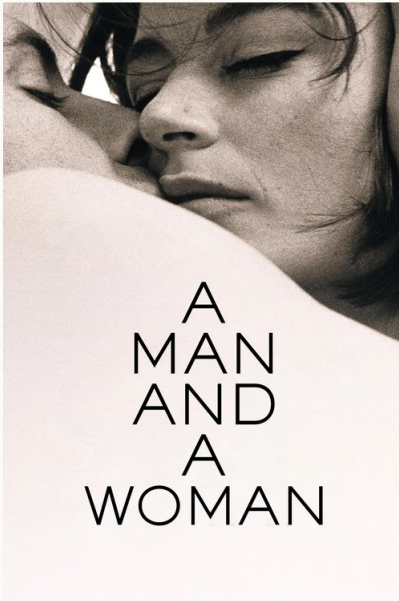




DRAMA · ROMANCE

A Man and a Woman

1966 · Directed by Claude Lelouch

French New Wave

Art Cinema

Melodrama

A widow and a widower meet by chance at their children's boarding school in Deauville and share a car ride back to Paris. What follows is a restrained, music-led love story in which memory and hesitation matter as much as attraction.

DIRECTOR	Claude Lelouch
----------	----------------

YEAR	1966
------	------

RUNTIME	1h 42m (102 min)
---------	------------------

COUNTRY	France
---------	--------

GENRES	Drama, Romance
--------	----------------

CAST	Anouk Aimée, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Pierre Barouh, Valérie Lagrange, Antoine Sire
------	--

MUSIC	Francis Lai
-------	-------------

IMDB	7.5 / 10 (12,337 votes)
------	-------------------------

ROTTEN TOMATOES	75% (critics)
--------------------	---------------

TMDB SCORE	7.4 / 10 (319 votes)
------------	----------------------

WHERE TO WATCH	Rent: Amazon Video, Apple TV Store, Google Play Movies, YouTube, Fandango At Home Buy: Amazon Video, Apple TV Store, Google Play Movies, YouTube, Fandango At Home
-------------------	---

Part one is spoiler-free. Part two, "After watching", reveals the story, scenes and ending.

Before watching

Spoiler-free

WHY WATCH THIS?

1 A global hit of 1960s romantic cinema

Winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes and two Oscars, it made Claude Lelouch internationally famous and became a defining French romance, remembered as much for its mood and music as its plot.

2 Colour, black-and-white and sepia, used by instinct

The film shifts between palettes in ways that feel more emotional than systematic. It is a clear example of 1960s freedom with image, sound and editing.

3 Francis Lai's music carries the feeling

The title theme and Pierre Barouh's songs do much of the emotional work, with the images often cut like a music video before the term existed.

WHY IT MATTERS IN CINEMA HISTORY

A popular, stylish counterpart to the harder-edged New Wave, it showed that the new French freedom of form could produce a romantic crowd-pleaser with worldwide reach.

WATCH WITH INTENTION

YOUR LENS

Watch it as a love story told through mood: let the music, the changing colour and the pauses tell you what the dialogue won't.

THREE THINGS TO NOTICE

- When the image shifts between colour, black-and-white and sepia, ask what each shift seems to do emotionally rather than looking for a strict rule.
- How often the camera stays in cars and moving vehicles, and how motion, roads and driving create intimacy and tension.
- The way Francis Lai's themes and the songs enter and sometimes replace conversation, shaping how a glance or silence feels.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY WITH YOU

How much of a person's past can you leave behind before you can begin loving someone new?

CINEMA AT THE TIME

- **Industry:** Lelouch made it independently and cheaply after earlier films had failed, so its success was a surprise. Its Cannes win and Oscar run brought French cinema a new, wider audience.
- **Dominant styles:** French cinema was shaped by the New Wave's handheld, location-based, personal filmmaking. Studio-polished romances and prestige literary adaptations were still the older, mainstream tradition.
- **Technology:** Lightweight cameras, fast film and zoom lenses allowed fluid shooting in cars, on beaches and at racetracks, and made the film's restless, intimate look practical.
- **Audience:** The mid-1960s public was drawn to glamorous, modern European films with pop-tinged soundtracks. This one offered feeling and style without heavy intellectual demands.

WHERE IT CAME FROM

MOVEMENT

French New Wave

Lightweight cameras, location shooting and personal, improvised style gave Lelouch the freedom to make an intimate romance.



FILM

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (1964)

Jacques Demy's romance showed that music and colour could drive a modern French love story.



FILM

Brief Encounter (1945)

An earlier model of a restrained adult romance in which feeling is held back by circumstances.



THIS FILM

A Man and a Woman (1966)

NEW AT THE TIME *It treated a quiet adult romance with the visual and musical freedom of a New Wave film, mixing colour stocks and using songs as narrative engine.*

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Made in de Gaulle's prosperous, modernising France of the mid-1960s, by a young director working outside the big studios on a tight budget.

- **Country and moment:** France was in the Trente Glorieuses, the postwar boom: rising wages, car ownership, television and holiday travel. Resorts like Deauville and motor racing reflected a society enjoying new mobility and leisure.

- **Society and women's roles:** Women's lives were changing. A 1965 reform let married women work and manage their own property without a husband's consent, and a woman with a career and a child, as in the film, was an increasingly visible figure.
- **Politics and censorship:** The Fifth Republic under de Gaulle was stable but socially conservative. Wider upheaval, including the protests of May 1968, was still two years away, and the film's tone is private and personal rather than political.
- **The filmmaker's situation:** Claude Lelouch was in his late twenties. His earlier features had done poorly, and he made this one through his own small company with limited money. Its international success, including the Cannes Palme d'Or, transformed his career.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Pace:** Gentle and episodic, with long stretches of driving, glances and music. Plot is simple, and the interest is in mood and small moments.
- **Style:** Impressionistic and lyrical: quick cuts, handheld and zoom shots, and montages that feel like early music-video editing.
- **Colour:** Colour, black-and-white and sepia alternate without a rigid pattern. Treat it as expressive rather than a puzzle to decode.
- **Performance:** Understated and naturalistic. Anouk Aimée and Jean-Louis Trintignant convey a lot through reticence.
- **Language:** In French with subtitles. Songs include French and Brazilian-flavoured numbers, and the title theme uses wordless vocals.

WATCH WITH KIDS?

12+ SUGGESTED AGE

France rates it U (all audiences), the only official rating given, but its quiet, adult-focused story, subtitles and flashback style suit children from about 12.

Official ratings: France U

- **Good for:** Older children and teens who like romance, French style, motor racing or visual experimentation may enjoy the lovely coastal settings, shifting colour and black-and-white photography, and the famous, lilting score.
- **May unsettle, mature themes:** Loss and grief are central to the story, and the characters' emotional pasts are treated seriously, with some sensitive subject matter.
- **May unsettle, romance and intimacy:** Adult relationships and physical affection are part of the story, handled discreetly and without anything explicit.
- **May unsettle, peril:** Motor racing and film-set stunts bring brief moments of danger, with some intense or tense imagery.
- **May unsettle, pace:** A slow, reflective, dialogue-led film with subtitles and frequent shifts between colour and monochrome that may lose younger viewers.

- **Explain first:** It is in French with subtitles, so younger children will need to read along or have help following the dialogue.
- **Explain first:** The film jumps between present and memory, and between colour and black-and-white, as a way of showing the characters' thoughts and feelings.
- **Explain first:** It was made in 1966, so the cars, fashions and pace of life look very different from today.

Talk about it after: *>How did the filmmaker use colour, black-and-white and music to show what the characters were feeling, and did it help you understand them?*

Cinespective's own guidance, a draft. Check it against the official ratings and your own judgement.

After watching

CONTAINS SPOILERS

THE FILM, UNPACKED

CENTRAL IDEA

The film explores how memory and grief can hold on to us even when we are ready to love again. It can be read as asking whether new intimacy can survive the weight of a lost past.

THEMES

- **Grief and memory:** Both leads are shaped by the loss of a spouse, and their pasts return in flashbacks that interrupt the present.
- **Second chances:** The romance is cautious and adult, built on people who know love can end and who need to decide whether to risk it again.
- **Work and speed:** Her job in film and his in motor racing give the story movement and risk, and their professions mirror their emotional lives.
- **Parenthood:** The children give the leads a shared practical world and a reason to meet and part, and they keep ordinary life close to the romance.
- **Music as emotion:** Songs and score stand in for feelings the characters cannot easily put into words.

Key scenes

The Deauville boarding school meeting

It sets up the film's low-key tone: an accidental meeting through their children, with a ride home that turns small talk into the first real connection.

The beach and car sequences with the title theme

The film's famous camera movement circling the characters, together with Lai's music, shows how the film turns feeling into rhythm and image rather than speech.

The flashbacks to their late spouses

These interruptions show that the past is never separate from the romance, and the shifting colour treatment makes memory feel unstable and emotionally charged.

The final reunion

The ending resolves the central question through movement and a gesture, not through explanation, and shows the film's belief that love is decided in action.

Filmmaking

- **Colour and texture:** Lelouch moves between colour, black-and-white and sepia. He has described the choices as partly instinctive and partly practical, so they work best as emotional texture rather than a code.
- **Camera:** Lightweight equipment lets the camera ride in cars, circle the leads and linger on faces, giving the film an improvised, spontaneous feel.
- **Music and editing:** Francis Lai's score and Pierre Barouh's songs drive the cutting. Montages follow musical rhythm, anticipating pop-video aesthetics.
- **Performance:** Aimée and Trintignant play restraint and uncertainty, with many scenes built on glances, pauses and half-finished sentences.
- **Structure:** A simple present-tense romance is interwoven with fragments of the past, so the plot is less important than the accumulating emotional weather.

THE FULL STORY

The full plot, including the ending.

Anne Gauthier, a script supervisor in the film business, visits her young daughter at a boarding school in Deauville. She misses the train back to Paris, and Jean-Louis Duroc, a racing driver visiting his own son, offers her a lift.

On the drive they exchange careful, partial confidences. Anne is a widow: her husband, a stuntman, died on a film set. Jean-Louis is a widower: his wife killed herself after a serious crash he had in a race. They arrange to meet again the next weekend, and the relationship grows through visits to the children, walks on the beach and drives.

As they grow closer, Anne remains tied to memories of her husband, and flashbacks show how vivid the past still is. Jean-Louis leaves for the Monte Carlo Rally, and during it he sends her a telegram telling her that he loves her.

Anne goes to meet him and they spend a night together, but she cannot escape her husband's memory and the intimacy fails. She takes a train back to Paris alone. Jean-Louis, driving home, decides to follow and be waiting for her. He meets her at the station, and the two embrace, choosing to try again.

BEHIND THE FILM

- **A risky independent bet:** Lelouch had made several films that did not succeed and was in a precarious position when he made this one on a small budget through his own company. Its success saved his career.
- **Music before images:** Lelouch is known for working closely with music in his process, and Francis Lai's themes and Pierre Barouh's songs shaped the film's rhythm. Barouh also appears as Anne's late husband.
- **Colour by instinct:** Lelouch has said that the shifts between colour, black-and-white and sepia were partly guided by practical limits and by intuition, not by a strict scheme, which is why attempts to decode them do not always work.
- **Cannes and Oscar success:** It shared the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1966 and later won two Academy Awards, making a small, personal French production an international hit.

- **Myth:** Colour is for the present and black-and-white or sepia for the past, following a clear rule. **Reality:** The pattern is not consistent. Lelouch has described the changes as intuitive and partly practical, so they read better as emotional texture than as a code.

LEGACY AND CONNECTIONS

Its place in the lineage before → after

MOVEMENT

French New Wave

Lightweight cameras, location shooting and personal, improvised style gave Lelouch the freedom to make an intimate romance.



FILM

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (1964)

Jacques Demy's romance showed that music and colour could drive a modern French love story.



FILM

Brief Encounter (1945)

An earlier model of a restrained adult romance in which feeling is held back by circumstances.



THIS FILM

A Man and a Woman (1966)



FILM

Un homme et une femme: vingt ans déjà (1986)

Lelouch revisited the same characters twenty years later with the same leads.



TRADITION

Music-driven romantic cinema

Its use of theme songs and montage helped set a model for romances built around soundtrack and mood.

Reception and reputation

The film was a surprise success. It shared the top prize at Cannes in 1966 and went on to win international audiences and Academy Awards. Many critics praised its style and performances, while some thought it glossy and more concerned with mood than depth.

It remains a widely loved romantic film and a key title of 1960s French cinema, valued for its music, mood and visual daring. Some viewers find it slight or overly stylised, but its place as an emblem of cinematic romance has endured.

Awards Oscars and Cannes

Academy Awards: 2 wins (Best Foreign Language Film; Best Story and Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen), plus nominations for Best Director (Claude Lelouch) and Best Actress (Anouk Aimée). Cannes: Palme d'Or (shared with *Signore & signori*).

Cultural impact beyond cinema

- **Scat refrain as shorthand:** The wordless "da ba da ba da" vocal hook of the title song became an instantly recognisable sound of romance, and it is still borrowed in adverts, comedy and affectionate pastiche of 1960s French love stories.
- **Deauville's romantic image:** The windswept Normandy beach and boardwalk of Deauville became closely associated with the film. The resort is still often described through its imagery, and Lelouch went back there for the later sequels.
- **Bossa nova in France:** Pierre Barouh, who appears in the film and sings on its soundtrack, brought Brazilian music to French listeners through songs like "Samba Saravah", helping the film reinforce the fashion for bossa nova and samba in 1960s Europe.
- **French chic icon:** Anouk Aimée's understated, elegant look and Jean-Louis Trintignant's reserved racing-driver persona became enduring images of Gallic romance, and the film is often cited as a template for the melancholy, stylish French love story.

Its lasting influence

Its fusion of pop-song structure, flowing camerawork and romantic stylisation influenced later romances and the way film music and montage were used. Lelouch revisited the characters in later sequels, and Lai's theme became a standard.

WHAT NEXT?

COMPARE ANOTHER APPROACH

Jules and Jim (1962)

Another French romance from the New Wave era, but more tragic and structurally playful. It makes a good comparison of how the movement handled love.

EXPLORE THE ERA OR MOVEMENT

Breathless (1960)

The film that defined New Wave freedom. It shows the harder, more rebellious side of the movement that made Lelouch's softer style possible.

FOLLOW THE IDEA

Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (1964) COMING SOON

A sung-through French romance with Michel Legrand's music and bold colour, showing another way to make feeling the film's engine.

COMPARE ANOTHER APPROACH

Doctor Zhivago (1965)

A big-scale 1960s romance released a year earlier, useful for seeing how differently an epic and an intimate film treat love and loss.

CONTINUE THE DIRECTOR

Les Uns et les Autres (1981) **COMING SOON**

Lelouch's large, music-filled saga follows several families across decades and shows how far he pushed his romantic, musical style.

FULL CAST AND CREW



Claude Lelouch
DIRECTOR



Anouk Aimée
ACTOR
as Anne Gauthier



Jean-Louis Trintignant
ACTOR
as Jean-Louis Duroc



Pierre Barouh
ACTOR
as Pierre Gauthier



Valérie Lagrange
ACTOR
as Valérie Duroc



Antoine Sire
ACTOR
as Antoine Duroc



Francis Lai
COMPOSER

Draft content generated for Cinespective and subject to review; awards and dates should be verified before being relied upon. This product uses the TMDB API but is not endorsed or certified by TMDB. Streaming availability by JustWatch via TMDB.