

**MAGNET**

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Presents

# Boarding Gate

A thriller by  
Olivier Assayas

**Official Selection**  
Festival De Cannes  
Midnight Screening

**106 Minutes**

**Press Notes**

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# Synopsis

The new film from acclaimed and adventurous French filmmaker Olivier Assayas, *Boarding Gate* is an erotic noir-thriller boasting an exciting international cast.

Asia Argento plays sexy ex-prostitute Sandra, who is forced to flee London after a steamy S&M encounter with a debt ridden ex-lover (Michael Madsen) ends in violence.

Fleeing to Hong Kong in search of a fresh start, she becomes involved with an attractive young couple, Lester (Carl Ng) and Sue (Kelly Lin), who promise to help her obtain papers and money.

But nothing turns out as expected for Sandra, and she finds herself trapped in a sordid game of manipulation.

An Official Selection of the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

# Comments from Olivier Assayas

## **ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT**

A news brief caught my eye about the murder of French financier Eduard Stern during an S&M session. It seemed like something right out of my film DEMONLOVER. That triggered in my mind the story of a murder involving an ambiguous sexual relationship and the world of modern finance. I also thought about a woman on the run, trying to escape both the murder and the past. So the first part of the story ended up being centered around the confrontation between a man and a woman, their cat-and-mouse game. I wanted the second part to be about her escape, her being desperate and on the move. I knew the first part could pretty much take place in any Western city. But the second part had to be Hong Kong. I know that city well, but I had never filmed there before. I had been dreaming about it a long time.

## **BOARDING GATE**

I chose this term as a title to evoke the idea of a passage between two worlds. Early on, I wanted the film's title to be the word stamped on passports when leaving Hong Kong: "departed." But I found that Scorsese had just finished a film that was going to use that word in the title.

## **B-MOVIE ECONOMICS**

After DEMONLOVER and CLEAN, I had originally wanted to make a very French film focusing on provincial life. But the project met with a lot of financial complications. A sign of the times. While waiting to see if my French film was going to happen or not, I decided to write and even shoot quickly another project. Why not make a sort of B movie in English? Why not take my place in the new order of film finance by constructing a project around B movie economics? Slashed budget and a fast shoot, but all the benefits of complete creative freedom. It was something I knew how to do. I made IRMA VEP under similar circumstances and for the same reasons. In March 2006, I scouted locations for BOARDING GATE, followed by Paris pre-production to start shooting in July 2006. We shot for six weeks, three in and around Paris and three in Hong Kong. The film ended up costing less than 2 million euros.

## **THE KEY IS TO SHOOT QUICKLY**

Frankly, I didn't feel any loss. Less locations makes it easier to shoot for less. In Paris, we shot primarily in the office and apartment of the Michael Madsen character Miles. For the other locations, I wanted to shoot in the city outskirts to give the feeling of a no man's land which could just as easily be Paris or somewhere else. The industrial suburbs of a modern industrial city somewhere in the Western world. This would only strengthen the contrast with ultra-urban Hong Kong. The key is knowing how to shoot quickly. This is something I learned a long time ago by simple survival reflex. It's essential to have a solid crew of technicians and actors ready to take the same risks as the director. This requires a lot of energy because the constraints and the pressure forces you to constantly invent new solutions. This was definitely the case in Hong Kong. Shooting there isn't really costly if you do it the local way. If you go there with a full Western crew, Western habits and a Western infrastructure, then things will quickly turn expensive and heavy.

## **ASIA: ALWAYS READY AND WILLING**

The narrative was inseparable from my urge to work with Asia Argento. She was the only actress capable of truthfully incarnating the different facets of the character. Asia is a physical actress. You can tell she has fun doing action scenes. Running around with a gun in her hand amuses her. She was behind the film the whole way, always ready and willing, even for the toughest acrobatics. And she fell in love with Hong Kong, which she had never been to before the shoot.

## **ASIA: ALL INSTINCT**

Asia is one of few actresses completely at home on a film set with no regard to stature. She has been on film sets since she was very young so she's more at ease with technicians on a chaotic set than shut away in a dressing room. Asia has a certain freedom in the way she thinks, reacts, in the choices she makes. This isn't something she puts on. She simply puts it out there very courageously. She's innately rock 'n' roll, which isn't very common among actresses. There's nothing prefabricated about her. She's all instinct with an uncommon intensity. She's a surprising actress who doesn't discriminate the trivial from the sophisticated, B movie situations from the most intimate of scenes. She's completely herself every time, and with the utmost generosity. Each take she comes up with something new, but she's always in the heart of the film, in the heart of her character. She has a nearly unreal bond to the camera.

## **ON MICHAEL MADSEN**

I met Michael Madsen through Nick Nolte, which was a good sign. I was looking for an actor with a strong physical presence who could play both dangerous and seductive. When I contacted him, he was able to find the time in his schedule to do the film. He was patient enough to stick with us every time we moved the shooting dates. We only needed him 10 days or so as his character shot only on three locations in Paris.

## **WHEN MICHAEL MET ASIA**

The scenes between Asia and Michael were shot in chronological order. Their first shot together, the one with the cufflinks, was actually their first meeting. They had never seen each other before. Seduction started instantly between them, but also a certain defiance. He's a bit of a bear. He tries to completely identify with his role, to get under the skin of his character. This can be risky for him and those around him. Asia is pretty radical herself, so this produced a real electricity on the set. It was like a pressure cooker between them, as if they were constantly competing, checking each other out. Even if the shots were carefully laid out and the movements very choreographed, Michael always shook things up with his unpredictability. Both Asia and I had to manage to follow him. Sometimes even against him, we had to firmly hold on to the line of the scene. He broke a plate, he spit out a pit on the other side of the room, he bit his nails... Conversely, there are things that he resists, that he balks at doing, that he reacts to at a different moment. Everything had to constantly be integrated into the film. Asia is on the front line so she has to react in real time. I'm behind, but I still have to take in everything and re-orchestrate so as not to lose the whole concept of the sometimes very long sequences. Michael can be very over-the-top and go to extremes. After a certain point, he can take you to some very scary places. Things can get out of hand and situations can take on a troubling truthfulness. Asia called his bluff and took some big risks. Michael didn't seem to like the idea of being pushed to the limits by a girl. For example, the sex play scene with the belt. I originally wrote something really simple. But Michael had some very precise ideas about what Asia should do to him. There were some takes that scared both of them!

## **KELLY LIN AND CARL NG**

Since I was going to shoot in Hong Kong, I wanted to do my film under the same conditions as Hong Kong cinema. I wanted to look toward the new generation of actors directly there instead of trying to cast out of Paris. Carl Ng, who plays Lester, is an actor-model who grew up in London. He's the son of Richard Ng, a star from the 80s. He has very strong presence which I immediately found right for his relationship with Asia's character. Kelly Lin has worked with directors like Johnny To and Patrick Tam, and she's won of the best new Chinese-speaking actresses around. BOARDING GATE is the first time she acts in English in an international film.

## **SHOOTING IN HONG KONG**

We were only five Europeans: Asia, the cinematographer, the sound engineer, the assistant and me. The rest of the crew was local. They understood that we were going to shoot like them: fast, hand-held. They are accustomed to rushing about with the Steadicam, so they were amazed and puzzled by our precision to the millimeter regarding the shots and our obstinacy at redoing them until we got exactly what we wanted. The unexpected difficulty we met in shooting the Hong Kong way was that the crews are big. Salaries are low, so there are numerous technicians for every job. For example, never less than six people around the camera. Crew members are numerous and the people of Hong Kong tend to be pretty noisy. This posed a problem when we shot in the streets, when we did guerilla shots in the middle of a crowd. The crew had to be really careful to be as limited and discreet as possible. Sometimes we had to invent these schemes, pretend to prepare a shot just to keep the excess crew occupied so that we could go somewhere else and shoot something else. In such guerilla conditions, the toughest thing is that you're forced to do a lot of illegal shots, like shooting in the subway without permits. We did those shots with a team of four people. We did two takes, then ran off. We did the same thing at the airport because we were restricted to shooting from a certain boutique in the main hall. Of course, it was impossible to shoot everything from only this point of view. Our Hong Kong crew was terrorized by airport security and they tried to stop us from doing anything illegal. We had a hard time getting them to do the shots we really needed. I have to say that I understood their reluctance because I would never do something like that in Paris!

# About Olivier Assayas

Born in 1955, Olivier Assayas studied painting and literature, directed short films and wrote for Cahiers du Cinéma between 1980 and 1985. He co-wrote two films of director André Téchiné, RENDEZ-VOUS and SCENE OF THE CRIME. Assayas is also the author of film books "Hong Kong Cinéma" (1984), "Conversation avec Bergman" (1990), "Kenneth Anger - Vraie et Fausse Magie au Cinéma" (1998) and the autobiographical "Une Adolescence dans l'Après-Mai" (2005).

Assayas starts shooting SOUVENIRS DU VALOIS (SPRINGTIME PAST) in June 2007 with Juliette Binoche, Charles Berling and Jérémie Renier.

## FILMOGRAPHY

**2007** BOARDING GATE

**2006** NOISE (documentary)

**2006** PARIS JE T'AIME ("Quartier des Enfants Rouges")

**2004** CLEAN

**2002** DEMONLOVER

**2000** LES DESTINÉES SENTIMENTALES

**1998** FIN AOÛT, DÉBUT SEPTEMBRE (LATE AUGUST, EARLY SEPTEMBER)

**1997** HHH : A PORTRAIT OF HOU HSIAO HSIEN (documentary)

**1996** IRMA VEP

**1994** L'EAU FROIDE (COLD WATER)

**1993** UNE NOUVELLE VIE (A NEW LIFE)

**1991** PARIS S'ÉVEILLE (PARIS AWAKENS)

**1989** L'ENFANT DE L'HIVER (WINTER'S CHILD)

**1986** DESORDRE (DISORDER)

# About the cast

## Asia Argento (as Sandra)

In addition to Olivier Assayas' *BOARDING GATE*, Asia Argento also stars this year in Abel Ferrara's *GO GO TALES* and Catherine Breillat's *UNE VIEILLE MAITRESSE*. Asia's recent film credits include Tony Gatliff's *TRANSYLVANIA*, Sofia Coppola's *MARIE ANTOINETTE*, George Romero's *LAND OF THE DEAD* and Gus Van Sant's *LAST DAYS*. Asia has twice won the David di Donatello (Italy's Academy Award) for Best Actress: in 1997 for Peter Del Monte's *COMPAGNA DI VIAGGIO* and in 1994 for Carlo Verdone's *PERDIAMOCI DI VISTA!* Other film credits include Rob Cohen's *XXX*, Michael Radford's *B. MONKEY*, Ferrara's *NEW ROSE HOTEL*, Michele Placido's *LE AMICHE DEL CUORE*, Patrice Chereau's *LA REINE MARGOT*, Nanni Moretti's *PALOMBELLA ROSSA* and Michele Soavi's *LA CHIESA*.

Asia made her acting debut when she was only nine years old in Sergio Citti's TV miniseries "Sogni e bisogni". Her first leading role was in Cristina Comencini's 1989 film *ZOO*. She is the daughter of famed Italian horror director Dario Argento. She has starred in three of his films: 1993's *TRAUMA*, 1996's *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* and 1998's *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*. She will soon be seen in his new film, *THE THIRD MOTHER (LA TERZA MADRE)*.

Asia also wrote and directed *THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOUT ALL THINGS* (2004) and *SCARLET DIVA* (2000).

## Michael Madsen (as Miles)

Michael Madsen played the evil Budd in both "volumes" of Tarantino's opus *KILL BILL*. His other recent credits include David Zucker's *SCARY MOVIE 4*, Uwe Boll's *BLOODRAYNE*, Frank Miller's *SIN CITY*, Jan Kounen's *BLUEBERRY* and Lee Tamahori's *DIE ANOTHER DAY*. Acclaimed performances as deranged killer in John Dahl's *Kill Me Again* (1989) and then as Susan Sarandon's rough-edged boyfriend in Ridley Scott's *THELMA AND LOUISE* (1991) led to Michael's breakthrough performance as the sadistic jewel thief Mr. Blonde in Quentin Tarantino's 1992 hit *RESERVOIR DOGS*.

Born in Chicago, Madsen began his career at the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. He was soon cast in a variety of supporting roles in movies such as *WARGAMES*, *THE NATURAL*, *FREE WILLY*, *MULHOLLAND FALLS*, *SPECIES*, *DONNIE BRASCO* and *WYATT EARP*. In addition to his film work, Madsen has contributed voice work to some of the biggest-selling video games, *Grand Theft Auto III*, *Driver 3*, *Yakuza*, *True Crime: Streets of LA* and *Reservoir Dogs*. He was also the voice of Maugrim the wolf, captain of the White Witch's secret police, in *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*. Michael will next be seen in Jon Keeyes' *LIVING AND DYING*, Mark Young's *TOOTH AND NAIL*, Mark Mahon's *STRENGTH AND HONOUR*, Robby Henson's *HOUSE*, Raul Inglis' *VICE* and Quentin Tarantino's *INGLORIOUS BASTARDS*, Bishop's *HELL RIDE* and Rodriguez & Miller's sequel *SIN CITY 2*.

## **Carl Ng (as Lester)**

Carl Ng is one of Hong Kong's fastest rising stars. He was recently seen in Jingle Ma's HAPPY BIRTHDAY (SUN YAT FAI LOK), Chung Ning Wong's MIDNIGHT RUNNING (FAAN DAU KWONG BUN), Wai Ying Yip's HALF TWIN (BOON BIN LING), James Yuen's HEAVENLY MISSION, Carlo Giudice and Paolo Marcellini's THE COUNTING HOUSE, Marco Mak's SET TO KILL (TSE BING) and Yonfan's COLOR BLOSSOMS (TOH SIK). Carl will soon be seen in Nicholas Chin's MAGAZINE GAP ROAD. Since making his screen debut in 2000 in Andy Lau's SAUSOLITO, his other credits include Johnny To's YESTERDAY ONCE MORE, Benny Chan's NEW POLICE STORY, Pou-Soi Cheang's LOVE BATTLEFIELD, Yan Yan Mak's BUTTERFLY, Dante Lam's HEAT TEAM and THE TRIAD ZONE, and Johnny Lee's LEGEND OF THE DRAGON. Carl was born in Hong Kong in 1976, and at the age of 12 moved with his family to England. His mother is British and his father is Hong Kong comedy legend Richard Ng. A graduate of Westminster University, Carl began his career in London acting in the theater and modeling.

## **Kelly Lin (as Sue)**

Taiwanese-born actress Kelly Lin has become one of the biggest names in the Hong Kong film industry. She recently starred in Patrick Tam's AFTER THIS OUR EXILE (FU ZI) and Qunshu Gao's THE TOKYO TRIAL (DONGJING SHENPAN). She will next be seen starring in the Johnny To segment of TRIANGLE and also his upcoming features CULTURED BIRD (MAN JEUK) and GODLY DETECTIVE. Kelly's other credits include Andrew Lau's THE LEGEND OF SPEED, To's FULLTIME KILLER, Tsui Hark's ZU WARRIORS and Wai-Man Cheng's SLEEPING WITH THE DEAD. A graduate of the University of California at Irvine, Kelly was named the sexiest Asian star in the world by FHM magazine.

# Cast

Sandra Asia ARGENTO  
Miles Michael MADSEN  
Lester Carl NG  
Sue Kelly LIN  
Lisa Joana PREISS  
Andrew Alex DESCAS  
Kay Kim GORDON

# Credits

**Directed by**  
Olivier Assayas

**Written by**  
Olivier Assayas

**Produced by**  
François Margolin

**Cinematography by**  
Yorick Le Saux

**Casting by**  
Antoinette Boulat

**Edited by**  
Luc Barnier

**Production Designer**  
François-Renaud Labarthe

**Costume Designer**  
Anaïs Romand

**Makeup Department**  
Maya Benamer .... key makeup artist

**Production Management**  
Sylvie Barthet .... production manager  
Laurent Coppola .... assistant unit manager

**Second Unit Directors / Assistant Directors**

Luc Bricault .... second assistant director  
Xavier Douin .... second assistant director  
Matthew Gledhill .... first assistant director

**Sound Department**

Guillaume Leriche .... engineer  
Daniel Sobrino .... sound

**Visual Effects by**

Lucie Bories .... digital compositor  
Bertrand Levallois .... visual effects supervisor

**Editorial Department**

Célia Lafitedupont .... assistant editor

**Transportation Department**

Olivier Suffert .... driver: Mr. Michael Madsen's

**Other crew**

Lionel Berner .... assistant location manager  
Tatiana Bouchain .... production coordinator  
Jean-Marie Modet .... location manager  
Chan Wan Sze Stanley .... assistant to line producer: Hong Kong