



Les Chansons d'amour

Love Songs

Christophe Honoré

FRANCE, 2007
French

95 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Alma Films**
Producer: **Paulo Branco**
Screenplay: **Christophe Honoré**
Cinematographer: **Rémy Chevrin**
Editor: **Chantal Hymans**
Production Designer: **Samuel Deshors**
Sound: **Guillaume Le Braz**
Music: **Alex Beaupain**
Principal Cast: **Louis Garrel, Ludivine Sagnier, Chiara Mastroianni, Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, Clotilde Hesme**

Production: **Alma Films, 176 rue du Temple, 75003 Paris, France. T (33-1) 4201-0705 F (33-1) 4201-0830 almafils@orange.fr**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Canadian Distributor: **Seville Pictures**
US Distributor: **IFC Films**
International Sales Agent: **Alma Films**
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"As-tu déjà aimé / Pour la beauté du geste?"
– two lines of song from *Les Chansons d'amour*

This playful oddity comes from one of French cinema's most interesting younger minds. Riffing on Jacques Demy's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, Christophe Honoré has created a scruffy, formidably charming musical about love and loss in contemporary Paris.

In its tone, *Les Chansons d'amour* combines the sexual freedom of Honoré's *Ma mère*, with the goofiness (and lyrical inflections) of his more recent *Dans Paris*. The film is roughly divided into three sections – "the departure," "the absence" and "the return" – that relate to a few months in the life of Ismaël (the floppy-haired Louis Garrel, who is rapidly becoming the planet's favourite art-house pin-up boy).

At first, *Les Chansons d'amour* feels almost campy, like a sixties sex comedy, as the silly, somewhat precious Ismaël consorts with his long-time *petite amie* Julie (Ludivine Sagnier) and their recently acquired threesome third, the mostly lesbian Alice (Clotilde Hesme) in a way-too-fabulous apartment. But young, polyamorous puppy love veers into tragedy as Julie perishes of a massive coronary on a Paris street. A grief-stricken Ismaël separates from hard-headed Alice and fends off the advances of Julie's sister (played with moving desperation by Chiara Mastroianni). Through an odd turn of events, Ismaël finds himself stalked by Erwann, an enthusiastic young gay Breton college student, played with insouciant charm by Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, a major acting discovery seen first

in André Téchiné's *Les Égarés*. The two men fall into a sweetly romantic and sexy entanglement, much to Ismaël's surprise. Erwann's powerfully trumpeted amorous feelings make Ismaël realize that love is still possible for him – if not with Erwann, then another human being capable of true affection.

Honoré handles these complex shifts in tone with grace and a great deal of wit. The songs, which are frequent and unannounced, are full of wonderful observations about love, family, death and Paris itself. They have an old-fashioned quality, recalling the glory days of Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg without being overly reverential. Some of the actors have better voices than others – Leprince-Ringuet is especially good – but the dog-eared charm they all bring to the material makes *Les Chansons d'amour* a wonderfully satisfying experience all around.

■ Noah Cowan



Christophe Honoré was born in Brittany, France, and is an established director and author whose screenplay credits include co-writing Jean-Pierre Limosin's *Novo* (02), which played as part of the Festival's inaugural Visions programme.

He has directed the features *17 fois Cécile Cassard* (02), which screened at the Festival, *Ma mère* (04), *Dans Paris* (06) and *Les Chansons d'amour* (07).

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