

La Petite Voleuse

("The Little Thief")

France : 1988 : dir. Claude Miller : Orly / Renn / Ciné Cinq /

Les Films du Carosse / Sedif : 109 min

prod: Claude Berri : scr: François Truffaut, Claude Givray, Claude Miller,

Luc Béraud & Annie Miller : dir.ph.: Dominique Chapuis

[Charlotte Gainsbourg](#)

Didier Bezace; Simon De la Brosse; Raoul Billerey; Chantal Banlier; Nathalie Cardone; Clotilde de Bayser; Philippe Deplanche; Marion Grimault; Erick Deshors

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5772	1.5	4	0	1,015	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"So-so character portrait of the title lass, an alienated, amoral teen drifting through life in post-war France. If she comes off as a female Antoine Doinel, its because the original story was co-written by François Truffaut, who was supposedly planning to film this at the time of his death; resulting film lacks the director's inimitable touch. Miller was for ten years Truffaut's assistant; Gainsbourg is the daughter of Jane Birkin. ****1/2** "

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

"It is 1950. Sixteen-year old Janine (Gainsbourg), abandoned by her mother but hopeful of her return, lives with her aunt and uncle (Banlier, Billerey) in a small town.. Longing to be grown-up, the girl steals clothes, make-up and, finally, money from church funds, narrowly escaping prosecution. She takes a job as a maid, loses her virginity to a married man (Bezace), takes up with a young thief (De la Brosse), becomes pregnant, is institutionalised, escapes and returns home to a cold welcome...

François Truffaut had long intended to film this subject, Janine a sort of female counterpart to Antoine Doinel, but his premature death prevented it. Working from the basis of a synopsis he left behind, his former assistant, Claude Miller, has given it life. In the event, one wonders why he bothered. Set in post-war France, the movie is jam-packed with incident and offers many small details of mood and

characterisation which are admirable and even enjoyable. Fundamentally, however, although it is difficult to fault Gainsbourg's portrayal of a half-knowing, half-innocent [*sic*] and feisty delinquent, Janine is so uncompromisingly irritating and her story finally so uninteresting that the film becomes almost unendurably tedious. Comparisons have been drawn with Emily Lloyd and "**WISH YOU WERE HERE**", but "**VOLEUSE**" has none of the charm of David Leland's film and little comparable period interest."

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

"François Truffaut began this project before he died in 1984, and it has been taken to a successful conclusion by his producer, Claude Berri, and his faithful assistant, Claude Miller. Gainsbourg gives a sharp and spirited portrayal of a complex, unloved French girl. She becomes a petty thief to gain attention and then falls in with a young male criminal (Simon de la Brosse) who elevates her self-esteem. Echoes of Truffaut's acclaimed "**400 BLOWS**" are evident in this astonishing characterisation, though Miller's direction is not as capable as Truffaut's. Originally filmed in French, the film was unrated in its initial theatrical release but rated "R" for video. ****1/2** "

The Virgin Film Guide review:

" "**THE LITTLE THIEF**" stars Charlotte Gainsbourg as Janine Castang, who, as the film opens, is a rebellious 15-year old struggling against the provincial strictures of

life in her small French village after WWII. Her penchant for petty thievery has aroused the wrath of her aunt and uncle, who have cared for her since her flighty mother deserted them. Removed from school and put to work, Janine finds escape in the local cinemas, where she meets Michel Davenne (Didier Bezace), a mild-mannered, married choirmaster for whom she develops a convulsive passion.

"**THE LITTLE THIEF**"'s main character was originally conceived as part of François Truffaut's "**THE 400 BLOWS**", but cut for reasons of length. Truffaut never forgot her, however. After his death, the task of making the film fell to Claude Miller, Truffaut's longtime production manager. The spirit of Truffaut is very much in evidence in "**THE LITTLE THIEF**": the affection for the past, the concern with adolescent angst, the abiding love of cinema. What's lacking is his radiantly omniscient sense of humanity, not to mention his sureness of control with both performances and film technique. The film is diverting and moves along briskly, but is never really moving or compelling. Gangling Gainsbourg, with her hushed, sibilant voice, is the best thing in the film. **1/2 "

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993"]

Cast:

Janine Castang**Charlotte Gainsbourg**
Michel DavenneDidier Bezace
RaoulSimon De la Brosse
Uncle André RouleauRaoul Billerey
Aunt LeaChantal Banlier
MauricetteNathalie Cardone
Severine LonguetClotilde de Bayser
Jacques LonguetPhilippe Deplanche
KebadianMarion Grimault
RaymondErick Deshors

No further information currently available. Charlotte Gainsbourg later starred for uncle Andrew Birkin in "**THE CEMENT GARDEN**" (92). In 1991 she was Matilda in the Italian-French-German film "**IL SOLE ANCHE DI NOTTE**" ("Night Sun"). There's no indication this was her debut appearance, but I'm not aware of any earlier films she made. Honest portrayals of delinquent teens all run the same hazard of disassociating the bulk of their audience as they chronicle the antisocial conduct of the central character. Most of us have a limit to our tolerance of persistent petty criminality, however much we're prepared to offset the blame against parental inadequacies and neglect. There comes a point in every teenage life when the individual must stand to account for his or her own behaviour, however much sinned against in childhood. The consensus of opinion above seems to be that the director badly misjudged that threshold, but it is still of genuine interest to the archive as, in effect, an extended out-take from "**LE QUATRE CENTS COUPS**" (though of course Janine is quite a bit older than Antoine Doinel in that film).

See subject index under **CRIME / DELINQUENCY**.