



Presents
a Leisure Times Features / Kimstim release

**Juliette
BINOCHÉ**

**CODE
UNKNOWN**

***Written and directed by
Michael Haneke***



**Press Contact: Rodrigo Brandao at Kino International
(212) 629-6880 or rbrandao@kino.com**

PRESSBOOK



Cast

Anne.....Juliette BINOCHÉ
Georges.....Thierry NEUVIC
Le Paysan.....Sepp BIERBICHLER
Jean.....Alexandre HAMIDI
Amadou.....Ona Lu YENKE
Maria.....Luminita GHEORGHIU

Credits

Alain Sarde - Producer
Marin Karmitz - Producer
Michael Haneke - Screenwriter / Director
Jürgen Jürges - Cinematographer
Karin Martusch, Nadine Muse and Andreas Prochaska - Editors
Emmanuel de Chauvigny - Production Designer
Yvon Crenn - Executive Producer
Françoise Clavel - Costume Designer
Alain Oliveri - First Assistant Director
Jean-Pierre Laforce - Sound / Sound Designer
Guillaume Sciamia - Sound / Sound Designer
Kris Portier de Bellair - Casting
Color / 35mm / 117mins.

Synopsis

Paris, the present. Anne (Juliette Binoche) is an accomplished and beautiful actress, on the verge of success. After leaving her apartment for a publicity meeting, she runs into her young brother-in-law Jean (Alexandre Hamidi) who had been waiting outside her building, without the new entry code for the main door.

Jean quickly convinces Anne to let him sleep at her apartment. As he walks back with a new code, he disrespectfully throws a used bag onto the lap of a street beggar — the Romanian immigrant Maria (Luminila Gheorghiu).

KINO ON VIDEO

CODE UNKNOWN

Synopsis (continued)

Amadou, a young man of West African descent, witnesses Jean's act and demands that he apologize to her. After Jean's refusal precipitates a fight, the local police intervene and arrest Amadou, letting Jean leave the scene unquestioned. Maria is also arrested and eventually deported for being an illegal Romanian immigrant.

As Anne rehearses and shoots scenes for her upcoming thriller, her lover Georges (Thierry Nouvie) returns from photographing war atrocities in Kosovo. After a long time separated from each other, their reencounter is awkward and full of ambiguous silences.

Anne and George's inability to connect to each other becomes evident when she contemplates calling the police to ensure the safety of a neighboring child, who constantly screams and is abused by her parents. Pressured by Anne to voice his opinion, Georges uncaringly refrains from suggesting a course of action, causing them to argue in a grocery store.

Jean, Anne's brother-in-law, leaves Paris and briefly returns to live with his father (Sepp Bierbichler). The old man is determined to persuade his son to take over the farm and refuses to accept Jean's need for a different lifestyle. Soon enough, Jean escapes again, now leaving a note asking his father to never search for him.

Maria, now back in Romania, reunites with her family and receives a warm reception. Together, they move to a small apartment and start living a decent life. But in the face of increasingly difficult conditions, Maria decides to illegally return to Paris in order to provide her family with a better life, even though she remains ashamed for having had to beg. Such move forces her to undertake a physically challenging trip, hidden in an empty, pitch-black gas tank.

Amadou's arrest deeply upsets his mother Aminate (Maimouna Hélène Diarra), who calls her husband (Djibril Kouyaté) to express her grief. She thinks her family has been cursed; her young daughter Salimata (Guessi Diakite-Goumbo) was born deaf and his younger brother Demba (Domeke Meite) is accused of being involved in a drug-related school incident. But even with all these problems, Amadou remains calm and supportive, continuing to teach sign language to her sister and other deaf children.

In the film's last scene, Maria starts to beg on the same street where she was previously arrested. And while Amadou's students play drums a couple of blocks away, Georges comes back to Anne's apartment only to find out that, like his brother Jean, he is locked outside, not knowing why the code has changed yet again.



Michael Haneke

Born in 1942, Haneke studied philosophy, psychology and theater in Vienna. From 1967 to 1970, he worked for German television. Since 1970, he has been an independent director and screenwriter. He has also directed theater productions in Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Hamburg.

“Austrian film was having something of a quiet life... and suddenly not only was a new star of European cinema born (Michael Haneke) but a whole country’s film industry was given a new wave of optimism. Turning to Haneke’s previous works, film buffs found a richly philosophical oeuvre, tackling some of the most compelling moral questions of our days in a noticeably film form” (Andrew James Horton; Editor-in-chief, Kinoeye).

Filmography

LE SEPTIEME CONTINENT

Screenplay & direction

Official Competition Cannes 1989

Leopard de Bronze - International Film festival Locarno 1989

BENNY’S VIDEO

Screenplay & direction 1992

Official Competition Cannes 1992

71 FRAGMENTS D’UNE CHRONOLOGUE DU HASARD

Screenplay & direction

Cannes 1994 Golden Hugo Award

Chicago Film Festival 1994

FUNNY GAMES

Screenplay & direction

Official Competition Cannes 1997 Silver Hugo Award

Chicago Film festival 1997 Fipresci Award

Flanders International Film festival 1997



Filmography (continued)

CODE INCONNU

Screenplay & direction
Official Competition Cannes 2000

THE PIANO TEACHER

Screenplay & direction
Cannes Grand Prize Winner 2001
Winner Best Actress Isabelle Huppert Cannes 2001
Winner Best Actor Cannes 2001

FILMS FOR TELEVISION

Castle, The 1997

Die Rebellion 1993

Nachruf für einen Mörder 1991

Fraulein 1986

Wea war Edgar Allan? 1984

Variation 1983

Lemminge, Teil 1 Arkadien 1979

Lemminge, Teil 2 Verletzungen 1979

Drei Wege zum See 1976

Sperrmüll 1976

After Liverpool 1974



Juliette BINOCHE (Filmography)

- 2002 CHOCOLATE dr. Lasse Hallstrom
- 2000 CODE UNKNOWN dr. Michael Haneke
- 1999 WIDOW OF SAINT-PIERRE, THE dr. Patrice Leconte
- 1998 LES ENFANTS DU SIECLE dr. Diane Kurys
- 1998 ALICE ET MARTIN dr. Andre Techine
- 1996 ENGLISH PATIENT, THE Oscar Best Supporting Actress (1997)
dr. Anthony Minghella
- 1995 LE HUSSARD SUR LE TOIT dr. Jean-Paul Rappeneau
- 1993 TROIS COULEURS: BLEU dr. Krzysztof Kieslowski
- 1992 DAMAGE dr. Louis Malle
- 1991 LOVERS ON THE BRIDGE dr. Leos Carax
- 1988 THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING dr. Philip Kaufman
- 1986 MAUVAIS SANG dr. Leos Carax
- 1985 RENDEZ-VOUS dr. Andre Techine
- 1985 JE VOUS SALUE, MARIE dr. Jean-Luc Godard
- 1984 LA VIE DE FAMILLE dr. Jacques Doillon
- 1982 LIBERTY BELLE dr. Pascal Kane



Thierry NEUVIC (Georges)

- 2001 Dieu est grand, je suis toute petite - dr. Pascale Bailly
- 2000 Code Unknown: Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys - dr. Michael Haneke
- 1998 "Louise et les marchés" (mini) TV Series - dr. Marc Riviere
- 1997 Spirale, La (1997) (TV) - dr Miguel Courtois
- 1996 "Femme de la forêt, La" (mini) TV Series - dr. Arnaud Selgnac
- 1996 Si je t'oublie Sarajevo (TV) - dr. Arnaud Selgnac

Luminata GHEORGIU (Maria)

- 2000 Code Unknown: Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys dr. Michael Haneke
- 1998 Train of Life dr. Radu Mihaukeanu
- 1993 Look Ahead with Anger dr. Nicole Margineanu
- 1993 Betraya dr. Radu Mihaukeanu
- 1988 Morometii dr. Stere Gulea

Sepp BIERBICHLER (The Farmer)- Selected Filmography

- 2 0 0 0 (Brecht) The Farewell dr. Jan Schutz
- 2000 Code Unknown: Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys dr. Michael Haneke
- 1998 Hot Dogs dr. Andreas Lechner
- 1997 Winter Sleepers dr. Tom Tykw er
- 1994 Deadly Maria dr. Tom Tyker
- 1 9 7 9 Woyzeck dr. Wermer Herzog
- 1 9 7 8 Second Awakening of Christa Klages, The dr.
- 1976 Heart of Glass dr. Wermer Herzog

Alian SARDE - Producer

Selected Filmography

- 2001 Mulholland Drive
- 2000 Esther Kahn
- 1999 Water Drops On Burning Rocks
- 1999 Straight Story, The
- 1996 Alice et Martin
- 1996 Ponette
- 1994 Wild Reeds, The
- 1993 My Favorite Season



Director's Statement

LETTER TO THE PRODUCER MARIN KARMITZ

Vienna, 14 March 2000.

Dear Marin,

You asked me to write something for the press kit. It's always very hard, impossible even, for me to sum up in a few sentences this "thing" which ends up becoming strangely complex, and on which one has spent most of one's time and energy for the past year and a half.

Moreover, I think that, even more so than my other films, "CODE INCONNU:" resists this process and is harder to reduce to a single "theme." I think that, by reducing it to its most obvious ideas (the Babylonian confusion of languages, the incapacity to communicate, the coldness of the consumer society, xenophobia, etc.), we cannot avoid a mere string of cliché's. That is always what happens when you try to isolate "themes". To do so, in my opinion, a short summary is ample.

Futhermore, there is little that can be said outside the aesthetic framework of the film. Otherwise I would have written a newspaper article instead of making a film. I do not think that my opinions on these "themes" are of much interest to anyone -nor should they be- I am not a "forger of opinions". The interesting thing about a table is its quality, its shape, its functional nature, the way the material was shaped, not the cabinetmaker's opinion.

The only things that remain for me to say after the film is finished, and which might conceivably interest someone, are the questions which triggered and motivated the project, for my film is nothing other than an attempt to try out some of the solutions that one might put forward. None of these questions are new, but they are still topical in the light of the prevailing media scene. Of course they were chosen in an arbitrary and incomplete way, but I hope that they evoke something of the intellectual climate which led me to make "CODE INCONNU".

- Is truth the sum of what we see and hear ?
- Can reality be represented ?



Director's Statement (continued)

- To the observer, what makes the represented object real, credible, or more precisely, worthy of being believed ?
- What is the responsibility of the puppet master if the puppet perfectly imitates real life ?
- In the world of moving pictures, are illusion and deception twins or merely closely related ?
- Are the questions answers ?
- Is the fragment the aesthetic response to the incomplete nature of our perception?
- Is editing the simulation of the whole ?
- Is precision an aesthetic or a moral category ?
- Can allusion replace description ?
- Is that which is off-camera more precise than that which is on ?

I hope I haven't disappointed you too much, or those who will be reading the press kit.

Best wishes,

Michael Haneke



Sight and Sound

Code Unknown



- [home](#)

- [sight and sound](#)

May 2001**Reviews**

- [Bamboozled](#)
- [Bread and Roses](#)
- [Code Unknown](#)

Features

- [Pup Fiction](#)
- [Critical Reading](#)

British Film Institute



France/Germany
2000

Director

Michael
Haneke

Producers

Marin Karmitz
Alain Sarde

Screenplay

Michael
Haneke

**Director of
Photography**

Jürgen Jürges

Editors

Andreas
Prochaska
Karin Hartusch

Music

Giba Gonçalves

Synopsis

Every month *Sight and Sound* prints reviews, synopses and full credits (the latter available only in the print edition) for all the month's new films. As a journal of record and continuing a tradition begun in the 30s by *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (now merged with *S&S*), our synopses give away the plot in full of every film, including surprise twists.

Paris, the present. Anne (Juliette Binoche), an actress, meets Jean (Alexandre Hamidi), the younger brother of her war-photographer boyfriend Georges (Thierry Neuvic). Jean has run away from his father's farm and asks her for the new entry code to her apartment; he then discards a crumpled paper bag into the lap of Maria (Luminita Gheorghiu), a Romanian illegal immigrant who is begging on the street. Amadou (Ona Lu Yenke), a teacher of deaf children, re-monstrates with him. In the ensuing scuffle, policemen arrest Maria and Amadou. Maria is deported. Amadou's West African mother expresses her grief at the treatment of her son. Anne performs a scene from the thriller she is filming, in which she is imprisoned in a soundproof room by a killer.

Georges returns from Kosovo, where he has been photographing atrocities. In Romania, Maria returns to her husband Dragos (Bob Nicolescu) and her family, with whom she moves into a small flat. She is ashamed of having had to beg in Paris, although she did send money home. Jean disappears from his father's farm. His father responds by killing his livestock, telling Anne and Georges that he is unable to run the farm without Jean's help. Anne hears sounds of distress coming from an adjoining apartment but is unsure what to do. She confronts an elderly neighbour who, she believes, pushed a note through her door purporting to be from an abused child in the other apartment; the old woman denies it. Antagonised by

Georges' inability to settle, Anne starts a scene with him in a supermarket, claiming that she aborted their child while he was away. Georges surreptitiously photographs passengers on the Métro. Maria pays to be smuggled back to Paris. Anne, travelling home on the Métro, is tormented by an Arab youth who spits in her face before being challenged by a middle-aged Arab man. As Maria starts to beg on the street, Georges finds the code to the apartment changed and Amadou's students perform a piece for massed drums.

Review

"Morality," *Cahiers du cinéma* critic Luc Moullet famously said in 1959, "is a question of tracking shots." Michael Haneke's first — predominantly- French-language film begins with an exquisitely realised nine-minute tracking shot initially following Juliette Binoche's Anne as she walks along the street. Were this not a Haneke film, it would be tempting to view these opening moments as a homage to the *nouvelle vague* film-makers' fondness for long-take sequences that juxtapose a beautiful actress with a Parisian boulevard caught in real time. But as in Haneke's earlier *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* and *The Seventh Continent*, both of which introduce the fragmented, episodic narrative structure employed in *Code Unknown*, Haneke is concerned here with philosophical first principles rather than referentiality. As this sequence-shot bears witness to the sudden street incident that links the disparate experiences of Maria (a Romanian immigrant), Amadou (the son of West African refugees), Anne, and Jean (the brother of Anne's boyfriend Georges), the film offers the first of a number of scenes which use the multicultural public spaces of Paris, not for their fashionability (Haneke points out he could as easily have filmed his script in London) but as a laboratory for testing the relationship between representation and reality. The results confirm Haneke's reputation as one of cinema's most accomplished moralists.

Both *Benny's Video* and *Funny Games* tended to didacticism and indulged Haneke's perverse modernist desire to punish us for our collusion with the commodified- and thus, for Haneke at least, mendacious- narrative certainties of dominant cinema. *Code Unknown*, on the other hand, furthers Haneke's project of countering what he sees as the degradation of our sense of the real by modulating with true virtuosity between various realisms. The opening sequence is by turns manipulative- stoking our indignation at the policemen's casually insensitive and implicitly racist handling of the confrontation between Jean and Amadou- and naturalistic, artfully thwarting our desire to reach easy judgement. In a later sequence in the Métro, a static camera observes in neutral long shot- again with an unbroken take- as Anne is tormented by an aggressive Arab youth who, incensed by her lack of reaction to his unprovoked taunts, spits in her face. In between the film presents us with fragments- interspersed with Brechtian fades and sudden Godardian sound edits- which turn on the difficulty of relating in a moral fashion to others in a world in which any communication seems fraught with the dangers of victimisation. Anne, while ironing, turns down the television when she hears screams coming from another apartment and this too is left unexplained and unresolved. Alongside this quotidian malaise are the characters' attempts to achieve contact through dissimulation, such as when Anne challenges her elderly neighbour, who may or may not have written a letter purporting to be from an abused child in the adjoining apartment, or when Anne, during an argument with

Georges, claims- we don't know whether it's true or not- to have aborted his child when he was in Kosovo. Georges' own subterfuge, his surreptitious photographing of people on the Métro- a form of surveillance that leads to a marvellous montage of portraits (the work of war photographer Luc Delahaye)- further complicates the film's insistent thematic build-up around responsibility to others and the unbridgeable glacial distance between people.

As Haneke has suggested in interviews, all of this would merely be a reiteration of various modernist clichés about the impossibility of communication were the film not to comprise one superb sequence after another. Rather than dryly demonstrating a thesis, each scene conveys a deeply affecting sense of authenticity and immediacy. The performance of the deglamorised- but still luminescent- Juliette Binoche, whose approach to Haneke initiated the film, contributes immeasurably to the success of *Code Unknown*. A sequence from the film she is shooting (she plays an actress), in which she is interrogated- one of two startling scenes that reveal Haneke's grasp of the strength of our desire to be manipulated (the other- at first deliberately confusing levels of reality - involves a toddler crawling on the edge of a tall building)- is a masterclass in close-up acting. That amid all these heavy-duty moral/aesthetic preoccupations Haneke manages to offer powerfully understated images of the lot of economic migrants- Maria's silent deportation and return to Paris- adds to the sense of *Code Unknown* as a major achievement. Orchestrating his long takes, his superb use of off-screen space and chilly long shots, Haneke sets about if not reinventing, then reinvigorating a non-naive realism for the 21st century. In the process, he gives us the most intellectually stimulating and emotionally provocative piece of European cinema of recent times.

Richard Falcon

This review appeared in the May 2001 issue of S&S. [Order a subscription online](#) now

Last updated Wednesday April 25, 2001 contact:
feedback@bfi.org.uk

• [text only](#)

▲ [TOP OF PAGE](#)