



## TCM BREAKFAST CLUB SCREENING

### Pierrot le Fou | 1965

Directed by Jean-Luc Godard

Hailed by many as Jean-Luc Godard's greatest achievement, *Pierrot le fou* (Crazy Pete or Pete Goes Wild) was inspired by Lionel White's crime novel *Obsession*. Godard's tenth feature movie, released between *Alphaville* (1965) and *Masculin, féminin* (1966), centres on Ferdinand Griffon, nicknamed Pierrot (Jean-Paul Belmondo), unhappily married and recently fired from his job in a TV broadcasting company. When he meets Marianne Renoir (Anna Karina), they team up for an extraordinary Bonnie and Clyde-style odyssey across France. Pierrot is "the man who is driving towards a precipice at a hundred an hour" and she is "the woman who loves the man who's driving". But *Pierrot le Fou* is no mere crime flick - it's a landmark in France's "new wave" films of the 1960s, according to TCM writer David Humphrey.

Ferdinand Griffon complains he is surrounded by "abrutis" (brutes) and can't resist the temptation to tell them what books to read. At a party in Paris that tests his boredom threshold to the limit, he decides to leave his wife and children for his babysitter, ex-girlfriend Marianne Renoir. But when he follows her into her apartment and finds a corpse, he learns she is being pursued by Algerian gangsters, from whom they only just manage to escape. Ferdinand - dubbed Pierrot by Marianne - joins her on a crime spree from Paris to the Mediterranean in the dead man's car. As they lead a hand-to-mouth existence dodging their pursuers the young couple's lives are punctuated by car chases, romance, robbery and extreme violence. But as they settle into their bolt-hole on the Côte d'Azur their relationship gradually deteriorates. Ferdinand does not

comprehend nor wish to understand the adventure into which Marianne brought him and spends his time reading books, philosophising and writing in his diary. For her part, Marianne grows disenchanted with Ferdinand's settled life. Eventually she drives him into a night-club where they meet one of their pursuers. In the final scene, Pierrot paints his face blue and decides to blow himself up with dynamite...

Godard said of Pierrot Le Fou that "it is not really a film, it's an attempt at cinema. Life is the subject, with [Cinema]Scope and colour as its attributes...in short, life filling the screen as a tap fills a bathtub that is simultaneously emptying at the same rate". He shot the film without a script and uses it as a vehicle for his questions about cinema, politics, Marxism, literature, music and pop culture. There are also frequent references to the Vietnam and Algerian wars, then occupying much public attention. In one scene, Marianne and Pierrot do a turn for American tourists on a beach, miming scenes where Pierrot is a US soldier and Marianne a Vietnamese girl. Pierrot is also tortured by being submerged in a bathtub, something favoured by France's colonial army during the Algerian war. In a typical Godard flourish, the actors sometimes talk direct to the camera, interrupting the narration and plot. Bizarre musical numbers and comical conversations with no relevance to anything in particular also have a habit of breaking up the story. There are absurd interjections, notably the one where a sailor complains he's

had a song stuck in his head for years. Sylvie Vartan was at first chosen by Godard to play the role of Marianne but her agent refused, while at one stage Godard considered Richard Burton as Ferdinand before finally plumping for Belmondo. Filming took place over two months, starting on the Riviera and finishing in Paris (in reverse order from the edited movie).

On a technical level, Pierrot represents one of Godard's cleverest uses of colour in demonstrating his mastery of the Eastmancolor pallet. While Belmondo gives a more nuanced performance here than he did in *Breathless* (1960), Karina easily matches him with her grace, beauty, and elegance. The camera is hopelessly in love with her.

## ESCAPE TO A WORLD OF FILMS THIS AUGUST WITH TCM

TCM screens ten of **Elvis Presley's** best-loved films and two documentaries to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the death of the king of rock 'n roll. There are also four new OFF SET interviews including one with his close confidant Jerry Schilling, who is interviewed by Sanjeev Bhaskar. In **Western Week** meanwhile, **John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Gene Wilder** and **Warren Beatty** saddle up for a showcase of unforgettable frontier favourites. In **Brando Season**, three of the films that brilliantly reveal Marlon Brando's star quality are screened together with a fascinating TCM-produced documentary about the man who turned the craft of acting on its head. And marking **Dustin Hoffman's 70th birthday** on 8th August, there's a special showing of **All the President's Men** (1977), in which he starred as a journalist probing the Watergate scandal.

On TCM 2, a celebration of the summer holidays brings movies that can be enjoyed by everyone, including **National Velvet** (1944) **The Secret Garden** (1949), **The Time Machine** (1960) and **Captain Nemo and the Underwater City** (1969).