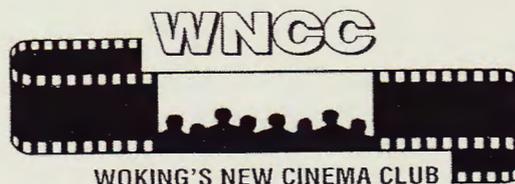


The Main Feature



Issue Number 7 – 13th December 2007

LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE (BEAUTY AND THE BEAST)

(France, 1946 100 mins)

Director Jean Cocteau
Cinematography Henri Alekan
Music Georges Auric
Design Christian Bérard and René Moulaert

Cast

The Beast/The Prince/Avenant	Jean Marais
Belle	Josette Day
Félicie	Mila Parély
Adélaïde	Nane Germon
Ludovic	Michel Auclair
The usurer	Raoul Marco
Belle's father	Marcel André



La Belle et la bête is a fairy tale, inspired by a story written in 1757 by Madame Leprince de Beaumont, an impoverished teacher of infants in England. She founded *Le Nouveau Magasin français*, a collection of literary and scientific works aimed at children. *La Belle et la bête* was included in the collection, and was itself adapted for younger readers from an earlier short story written in 1740 by Madame Barbot de Villeneuve. The story is well-known and populated with fairy story characters from central casting.

Once upon a time, a merchant lived with his three daughters: the proud Félicie and Adélaïde; and the good and beautiful Belle. The merchant's son, Ludovic – a scoundrel and a gambler – has a friend Avenant who is in love with Belle. The merchant, a good but weak man, learns that one of his boats which he thought lost has just returned to port. Thinking to regain his wealth, he plans a journey. His elder daughters asks that he brings them dresses, coats and jewels; Belle asks for a rose. On his way back, the merchant – disappointed and completely ruined - loses himself in the forest and takes, to give to Belle, a rose from the garden of the Beast, a creature who looks like a Lord but who has the face and hands of a deer. The Beast tells the surprised merchant that because he has picked the rose, he must die. The two agree that the merchant may leave provided he returns within two or three days or sends one of his daughters as a replacement. He returns home on a white horse (called The Magnificent). To save her father, Belle returns to the Beast where she is surprised to find the Beast, suffering from his ugliness, surround her with luxury and kindness. At first frightened, Belle's feelings gradually change from pity to something approaching love.

Meanwhile, the merchant falls ill and the Beast allows Belle to return to his bedside provided she promises to return. At home, Belle's beauty makes her sisters jealous; deceived by their crocodile tears she dares not return to the Beast's castle. Egged on by the two sisters, Ludovic and Avenant go to the Beast's castle planning to rob him of his wealth, where Avenant loses his life. At the same time, Belle returns to the Beast's castle to find him dying, but under her loving gaze he changes into a Prince Charming who flies away with her to his magic kingdom ...

Jean Cocteau was born in 1889 of a bourgeois family. He did not regard himself as a film maker (he was 57 when he directed *La Belle et la bête*, his second film after an interval of 15 years) but as a dramatist, novelist, poet, painter, decorator, boxing promoter, essayist, librettist, journalist – and full-

time celebrity. His artistic debut came in 1908 with a public reading of his poems and in 1909 he charmed his way into the extended family of Serge de Diaghilev, impresario of the Paris-based Russian Ballet. During the Great War he worked for a time as an ambulance driver and, in 1917, with friends from the Russian Ballet produced *Parade*, an avant-garde ballet conceived by Cocteau with backdrops and costumes by Picasso, music by Satie and a programme note by Guillaume Apollinaire which included the first documented use of the word *surréaliste*. The ballet was greeted with ridicule, but it made Cocteau's name.

When his 20-year old lover Raymond Radiguet died of typhoid in 1923, Cocteau took to opium and was addicted for much of the 1920s. Whilst in rehab (as we would say today) Cocteau wrote a play, a libretto, an autobiographical sketch, a monologue and a novel all of which drew on mythology, melodrama and fantasy – themes which recur in the film.

The character of the Beast is played by Jean Marais who some have suggested was a poor actor who only landed the part because he was Cocteau's lover. In contrast, others admire his acting as the Beast as well as in his other roles as Avenant and Prince Charming. As the Beast his make-up practically engulfs his entire body, and apparently took five hours to apply – three hours for the face and an hour each for the hands. Removing it was like a surgical operation.

A good deal has been written about *La Belle et la bête*, quite a bit by Cocteau himself. For example, he said of the story 'I want to draw it, to paint it, to put it on the stage. In the end, the cinema seems to me the only machine which can give form to my dream.'. He also said 'To fairyland as people usually see it, I would bring a kind of realism to banish the vague and misty nonsense, now so completely outworn. [...] My aim would be to make the Beast so human, so sympathetic, so superior to men, that his transformation into Prince Charming would come as a terrible blow to Beauty, condemning her to a humdrum marriage and a future that is summed up in the last sentence of fairy tales "And they lived happily ever after.'".

In France, the film is taught in schools. Teachers are encouraged to draw their pupils' attention to the themes in the film: love; jealousy; death; differences; courage; tolerance. Plenty to discuss there in the interval, together with the significance of mirrors, horses and gloves.

And one last quote from Cocteau on one of his most celebrated films, citing the poet Paul Eluard: '... to understand my film version of *La Belle et la bête*, you must love your dog more than your car.' You could discuss that too.

Michael Hipkins



BBC NEWS

Lee film sweeps Taiwan 'Oscars'

Ang Lee's controversial spy thriller *Lust, Caution* has won a host of prizes at the Golden Horse awards in Taiwan.

The World War II drama was named best picture at the annual event - seen by many as the Chinese-language equivalent of the Academy Awards.

Lee won the best director prize, while his leading man Tony Leung Chiu-wai was named best actor.

Co-star Tang Wei won a newcomer award, while Lee was also named outstanding Taiwanese filmmaker of the year.

Additional honours went to *Lust, Caution* for its screenplay, score and make-up and costume design.

Cast member Joan Chen also had something to celebrate after being named best actress for another film, *The Home Song Stories*.

Collaborator

Tony Leung Ka-fai, Chiu-wai's near-namesake, was named best supporting actor for his role in *The Drummer*.

Lust, Caution's awards haul follows the Golden Lion prize it won at the Venice Film Festival in September.

The raunchy drama, however, will not be up for next year's best foreign film Oscar after the Academy ruled too few people from Taiwan were involved in its production.

Set in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during World War II, the film follows the fortunes of a young woman embroiled in a plot to seduce an enemy collaborator.

Lee's other films include *Hulk*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and the Oscar-winning *Brokeback Mountain*.

The Golden Horse awards, held in Taipei, mostly feature films from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

This year's event was marked by controversy when two submissions from mainland China, *Tuya's Marriage* and *Blind Mountain*, were forced to withdraw.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/entertainment/7134533.stm>

Published: 2007/12/08 17:47:29 GMT

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***Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year***

Reactions to

L'Enfant (The Child) – 22nd November 2007

Score 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Votes ~ ~ 1 1 3 9 10 21 6 3 ~

Total Votes - 54 Average Score - 6.37 Position in Season - 6th

Film	Score	Position
The Lives of Others	8.23	1 st
Notes on a Scandal	7.73	2 nd
Pans Labyrinth	6.88	3 rd
The Prestige	6.86	4 th
Offside	6.56	5 th
L'Enfant	6.37	6 th
The Day I became a Woman	5.72	7 th

Your views

Great not to have any background music – makes it more dramatic. An excellent film, beautifully acted.

A total waste of time

Found it very dreary

A Belgian Fagin & Oliver

Some scenes were rather drawn out – could have been shorter

Gritty and realistic – and some terrific acting

Outstanding acting. At least some hope of redemption in the end!

Hard to watch

I didn't really care enough about the characters to find it interesting.

Riveting

Next Time

10th January 2008 – Little Miss Sunshine

In this award laden film, Olive has a dream to win the Little Miss Sunshine contest. Her family wants her dream to come true, but they are the dictionary definition of "dysfunctional". Can they survive a road trip to California?

 USA/2006/101 mins



Repropoint

sponsors photocopying of the main feature