# Breathless

by Jean-Luc Godard

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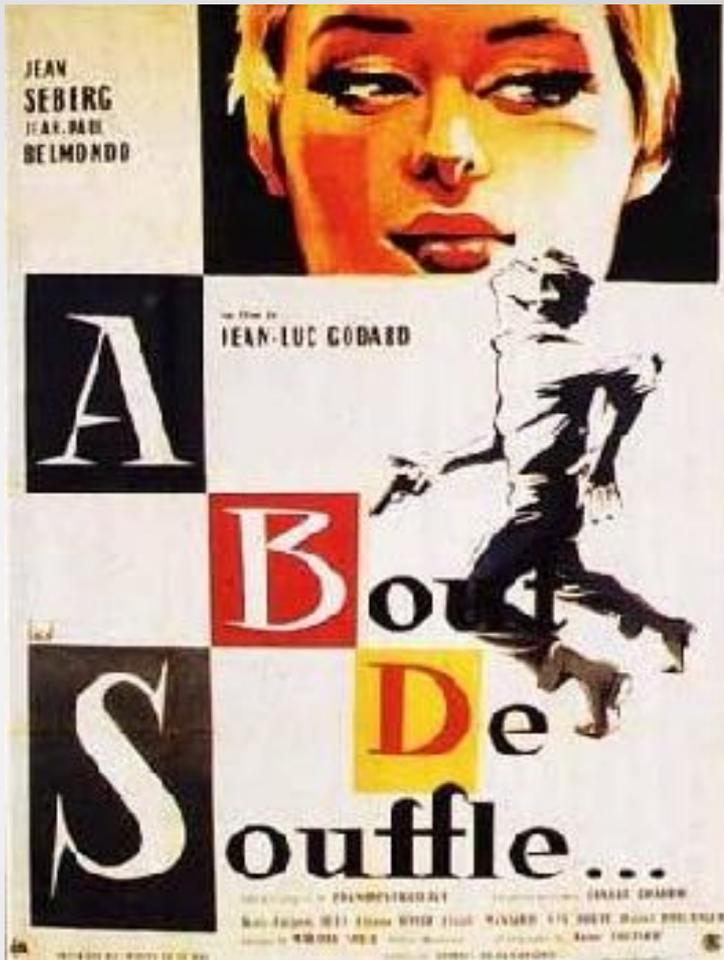
Genre & History

Director: Jean-Luc Godard
Title of the film:
"Breathless"
Released back in 1960.
Starring: Jean-Paul
Belmondo, Jean Seberg,
and Daniel Boulanger.
Inspired by: "400 Blows".
Genres: gangster/criminal,
drama, film noir
Style: French New Wave
In his "Breathless", Godard
motivates to "advance into
unknown lands and to take
risks" (Godard, 1980, p.
80).

- **"Breathless"** as a new page in the history of French and world's cinematography.
- Ended up the era of **classical cinema**.
- The mood of the film is rather jazzy, democratic, and sexy.
- **Main characters**: Michel and Patricia, naïve and amoral young heroes
- **Setting**: Paris, France
- **Michel** (main male character): a selfish, straightforward, cynical, vulgar, but yet loving car theft
- **Patricia** (main female character): a prudent, cruel, risky, and charming 'gambler'
- **Michel** smokes all the time; wears American-style hats; enjoys staring in the mirror for hours; and watching favorite movies.
- **Patricia** – the main cause of her partner's death. Pretended to be pregnant. The main antagonist of the story.

Plot and Heritage

Genre Peculiarities

"Breathless" basic genres are gangster film and "film noir with its problematized freedom" (Borde and Chaumeton, 1955).

Film noir elements: murder and betrayal (Michel's tragic death, Patricia's betrayal and killing).

Other features: Mumbled and a bit aggressive dialogues, cruel heroes' nature, violence, selfishness, and other issues represent the dark side of reality.

- **Jump cuts** (reinvention of the whole French cinematography). "Some reviewers even called these disjunction jum cuts" (Bordwell, 1984, p. 10).
- **Quick cuts**. These techniques created Godard's specific tone of voice: he implemented "more cinematic tricks than most filmmakers during their entire career" (Taylor, 1964, p. 113).

Techniques Applied in the Movie

3 criteria to evaluate the movie:

- **high technical competency,**
- **author's distinguishable identity,**
- **and connection of the director's personality with the film's 'interior meaning.'**

Both director's and film's rebel spirit proves there should be a "relationship to the way a director thinks and feels" (Caughie, 1981, p. 64).

What makes this movie "a quintessential New Wave film is not a particular technique, but the energy with which it speaks" (Dudley, 1987, p. 18).

Reviews and Critique
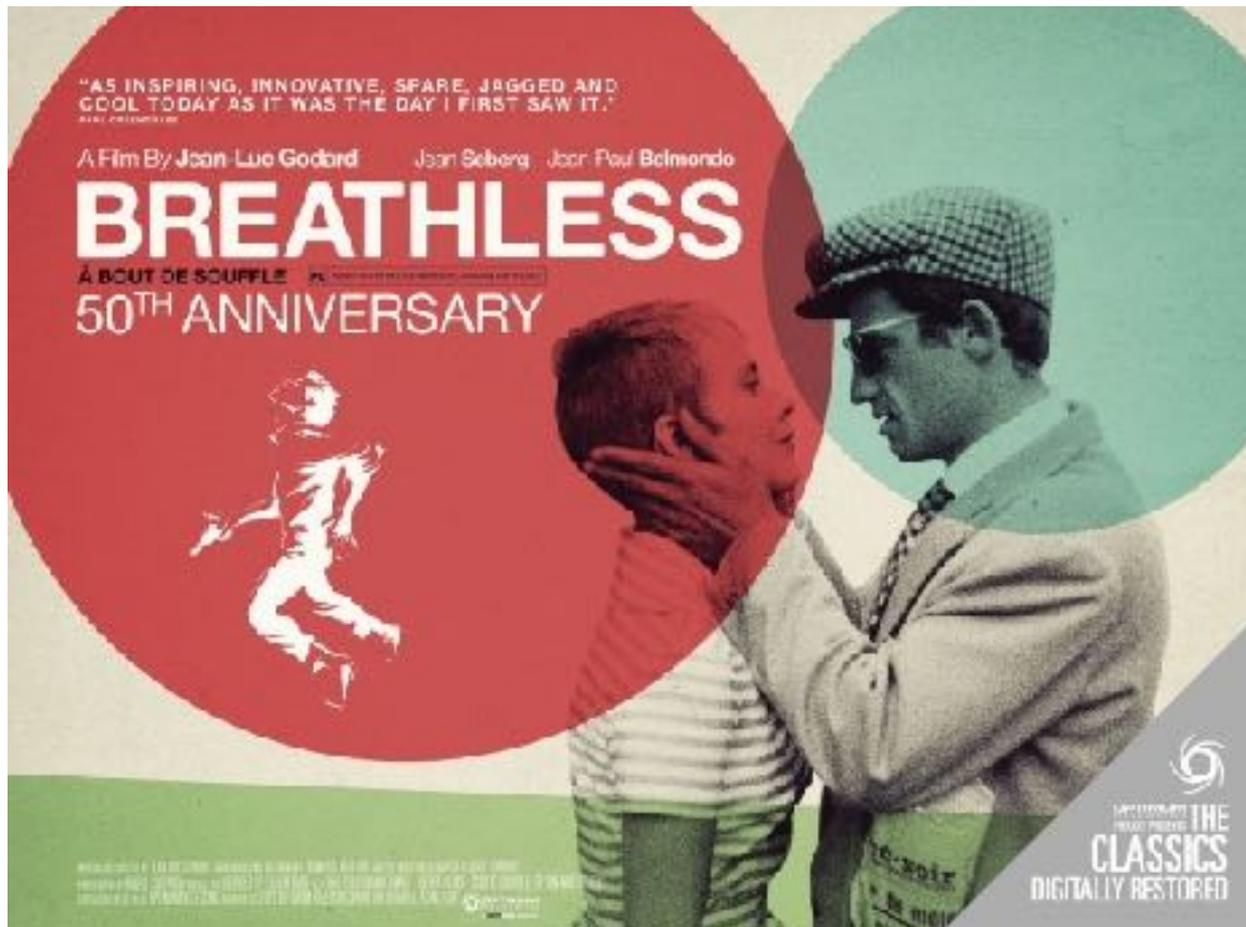
No matter how far some people go in their judgments concerning **Godard's "Breathless"**, the film has completely changed **French** and even **Hollywood** vision.

The **techniques** suggested by famous director have ruined the **traditional approach** to movie-making.

Movie's **original tone**, **irresistible heroes**, and **self-made style** allowed this masterpiece to be remembered for ages.

Conclusion

Works Cited

- Borde, Raymond, and Chaumeton, Étienne. "Panorama du Film Noir Américain." Paris: *Les Éditions de Minuit*, 1955.
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- Dudley, Andrew. "Breathless." Rutgers University Press, 1987, pp. 3-20.
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- Taylor, John Russell. "Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear." New York: *Hill and Wang*, 1964.

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