

# The Main Feature



## Season 34 - Issue 2 (screening 26.9.13)

Austria/France/Germany, 2012  
127 minutes, certificate 12A

Director Michael Haneke  
Screenplay Michael Haneke  
Cinematography Darius Khondji

Cast  
Anne Emanuelle Riva  
Georges Jean-Louis Trintignant  
Eva Isabelle Huppert



JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT



EMMANUELLE RIVA

AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DE  
ISABELLE HUPPERT

# AMOUR

Interviewed during the making of *Amour*, Jean-Louis Trintignant said: 'I've rarely seen [...] a film so sad, so desperate, so hopeless.' It's easy

to agree that *Amour* is a dark film. And it has a powerful effect on the emotions of the viewer, so much so that it is difficult to be objective about it.

Briefly, *Amour* tells the story of a cultured elderly couple, Anne (Emanuelle Riva) and Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant). Anne, a piano teacher, suffers a stroke. Georges promises not to put her in hospital or in a home. The film traces both the deterioration of Anne's health and the evolving relationship between George and Anne as he cares for her.

The film is deeply moving, for what seem to me to be three equally important reasons. First, the script. Michael Haneke, who also directs the film, drew on his personal experiences in writing the screenplay. The aunt who brought Haneke up when his feckless parents, both actors, realised they had no talent for child-raising, was crippled by rheumatism. At the age of 92 she overdosed on sleeping pills. Haneke found her in time, and took her to the hospital. She had previously begged him to help her die; he pointed out that since he was her heir, he might have ended in prison. A year after her first attempt, she took more pills and this time succeeded in taking her own life. Haneke thus has some understanding of the suffering of a debilitating medical condition.



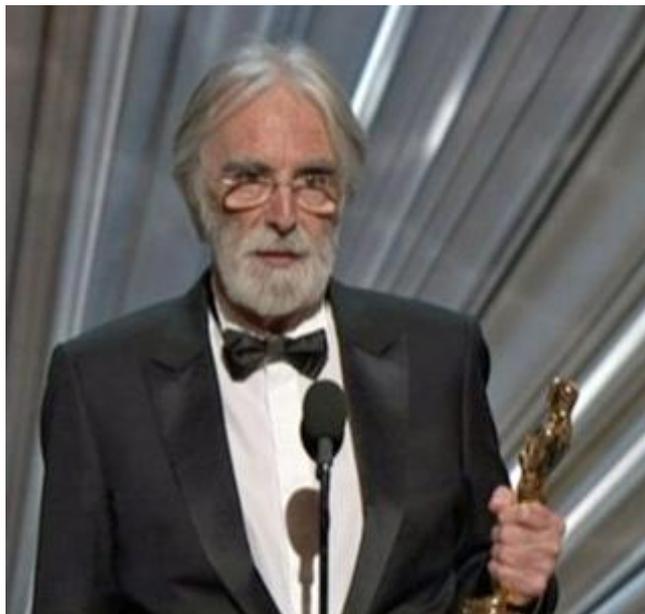
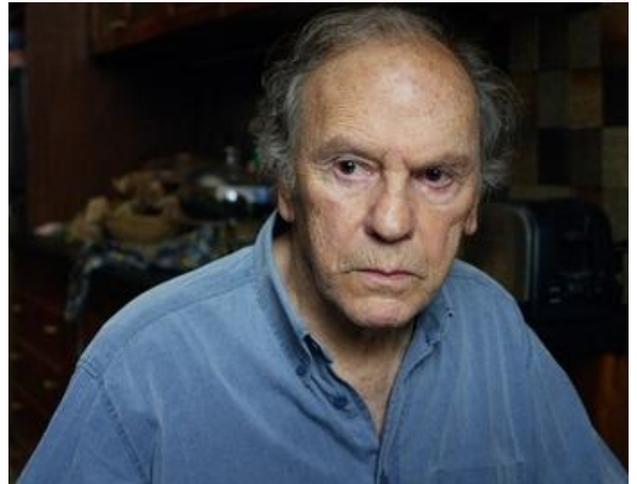
Second, the cast. This is a two-handed film (one critic called it a chamber piece) so the choice of actors is even more important than usual. Haneke wrote the script with Jean-Louis Trintignant in mind as Georges (Trintignant had narrated the French version of Haneke's film *The White Ribbon*). A veteran of French cinema, Trintignant's distinguished career includes such films as *A Man and a Woman*, *Z*, *Les Biches* and *My Night with Maud* in the 1960s and more recently *Three Colours Red*. Emanuelle Riva is equally

distinguished, coming to international prominence in 1959 in Renais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Both now in their eighties, their performances bring a rare authenticity to their roles. The early scene when Anne has her first stroke is a master class in understated but effective acting, 'rich in subtle gestures and expressive detail' as one critic put it.

They are joined by the excellent Isabelle Huppert in the supporting role of their daughter Eva. Though she appears on the screen for a relatively brief time, she brings real depth to her character who can only see the issues in her own frame of reference, not her parents'.

Third, the direction. Haneke emphasises the daily detail of life. The set is a reconstruction of the apartment where Haneke's parents lived. The authenticity is clear – the apartment is slightly overcrowded with furniture and ornaments, and is in need of redecoration. Almost all of the action takes place indoors: meals, washing, exercising, trying out the new wheelchair, brief conversations with the concierge and his wife, visits from Eva and from a former pupil of Anne. It feels claustrophobic as the couple are thrown together in a new way in their marriage through one caring for the other.

The style of the film is simple and direct. But above all it has a great sense of realism. We recognise everything we see. Haneke emphasises the simplicity, though he said: 'I think Bertold Brecht summed it up perfectly when he said "Simplicity is very difficult."'



The film and its cast have won many awards, including: the Oscar for Best Foreign Language film; the Palme d'Or at Cannes; and the best film at the Césars. Among others, Riva won the BAFTA and César awards for best actress; Trintignant the César for best actor. Huppert was nominated for best supporting actress at the Césars. Nonetheless, Haneke – and the film - has its critics. One article points out the film is unrealistic because Georges does not benefit from current enlightened practice for carers.

The film is difficult – sometimes harrowing - to watch. Its subject matter is not immediately attractive. The conclusion may repel some. But it is a masterly piece of film-making.

Michael Hipkins

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## RECENT NEWS ITEMS

*After our last film I thought the following Guardian article from 13 September would be of interest:*

Iran's main film industry guild has reopened, almost two years after it was closed by hardliners, reports the state news agency, Irna.

The demise of the House of Cinema was criticised by high-profile directors such as Asghar Farhadi, whose film, *A Separation*, won the 2012 Oscar for best foreign-language film. The reopening could signal a change in attitude towards film under the leadership of new Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, who is seen as more moderate than his predecessor and has hinted at a greater tolerance on cultural issues.

The guild, which has more than 5,000 members from all corners of the Iranian film industry, was closed in January 2012 after being accused of changing its statutes without consulting officials.

Deputy culture minister Hojatollah Ayoubi criticised the closure and confirmed that the decision indicated the new president's support for local directors. "When a cultural issue – like the one about the House of Cinema – becomes a political one, that is [because] the situation was not managed properly," he told Irna.

The reopening will raise hopes that Iran's best-known film-maker, Jafar Panahi, might soon benefit from the country's increasing tolerance. Panahi, the celebrated director of *The White Balloon* and *Offside*, is currently under house arrest for defying authorities with his films. He was banned from making films for 20 years and sentenced to six years in prison in December 2010.

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*Obituary from the BBC website on 13 September 2013:*

Ray Dolby, the US engineer who founded Dolby Laboratories and pioneered noise reduction in audio recordings, who died in San Francisco aged 80.

Mr Dolby had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for several years and was diagnosed with leukaemia this summer. His name became synonymous with home sound systems and cinema, and his work won many awards.

Kevin Yeaman, president of Dolby Laboratories, described Ray Dolby as a "true visionary".

Mr Dolby was born in Portland, Oregon, and grew up in the San Francisco area. He began his career in the Ampex Corporation, helping to develop early videotape recording systems while he was still a student. He then went on to complete his PhD at Cambridge University in England and in 1965 founded Dolby Laboratories in London.

The company grew to be an industry leader in audio technology, cutting background hiss in tape recordings and later bringing out "surround sound".

Mr Dolby moved his company to San Francisco in 1976 and in 1989 was awarded an Oscar for his contributions to cinema. He shared the award with Dolby executive Ioan Allen. He also received a Grammy award in 1995 and Emmy awards in 1989 and 2005.

Mr Dolby's son, filmmaker and novelist Tom Dolby, said: "Though he was an engineer at heart, my father's achievements in technology grew out of a love of music and the arts. He brought his appreciation of the artistic process to all of his work in film and audio recording."

Neil Portnow, president of the Recording Academy, which hands out the Grammy Awards, said Mr Dolby's innovations had "changed the way we listen to music and movies for nearly 50 years. His technologies have become an essential part of the creative process for recording artists and filmmakers, ensuring his remarkable legacy for generations to come," he added.

## Reactions to **Argo** – 12.9.13

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	~	2	4	16	6	2
Total received – 30	Average Score – 8.07									

### Your Comments

An excellent film to start the year

A good start to the season

Realistic, exciting and very well produced

Funny, scary and completely enthralling movie

A fine film telling a fascinating story

Pity about the sound (speech) quality, great film notwithstanding

Watched for the second time and enjoyed as much as before

A great film – very exciting

Hollywood rules

Great start back!

Gripping!

## *Our next film*

# 8pm on Thursday 10 October 2013

