

Les trois désastres by Amy Taubin

The following article was originally published in Film Comment, July-August 2013

No surprise that the most brilliant movie [at Cannes] was Jean-Luc Godard's *The Three Disasters*, an 18-minute 3-D piece that unfortunately is embedded in the 3-D triptych *3x3D*, the other two parts of which, by directors who shall remain nameless, are unwatchable. Largely a found-footage collage, it would be no different from the many short spin-offs from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* that Godard has made over the past 15 years, except that it is in 3-D as you have never seen it before—not as an enhancement or a novelty, but as a radically new medium that is overwhelmingly expressive and complicated in the meanings it makes. If we're lucky, Godard, always a wily fellow, will find a way to liberate this masterpiece, the first movie of the cinematic future. ♦



Acropolis Cinema presents:



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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

On September 13, we lost arguably the most radical and influential of modern filmmakers: Jean-Luc Godard. To close out Acropolis' seventh year, we pay tribute to the late master with the Los Angeles premiere of two films that offer a crucial look into his final decade of filmmaking.

***Les trois désastres* (Dir. Jean-Luc Godard)**

Commissioned by the Portuguese city of Guimarães, Godard's first foray into 3D surveys the history and (mis)uses of the technology while applying a number of fresh optical techniques that the director would push even further with the following year's *Adieu au Langage* (2014). Combining excerpts from films such as *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, *Final Destination 5*, and *Piranha 3D* with verbal interrogations of these and other filmmakers' experiments with stereoscopic imagery (including, most pointedly, James Cameron), *Les trois désastres* offers an at once radical re-reading of film history and a bracing vision of 3D's limitless potential.

17 min. | France/Portugal | 2014 | 3D

***Film Catastrophe* (Dir. Paul Grivas)**

In 2012, the Costa Concordia cruise liner sank off the coast of Tuscany, killing 32 people. In *Film Socialisme* (2010), the ship served as an allegorical vessel for Jean-Luc Godard's pointed political critique. In *Film Catastrophe*, director, actor, and *Film Socialisme* co-cinematographer Paul Grivas revisits the events by combining on-set footage of the Godard film and civilian-shot footage captured aboard the Concordia as it ran aground. Made in the spirit of Godard's frequent companion pieces to his own features, this "anatomy of a disaster" reanimates the ship's ghostly aura and offers precious insight into Godard's process.

55 min. | France | 2018

Film Catastrophe by Richard Brody

The following article was originally published by The New Yorker, April 19, 2019

"Film Catastrophe" is the first feature by Paul Grivas, who is Jean-Luc Godard's nephew. Grivas, who is a photographer, was Godard's assistant on the movie "Film Socialisme," from 2010, and "Film Catastrophe" is largely a making-of for Godard's film. Much of "Film Socialisme" was shot aboard the cruise liner Costa Concordia, in the midst of one of its actual Mediterranean voyages. Godard and the cast and crew were integrated with the passengers, and "Film Socialisme" is both a historical inquiry, linking the circulation of money and ideas to longstanding political conflicts in the Mediterranean region, and

a virtual documentary on the paying customers' activities aboard the ship. Yet the Costa Concordia entered history on its own, in 2012, when it went aground, off the coast of Italy, resulting in the deaths of thirty-two passengers—and, true to modern habits, some passengers took their own videos of the disaster that they experienced.

In "Film Catastrophe," Grivas briefly shows some of that horrific footage of the shipwreck in motion. He also suggests, with a loving wink, that an agent of mischief has already made an appearance aboard the ship, when a woman is sitting alone at a banquet table and a familiar figure strolls through the frame behind her—Godard himself, with a gray-white beard, a ski cap and a scarf, and a glass in hand. "Film Catastrophe" includes copious outtakes from "Film Socialisme" that show, with wondrous admiration, Godard at work with original methods that are simultaneously casual and meticulous, spontaneous and stringent—and that are inseparable from the artistic results onscreen. "Film Socialisme" was made with a small single-lens-reflex still-and-video camera that's easily handheld but that, for the most part, is posed on a lightweight tripod. Godard doesn't have a camera assistant use a slate to mark scenes and synch sound; rather, he stands in front of the camera himself, calls out the scene, and claps his hands in front of the lens. (Fascinatingly, there's one time that a regular slate is used—for a scene involving Patti Smith and Lenny Kaye, as if, in their presence, he had to seem, and to be, a bit more traditionally professional.)

Godard's setups are simple: closeups and two shots, composed with a spare yet profound graphic inflection, in which characters deliver epigrammatic dialogue of philosophical and literary inspiration. Godard's attentiveness to his actors is gentle and precise; his verbal instructions are calm, and his physical miming of desired gestures is good-humored. What Grivas reveals is nothing less than the radical simplicity with which Godard creates moments of breathtaking grandeur. Grivas offers a wide range of shots from sequences that aren't in the finished film—outtakes from "Film Socialisme" that attach to the film seamlessly. "Film Catastrophe" includes some amazing images and moments that extend the original film's imaginative range, including one of an elevator in dark green light that looks like a digital updating of a German Expressionist film.

There's an element of comedy that runs through "Film Catastrophe," in Godard's effort to film a single, simple scene between two characters, in which one actor repeatedly fluffs his lines. Godard ends up doing more than a dozen takes, never losing his cool, even as viewers watching the actor's mess-ups may be ready to burst from his repressed frustration. There are also joshing nods to Godard's impish presence, which are warmed by his and Grivas's family bond. Despite the movie's threads of humor (and an exaggeratedly sardonic rush to the ending), Grivas isn't making fun of the ship's tragedy; he's making an observation, corresponding to the very subject of Godard's film, that an exemplary object of modern capitalist spectacle also turns out to be the site and source of a deadly industrial disaster. In this way, too, the film is more than a mere supplement to "Film Socialisme"; it's bound together with its DNA. ♦