is not gay," as one of Demy's mentors, Max Ophuls, said at the end of *Pleasure*. To tame the sorrow that invades us at the end of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, perhaps we must also bear in mind the filmmaker's autobiographical and revolutionary cunning. The love between Geneviève and Guy may be dead, but a very real fruit has remained from it, well and truly alive and called upon to last beyond the end of the film: Françoise, the daughter of Guy Foucher, Geneviève Émery, and Roland Cassard. She is played by Rosalie Varda, herself the daughter of Agnès Varda, Antoine Bourseiller, and Jacques Demy.

While the *Umbrellas* fiction... is bittersweet, the film's reality was utterly joyful, from its playful conception to the enchanting film shoot and its public release. This project that no producer initially wanted, except for the sensational Mag Bodard, garnered all possible honours. Michel Legrand: "*Umbrellas*... progressively worked its way up the ladder of success: Prix Louis-Delluc, Palme d'Or at Cannes, nominations at the Oscars for the music, international renown... Who was it who said 'Big successes aren't made for, they're made against'?" Jacques Demy: "We were very lucky to win the Prix Louis-Delluc and then a Palme d'Or at Cannes, it was totally unexpected. It was wonderful and I became recognised internationally." And how! The real and enduring happy end of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is that of instantly becoming an absolute classic, an unalterable gem in the rich history of world cinema.

# All Girls Are Called Geneviève

By Anne Berest



Cherbourg, 1957. Geneviève, a young woman of 16, lives alone with her mother. They run the umbrella shop in the city, as bright as a candy-box in a Matisse painting. But beneath their preened, doll-like looks, tightly coiffed with never a hair out of place, they shake up social mores. Geneviève falls pregnant out of wedlock, affirms loud and clear "I do what I like", she smokes, goes out at night, and rebels, while her mother manages

the boutique all alone, with no man to help her. Another character also disrupts the patriarchal laws: Madeleine, who brings Guy the funds he needs to start his garage. Here, the women are strong, they find solutions by themselves and don't let life get the better of them. Artifice is everywhere, yet nothing tell us so much about real life.

We shouldn't forget that in this late 1950s period, French women were – legally – minor subjects with respect to men. A married woman was not supposed to work without her husband's consent or manage her own assets. And a young woman did not have the right to exercise free agency over her own body. From this point of view, the female characters of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* are all "outlaws", they act against social decorum. But the most wonderful part is that they do it while singing, all charm, as though to help swallow the pill.

### ***He brought the Algerian War into his script: "too dangerous" his producers told him***

Jacques Demy designs female characters who are "outside the box", for a film that was no less so. He brought the Algerian War into his script: "too dangerous" his producers told him, who were frightened by his film. The director decided that all dialogues would be sung: "too risky", they told him. Jacques Demy was constantly flirting with the borders of "that which is not the done thing", with the limit of what was acceptable for the film industry. Just as his female characters are constantly verging on the inadmissible for the society of their time.

Jacques Demy also did this very unusual thing: he gave the same first name to two film characters. "Geneviève" is both the heroine, played by Catherine Deneuve, but also a prostitute at the port, whom Guy meets upon his return from Algeria. In *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, to use the title of Jean-Luc Godard's short film, all girls are called Geneviève: that is, they're equals, as much the young woman as the prostitute: all subjected to the rules of society, all subjected

to the diktat of men, but all eager for independence. These two characters form a two-faced bust, like the god Janus, Roman god of beginnings and ends, choices, transitions, and gates.

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, Palme d'Or of the year 1964, contains a flare of fever at its core, a scorching blast, ready to explode: the latent desire for social change. It tells the story of the slow but imminent liberation of women. Was it an accident if the umbrella store was replaced by an automatic laundry, with its washing machines, a symbol of the liberation of housewives? The phallic symbol was over. That was one of the modern aspects of the film: discussing taboo subjects, in a joyful and colourful setting, just as Beaumarchais circumvented censorship by making his characters laugh – while foreshadowing the French Revolution.

In the film's final scene, Geneviève appears, sublime, at the wheel of her car – an image of the dangerous woman travelling alone, a symbol of emancipation. And we imagine that the little girl accompanying her, little Françoise who watches her mother drive, will one day put flowers in her long hair and set the world on fire. The revolution to come will be that of all Genevièves before her, who paved the way.

And the youth who would later acclaim *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* will have only one word on their lips: freedom.



## Letter from Guy to Geneviève

february 1958

*I am very proud of you  
François is a pretty name for a boy...  
Time passes slowly here.  
Furloughs have been suspended  
And I don't know whether I'll come back to France before long.  
My love, I know you are waiting for me.  
Last night, one of our patrol fell into an ambush.  
Three soldiers were killed.  
All the same, I don't think that there's great danger here.  
But it is strange how sun and death travel together.*



Catherine Deneuve et Anne Vernon

## The Algerian war on screen

"From 1954 to 1962, very few films alluded directly to the Algerian conflict. If Algeria was present, it was simply as a backdrop for an action unrelated to the war." [...]

Created after the signing of the Evian Accords and the attacks committed by the OAS (Secret Army Organisation), *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* clearly appears very discreet compared with the films of Drach, Vautier, or Boisset.

But, at that time, could Demy have gone further? Probably not. By making the Algerian War the essential problem of the scenario, since it leads to the dislocation of the couple, Demy – like Resnais or Enrico – touches on the deeply inhumane character of this conflict.

Geneviève and Guy's fate is sealed. The man who will return to Algeria after being wounded, is no longer the same. Love is off limits to him, his marriage with Madeleine bears no illusions: life must go on... miracles are impossible, and tragedy is written into everyday life.

*François Bouvier, Teacher in Nancy  
Cahier des Ailes et du Désir n°4, december 1996*

# On Tenterhooks

By Marie Colmant

We always tend to present the 1960s as carefree years of liberation. Think of the arrival of the twist in Saint-Tropez, the rock'n'roll oozing sex appeal from the crude Elvis "The Pelvis" Presley. In France, they danced the night away at the Golf Drouot, Johnny was going out with Sylvie, and Sheila sung about the end of school. But, if Eddy Mitchell is to be believed, boss of the band *Les Chaussettes Noires*, this image is deceptive: "I don't understand how we can describe those years as carefree when we were dying of fear that we'd be called up for Algeria."

This major trauma of young people born during the war is at the heart of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Just as it is at the heart of *Cléo de 5 à 7*, made a year earlier by Agnès Varda, and *Adieu Philippine* by Jacques Rozier, also released in 1962. Three major names of the New Wave, which is inevitably permeable to the many debates that the Algerian War raised up until 1999, the year when Jacques Chirac requalified the "events" as a war, the conscripts were not deceived and most often left with fear in their stomachs.

The fear of not coming home, as Guy so aptly puts it to Geneviève: "So we'll speak of marriage later on, with what's happening in Algeria at the moment..." Fear of not finding the love of his life again after two years of military service. Because she wouldn't have the courage to wait, or the patience, or in Geneviève's case, because the circumstances, an accidental pregnancy, changed the course of things. Wounded, Guy has a long stay in hospital from which he returns in pieces. Surely due to Geneviève's marriage. What toll did his war play in this depressive phase? Once he has emerged from this black hole, Guy doesn't speak of it. Like the vast majority of former soldiers in Algeria, Guy doesn't talk about his war. He doesn't breathe a word of it.

To learn more about these French soldiers and the major trauma that the Algerian War represented in their lives, for them to finally accepted to talk about it, it would take nearly thirty years. Until Bertrand Tavernier managed to liberate these veterans' tongues in *The Undeclared War*.

From *Jacques Demy*,  
Éditions de la Martinière, 2010

**« I don't understand how we can describe those years as carefree when we were dying of fear that we'd be called up for Algeria. »**









# The 4K Restoration of *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*

By Elena Tammaccaro  
and Laure Balka / Éclair Classics

The 4K picture restoration of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was based on the original negative. Several different elements were available; the camera negative, an interpositive from the period, but also marrons (fine-grain masters) in monochromatic separation, which the production had printed from the original negative after the shoot. The latter are a set of black-and-white positive prints designed for the long-term preservation of colour films. For these elements, by combining the use of filters with the colour sensitivity of emulsion, it is possible to separately reproduce the images corresponding to each of the three base colours (red, blue, and green).

The reparation of the camera negative was the first phase; a few perforations and rips were repaired using a tape specially designed for the film stock. The splices that had opened had to be repaired with a glue, which was also specifically created for the stock.

In addition, before starting the restoration, scan tests between the negative and the silent fine-grain prints from the monochromatic selection were made. At that stage, we noticed that the photographic quality of the camera negative was the best that we could obtain. The reels had been well conserved. In fact, despite a few scratches, the latter were in good mechanical condition.

The presence of these few physical defects and particularly the scratches, encouraged us perform an immersive scan on an Arriscan, in order to reduce the wear and tear that time had left on the print.

The digital restoration of the images was obtained using manual and automatic processes, through the combination of three different software programmes. These programmes were used concomitantly to perform corrections on a vast range of problems and flaws, such as: image steadiness, reduction in light bleed, elimination of scratches, reconstruction via the interpolation of fully or partially missing images, elimination of ribbon and splicing marks, elimination of dirt and dust, and halo-reduction. These programmes can be used in manual, semi-automatic, or automatic mode, with a scrupulous, image-by-image verification of the artefact performed at the end of each process.

Finally, the digital colour grading on the negative image, created under the supervision of Mathieu Demy, was completed within the logic and aesthetic of Technicolor. This choice had already been made by the director for the trichromatic fine-grain prints, a process that emphasises the film's full colorimetric spectrum.



## The 4K restoration of *Unbrellas of Cherbourg*



Original negative, 1964



4K Restoration, 2024



Original negative, 1964



4K Restoration, 2024



## The new sound restoration of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*

By Léon Rousseau / L.E Diapason

In 1963, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was released with a mono mix, as was the case for the vast majority of films from this period. It was this mix that was to be used for the rereleases and future editions of the film in the decades to come, sometimes blown up into more current formats, but fundamentally limited by the monophonic aspect of the source.

By trawling through the archives with a fine-tooth comb, Rosalie Varda uncovered an alternative source at Universal Music Publishing: a three-track stereophonic mix of the music and voices of exceptional quality. The existence of this three-track remains mysterious, since neither the mono mix of the film, nor the stereo versions produced for the album required this format. Had the production planned to do a 70 mm multi-channel format release, as was the case a few years later for *The Young Girls of Rochefort*?

It was this mix, combined with the period foley found on 35 mm magnetic tapes that have allowed us to present this new restoration to you, featuring Michel Legrand's music as you've never heard it before, highlighting his genius as an arranger and composer. This reconstruction is not a new mix or a reinterpretation. We used an element that did in fact already exist, even though it hadn't previously been used due to the monophonic release in standard 35 mm format. No extra foley or additional elements were added to the original sound.





The half-inch reels containing this precious version were discovered in an extremely satisfying state of conservation for sixty-year-old magnetic tapes. They were clearly original masters. In the field of analogue audio, each new generation of copies leads to a considerable loss of quality. Finding the originals enabled us to match the sound sessions from the period as closely as possible, providing a digitisation of remarkable precision. Using such exceptional sources allowed us perform the least aggressive restoration possible, with minimal use of digital noise-reduction algorithms.

By preserving the original dynamic and timbres, we became aware of the incredible sound recording work delivered in 1963. We also recovered three-track tapes of the orchestra recordings, before the voices were added, which gave us a better understanding of the creative process of the film's sound. Between each take on these reels, we hear Michel Legrand directing his orchestra. We also hear the musicians chatting and joking among themselves. Apparently, the music mix was performed live, on a three-track recorder, seemingly with very few microphones, yet obtained breathtaking results.

The original mono mix, which served as a reference throughout this 4K restoration, will also now provide a new master for future use.



Catherine Deneuve, photo Agnès Varda



# The american reception of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and its lasting legacy

By Matt Severson, Director, Margaret Herrick Library

By the time Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was released in the United States by the Landau Releasing Organization in New York on December 14th, 1964 – it had already achieved commercial success and won several prestigious awards during its initial European release, including the Prix Louis-Delluc and the Palme d'Or at the 1964 Cannes Film Festival.

In addition, France had selected *Umbrellas* as its entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 37th Academy Awards ceremony.

With its candy box colors and all-singing dialogue – it was like nothing else coming out of France or elsewhere. Prior to the film's release in America, New York Times' Eugene Archer published a profile on Demy, writing, "In an industry noted for its tempers and temperaments, Jacques Demy is a most unusual young man. He is soft spoken, sensitive, modest, eager to please, and so amiable that even his competitors in the cutthroat motion picture field have nothing but kind words to say about him. Without prior warning, one would hardly take this boyish, self-effacing Frenchman to be a film director. But a director he is, and a gifted one."

**« Although it has its poignant moments, is as fresh as spring rain »**

Critics were largely rapturous: Variety wrote that the film "is an original, eye-filling, fetching affair that appears to have the legs for both arty houses and even more general situations abroad... Michel Legrand has supplied a richly tuneful score that still is not ostentatious and also serves as a sharp counterpart to help story points and enhance the moods." Richard Oulahan in Life wrote, "Director Demy has captured [Cherbourg's] colors and texture on his palette like a true French impressionist – the oily harbor, rain on cobblestones, a parade of pastel umbrellas, a flaking green wall..."; the New Yorker's critic wrote, "...I've been trying in vain to think of someone whose heart would be flinty enough to

resist the manifold seductions of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. The picture is something altogether new... The inventors of this extraordinary film are its director Jacques Demy, who wrote the screenplay and lyrics, and Michel Legrand, who composed and conducted the music, I applaud them for the boldness of concept and the delicacy of its execution. ...I applaud, too, Catherine Deneuve, as the girl (when she weeps, her eyes are as veritably rainy as the streets beyond her window)." James Powers in Hollywood Reporter wrote: "although it has its poignant moments, is as fresh as spring rain, as lyrical as a budding tree... it is handled with such delicacy and warmth that the realism never overbalances the mood, which is sweet and affecting, unpretentious and persuasive."

On the morning of February 23, 1965, the Academy Awards Nominations were announced in Beverly Hills, and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was nominated for Foreign Language Film by the Academy, along with *Raven's End* (Sweden), *Sallah* (Israel), *Woman in the Dunes* (Japan), and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Italy). (It should be noted that eligibility in the Foreign Language Film category was based on the release date in the submitting country, not on a U.S. release date.)

In the week leading up to the 37th Academy Awards, Demy, and the other nominated foreign language film delegates, including Menahem Golan, Ephraim Kishon, Hiroshi Teshigahara, Haym Topol, and Bo Widerberg, were brought to Los Angeles. Among the group's activities, in addition to a cocktail party hosted at the DGA and a press conference at the Polo Lounge in Beverly Hills, the international delegation went to Disneyland, where they met Walt Disney and received a guided tour of the amusement park. The Academy Awards ceremony was held the next evening at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Italy's *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (directed by Vittorio De Sica) received the Oscar.

Demy's film would go on to be nominated for four more Academy Awards the following year, since



From left: Bo Widerberg, Jacques Demy, Joseph E. Levine at Cocktail Party for Foreign Language Film Award Nominees held at Director's Guild of America. © Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* wasn't released in Los Angeles until March 17th 1965; and at that time, only eligible to be nominated in competitive categories for the year it was in release in Los Angeles. The film was nominated for "Music Score – substantially original" (Michel Legrand and Jacques Demy); "Scoring of Music – adaptation or treatment" (Michel Legrand); "Song" – "I Will Wait for You," (Music by Michel Legrand, Lyrics by Jacques Demy; English lyrics by Norman Gimbel); and "Writing: Story and Screenplay – written directly for the screen" (Jacques Demy). Though the film didn't go on to win any of the Oscars it was nominated for, it was still highly unusual at that time for an international film to receive multiple nominations outside of the Best Foreign Language Film award, and a testament to how well the film was regarded by the industry.

Demy's musical was revived by art houses across the country for many years and became a cult film among cinephiles. In the May 25, 1970 issue of *Boxoffice*, there is a report on a successful publicity campaign in Topeka, Kansas to revive *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* which was begun by two managers of the Gage Theatres chain who printed "a two-page letter which was sent to French and music teachers in 250 junior and senior high schools, two- and four-year colleges, and private and parochial schools within a 100-mile radius of Topeka" six weeks before the film's opening night. The university students and teachers got involved, and "in a special arrangement with Crosby's Department Store, one of Topeka's oldest and largest, an attractive lobby display was set up, and Crosby's furnished the theatre with 20 brightly colored umbrellas which were hung open upside down from the 12-foot ceiling lobby, [with] strands of plastic raindrops were placed on each umbrella." During the one week run of Demy's film, at least 650 students attended the screening, and trade paper noted that advertising at department stores, newspapers and TV advertising contributed to the success of the film's revival.

Undoubtedly contributing to the film's longstanding popularity is Michael Legrand's soundtrack, and particularly the film's nominated song, "I Will Wait for You" (with lyrics by Jacques Demy) which has remained extremely popular and has been covered by a wide array of artists since its initial release. There were over 50 instrumental covers of the song released in North America alone in the first five years since its release, by such artists as Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass, Ray Conniff, Martin Denny, Jackie Gleason, and Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra. And over the years, many sin-

gers have also covered the English version of "*je ne pourrai jamais vivre sans toi*," including Louis Armstrong, Vikki Carr, Cher, Petula Clark, Bobby Darin, Linda Eder, Marianne Faithfull, Eddie Fisher, Connie Francis, Laura Fygi, Astrud Gilberto, Lena Horne, Lainie Kazan, Steve Lawrence, Brenda Lee, Johnny Mathis, Liza Minnelli, Jim Nabors, Frank Sinatra, Bobby Vinton, and Andy Williams. Connie Francis' cover of "I Will Wait for You" was prominently featured in a 2002 episode of the American television series *Futurama*, titled *Jurassic Bark*.

### ***Demy's musical was revived by art houses across the country for many years***

Today, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is considered a classic, beloved by audiences old and young around the world. The film heralded Legrand's career in America, which would go on to include the scores for many films, including *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Summer of '42* and *Yentl*. Demy's unique style has influenced many contemporary filmmakers, including Anna Biller (*The Love Witch*), Greta Gerwig (*Barbie*), Wong Kar-Wai (*In the Mood for Love*), Celine Song (*Past Lives*), Quentin Tarantino (*Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood*), Johnnie To (*Sparrow* and *Office*), and perhaps most notably, Damien Chazelle in *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* and the Umbrellas-esque musical, *La La Land*, which received 14 nominations and won six Oscars at the 89th Academy Awards ceremony in 2017.



Group Photo Cocktail Party for Foreign Language Film Award Nominees held at Director's Guild of America



Jacques Demy, Joseph E. Levine, George Sidney et Bo Widerberg



Ely Levy, Jacques Demy et Louis Blaine



Catherine Deneuve and Marc Michel

## Press clippings

“A film that will get people talking and even singing.”

*Philippe Labro, Le Journal du Dimanche, 1964*

“When this singing film sing in its enchanting song we can’t help but sing along”

*Jean de Baroncelli, Le Monde, Fév. 1964*

“A singing film or a film in song, how narrow these definitions seem when held up to the originality, sumptuousness, and quirky beauty of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*.”

*Henry Chapier, Combat, 1964*

“The natural, sincere tone we rightly admire in Demy’s work is nothing other than the attentive gaze of a mutant on the world that intrigues him.”

*Serge Daney, Libération, 1981*





Nino Castelnuovo and Ellen Farmer

"*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is one of the rare French films of the period that dares to allude to the still very sensitive subject of the Algerian War, to the point of making it one of the essential dramatic drivers of the script. My advice: go see it as a group or alone, as you'd let yourself surreptitiously get caught up in an old Barbara hit, as a homeopathic way to weep."

*Gérard Lefort, Libération, may 1982*

"The story is tender, heart-rending, a bit cruel, but beyond the story there is grace, harmony. The film flows, flows, like life."

*Claude-Marie Tremois, Télérama, Nov. 1992*

# Jacques Demy's impressions

April 1964,  
before the Cannes Film Festival

**Are you happy, Demy, about being «selected» with *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* ?**

Jacques Demy : Yes

**What does it feel like to be a famous (young) director ?**

Young yes, but famous! Are you really sure of what you say ?

**What do you yourself think of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* ?**

I did it my way...

**Anything you don't like about *Umbrellas* ? - And that you do ?**

That I didn't shoot in it 70mm. - Knowing that it exists.

**How would you like your art as a film director to be appreciated ?**

People speak very well and very clearly about what I do. I don't feel misunderstood.

**They say you're a tender man, a modern romantic. What do you say ?**

I think that's almost true.

**When you direct actors like Catherine Deneuve or Nino Castelnuovo, what do you like for them to show - or reveal?**

Their talent through their sincerity.

**From *Lola* to *Bay of Angels*, what would you say has been your own particular experience as a filmmaker**

If you don't mind, we'll discuss that at the 54th Cannes Film Festival (May 2001) when, for my 70th birthday, I'll be presenting my 20th film which, I hope, will be selected, or invited, or awarded, doesn't matter which.

**Do you believe love is the key to the world?**

Yes, it's the key of G, because love is sweet romance and G whiz! That's all that there is.

**Some may criticize you for preferring the "pastoral" side of life. What do you say to that?**

Too late to change. I prefer blue over black, birth over funerals, red wine over Vichy water and sun over rain.

**What sort of pleasure did you get from making *Umbrellas* ?**

Extreme, refined pleasure. Nothing bestial about it.

**Do you like beasts? How would you like to depict them on the screen?**

I sure do. As a *Donkey Skin*.

**Do you aspire to make a big film in Hollywood? Or a big kino - why not - in Russia?**

Both. No order of preference.

**Your wife, Agnès Varda, is famous. She has also been selected for Cannes recently. What moves you about her talent?**

Her poetry.

**What do you hope do with your free time at this festival ?**

Finish the script of my next film (between screenings), on the beach if possible.

**Is there anyone here for the festivities whom you'd particularly like to see ?**

The Dorléac sisters.

**Would you like to conclude with something you'd like to talk to us about?**

I'd like to talk to you about happiness, the Festival, the cinematograph... but there would not be enough room in a single issue of *Le Film Français*.

*Cinemonde, Le Film Français, « Spécial Cannes » 1964*



Jean Rabier, Jacques Demy and Catherine Deneuve. Photo Agnès Varda

# 1964

## La revue du cinéma Image et son

n°175 juillet 1964



You have to start somewhere. In my case, I start with characters. It's a personal method: I know that that way I can construct a story, just as I know that I work better by the seaside than in the mountains... My 'mechanism' works that way. A specific character makes me think of a certain world, then of other characters, then of their interactions, and then there's a eureka moment and then the story elements are organised...

For example, for the film I'm working on now, I have the characters, they have a past but don't yet have a future. What I'm lacking, in some sense, is an anecdote... And if from one film to the next I reuse one of these characters it's not to be self-referential, which wouldn't bother me anyway though. Godard does this often, and I think it's quite lovely. It's some sort of allusion that amuses those who understand and that doesn't bother those who don't understand. It amuses me. For instance in *Band of Outsiders*, his characters go into a cafe and we hear the music of *Umbrellas* coming out of a juke-box: when we were writing the music for the film, I'd talked to Godard about it and we commented that it wasn't made for juke-boxes! He remembered that and the rest is history!...

But the reminders of *Lola* in *Umbrellas* are very different: they are an integral part of the second

film, they are necessary for my creation... Getting back to the film I'm working on now, it is the anecdote that's still missing. But that doesn't really matter.

After all, there are not so many dramatic situations and that's not the point. For instance, Truffaut's film *Soft Skin*. Its anecdote is very simple, very banal. But what I find admirable is Truffaut's view of these banal things: eyes meeting in a lift, the man on the telephone, etc.... All of that is very beautiful.

[...]

It was war that caused this love to come undone. Here, war is the general, social context. But what I'm telling you here are my current thoughts, which I wasn't thinking about two years ago when I wrote the film.

*Interview with Jacques Demy, taped by Philippe Pilard*



Myriam Michelson and Nino Castelnuovo

# The music of Michel Legrand

**How did you come up with the concept for *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*? Is it your personal take on opera?**

Jacques Demy : Yes and no. Here's the story: After *Lola*, Jacques came to me with a script entitled *Infidelity* or *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. It's a story about heartbreak, a broken promise between a very young woman, Geneviève, and her beloved, Guy, who is drafted for the war in Algeria. Demy wanted to shoot it like a regular film, in black and white and Cinemascope.

After reading the script three times, I thought, «As with *Lola*, the subject matter and dialogue here have a profoundly musical dimension to them. This time Jacques mustn't give in, he has to go the whole nine yards.» He came around to my viewpoint. We initially agreed there should be singing in certain key situations, like when the lovers part ways on the train platform.

For ten days, Jacques and I tried to come up with musical themes for our singing sequences. We failed miserably. Nothing worked.

The juncture between speaking and singing felt artificial, almost like an anomaly. The audience was bound to wonder, «These characters were just talking, why are they singing all of a sudden?» Or the other way around, «Why have they stopped singing?» Upon reflection, Jacques came to the following conclusion: «Michel, since the transition between talking and singing is bothering us, let's make the film either all talking or all singing.» I took the ball and ran with it: «Let's go with all singing, no one has ever made a feature film in which singing totally replaces talking. If we pull it off, we will have invented a whole new musical genre!» We started talking aesthetics and decided realism was essential. Or at least the idea of a transposed realism. We'd have to steer clear of the operatic, dodge the excesses of lyricism. We set out to create a singing tempo closely resembling that of speech, with the same pauses and precipitations found in everyday language. Because the characters are ordinary people: a mechanic, a mother and daughter who run an umbrella store, a jeweler.



**Did you quickly zero in on a musical aesthetic for *Umbrellas* ?**

No, I had to feel around for quite a while before I stumbled upon the right style. My first attempts were too elaborate, they lacked simplicity, readability. Months passed, and I wasn't getting it. My eureka moment came during a long weekend in Noirmoutier, in November 1961. It was the jewelry store sequence. «We're in a difficult situation. Geneviève helps me as much as she can...» Jacques exclaimed, «Michel, I think that's it! The words and the music are flowing naturally.» I liken it to a spool of thread: I'd finally found the end, now all I had to do was pull the thread. From that point on, Jacques and I met daily, most often at his place, Rue Daguerre. Together, we tried to figure out which musical themes worked best with his lyrics.

Since music has very precise rhythmic and metric requirements, sometimes a theme would not completely adhere to the lyrics. So Jacques would adapt them, lengthening or shortening his text to fit in with my musical notes. We created absolutely everything together. By that stage, Demy had already worked out in his mind how he would direct the film. He'd say, «Michel, in this

scene we need to give Cassard time to pace before he confesses his love for Geneviève to Mrs. Émery; here you need to leave me time to finish my tracking shot.» Therein lies the originality of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*: the music is an integral part of the filmic language.

Once we finished the work, we were faced with the daunting task of finding a producer... until Pierre Lazareff introduced us to Mag Bodard. Same thing for the score: We had to finance the recording of an hour and a half's worth of music, complete with voices and orchestra, before we could shoot the first take of the first scene. Every single music publisher in Paris turned us down with the same argument: «Too expensive! Too risky!» I ended up producing the recording sessions myself, along with my pal Francis Lemarque.

### **What were the recording sessions like?**

Unforgettable. We emerged exhausted but euphoric. There were a lot of high-tempo passages, so I'd chosen singers who were accustomed to jazz: my sister Christiane, José Bartel, Danielle Licari... The actors were in the recording booth during the vocal sessions. Catherine Deneuve watched Danielle Licari sing her role and gave her acting directions: «I think I'd probably do this line in a more detached way, for this one I'd sound more worried,» etc. By "directing" her voice in this way, Catherine was preparing for the shoot, so she'd feel more comfortable in front of the camera. It was a strange sensation, having the two women who were playing Geneviève standing there before me - the two chemical elements that, when mixed together, would become Geneviève.

Fifty percent of Danielle and fifty percent of Catherine would add up to one-hundred-percent of a new entity - a synthetic character who would completely escape both of them. After its release in February 1964, *Umbrellas* gradually rose up the ranks of success, winning the Louis-Delluc award, the Palme d'Or in Cannes, Oscar nominations for the music, international acclaim... plus there were a flurry of cover versions of the theme song. The sheer amplitude of this maelstrom surprised us, overwhelmed us. It was in direct proportion to the difficulties we encountered financing the project. Someone once said, «Great success is not achieved with, it is achieved against.»

### **Outside of your work, what was your relationship with Demy like?**

Honestly, the development of *Umbrellas* was accompanied by another movement, that of a friendship in crescendo. Jacques and I were of the same generation, with about eight months between us. Naturally we talked a lot about cinema, but also about life, love, our children.

Demy was a vibrant being, with genuine charm, attentive to others, a propensity towards melancholy, as well. My son Hervé was almost the same age as Rosalie, the daughter of Agnès and theatre director Antoine Bourseiller, raised by Jacques as his own daughter. This contributed to bringing our two couples together. Our little tribe operated according to incomprehensible codes for the uninitiated. The women called themselves "Fufutes" (Smarties) among themselves, the men "Fufus" (Nutsos), a rite whose origins I've forgotten. But that we continue to perpetuate today, Agnès Varda and I. People give us worried looks when I kiss her, booming: "How are you, my little Fufute?" As the years went by, the friendship between Jacques and I grew into a true fraternity, coupled with cheerful emulation.

Fascinated by the Cessna that I flew, Jacques sat his pilot's licence at the Villacoublay aeroclub and bought a little plane himself. In the other direction, his collection of sixteen millimetre films made me want to acquire a projector, to hold family cine-club sessions. And then there were the holidays, which the six of us quickly shared. The fusion of our two families created one big re-composed family. I rarely feel melancholic, except perhaps for these euphoric moments of youth and cooperation. We were thirty and we were happy.

*From an interview with Michel Legrand*

*by Stéphane Lerouge.*

*Excerpt from L'intégrale Jacques Demy/  
Michel Legrand (Universal Classics & Jazz France)*



## The first director who really saw me...

Interview with  
Catherine Deneuve

**Serge Toubiana** : *Watching Jacques Demy's films again, I'm struck by the complexity and relative darkness of his vision.*

Catherine Deneuve : I've always thought of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* as a fairytale, at once poetic and cruel. Though honestly, I didn't think about that during the shoot. The atmosphere on set was so magical, so fun, so joyful. I wasn't even twenty yet - for me it was above all a great experience. It was later, seeing the film again, reevaluating certain scenes... as life began to resemble the film, and milestones, accidents, would bring the film to mind: the relationship between the mother and daughter, the mother pushing her daughter to be wise and reasonable, the marriage, the reunion, the blend of melancholy and sadness... The ending of *Umbrellas* reminds me of *Splendor in the Grass*. There are analogies, though the sexuality of Kazan's film is far more violent, the madness it provokes.

The sad thing is he's gone. Whatever differences we may have had years later, our friendship, though quite reserved, was passionate.

He needed you to agree with him completely. He was extremely stubborn, very proud. It's true that he interpreted requests, questions or reservations as rejection. We got tripped up on *A Room in Town*, but I would say that was entirely his choice. As a matter of fact, I never say we fell out, I always said he fell out with me. And it was true for a pretty long time. (...)

**You were there when he achieved audience recognition, with *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. What was that like?**

The shoot was an extraordinary experience. An amazing producer, Mag Bodard, made it all happen through sheer brute force. She had the means to get the film made, in the right conditions. The project was far too unusual to be handed a blank check from the get-go. Too much money is detrimental to films in general. Lack of money can help maintain the nervous energy,



desire and imagination you need. Jacques, his production designer Bernard Evein and the technicians were forced to be inventors. I remember them fabricating an incredible crane and pulley tracking system so Jacques could get what he wanted. Shooting with music made it feel like we weren't making a film. That was the first time an entire film was shot in lip-sync. I knew the entire thing by heart before the shoot even began. In fact, it's the only film I still know entire parts from, because you had to learn the whole thing beforehand.

Seeing *Umbrellas* again, I was struck by two things: You seem to know the melody by heart, and your acting resembles that of a silent film. You're using the expressions of the silent genre, or melodrama. Really? Well, *Umbrellas* is a melodrama. And the music makes you more expressive. In silences, you don't express the same things when the focus is on you. When there is music playing in the background, it carries you to a more expressive place.

***The characters give more of themselves, like during the silent era.***

I was just saying the other day that I'd love to do a silent film. That's a crazy thing to say, but the idea of doing a silent film with subtitles amuses me, perhaps as a style exercise. Something totally expressive.

***At the time, did you get the impression some of the dialogue in Umbrellas might seem ridiculous, because of its triviality?***

No, never. Fortunately, since as I hadn't done many films, Jacques really carried me through it. I was extremely shy. A mere phrase or the suggestion of a doubt would have been enough to make me to shut like a clam. Jacques pushed you to take risks, but he took you there in stages, gently. I loved the music in *Umbrellas* so much, I didn't think about it. I remember crying during rehearsals. It must be said that a great deal of the film existed prior to the shoot. We had the voices and the music.

***How did you meet?***

One day I received an invitation to attend a premiere of the film *Lola*. He'd drawn a circle around his name and written "I'd really like to meet you." I went along, intrigued and quite touched. He'd seen me in a film, *L'Homme à Femmes*, with Mel Ferrer. We met, and he told me about the project. But some time passed between our meeting and the *Umbrellas* shoot. I became a blond, I had my son. Nearly two years went by.



Photo Agnès Varda

## From *Lola* to the *Umbrellas* of *Cherbourg*

*Interview with Marc Michel*

A year after *Lola*, Jacques told me he wanted me to play the Cassard character again, in another film. I was immediately sold on his unprecedented idea of having his characters move across time.

But the Roland Cassard of *Umbrellas* is very different from the one in *Lola*. He's more complex, and he's dragging behind him a veritable aircraft carrier ! I worked on his every gesture (down to the way he handles the gems in the jewerly store) in order to convey his gravitas, the awareness he's gained on his travels in the years following his youth in Nantes.

To portray this man of adventure, Jacques insisted I wear a Clark Gable mustache. I hated the idea, but I had to bow to his obstinacy. Thinking back, I realize it was clearly the best way to illustrate the character's transformation. I'd gone from naïve to manipulator, a man who knows weight of things, and their fragility too.

*Excerpt from an interview with Matthieu Orléan, Autumn 2012*





# Once upon a time... The Umbrellas of Cherbourg

*Said Ould Khelifa in conversation  
with Jacques Demy*

**JD:** I have always loved music and painting and I try to put all of that into my films. I tried to create a performance with these elements and tell stories with color, music, poetry and also choreography and ballet.

**SOK:** *Weren't you a little worried, because there is a standardization of the use of speech in cinema and theatre, a codified language, and you come along to "make it sing"?*

I was sort of thinking of opera, though I find it too set in its ways. Opera doesn't move with the times very quickly. I thought there were perhaps alternative ways of using speech and music. When I spoke to Michel Legrand about it I remember saying, "In France there are different accents that really 'sing'; so if we were to transpose the melody of the Marseille accent, for instance, a kind of music would emerge from that. We could apply the same principle." But I didn't want to go too far with it, like they do in Opera, because I still wanted the words to be understood. Often in opera, the voices reach so high and low that we no longer understand the meaning of the text. It seemed dangerous, and a bit of shame, to do that in cinema. So bearing that in mind, I told Michel Legrand we needed to come up with a simple, new, interesting form of expression, and that's how we arrived at *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. It was a long process, because it wasn't easy at first. Michel lost six or eight months, he couldn't figure it out. It wasn't working. The lyrics were on one side, the music on the other. The music was nice, the lyrics were good, but they didn't go together.

**Did you feel like you were writing a libretto, to stay close to the opera format, or was it more like a script?**

Initially it was a script, but I thought it was lovely to treat it in a lyrical way, to see it as a potentially operatic story. This is what led me to write it first-ly as a script, so we'd have a basis to work from. Then as soon as Michel Legrand was on board with it, we worked together every day.

He'd write a note and I'd write a syllable, or vice-versa. It was very important that we work together. We worked for a long time without results. It wasn't good, or pretty, or convincing: it seemed artificial. Then one day, I'll always remember, this one particular scene really struck me. I felt giddy, the music and words really worked together. It was very, very good. I said to Michel Legrand, "This is it, we must continue in this direction, it works."

The film was very hard to get up and running. People didn't like it. They said to me, "The audience will walk out after one reel, they won't stay to the end."

**Did the actors have any reservations?**

No, they weren't well known, so they were all delighted with the experience. Catherine Deneuve was not yet famous, and neither was Nino Castelnuovo. Anne Vernon had had a career, but she'd been off the radar for a while and was very happy to sing. The actors found the experience pleasant and stimulating.

**Did you ever consider using singers as actors?**

At one point, I thought of Sylvie Vartan and Johnny Hallyday, but neither of them wanted to do it. Besides, Michel Legrand was very exacting in terms of the music. He wanted everything to be sung perfectly. Cinema is all about special effects anyway, you have the image on the one hand and the sound on the other, then you put the two together. So I figured we could very easily cheat. We could use the image of one person and the voice of another, just like an overdub.

It is possible to attain perfection: to put the most beautiful face with the most beautiful voice. Michel Legrand thought this was a great idea, and we took it from there.

**For the shoot you had a third accomplice, the production designer, who has long been a faithful companion of yours.**

I already knew Bernard Evein. We were at art school together in Nantes (he was also part of the "Nantes period"). Back then, I was absolutely mad about Matisse. I kept saying, "The film should be a Matisse painting that sings. We need to find harmonies that are like his paintings and completely transpose that style." I made paper cut-outs, thinking it would be good to have some paper flowers. I showed them to Bernard Evein, saying, "Let's go crazy, the film should mirror pop art." We started discussing that. Certain things now



seem incredible to me. I made the film in 1963, so I wrote it in 1962. Right during the Algerian War. When I showed the script to the distributors, they all said, "You mustn't say the word 'Algeria', it's too dangerous." But it's a film about war; the film is a product of war. The film isn't about the problem in Algeria, but it has to be mentioned, because the war is what destroys love.

Though it isn't a political film, this is an essential point. I still believe that. It was crucial to situate it in time. That was important. It's amazing how frightened people were.

***The Algerian War was definitely a taboo subject in French cinema at the time.***

I'm glad I resisted. It is always important to be able to date things. Cinema is our memory, the world's memory. Despite many difficulties and very little money, the film got made thanks to one producer, Mag Bodard. She was wonderful. I spoke about the film to the whole of Paris. I saw everyone. At that point, I had only made one film, *Lola*. It was not a very commercial film, but people liked it. They said, "Now here's a filmmaker who knows how to use a camera. So what do you want to do next?" I told them about the project, and they all said, "He's mad, it'll never work." Only Mag Bodard gushed, "It's wonderful, exactly the kind of film I want to make." She had a true and noble ambition to make beautiful films, whereas most producers want to make money more than anything else.

***What happened after Umbrellas ?***

We were very lucky to win the Prix Louis-Delluc and then a Palme d'Or at Cannes, which was totally unexpected. It was wonderful, and I gained international recognition. [...]

*Excerpt from an interview with Jacques Demy, november 1986*



# Super or regular ?

By Olivier Père

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* in itself confers to Jacques Demy a unique role in the history of cinema. With this manifesto film, the filmmaker stood out as an inventor of filmic forms. In French cinema, based more on the idea of heritage than on that of revolution, there are not many of them: Jacques Tati, Robert Bresson, Alain Resnais, and Jean-Luc Godard. Jacques Demy kept the dream alive, for years, of a sentimental and emotional cinema inspired by deeply original chromatic and musical choices. His obstinacy, the complicity of Michel Legrand, and the courage of the produced Mag Bodard allowed him to create, amid the euphoria of youth and inspiration, a peerless filmic adventure, whose aesthetic choices differ from those of his previous two films: an exceptional use of colour, transfigured natural settings, and the pictoriality of the framing.

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was a crazy bet, a labour of perseverance that resulted in a highly original filmic object, verging on experimental, coupled with global success and immense popularity. Not a Hollywood-style musical comedy, or a film-opera, or French operetta, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is therefore an *en chanté* (sung / 'in-chanted' / enchanted) film, according to Demy's lovely expression, as one might say "in colour". Therein most likely began the misunderstanding around "Demy the enchanter", since there is probably no film more disenchanting than *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, or filmmaker more lucid than Demy regarding social and political injustices.

Behind the dazzling colours, hides (just barely) a cruel story of children full of illusions and sublime sentiments that will be dashed against the relentless law of reality. Geneviève, pregnant to Guy, resolves to marry Roland Cassard to settle her mother's debts and thus avoid bankruptcy and dishonour.

*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is also one of the rare French films of the time to broach the subject of the Algerian War, represented by the figure of absence, as it was experienced by French families and women during the Algerian "events" (as the euphemism of the period called them). It is the off-screen part of the film, perhaps the most important, about the suffering of separation and the fear of death.

The unprecedented refinement of the images does not eclipse the evocative power of the words, which are the only things capable of expressing the disgust of war in a country where "sun and death travel together". Finally, it was the film (along with *Belle de jour*) that invented Catherine Deneuve and immediately ushered in the actor's metamorphoses as her career progressed: virginal and Raphaelite beauty, tragic lover, and melancholic *grande bourgeoisie*.

A veritable masterpiece on thwarted love, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* contributes to a cinema of cruelty in which our tears, inevitably shed upon each viewing of the film, do not relieve us.



Nino Castelnuovo, Ellen Farmer and Hervé Legrand



# Jacques Demy : portrait and filmography

Jacques Demy was born on June 5, 1931 in Ponchâteau (Loire Atlantique) and spent his childhood in Nantes in his father's garage.

Nantes was bombed in 1944. Jacques attended technical college and turned his hand to animated films at age 14. He then attended the Ecole de Vaugirard (studying directing and camerawork) in Paris. After working as an assistant to Paul Grimaud on advertising films, and to Georges Rouquier on two films, Jacques made his first short film at the age of 24: *Le Sabotier du Val de Loire* (1955).

He then started writing and directing feature films. Some have become classics of the Nouvelle Vague: *Lola* (1960), which marked his debut with Michel Legrand

- *Bay of Angels* (1962) ;
- *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964, Palme d'or at the Cannes Festival, Prix Louis-Delluc, Oscars nominated) ;
- *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967) ;
- *Donkey Skin* (1970).

Among his other films is *A Room in Town* (1982) a singing film like *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. This time, the music was composed by Michel Colombier.

Demy's last film, shot in 1988, is a musical (Yves Montand's first): *Three seats for the 26th* (1988). Music by Michel Legrand.

In it we hear the following lines:

*Dancing movies, singing movies,  
Movies, your good humour enchants me,  
Laughing movies, happy movies,  
Cynical movies,  
Mocking movies,  
Violent movies for brawlers,  
I don't care for that kind of movie,  
I prefer musicals.*

Jacques Demy met Agnès Varda in 1958. They raised Rosalie and Mathieu. Rosalie, a costume designer, worked with her father on four of his films. Mathieu, born in 1972, is an actor and film director.

Jacques Demy died on October 27, 1990.

Most of his films have been restored by Ciné-Tamaris under the supervision of Agnès and their children.

The square in front of the town hall in the 14th district of Paris is now called "place Jacques Demy".





Nino Castelnuovo and Jacques Demy on set. Photo : Agnès Varda



## CINÉ-TAMARIS

In 1954, Agnès Varda created Tamaris Films to produce her first feature film, *La Pointe Courte*, a precursor of the French New Wave. The company adopted the name Ciné-Tamaris in 1975, at the time of production of *Daguerréotypes*, and continues its production, distribution, and book publishing activities today, as well as exhibition productions.

Today, Ciné-Tamaris and the Varda-Demy family want to be able to continue to promote the heritage films of Agnès Varda and Jacques Demy that compose its catalogue in a new technological context: digital cinema and its new platforms.

Thanks to the digital restorations of the films in our catalogue, we hope to reinvigorate the distribution of Ciné-Tamaris films and thus allow viewers to rediscover them in the best technical and artistic conditions.

***« In the conception of a film,  
I need people who are my allies.***

***So I try to surround myself  
with associates who belong to  
the same family as myself.  
With Michel Legrand, the bond  
is even stronger: he is not  
an associate but a brother.***

***He is more a musical fountain  
than a composer.” »***

*Jaques Demy*

# The film crew in front of the umbrellas shop



From left to right, from the top:

- |   |                  |    |                     |    |                    |
|---|------------------|----|---------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Maurice Urbain   | 9  | Christiane Fornelli | 17 | Nino Castelnuovo   |
| 2 | Roger Delattre   | 10 | Pierre Major        | 18 | Anne Vernon        |
| 3 | Philippe Dussart | 11 | Nicolas Stanislas   | 19 | Annie Maurel       |
| 4 | Pierre Villemain | 12 | Roger Schleich      | 20 | Un marin           |
| 5 | Jacques Demy     | 13 | Pierre Dubost       | 21 | Joseph Gérard      |
| 6 | Jean Rabier      | 14 | Pierre de Vos       | 22 | Jean-Paul Savignac |
| 7 | André Frédérick  | 15 | Albert Moreau       | 23 | Un autre marin     |
| 8 | Agnès Soulet     | 16 | Catherine Deneuve   |    |                    |





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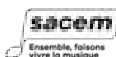
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