

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An independent film club based in Chelmsford

Visit our website at:

www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk

Follow us on:

[Twitter.com/ChelmsfordFilmC](https://twitter.com/ChelmsfordFilmC)

www.facebook.com/ChelmsfordFilmC



The New Girlfriend

Dir: Francois Ozon 2014 France 108 minutes

Cast: Francois Ozon (Homme cinema); Romain Duris (David); Anais Demoustier (Claire); Raphael Personnaz (Gilles); Isild Besco (Laura); Aurore Clement (Liz).

“The opening sequence of Ozon’s deliciously adventurous take on Ruth Rendell’s short story presents a microcosm of what is to come – a series of ritualistic dressing details (the application of lipstick, the tethering of a stocking) with a blackly comic sting in the tail. We return to this sequence later as Romain Duris’s widowed David tells his only confidante, Claire, how the loss of his wife, whom Claire loved as much as he, proved a transformative experience.

En route, Ozon’s psychosexual comedy slips Freudian playfulness between ripe Hollywood melodrama, uptight English intrigue, gay Gallic romance and ecstatic Almodavarian exploration. Duris is suitably mercurial as the man whose mission to be both “father and mother” to his child taps into his dormant desire to slip into something more (un)comfortable. But it’s Demoustier who steals the show, her freckled face registering every nuance of Claire’s flickering mood as love turns to jealousy, infatuation and dawning self-revelation. Nods to Hitchcock’s ‘Vertigo’ and Preminger’s ‘Laura’ are evident, but a scene in which Bruno Perard’s Eva lip-synchs to Nicole Croisille’s torchy ‘Une Femme Avec Toi’ proves a sublimely defining moment.” (So wrote Mark Kermode about this film, in the Observer, almost a year ago.)

Members may remember Ozon’s very impressive ‘In the House’, which we screened recently. It featured Kristin Scott Thomas (as all French films must under EU directives – oh the freedom, the freedom that awaits!) as the wife of a literature teacher whose 16 year-old star pupil covets a classmate’s plush home and beautiful mother. Both husband and wife become voyeuristically, and increasingly obsessed, by the student’s literary revelations. After Ozon’s other notable feature, ‘Under the Sand’ (with Charlotte Rampling), ‘In the House’ put him up there with the likes of Almodavar and Michael Haneke as the kind of director who can portray strong women and complicated (to say the least) sexuality. When he achieved great commercial success outside France with ‘8 Femmes’, featuring Fanny Ardant, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Hupert and Emmanuelle Beart, it became clear that he liked working with female actors. And we cannot forget ‘Swimming Pool’ in 2003, with Ludivine Sagnier and, again, Charlotte Rampling.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder has been a significant influence on Ozon. In 2000 they collaborated on ‘Gouttes d’eau sur pierres Brulantes’, exploring a relationship between two men, but complicated by one of them becoming involved with a woman. There has been one English language film from Ozon, the 2007 ‘Angel’, with Romola Garai (‘I Capture the Castle’, ‘Vanity Fair’). It was based on the novel by Elizabeth Taylor, following the story of a poor girl who climbs Edwardian England’s social ladder by becoming a romance writer. Women, writing, sexuality... a theme emerges.

Our next screening: **Spring in a Small Town** on 4 May. The reaction slips are very much appreciated: please hand them in. Do submit your preferences for next season’s programme, via the website, email to Sally Bunyan or hard copy handed to a Committee member.