

## ***Feux Rouges* (15)**

8th January 2007

Director: **Cédric Kahn**  
France 2003

Subtitled. Running time: 106 minutes

LEADING PLAYERS: **Jean-Pierre Darroussin** (Antoine Dunan), **Carole Bouquet** (Hélène Dunan), **Vincent Deniard** (Cristophe Montana), **Charline Paul** (café waitress), **Jean-Pierre Gos** (Inspecteur Levet).

SCRIPT: **Cédric Kahn, Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa**. PHOTOGRAPHY: **Patrick Blossier**. EDITING: **Yann Dedet**. MUSIC: **Debussy, Brahms, Pärt, etc..**

*Feux Rouges* (*Red Lights*) – the title has the traffic embodiment of Antoine’s inarticulate rage, a kind connotation, as well as a scent of danger – opens of preternatural wakeup call. Unless, of course, you under the titles with a shot of the gleaming modern are happy to write off the fact that both Antoine and commercial district of La Défense in Paris. It is Hélène come into contact with this villain as simple clearly a sweltering summer’s day and people are coincidence at the service of a genre thriller. You moving ant-like about their business. The might as well say it is a cautionary tale against the impression of heat is partly conveyed by the music dangers of drink-driving. Certainly the only way I from Debussy’s Nocturnes for orchestra, «Nuages», can accept the extraordinarily glib and sunny an atmospheric piece which speaks of lazy summer conclusion is as an indicator of some sort of afternoons and has an oboe figure with more than a symbolic intent. hint of menace. The music returns like a refrain later in the movie.

Antoine works in insurance and is looking forward rigorously analytical about Kahn’s films (*Roberto* to spending the weekend with his wife, a doctor, *Succo, L’Ennui*), as if he is a scientist observing his and their children, who are staying some way south subjects. Nowhere is this unblinking steadiness in the country, doubtless because it is the summer better exemplified than in the scene in the café holidays. However, for some reason – irritation at towards the end. Antoine is trying to locate Hélène the delay in departure, the need to de-stress after a the following morning and asks to use the busy week – he starts to drink, just a beer at first, telephone. He proceeds in one unbroken take to but as the bickering in the car increases, and as they make a series of calls, backwards and forwards, to hit heavy weekend traffic, every opportunity (a Hélène’s parents, the police, the hospital. It is a phone call, a toilet stop) is taken to aggravate the bravura piece of acting from Darroussin and the dose. The over-riding impression for the first half effect is that of watching real time. Kahn makes us of the film is of a character bent on self-destruction, watch every step by which his Orpheus retrieves his and Hélène is the figure increasingly likely to suffer Eurydice from the underworld. in the collateral damage. For the moment, though, this is one of those bourgeois marital breakdown films the French do so well.

**David Clare**

It is at this point that the expected criminal element in the scenario enters stage left: a dangerous convict has escaped. This news is introduced surreptitiously, but as Hélène abandons the car and its unstable occupant for the train, the man, Montana, becomes a very physical presence in the narrative. Antoine picks him up, at first none the wiser, then treats him like Jesse James; but there is no romantic free spirit in this outlaw, just a brutal animal against whom our slurring, balding, pot-bellied hero must fight for his life.

Montana can be read either as the *péril en la demeure* (lit. ‘danger in the home’) for your professional middle-class family, or as the