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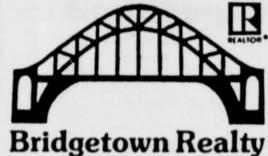
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Emanuelle Beart is Manon.

## Films big at boxoffice at year's end

1987 brought a plethora of films that cross age, gender, and class barriers. Two films with broader appeal than usual are "The Princess Bride" and "Manon of the Spring"

Starring: Yves Montand, Emmanuelle Beart, Daniel Auteuil

Directed by: Claude Berri

From the novel "Leau des Collines" (1936) by Marcel Pagnol

agerly awaited by all who saw Jean de Florette," part two of this two-part epic work, Manon of the Spring, maintains the same cinematic splendor, brilliant acting and ironic tragi-comic tone. A beautiful film on every level, Manon of the Spring should stand as a

benchmark to filmmakers on how to translate beautiful literary works into beautiful, literary

Continuing in their roles as Cesar Soubeyran and his simple, homely nephew, Ugolin, Yves Montand and Daniel Auteuil are once again rural perfection. As the last of the Soubeyran line, Ugolin has only his gold to offer a woman and it's not very important to him — it's never shown on screen. He has followed his passion of raising carnations on the farm he and Cesar slowly and punishingly wrested from Manon's father. The ordeal resulted in Jean's death and orphaned Manon's current situation. She is a shepherdess; she herds her goats among the hills of what is now Ugolin's farm. It's in the terms of sale that she can live there, and though her mother has resumed her career on the operatic stage, Manon choses to remain with the old woman who lived in a little cabin on the farm when her father still owned it.

Manon, still proud as she was in her girlhood, hides from hunters, but occasionally they catch sight of her, and she has blossomed into a beautiful young woman. The beautiful young woman. Scurrying up and down the hills with her goats, napping in the noonday shade, bathing in a spring, frolicing nude in the sun (maybe 30 seconds of film) while playing her father's harmonica, have combined to make the most of her heritage; she resembles the legendary beauty, her grandmother, Florette.

Manon has few lines in the film. She sings, in quite an operatic fashion, to her goats, and she answers the occasional question, but she will,

for example, shake her head "no" when old Baptistine asks her if she wants to rejoin her mother. Fatally smitten Ugolin, who has taken to following her from afar (or, camouflaged, from anear), voices some details in the action — he is trapping birds and putting them in her little traps. She takes them to a neighboring town to sell. Ugolin tends his flowers at night. He stalks, hunts and pines by day.

This complete absence of prattling and petty talk, coupled with Manon's bounding around the hilly farm in all her sun-kissed splendor, add to her weight as a dramatic character. She is incredibly beautiful, but only eighteen or so. Yet she comes off as the closest thing to a true earth goddess we have seen on film for decades. Later, when Manon discovers the source for all the water in the area and dams it up, we believe she has the strength of purpose to do it. We can almost believe it is her divine right, and not just from a squabble over land and her father's untimely death. There is also her ownership of the territory; we feel this for her by her cheerful tending of the goats as she wanders the place. She can quote her late father about the Jurassic makeup of geological features to the new school teacher, but she is so metaphorically bound up in the earth that when he comes to talk to her later, he dusts off some leaves before he wakes her up from her nap.

Manon, who ends part one of the film with a shriek, as a girl of ten or so who has just seen César and Ugolin undam the spring, overhears two hunters, one of whom details the Soubeyrans' fiendish plot, known to all the villagers, as it turns out. Superstition kept him from telling the truth earlier. Ironically, it is superstition that turns things around.

Lo and behold! Manon is a mystery we have been watching all along. We find out why Ugolin is so simple, and why the Soubeyrans are an endangered species. We find out what happened to Florette (hers was a sad story). We find out why Jean was a hunchback. And Africa, so delicately foreshadowed in Jean de Florette, plays no small part in the set-up of the epic tragedy.

Beautiful, tender, proud, intelligent acting, the surpassingly beautiful Beart, and great respect for an engrossing story make Manon of the Spring one of the loveliest, most artistically satisfying films in the history of the medium.