

Film Notes

By Ellie Hendricks

Le Bonheur

1965 | 80mins

Director: Agnès Varda

Starring: Marie-France Boyer, Claire Drouot, Jean-Claude Drouot



f X @FilmBathUK



Excellent

Fair

Poor

“Thérèse (Claire Drouot) and François (Jean-Claude Drouot) appear to have it all, they’re young, beautiful, and above all, happy. With Thérèse a devoted homemaker and François a hard-working carpenter, their lives seem blissfully simple. Together, they spend sun-drenched days with their children in fields and forests, wrapped in an idyllic sense of happiness.

But when François meets Émilie (Marie-France Boyer), a kind post office worker, the delicate balance of their perfect life begins to shift. His pursuit of happiness, and his belief that love can be multiplied without consequence, leads to devastating results.

A towering figure in French cinema, Agnès Varda remains one of the most distinctive cinematic voices of the 20th century and her naturalistic, experimental approach placed her at the heart of the French New Wave movement. Varda’s deeply personal, politically engaged, and unapologetically feminist style of filmmaking makes her work unique.

From *La Pointe Courte* (1954) and *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962) to *Le Bonheur* (1965), Varda explored themes of identity, gender, and societal expectation. She balanced beauty and critique, joy and anger, creating films that were as emotionally rich as they were intellectually daring.

Among Varda’s remarkable works, *Le Bonheur* stands out as one of her most quietly subversive. Beneath its radiant, warm palette lies a sharp critique of domesticity. Like a viper hidden in a sunflower garden, *Le Bonheur* exposes the toxicity that can lurk beneath surface perfection. Its cheerful tone and luminous imagery contrast powerfully with its unsettling moral questions, a combination that makes the film as provocative today as it was in 1965.

‘It is both a memorable and exasperating view of the male and female animals—awash in familiar togetherness, sacred sex and frank adultery—that makes it at once joyful and moving but crucially immature, disturbing and tragic’

- The New York Times

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

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Did You Know?

- François' wife and children are played by Jean-Claude Drouot's real family in their only film appearances
- The film's look was inspired by Impressionism art.

Continue Your Journey...

If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Cléo from 5 to 7 (1962)

Written and directed by Agnès Varda, it follows a young French singer between 5pm and 6:30pm as she awaits medical results that could confirm a stomach cancer diagnosis.



The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964)

A musical romantic drama in which two lovers become separated due to drafting for the Algerian War. Similar themes to *Le Bonheur* with love and loss at its centre.

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