

Paul and Paulette Take a Bath [15]

2024 UK 109 mins

UK released **3 September 2025**

Director **Jethro Massey**

Screenplay **Jethro Massey**

Cinematography **Ole Marius Dahl; Isarr Eiriksson**

Music **Marc Tassell**

Cast **Marie Benati** (Paulette); **Jérémie Galiana** (Paul);
Fanny Cottençon (Charlotte) ; **Laurence Vaissiere**
(Valerie) ; **Gilles Graveleau** (Gilles); **Margot Joseph**
(Margerita)

In 1974, Jacques Rivette's Céline and Julie famously went boating, the two questing protagonists drifting in its closing scene down a river of their imagination. A bath, where this film's leads find themselves, is considerably more cramped and intimate – and also a fine analogy for the dimensions and tone of British filmmaker Jethro Massey's debut, which is content to soak in its own misanthropic worldview. Self-produced by the Paris-residing director, *Paul & Paulette Take a Bath* is an uneven work but impresses with how it freshens up old cinematic idioms: could it be the first historico-black romantic comedy?

For a film obsessed with the decrepit corners of Paris's past, *Paul & Paulette Take a Bath* is also old-fashioned and backward-looking in a more unwitting sense. It's felt like an age since a filmmaker has attempted such an unashamed "boy meets girl in the City of Love" movie, in the key of the New Wave, *Before Sunset* and Wes Anderson's early beta-male character studies, but it doesn't feel fresher for having spent around 15 years off our screens, as tastes and also gender politics have changed. Paul (Jérémie Galiana) is the tousle-haired US wannabe photographer; Paulette (Marie Benati) is a raven-haired manic pixie dream fille given to moods alternately morbid and whimsical. Yes, they look uncannily photogenic and chic together, and it's hard not to reflect on the sheer immortality of all these romantic clichés. They meet-cute as Paul alights upon Paulette re-enacting Marie Antoinette's death by guillotine on a grand city thoroughfare; however alarming it may be,

as an opening character gesture, it has an expected, impulsive theatricality. Yet the more contemporary-feeling aspect of Paulette's sexual fluidity keeps her flirtation with Paul unpredictable: she's apparently mourning a break-up with Margerita (Margot Joseph), a "Marilyn Monroe impersonator", and our similarly named title characters consummate their relationship far later than you'd expect. And then there's the matter of Massey's historical allusions: their "chat" is largely composed of exposition on the vast misdeeds and tyranny that have plagued the city's life: its Vichy occupation, its Napoleonic military dictatorship and its numerous colonial crimes. The spoken descriptions feel like Wikipedia, winningly so because they're precise and lucid. Here, the more original aspects of Massey's artistic vision reveal themselves: actual physical evidence of this history in Paris can feel well disguised, but this generation has grown up with the internet and social media – a very efficient way for it to re-circulate (and Paul's day job in luxury e-commerce hints at this digital-centric element to the film). If the familiarity of Paul & Paulette Take a Bath's component parts can induce a bit of cynicism, its absence of sentimentality and adeptness at making you uncomfortable reduce our complacency. Just as a hot bath is an oddly useful place to think, Massey's film enjoys pondering our irrationalities and strange fixations: where they come from (to reference a plot thread involving Paulette's troubled father) and whether love can help us escape them.

David Katz, *Cineuropa*, 4 September 2024

Coming soon....

Monday 29/09: ***Put Your Soul in Your Hand and Walk***

Monday 06/10: ***Young Mothers***

For details and more – visit our website

Scan to get a weekly email about what's next



www.buxtonfilm.org.uk



Buxton Film is a Registered Charity no. 1165040
admin@buxtonfilm.org.uk  @buxtonfilm.bsky.social