

## François Truffaut



## Trivia & Quotes From The IMDB:

"Truffaut once picked up a hitchhiker and started a conversation about movies. When it turned out the man had too little knowledge about the subject to participate, Truffaut insisted he leave the car."

"Truffaut was voted the 27th Greatest Director of all time by Entertainment Weekly. He is the highest ranking director on this list who was a film critic before he became a filmmaker."

## Trivia & Quotes Continued:

Truffaut made \$75,000 for his appearance in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind".

Truffaut loved the TV show "Dallas".

### PERSONAL QUOTES:

"I have always preferred the reflect of the life to life itself."

"Film lovers are sick people."

## Truffaut

### I. Truffaut's Background

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- Work as a critic
- Influences



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## Truffaut

### III. Examples Truffaut's Films

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  - The 400 Blows (Les Quatre Cents Coups)* 1959
  - "Antoine and Colette" ("Antoine et Colette") 1962
  - Stolen Kisses (Baisers Voies)* 1968
  - Bed and Board (Domicile Conjugal)* 1970
  - Love On The Run*

### IV. Conclusion

## Background - History

Born February 6 1932

Lived with his grandmother until he was 8.

First ran away at 11, by 14 he was on his own.



On and off he lived with his good friend Robert Lachenay who was also to become a film critic.

Started a film club with Lachenay.

Lachenay on the left, Truffaut on the right

## Background - History

Met André Bazin who was running *Cahiers Du Cinema* at the time.

Truffaut: "This kind of movement that was the New Wave was prompted by friends who were more productive than I was."



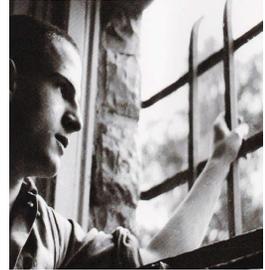
André Bazin

## Background - History

Truffaut enlisted in the army, it wasn't long before he went AWOL.

A great love for reading and writing, a greater love for cinema.

It is claimed that between 1946 & 1956 Truffaut watched more than 3,000 films.



## Background - Critic

Bazin hired him to write for *Cahiers Du Cinéma*.

He also began contributing to *Arts*, another influential film journal of the time.

Truffaut was known as an "uncompromising, thorough and sometimes vicious film critic".

Was called "the grave-digger of the French cinema".



## Background - Critic

While at *Cahiers* Truffaut wrote the famous "A Certain Tendency In French Cinema"

In which he criticized the most widely known French directors of the day (including Claude Autant-Lara, Jean Delannoy, René Clément and Yves Allegret) and scriptwriters (Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost).

At the same time he promoted many American directors.



## Background - Critic

Attacks the tradition of quality (lack of input from the director, bloated production).

Believed the director was the author - which is explained in his concept of the "auteur", the filmmaker as author.

A good director is one whose work displays a recognizable style and consistent personal vision.

The concept was at the heart of the New Wave (Nouvelle Vague) movement, to which Truffaut, along with Godard, belonged.



## Background - Influences

Handheld camera: Éclair developed a lightweight camera that was able to be handheld (used primarily for documentary work).

The new camera offered the New Wave directors great freedom and allowed for shooting on location.



## Background - Influences

New Wave directors had great respect for many us directors. Also sought to create films that were uniquely French & reflected French life and values.

### Hitchcock's Influence:

1. The focus on genre.
2. The use of suspense.
3. Use of wry humor.
4. "Sense of the power of the image".
5. Women as a central figure.
6. Both used Bernard Herrmann for his musical scores.



O primeiro filme produzido e dirigido pelo mestre é anticonvencional até para o histórico inovador de Hitchcock

## Background - Influences

### Orson Welles Influence/Inspiration:

Truffaut claimed to know *Citizen Kane* by heart.

1. Use of music as a narrative device.
2. Use of fragmented narrative.
3. Ambiguous central character (the sympathetic yet destructive Charles Kane & his desire for love).



## Background - Influences

### Jean Renoir:

#### French Influence

1. Focus on characters.
2. Tolerance for human weakness.
3. Use of realism.
4. The "passion for the visual poetry of everyday life".

Influence is somewhat contrasting to Hitchcock's.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Director Overview

Truffaut's career as a director spanned 29 years, from 1954 to 1983.

He directed 24 films: 3 shorts and 21 features.

Many critics feel that Truffaut's films "form an inseparable overlapping whole" including overlapping aspects such as structure theme and formal elements.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Director Overview

Truffaut's films are sometimes grouped into 3 broad categories:

1. Films that recount childhood and adolescence, which would include *The 400 Blows* and *The Brats*.
2. Loosely defined, genre films such as *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), *Shoot The Piano Player* (*Tirez Sur Le Pianiste*, 1960) and *The Bride Wore Black* (1968) - his films that were most influenced by American cinema.
3. Historical films such as *Jules et Jim* (1962) and *The Green Room* (*La Chambre Verte*, 1978).



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Recurring Themes

1. Love - working toward an understanding of love.
2. Women as a central feature. Closely related to theme of love. Women are "active principles and motive forces" (only *The 400 Blows* and *L'Enfant Sauvage* are exceptions). The male fascination with women.
3. Children - talent for surviving in a hostile world, treated as people. Education and the educational system.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Recurring Themes

- Writing - school essays, novels, letter writing, forging letters.
- Relationship of the individual with authority (*The 400 Blows*).  
Anti-authority.

- References to other films -  
line between reality  
and fiction/fantasy.  
Makes films how one  
would expect a critic  
to make films.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Recurring Themes

- Art - the importance of art, closely related to writing and film.
- Capturing the poetry of everyday life/existence or routine - Capture the quality of the life, not necessarily its historical details.
- French sentiment - includes the "English sense of affection and feeling, but it also has connotations of perception, sense, consciousness and sensibility."



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Reoccurring Themes

- Death
- Isolation ("Antoine and Colette", they are separated by rows of seats at the concerts they attend, Antoine calls Colette from his window across the street).
- Friendship - specifically male friendship. The boys in *The Brats*, Jules and Jim in *Jules et Jim*.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Reoccurring Themes

- Construction of masculinity. Can be seen in all of the Antoine Doinel films, through the development of Antoine's identity and his relationships with women and men.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Recurring Questions

- Are films more important than life?

Irony with Truffaut's films - for him Films may be more important than life or than people, but "people are undeniably the most important element of films" including his own. In Truffaut's films "the focus shifts continually back and forth between characters on the one hand and the film medium itself on the other". Each film "reinforces the union of life and film".



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Recurring Questions

- Are Women Magic?

*Day For Night*  
In many of the Doinel Films



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Film Language

### How themes are presented

"Style is content"- the structure of a film is as powerful as its content.

Truffaut's films often operate on 2 parallel levels of meaning:

1. The narrative level (characters & story line).
2. Visual/aesthetic (mise-en-scene and cinematography) & sound style. Corresponds with the narrative, but is separate and distinct. Concerned with purely cinematic aesthetic matters. Emphasis on visual rather than verbal narrative (communication through editing and shots rather than through strict narrative devices).

## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Film Language

Some of the recurring elements of Truffaut's "Film Language" or style are:

1. The narrative is often episodic instead of linear (*The 400 Blows*). Like a mosaic, many smaller pieces work to form a whole.
2. Preoccupation with genre - often includes elements or references to multiple genres within one film.
3. Concentrate more on character than on plot.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Film Language

Recurring elements of Truffaut's "Film Language" or style:

4. Music plays a central role, often not just in creating mood, but also in communicating information.
5. Bazinian reality - Desire to increase the amount of "honesty and clarity in film and thereby decrease the distance between author and observer", "more interested in the relationship between author and film, or film and audience, than in static evaluations" or strict aesthetics. New handheld camera allowed for shooting on location using available light. More in theory than in style.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Film Language

Reoccurring elements of Truffauts "Film Language" or style:

6. Camera movement: "The considered pan". The last shot of *The 400 Blows* (Antoine runs across the beach, the camera tracks beside him, as Antoine reaches the sea the camera pans quickly to reveal the ambiguous barrier and the image freezes). Seen as building on Bazinian reality, the camera comments but it does so quietly.



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Film Language

Reoccurring elements of Truffauts "Film Language" or style:

7. Use of natural sound and allows the pauses of natural time, often doesn't hold shots for very long, which creates a "quiet, quick, unpretentious rhythm".



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Visual Motifs

Visual Motifs:

Relate to the overall themes

1. Mirrors
2. Windows
3. Caresses
4. Slaps
5. Women's Legs



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Visual Motifs

### Visual Motifs:

6. Fire

7. Cinema

8. Positioning



## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Visual Motifs

### Visual Motifs



Fire

Caresses

Slaps

## Elements of Truffaut's Films - Visual Motifs



Windows

Cinema

Positioning

## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### Doinel Films

Defining series of Truffaut films: Often referred to as the "Antoine Doinel films". Several are included within the previously mentioned adolescent film category, but do not include all the films from that category.

The Doinel films:

1. *The 400 Blows (Les quatre cents coups)*, (1959)
2. "Antoine et Colette" (from *Love at 20*, 1962) - Short film in compilation
3. *Stolen Kisses (Baisers volés)* (1968)
4. *Bed & Board (Domicile conjugal)*, 1970
5. *Love On The Run (L'Amour En Fuite)*, 1979

## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### Doinel Films:

Films cover 20 years of production and all include Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel.

A series of films about the same character, played by the same actor that span more than two decades of time, both in narrative and in overall production.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### Doinel Films:

Jean Pierre Léaud's personality influenced Truffaut in the shaping of the Doinel character.

Many of the narrative elements in the Doinel series are autobiographical for Truffaut.



In place of the obsession with the cinema Antoine is given a fascination with music, he is a novelist not a filmmaker & holds the belief that the reality of art is more important than the reality of the world- relates to the question: "is film more important than life?"

## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### Doine! Films:

None of the Doine! films truly tell a complete story, each is a framework for a film mosaic (bits and pieces that form a complex whole).

Each film displays a set of "passive-aggressive oppositions: men versus women, adults versus children, film versus life".



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### 400 Blows (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*) 1959

Truffaut's first feature & the first film of the Doine! cycle.

Financed by government subsidies, friends, and Madeleine Morgenstein's father, Ignace Morgenstern, managing director of Cocinor (one of France's largest film distribution companies).

Truffaut met Madeleine Morgenstein at the 1956 Venice Film Festival (would eventually marry Madeline, ended in divorce, but continued friendship).



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

*The 400 Blows* is about childhood, parents and children. Audience is introduced to the character of Antoine Doine!.

In the film Antoine and Rene's friendship is partially based on the relationship between Truffaut and his childhood friend Lachenay.

Truffaut's mentor Bazin died while shooting *The 400 Blows*.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### *The 400 Blows*

Instant and enormous critical and commercial success.

Won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1959.

Brought the attention of critics and audiences to the New Wave and to Truffaut in particular.

Paved the way for Truffaut to make more films and to support other New Wave filmmakers as they produced films.

Provoked a shift to youth-oriented culture in France.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### "Antoine and Colette" ("Antoine Colette") 1962

A 30-minute short about young love.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### *Stolen Kisses* (*Baisers Voles*) 1968

About the twilight of youth- the passage from youth to adulthood, just before responsibilities become unavoidable.

The "are women magic?" question is explored.

Antoine is now a young man, recently discharged from the army; the film explores his relationships and career paths and creates a deeper understanding of the Antoine character.



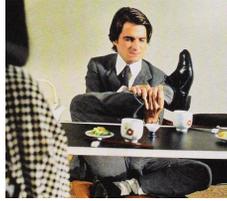
## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### *Bed and Board (Domicile Conjugal)* 1970

In this film the politics of marriage are explored, in which "domestic politics provides a microcosm" for all social politics.

The film also explores "the contrast between the romantic roles assigned to women and the realistic roles women need and want."

The film is another exploration of the question "Are women magic", with a possibly different conclusion for Antoine than that of *Stolen Kisses*.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

### *Love On The Run* (*L' Amour En Fuite*), 1979

Marks the end of the Antoine Doinel cycle.

Truffaut initially did not intend to return to the Doinel character after *Bed and Board* and he was unhappy with the *Love on the Run*, he labeled the film a swindle.

The film further examines the Doinel character, who, in *Love on the Run* again meets up with Colette.



## Examples of Truffaut's Films

While the Doinel films were shot chronologically, Truffaut wrote and directed many other films during the 20 year time period. Including *Jules et Jim* and *Fahrenheit 451*.

Jean-Pierre Léaud also starred in several other films during this time, including ones directed by Truffaut.



## Truffaut Conclusion

Truffaut also worked as an actor; he had roles in 14 films, many of which were cameos, including his 1970 film *The Wild Child (L' Enfant Sauvage)* and Steven Spielberg's 1977 *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.



## Truffaut Conclusion

Truffaut's final film as a director was *Confidentially Yours (Vivement Dimanche!)*.

Truffaut died on October 21, 1984 at age 52 .

His screenplay for *The Little Thief (La Petite Voleuse)* was directed by Claude Miller, who also co-wrote the script. The film was released in 1988.

