



*The
Lion Sleeps Tonight*

a film by Nabuhiro Suwa



SHELLAC PRESENTS

JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD

PAULINE ETIENNE

ARTHUR HARARI



Lion Sleeps Tonight

The

a film by Nabuhiro Suwa

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SYNOPSIS

South of France. Present day.

Jean, an actor caught up in the past, learns that his current film shoot is unexpectedly suspended for an indefinite period. He takes this opportunity to visit an old friend and settles, clandestinely, into an abandoned house where it happened that Juliette, the great love of his life, once lived.

A group of young friends, novice filmmakers, stumble upon the same house and decide it's the perfect location for their next home-made horror movie.

Jean and the kids will meet face to face, sooner or later.

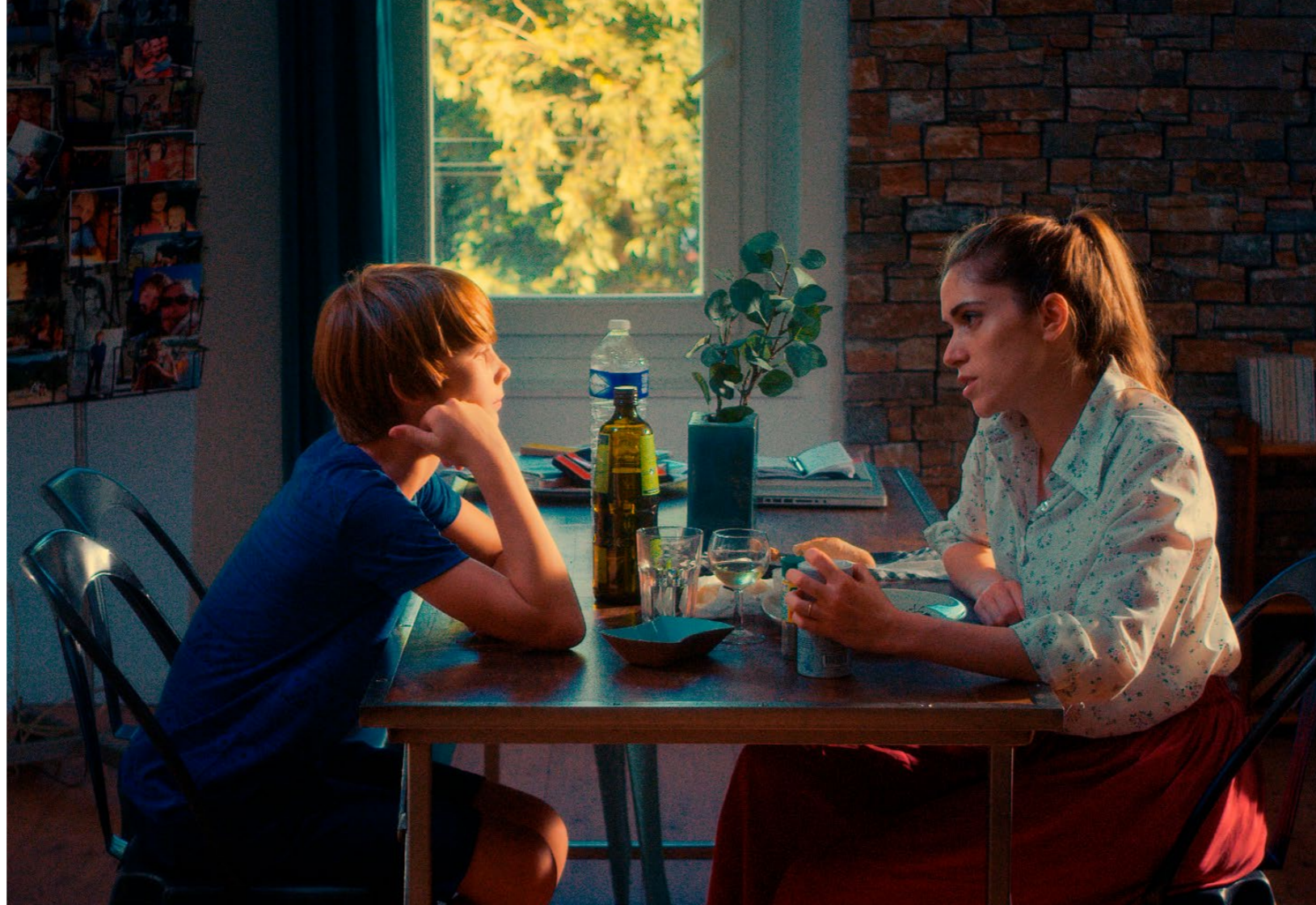
CAPTURING JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD'S PRESENCE

We met for the first time in 2013 at the Festival International du Film de La Roche-sur-Yon. There was a retrospective of his work at the same time as mine. Jean-Pierre was interested in my films and watched them. That's how we met. I wasn't expecting him to see my films, so I was delighted about that. We had some good moments together. Jean-Pierre had always been a significant actor for me, so I would be lying if I said that I had never dreamt of working with him one day, but I didn't think that it would really happen...When I saw him, I felt a powerful cinematic poetry in his presence, in the way he was and the way he spoke. This made me really want to film him. At that time, we only spoke vaguely about the idea of making a film together; nothing was definite. The starting point was a simple desire to capture Jean-Pierre's presence on film.



A COMBINATION OF REALITY AND FANTASY

Tom Harari, our cinematographer developed this wonderful light. His way of creating light is very bold. He repeatedly amazed me on set. It was very inspiring to work with him. I didn't give him very clear instructions. However we shared the same vision. You had the impression that this film would be multi-faceted; a combination of reality and fantasy that would not be expressed through straightforward naturalism. Of course the filming location played a very important role. The choice of the south determined our direction. In retrospect, I think that the film required this light.



SPONTANEITY

There are many children in this film...Over the course of the last few years I organised several film workshops for children in Japan. The children film and edit a film in just three days in these workshops. Their creative process is very interesting and I wanted to integrate it in the project, but without subjecting them to our control, that is, I wanted the children to imagine a story and film it themselves autonomously. That is why the casting was very specific. Twenty or so children took part in our workshops, and we chose those that you see in the film. But the choice was extremely difficult as they were all wonderful. To tell you the truth, I wanted everyone to be in the film... They tried very hard to play their fictional characters, but what I loved, was seeing them simply being there spontaneously with their own personalities.



VIVACITY

At the start of the project, I had an image in mind, an image where Jean-Pierre is with a woman. And I had the impression that this woman was a ghost, I don't know why... I met several actresses for this role. They were all very interesting. But I had a strong intuition with Pauline Etienne. I thought: 'she's the one'. It's very difficult to explain it in words... Pauline is very vivacious, something not usually associated with the typical image of a ghost. She also has a pureness. Also, what's magical about her is that when you see her next to Jean-Pierre, you completely forget their age difference. She was amazing from the first scene. Her character was quite complex, but Pauline succeeds in playing it with such accuracy and conviction.

THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT

As the project evolved, I decided that I wanted Jean-Pierre to sing a song in the film. One day, long before shooting, when he came to Japan for the first time, we met in Kyoto. I asked him if there was a song that he was very fond of. He sang *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* for me. I really liked his very original way of singing it. I also liked the title. I had the impression that it was spot-on for this project, or rather, I felt that it would be a good starting point.





AN ENCOUNTER

It's true that the subject of death was addressed several times in discussion with Jean- Pierre during preparation. Indeed, in the film the subject is reflected upon... 'Death is an encounter, what matters is to see it coming'... I didn't write this reflection. It struck Jean- Pierre, along with his thoughts on the matter: 'how do you play death?' And it is expressed in his improvisation. Admittedly, the matter of death has a certain presence in the film, but more importantly for me, as well as for Jean-Pierre, was more an affirmation of life. The main subject is therefore not really death, but life. 'How life is wonderful!' we agreed with him on this point. As Jean's character says, borrowing the phrase from the text written by Jean-Pierre's father, Pierre Léaud: 'You have to walk throughout life, hand in hand with death'. There is complementarity between life and death; it is because there is life that there is death and vice versa. It's this ambivalent relationship that I found interesting. It's also perhaps why I was attracted to the song *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*. The song talks about the death of a lion but with such joy. I think that singing out loud keeps us alive.

NOBUHIRO SUWA

Nobuhiro Suwa was born in 1960 in Hiroshima, began his career in Japan in documentary filmmaking. In 1997, he made his debut in fiction with his first film *2 Duo*. His work has been selected for numerous festivals, including the NETPAC Award at the Rotterdam International Film Festival.

For his first film, Nobuhiro Suwa directed *M-other* a film about a contemporary Japanese woman. His second feature film, shot in 1999, won the International Critics Award at the 52nd Cannes Film Festival. In Japan, the film receives a triple award at the 54th edition of the Mainichi Contest: Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Music. In 2001, *H Story* allowed him to come back to the history of his hometown, Hiroshima, with this experimental work based on a remake of *Hiroshima mon amour* by Alain Resnais. He worked there with a French team, Béatrice Dalle was part of the cast and Caroline Champetier the DOP of the film. This extraordinary work was presented in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival.

Nobuhiro Suwa, then, shot in French and Paris, *A Perfect Couple* (Special Jury Prize at Locarno in 2005) with Valérie Bruni-Tedeschi and Bruno Todeschini. During the casting of this film, he became friends with the actor Hippolyte Girardot, to whom he offered to co-direct a feature film. This is how *Yuki & Nina*, his fifth feature, was born, a delicate work filmed at the height of a child, presented at the Directors' Fortnight in 2009.



FILMOGRAPHY

- 2017** *Le lion est mort ce soir*
- 2011** *Cheveux Noirs* (Short)
- 2009** *Yuki & Nina*
- 2006** *After War* (segment « A Letter From Hiroshima »)
- 2006** *Paris, je t'aime* (segment « Place des Victoires »)
- 2005** *Un Couple Parfait*
- 2002** *A Letter from Hiroshima* (short)
- 2001** *H Story*
- 1999** *M/Other*
- 1997** *2/Duo*



JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD

Born on 28 May 1944, he is a French actor, best known for playing Antoine Doinel in François Truffaut's series of films about that character, beginning with *The 400 Blows* in 1959. He moreover worked several times with Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette or Jean Eustache and is a notable figure of the French New Wave. He also played for Jerry Skolimowski, Bernardo Bertolucci, Tsui Ming-Liang, Philippe Garrel or Aki Kaurismaki. He received the Honorary Palm d'Or at Cannes Film Festival in 2016 and won the Lumière Award for best actor for his role in *The Death of Louis XIV* by Albert Serra.

PAULINE ETIENNE

She was born on June 26, 1989 in Ixelles, Brussels, Belgium. She is an actress, known for *La religieuse* (2013), *Tokyo Fiancée* (2014) and *Eden* (2014).

ARTISTIC LIST

Jean **Jean-Pierre Léaud**
Juliette **Pauline Etienne**
Céline **Maud Wyler**
Philippe **Arthur Harari**
Marie **Isabelle Weingarten**
Yuki **Noë Sampy**
Claude **Jean-Louis Berard**
Make up artist **Françoise Michaud**
the director **Louis-Do de Lencquesaing**
and the children **Jules Langlade, Tom Cuccureddu**
Adrien Bianchi, Louis Bianchi
Romain Mathey, Mathis Nicolle
Coline Pichon-Le Maître,
Emmanuelle Pichon-Le Maître
Rafèle Geblat,
Lou-Ann Mazeau-Guegen



TECHNICAL LIST

Director **Nobuhiro Suwa**
Cinematographer **Tom Harari**
Sound **Florent Klockenbring**
Emmanuel Croset
Production design **Thomas Gréaud**
Editor **Martial Salomon**
Music composer **Olivier Marguerit**
Producer **Michiko Yoshitake (FILM-IN-EVOLUTION)**
Jérôme Dopffer (Les Productions Balthazar)
Yuji Sadai (Bitters End)

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