



A film by Chris Marker

LEVEL FIVE

“Passionate and cerebral; there is nothing else in theaters now that feels quite as new.” –A. O. Scott, *The New York Times*

**“Should rightly take its place among the late director’s best work.”
–Robert Abele, *The Los Angeles Times***

With Catherine Belkhodja / France / 1996 / 106 min / In French with English Subtitles / DCP

Contact: (718) 488-8900 www.IcarusFilms.com
Serious documentaries are good for you.



SYNOPSIS

While developing a video game about World War II's Battle of Okinawa in which 150,000 Japanese were killed, many by suicide, Laura (Catherine Belkhodja) becomes increasingly drawn into her work. Chris Marker's elaborate, colorful LEVEL FIVE is a patchwork of mesmerizing and pixelated images, archives, history, interviews (including with the Japanese director Nagisa Oshima), and quasi-science fiction, LEVEL FIVE prefigures the director's fascination with digital worlds, which he also explored in installations, interactive CD-ROMs, and later, digital platforms.

ABOUT THE FILM

A woman (Laura), a computer, an invisible interlocutor: such is the setup on which *Level Five* is built. She "inherits" a task: to finish writing a video game centered on the Battle of Okinawa—a tragedy practically unknown in the West, but whose development played a decisive role in the way World War II ended, as well as in postwar times and even our present.

A strange game, in fact. Contrary to classical strategy games whose purpose is to turn back the tide of history, this one seems willing only to reproduce history as it happened. While working on Okinawa and meeting through a rather unusual network—parallel to Internet—informants and even eye-witnesses to the battle (including film director Nagisa Oshima), Laura gathers pieces of the tragedy, until they start to interfere with her own life.

As in any self-respecting video game, this one proceeds by "levels". Laura and her interlocutor, intoxicated by their enterprise, use this as a metaphor for life itself, and gladly attribute levels to everything around them. Will she attain *Level Five*?

Watch the Trailer: <http://trailers.apple.com/trailers/independent/levelfive>

Press Room: <http://icarusfilms.com/pressroom.html>

Download high-res images and additional press material

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

What do you mean, you never know?

By Gérard de Battista, French Association of Directors of Photography (AFC)

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

May 1985, filming *Level Five* on Okinawa, Japan's southernmost island. Extremely small team: Marker and me, him with a Walkman-style tape recorder modified by Antoine Bonfanti, and me with an Arri 16 SR, a Zeiss 11-110mm zoom lens, a backpack containing a magazine, film, and changing bag.

It was the fortieth anniversary of the American landing on the island and the battle that followed. The film talks about the war in general and we filmed the different battlefields, ceremonies, families visiting the battlefields and cemeteries (there were many deaths at Okinawa, American and Japanese soldiers and civilians killed in the bombings, or collective suicides by entire families...). We generally managed to get around using taxi drivers who spoke English, and so filming was both discreet and mobile.

One day, he asked the taxi to stop on a road in the middle of the forest and asked the driver to come back in an hour. He told me to follow him, and there we were on a path through the jungle. We walked for half an hour and the path led us right up to the sea, there was no shore. Off in the distance was a little islet covered in trees.

He said to me, "You see, on that island lives a race of wildcats that can only be found there. So set your zoom to 25, film the sea there, film steadily for five seconds, then pan over to the left until you reach the island, hold for five seconds, cut, and let's get out of here." I do the shot, it takes me about twenty seconds, and I cut. And there, I let out one of those unfortunate and stupid lines that years of reading TV magazines had drilled into my head: "Don't you want me to pan in the other direction, to the right? You never know!" And the moment I said it, I realized the tremendous idiocy of what I had just said...

Suddenly all of these memories came flooding through my head: who I was speaking to, the high-school theatre where I had presented *Sunday in Peking* and *Letter from Siberia* when I was 16, Marker's voice on my message machine asking me to come... He turned around to face me, stared into my eyes, and enunciating each word clearly and slowly, said, "What do you mean, you never know?"

Okinawa in the month of May has a Polynesian climate. And yet I felt cold all over. The dailies of that shooting stayed in the cutting room for ten years. The film was assembled and released in 1995. Of course, the shot is there, and, of course, it is exactly as it was shot. Since then, when I hear the words "You never know," for a shot, a lens, a light, a scene, and even for a film, I think about that island with the cats.

Chris Marker loved cats, and owls.

Adios, Maestro.

IN THE PRESS

“Passionate and cerebral...there is nothing else in theaters now that feels quite as new.”

–A. O. Scott, The New York Times

<http://nyti.ms/1q2LdBp>

“Should rightly take its place among the late director's best work.” –Los Angeles Times

<http://lat.ms/1mq9QEf>

"A fin de siècle masterpiece." –Mubi

<https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/time-aches-headaches-chris-markers-level-five>

“At once playful and serious; *The Week Ahead* Film Pick” –The New York Times

<http://nyti.ms/1q2LaW7>

“5/5 Stars—sensational; ecstatic!” –Time Out New York

<http://www.timeout.com/us/film/level-five>

“4/4 Stars!” –Slant <http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/level-five>

“The jewel in the [BAM] series' crown.” –The Village Voice

<http://www.villagevoice.com/2014-08-13/film/chris-marker-bam-brooklyn/>

“One of This Week's Must-See Art Events” –Art F City

<http://artfcity.com/2014/08/11/this-weeks-must-see-art-events-future-perfect/>

“Six Things to Do in New York's Art World” –Gallerist

<http://galleristny.com/2014/08/6-things-to-do-in-new-yorks-art-world-before-august-18/>

“Top Movies To See This Weekend” –Blackbook

<http://www.bbook.com/28-films-see-weekend-chris-marker-philippe-garrel-douglas-sirk/>

“A reason for celebrating.” –LA Weekly <http://bit.ly/1mq9Jc0>

“100% Fresh” –Rotten Tomatoes http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/level_five/

“Level Five” highlight –The L Magazine <http://bit.ly/1mq9hKJ>

“Level Five” highlight –The Wall Street Journal <http://on.wsj.com/1pNUsGK>

“Level Five” highlight –The Dissolve <http://thedissolve.com/reviews/999-level-five/>

“Four stars! An essay film that is at once a documentary about the last battle of World War II on the Japanese island of Okinawa, and a monologue delivered by a computer programmer about designing a game of this battle. [Its] digressive, elliptic, self-referential approach to depicting the atrocities of war feels like the only true response to such unimaginable horrors.

At one point the narrator refers to 'the ethics of imager', and few filmmakers have probed this field with such acuity and sensitivity as Marker has." —Edward Lawrenson, *Time Out London*

"Too complicated for words—yet unforgettable—Chris Marker signs a masterful historic-fantastic thriller, a vital reflection on death and image... A film on memory and the refusal to forget. An unforgettable film." —Pierre Murat, *Telerama*

"An exceptional film!" —Jean-Michel Frodon, *Le Monde*

"A film full of intelligence and generosity." —Gerard Lefort, *Liberation*

"A bit in the same way as Resnais' *Hiroshima, mon amour*, *Level Five* unwinds the three entangled threads of a ball of yarn: transmission of History, reflection on image and film matter, intimate dialogue." —Serge Kaganski, *Les Inrockuptibles*

"[Chris Marker became] increasingly fascinated by multimedia and its impact on the documentary process. [*Level Five*] centers on a woman (Catherine Belkhodja) who gives free vent to her thoughts after being asked to finish writing a computer program on the Okinawa tragedy. Clicking on various subjects, she calls up data that gradually leads the viewer into the little-known event, in which the Japanese military murdered their families and then committed mass suicide in an attempt to shock U.S. forces from further aggression. As the film ironically notes, the result was the complete opposite: In fact, it made the atomic solution inevitable. [*Level Five*] adds up to a fascinating glimpse of a historical event that's still little known in the West." —Derek Elley, *Variety*



ABOUT CHRIS MARKER

Born Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve on July 29, 1921 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, Chris Marker was a cinematic essayist and audio-visual poet. After World War II, he worked as a writer, publishing his first book, *Le coeur net*, in 1949. In the 1950s he turned to documentary filmmaking; among his many significant works from this period are *Letter from Siberia*, *Cuba Sil*, *La Jetée* and *Le Joli Mai*. In the 1960s and 1970s, Marker was involved with SLON, a filmmaking collective dedicated to activist productions. He began making films under his own name again in 1977 with *A Grin Without A Cat*. During the '80s and '90s, Marker's work included several films about fellow filmmakers, including *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich* (1999), an homage to his friend Andrei Tarkovsky. He also explored video and computer-generated imagery with a continued emphasis on the intersection between personal and political themes in films such as *The Case of the Grinning Cat*. An original voice in world cinema for over 50 years, Marker passed away on his 91st birthday, July 29, 2012.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

La Jetée (1962)
Le Joli Mai (1963)*
The Sixth Side of the Pentagon (1967) *
Far from Vietnam (1967) *
A bientôt, j'espère/Be Seeing You (1968)*
Class of Struggle (1969) *
Three Cheers for the Whale (1972) *
The Embassy (1973) *
A Grin Without a Cat (1977) *
Sans Soleil (1982)
The Last Bolshevik (1993)*
Chris Marker's Bestiary (1994)*
Level Five (1996)*
One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich (1999) *
Remembrance of Things to Come (2001)*
The Case of the Grinning Cat (2004) *

*An Icarus Films Release

FILM CREDITS

Argos Films, with the participation of Canal Plus, Coficiné, and the Centre National de la Cinématographie, with the support of La Procirep and co-produced by La Sept Cinéma, presents:

"Level Five"

A film by Chris Marker

With Catherine Belkhodja

And the participation of Nagisa Oshima, Kenji Tokitsu, Ju'nishi Ushiyama

And the testimony of Reverend Shigeaki Kinjo

Okinawa shoot 1985 (Market, islands, underground, Mabuni Hill): Gérard de Battista
Chateau de Sauvage shoot (Laura among animals): Yves Angelo

Soundtrack and Keyboard: Michel Krasna

Voice Wizard: Ramuntcho Matta

Sound Mix: Florent Lavallée

Made with the support of: Centre Georges Pompidou (audiovisual department);

Harouth Bezdjian; Didier Coudray; and Nicolas Joly

Documents: Archives NAVL

Friends and Collaborators: Catherine Cadou, Yoshié Oshita, Evguenia Widhoff, Yuko Fukusaki, Jacqueline Heymann, Hayao Shibata, Tomoyo Kawai, Teishu Murata, Hiroko Govaers, René Chateau, Shinnosuke Misawa, Euphète Kosinki

The film knows what it owes to the book *Tennozan* by George Feifer and to the memoirs of Colonel Yahara

Film excerpts: LES MORTS SONT TOUJOURS JEUNES, CINEMETIERES MARINS by Nagisa Oshima; LET THERE BE LIGHT by John Huston

Apple computer: PowerMachinosh 8100

Carte Radius: VideoVision

Software used for game simulation: HyperStudio (Roger Wagner); Adobe Photoshop;

Fractal Design Painter; Studio 32; Morph

Production: Les Films de l'Astrophore; Argos-Films; La Sept Cinéma

Dotted line producer: Raphael Roméro

With the participation of Canal Plus and support from La Procirep and Karedas

"Un Jour tu verras" (Mouloudji/Van Parys) Sung by Mouloudji

Subtitles: Pierre Hodgson

Language: In French with English Subtitles

Running time: 106 minutes

Production Year: 1996

Release Year: 2014

An Icarus Films Release