

## Document Citation

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# RETROSPECTIVE



IRMA VEP

## THE FILMS OF OLIVIER ASSAYAS

**Olivier Assayas will be present on Saturday, February 2!**

A representative of the next generation of CAHIERS DU CINÉMA critics-turned-filmmakers Olivier Assayas has amassed a body of work that comprises some of the most ambitious and accomplished movies in contemporary French cinema. While he follows in the character-driven, behavioral tradition of post-New-Wave directors like Jean Eustache and Maurice Pialat, his connection to his CAHIERS forebears manifests itself in his movies' eagerness to enter into dialogue with a wide variety of cinematic texts, most famously in *IRMA VEP*, which looks backwards to the mysterious silent serials of the great Louis Feuillade while throwing a sidelong glance at contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Assayas' career has been marked by a thrilling creative restlessness, as he has explored a variety of genres and modes, trying his hand at contemporary drama (*CLEAN*), documentary portrait (*HHH*, his 1997 film on Hou Hsiao-hsien), period-piece (*LES DESTINÉES*), and cyber-thriller (the notorious *DEMONLOVER*). Anthology, in association with Yale University, presents a broad survey of Assayas's work.

Organized in collaboration with Richard Suchenski and David Pratt-Robson (Yale University). Special thanks to Paul Ginsburg (Universal), Clémence Taillandier (Zeitgeist Films), Ed Arentz and Cindy Banach (Palm Pictures), Jonathan Miller and Lori Fried (First Run/Icarus Films), Sonia Pachmayer (Focus Features), and Tiffany Stile (Genius Products).

### LATE AUGUST, EARLY SEPTEMBER / FIN AOÛT, DÉBUT SEPTEMBRE

1998, 112 minutes, 35mm. In French with English subtitles. With Mathieu Amalric, Virginie Ledoyen, Jeanne Balibar, Alex Descas, Arsinée Khanjian and Nathalie Richard. Distributed by Zeitgeist Films.

A beautiful, poignant film about the looming specter of mortality among a group of Parisians in their thirties who, loosely connected by their friendship with an older writer, are profoundly affected by his death. Assayas's famously agile camera charts their road to a hard-won understanding of themselves and of their old friend with a mixture of rigor and tenderness.

**-Friday, February 1 at 7:00, Saturday, February 2 at 9:30, and Saturday, February 9 at 4:30.**

### IRMA VEP OLIVIER ASSAYAS WILL INTRODUCE THE SCREENING ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2:

1996, 99 minutes, 35mm. In English and French with English subtitles. With Maggie Cheung, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Nathalie Richard. Distributed by Zeitgeist Films.

"[A] dark, brittle...comedy about a film company remaking Feuillade's silent serial *LES VAMPIRES*. This unexpected masterpiece was assembled so quickly that it has an improvisational feel and a surrealist capacity to access its own unconscious – traits it shares with Feuillade's work. A once prestigious French director (Léaud) casts Maggie Cheung (playing herself) as villainess Irma Vep, and his sexual infatuation with her is matched by that of the costume designer who escorts her around Paris. The feverish pace of the shooting seems to unleash bad vibes as well as desire, and Assayas follows the delirium as if he were at the center of a hurricane." –Jonathan Rosenbaum, CHICAGO READER

**-Friday, February 1 at 9:30, Saturday, February 2 at 7:00, and Saturday, February 9 at 9:30.**

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# RETROSPECTIVE



LATE AUGUST, EARLY SEPTEMBER



DEMONLOVER



CLEAN

## THE FILMS OF OLIVIER ASSAYAS, CONT.

### HHH: A PORTRAIT OF HOU HSIAO-HSIEN

1997, 91 minutes, video. In English, French and Mandarin with English subtitles. Distributed by First Run/Icarus Films.

Assayas's longtime enthusiasm for the work of Taiwanese filmmaker Hou led him to make this surprisingly exuberant profile of a director known for his quietly restrained, elliptical films. As Hou escorts Assayas around his childhood haunts of Taipei and its environs, he reveals himself to be charmingly wry, politically and critically engaged, and fond of karaoke.

**-Saturday, February 2 at 5:00,  
Monday, February 4 at 9:30, and  
Sunday, February 10 at 5:00.**

### LES DESTINÉES SENTIMENTALES

2000, 180 minutes, 35mm. In French with English subtitles. With Emmanuelle Béart, Charles Berling and Isabelle Huppert. Distributed by Genius Products.

This deceptively classical, supremely elegant adaptation of Jacques Chardonne's semi-autobiographical epic novel, set against a turbulent backdrop of turn-of-the-century French bourgeois complacency devolving into pre-WWII anxiety, traces a Protestant minister's dying marriage, his tentative seduction of a young woman, and his noble attempts to save his family's troubled Limoges porcelain factory.

**-Sunday, February 3 at 5:00 and  
Wednesday, February 6 at 7:00.**

André Téchiné

### ALICE AND MARTIN / ALICE ET MARTIN

1998, 120 minutes, 35mm. In French with English subtitles. Written by Olivier Assayas, Gilles Taurand and André Téchiné. With Juliette Binoche, Alexis Loret, Mathieu Amalric and Carmen Maura. Distributed by Focus Features.

A collaboration between Assayas (who co-wrote the screenplay) and André Téchiné, ALICE AND MARTIN is one of the most underrated works in both filmmakers' careers.

"ALICE AND MARTIN... tells a complex, convoluted love story with the lyrical force and dysfunctional frenzy that have been Mr. Téchiné's trademarks for over a quarter of a century. [F]ew of his films have achieved wide distribution in America. Of the ones I have seen, ALICE AND MARTIN is clearly among the most artistically accomplished and emotionally expressive."

—Andrew Sarris, NEW YORK OBSERVER

**-Sunday, February 3 at 8:30 and  
Monday, February 4 at 7:00.**

### DEMONLOVER

2002, 117 minutes, 35mm. In English and French with English subtitles. With Connie Nielsen, Charles Berling, Chloë Sevigny and Gina Gershon. Distributed by Palm Pictures.

Updating David Cronenberg's VIDEODROME for the dotcom age, this dark thriller throws together grey-suited executives, high-tech websites, and corporate espionage. As it draws links between the worlds of anime, videogames, and pay-per-view pornography, Assayas's film unnervingly suggests that even the most innocuous entertainments are part of a far less wholesome culture of the image.

"At once illness and antidote, wound and knife, chilling and fascinating — in short, demonic and loving — DEMONLOVER is a beautiful and disturbing contemporary filmic object." —Serge Kaganski, FILM COMMENT

**-Tuesday, February 5 at 7:00,  
Thursday, February 7 at 9:00, and  
Saturday, February 9 at 7:00.**

### CLEAN

2004, 111 minutes, 35mm. In English, French and Cantonese with English subtitles. With Maggie Cheung, Nick Nolte, Béatrice Dalle, Jeanne Balibar and Don McKellar. Distributed by Palm Pictures.

Assayas returns to the deft, naturalistic style of his early work with this story of a recovering addict struggling to put her life back together. When her husband ODs in a seedy motel, Emily (Cheung) embarks on a quest to reunite with her son, but her father-in-law (Nolte) is adamant that she first exorcise the demons of her addictions. Nolte gives perhaps the most tender performance of his career, while Cheung (Assayas's real-life ex) is a powerhouse.

**-Tuesday, February 5 at 9:30, Friday,  
February 8 at 7:00, and Sunday,  
February 10 at 7:00.**

### COLD WATER / L'EAU FROIDE

1994, 92 minutes, 35mm. In French with English subtitles. With Virginie Ledoyen, Cyprien Fouquet, László Szabó and Jean-Pierre Darroussin. Print courtesy of Universal Pictures.

With a soundtrack of generation-defining music that features Leonard Cohen, Alice Cooper, and Roxy Music, and with career-defining performances by a feral Ledoyen and an anguished Szabó, COLD WATER is a masterful portrait of adolescence circa 1972. Assayas conjures a sense of life teetering on the precipice of oblivion through spatial compositions that are at once constraining and expansive, tense camerawork, and a wintry palette of translucent blues.

**-Thursday, February 7 at 7:00, Friday,  
February 8 at 9:30, and Sunday,  
February 10 at 9:15.**