



# CELEBRATION

A FILM BY OLIVIER MEYROU

PLAYTIME PRESENTS  
A HOLD-UP FILMS PRODUCTION



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**[CÉLÉBRATION]**

A FILM BY OLIVIER MEYROU

France / Documentary / 1.66 / 73 min

INTERNATIONAL SALES

PLAYTIME

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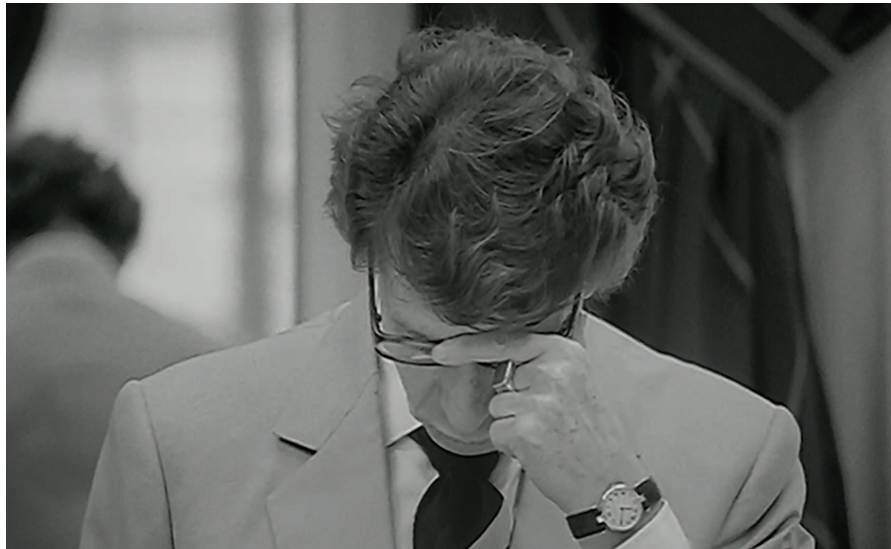
The film was originally presented in the Panorama section of the 57<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival in 2007. Pierre Bergé, co-founder of the Yves Saint Laurent couture house, banned the public release of the documentary film during his living.

The 2018 film is a re-edited version by the same director, Olivier Meyrou, to be released a decade after Yves Saint Laurent passed away.



# SYNOPSIS

As Yves Saint Laurent, one of the greatest Parisian haute couture designers, draws the sketches for his final collection, behind the scenes, Pierre Bergé manages a series of events to celebrate the fashion icon as a modern myth. Immersed inside the couture house from 1998 to 2001, during YSL's final years there, documentary filmmaker Olivier Meyrou's camera films the YSL-Bergé duo.



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I spent 2 and a half years “embedded” at Yves Saint Laurent.

Pierre Bergé wanted to leave a mark. As Yves Saint Laurent’s retirement drew near, Pierre Bergé organized a number of often quite remarkable happenings and events to celebrate YSL throughout the world. I used this series of celebrations, this veritable swansong, as a base to create the film’s dramatic arc.

Trying to film Yves Saint Laurent was much like trying to film two different characters at the same time. On the one hand, there is the historic figure, on the other, a man in physical decline, still relentlessly at work. I needed a visual texture to mirror this situation. I then had the idea of alternating the use of black and white and color film. Black and white to evoke the figure who had already made his place in history, and color to create a feeling of proximity and empathy with the fragile yet vibrant man he was at the time we were shooting the documentary.

I wanted to reveal the collective adventure behind the fashion designer’s renown. The YSL couture house epitomized French society in miniature with its seamstresses, executives and two very rich men at its helm. I spent as much time with the seamstresses as I did with Yves Saint Laurent. Filming the seamstresses at work in the splendor of the mansion’s rooms allowed me to introduce an element of normalcy within a story of such extravagant proportions. The seamstresses shared the same goal and the same passion as Yves Saint Laurent, bringing his sketches to life, but only rarely seeing him, and at that from afar as they worked on the upper floors. Filming these two so close yet so very distinct worlds enabled us to tell the couture house’s story.

Placing the camera at just the right spot and just the right distance resulted in immediate rewards. Capturing a moment in a straightforward, documentary-like fashion, such as was the case for Yves Saint Laurent's birthday, metamorphosed a slice of life into a sequence of pure fiction. All we had to do was glean, from every floor of the couture house, these actual situations and try to enhance their essence. At times we succeeded. For me this film shoot was a lesson in staging documentaries.

For Yves Saint Laurent, everything was a matter of image, but the fashion designer was camera shy. He worked holed up in his studio. What was the solution to filming over a long period of time in these conditions? We opted for an approach that is very close to a wildlife documentary. The first day of the shoot in Yves Saint Laurent's studio, we sat on the ground, in a corner of the room remaining as discreet as possible despite the constraints of shooting on reel. And we waited. Yves Saint Laurent never came. We persisted on the days that followed for just like big cats must sooner or later come to a watering hole, Yves Saint Laurent was going to have to come to his table sooner or later to design his collection.

One day, Yves Saint Laurent came and sat down at his drafting table. He did the best he could to ignore our presence, which was unavoidably intrusive in just 400 square feet. His dog Moujik vigilantly at his side, Yves Saint Laurent gradually grew accustomed to our being there. Even when he was at work, Yves Saint Laurent was equally a timid man of terse conversation. His way of looking, moving, touching fabrics said much more than anything words could express. There was no sense in trying to interview him.



I did film him once in New York in a strange face to face interlude with a journalist from the French daily newspaper *Le Figaro*, who was asking him questions about his career. Staging this twilight interview in contre-jour and black and white, showing Yves Saint Laurent tense-faced with this journalist whom he knew well, showing how difficult it was for her to ask him the simplest questions, was a way of depicting his profound isolation far beyond any of his words. Yves Saint Laurent resembled his spectral sketches. I never met the young man, the rising artist, the creative and joyful revolutionary that we see depicted in Andy Warhol's paintings.

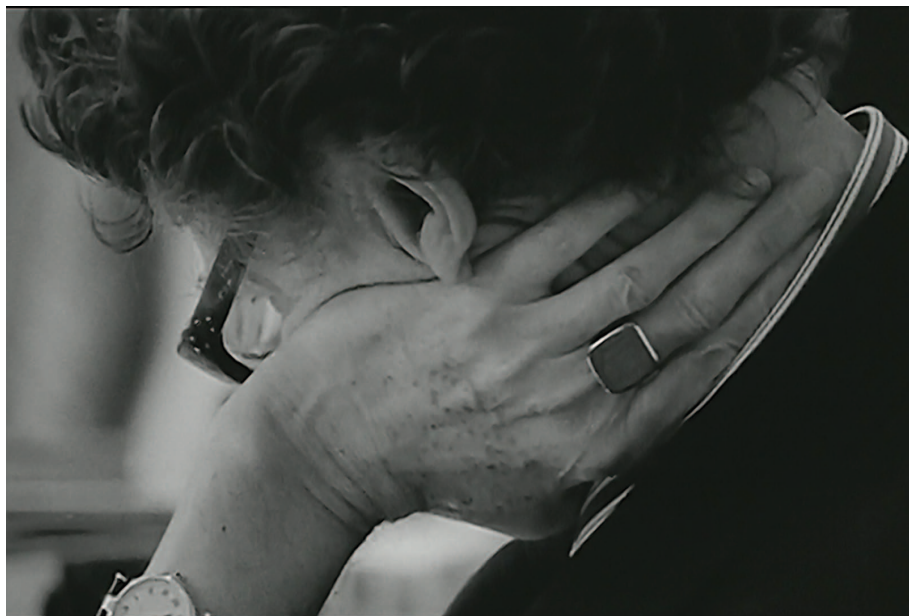
Pierre Bergé, however, had his two feet firmly planted in reality. My work with him consisted in getting beyond the varnish of the public figure to shine a light on this man who was completely in control. He gave himself wholly to the service of what he believed in. I filmed this powerful man trying to capture his intrinsic childlike side. He would do anything to defend his dream. His energy, pride, fits of rage, dishonesty; his anger became touching and comical. When he was irritated, Pierre Bergé could resemble the short-fused comic French characters played by Louis De Funès.

I came to know Yves Saint Laurent without ever conversing with him. On the other hand, with Pierre Bergé, we had a great number of conversations. The shape of this film, the story it tells, is in the image of what I experienced with them and what I observed during that period of time.





# CREDITS



PRODUCED BY	Bénédicte Couvreur, Christophe Girard
DIRECTED BY	Olivier Meyrou
PHOTOGRAPHY	Jean-Marc Bouzou, Florian Bouchet
MUSIC	François-Eudes Chanfrault
SOUND	Yolande Decarsin, Ludovic Escallier
SOUND EDITING & MIXING	Sébastien Savine
EDITING	Cathie Dambel, Amrita David
PRODUCTION	Hold-Up Films
FRENCH DISTRIBUTION	Norte Distribution
INTERNATIONAL SALES	Playtime