

French New Wave

1959-ca.1970

Origins

- Critics from *Cahiers du Cinema*
- Reaction to films of literary adaptation
- “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” essay by Francois Truffaut

Themes

- Youthful rebellion
- Social criticism
- Human relationships
- Homage to Hollywood (cinematic references)

Directors

- Alain Resnais
- Jean-Luc Godard
- Francois Truffaut
- Claude Chabrol
- Agnes Varda
- Robert Bresson

Jean-Luc Godard

Most political

First film *Breathless* 1959

Barometer of the age

Self-reflexive

Some of innovations

- Jump cut

- Chapter breaks and titles

- Direct address

- Emphasis on ambient background sound

- voiceover

Breathless

- ▶ Best known of his films
- ▶ Summary: A street punk shoots a cop and wants to flee with an American girlfriend to Italy. She vacillates, then consents, but again changes her mind and turns him in.
- ▶ Low budget
- ▶ Not instant success
- ▶ Eventually influences film and narrative style
- ▶ Introduces Jean(ne) Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo

Alain Resnais

- Paves way for New Wave (nouvelle vague)
- Already established as filmmaker
- *Nuit et brouillard* 1955
 - Auschwitz
 - Reflects past
- *Hiroshima mon amour*
 - Exploration of memory
 - Exploration of guilt
 - Love affair

Francois Truffaut

- Most immediately accessible of directors
- *400 Blows*
 - Influence of Jean Renoir and Orson Welles
 - Moving camera
 - Long takes
 - Open, fluid mise-en-scene
 - Revisits the character in four later films

Post New Wave

- Not really a movement
- Shows influence of New Wave
- More commercial
- More diverse
- Less experimental
- Less political

Selected names and titles

- Jean-Jacques Beineix
 - *Betty Blue* 1986
 - *Diva* 1981
- Luc Besson
 - *La femme Nikita* 1990
 - *The Messenger* 1999
 - *The Fifth Element* 1997
- Jean-Jacques Annaud
 - *Quest for Fire* 1981
 - *The Bear* 1988
 - *Enemy at the Gates* 2001
 - *Two Brothers* 2004

Names and titles continued

- Jean-Pierre Jeunet
 - *City of Lost Children* 1995
 - *Alien: Resurrection* 1997
 - *Amelie* 2001
 - *A Very Long Engagement* 2004
- Catherine Breillat
 - *Romance* 1999
 - *Fat Girl* 2001
- Gaspar Noe
 - *Irreversible* 2002