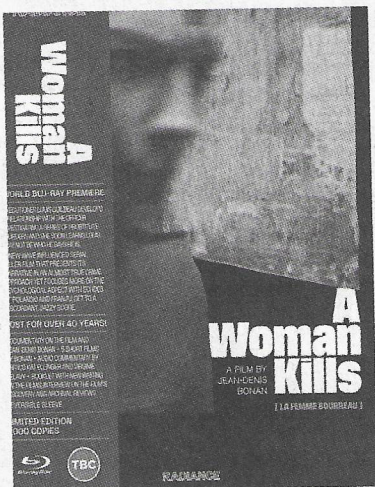


# FILM FINDS

**A WOMAN KILLS** (1968) 888 1/2  
 D: Jean-Denis Bonan. Claude Merlin, Solange Pradel. 69 mins. (Radiance Films) 3/23

Writer/director Bonan's cinema vérité French murder mystery **A Woman Kills** was shot in May 1968 during the student strike but, because of Bonan's controversy with film censors for his previous work, went unreleased for 45 years until a restoration by Luna Park played French cinemas. This 2K restoration of the film from the original 16mm elements with original uncompressed mono PCM audio marks the film's first release on Blu-ray. Hélène Picard is executed for a series of prostitute murders, but the killings continue after her death. Solange Lebas (Pradel), assistant to the Minister of Justice, is assigned to investigate paranoid ministerial assistant Louis Guilbeau (Merlin). The two strike up an unlikely romantic relationship while the murders rage on. Bonan invests the film with an odd but interesting structure, using rather cold, indifferent narration for some parts, giving the proceedings something of a police procedural feel, balanced with voyeuristic drama and finally a corker of a long foot chase across rooftops and in alleys, guns blazing, in the action-packed third act. Pradel and Merlin exhibit engrossing chemistry together as two suffering souls. **A Woman Kills** is a bold, transgressive work bound to cause eyebrow-raising among some modern-day viewers with its themes, including its transvestitism angle. The crisp black and white cinematography by Gerard de Batistta looks terrific, running the gamut from extreme close-ups of actors eating fruit to imaginative shots of sex on bare bed springs to beautiful landscape shots of Paris. French Free Jazz composer Bernard Vitet adds a fittingly cacophonous score. It's a shame that this historical slice of French cinema went unseen—even unfinished—for so long, but the chance to see it now is reason for celebration for aficionados of unique cinematic voices. The wealth of newly commissioned and archival bonus features include the newly updated documentary **On the Margin: The Cursed Films of Jean-Denis Bonan** featuring Bonan and members of his cast and crew, audio commentary, six of Bonan's short films, and a booklet featuring new writing on the film.



—Joseph Perry

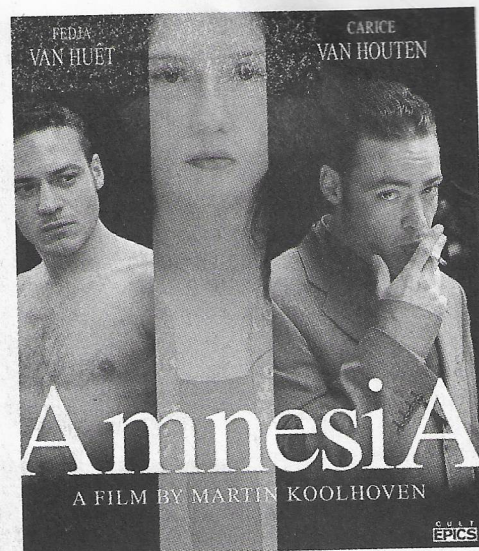
## CULT EPICS 2-DISC LIMITED EDITION SET 4/23

**AMNESIA** (2001) 888  
 D: Martin Koolhoven. Fedja van Huêt, Carice van Houten, Theo Maassen, Sacha Bulthuis, Cas Enklaar. 90 mins.

**DARK LIGHT/DUISTER LICHT** (1997) 888  
 D: Martin Koolhoven. Marc Vehelen, Viviane de Muynck. 53 mins.

**SUZY Q** (1999) 888  
 D: Martin Koolhoven. Carice van Houten, Roeland Fernhout, Jack Wouterse, Michiel Huisman, Ricky Koole. 82 mins.

Dutch director Koolhoven's psychological mystery thriller **Amnesia** explores the fraught relationship between twin brothers Alex and Aram (both played by van Huêt) as they warily reconnect to help their elder and difficult mother (Bulthuis), while rummaging aimlessly around



family, and **Dark Light**, an arresting two-person tug-of-war, both originally debuted on Dutch TV. Suzy (van Houten)'s dad's (Wouterse) glory days were as a petty official in German-occupied Holland during World War II; now he's an unemployed nobody living off his maddeningly disassociated model wife's money and scavenging rancid war rations he foolishly hopes



their quirky home adjacent to their dead dad's car junkyard and exhuming their guilty connection—and a forever suppressed wrongdoing—connected to the murder of Dad's secret lover. Alex, a career thief, has the upper hand and delights in tormenting brother Aram, especially when he connives to turn Alex's enigmatic girlfriend (van Houten) against him. Everything in this wacky household is wonderfully off-kilter, including the unexpected arrival of Alex's pal Wouter (a scene-stealing Maassen), gutshot in their last escapade, who's come to the house to good-naturedly die. Alex is a photographer and his camera is the window through which he processes the present and reviews in flashback how his brother led him to commit a crime. Dysfunctional families, shame and humiliation—and an exit from this ongoing hell—are Koolhoven's themes; he mines them for all it's worth with endless plot twists, one-upmanship and a very searing, stark reveal: Alex punishes himself in a way that will punish Aram forever. Extras include a comedy by Koolhoven, conversation with Koolhoven and Carice van Houten, making of featurette, behind-the-scenes and trailers.

**Suzy Q**, set in Amsterdam in 1967, and following the ups and mostly downs of a put-upon teenager in another fascinatingly nutty/abusive

to sell. One brother (Huisman) knows not to get involved and stays in his room dreaming of being a rock musician; the other, Zwier (Fernhout), is the seemingly normal evil seed who kills his girlfriend's ex. In between is the questing Suzy, slapped around by dad and, incredibly, finding excitement and salvation meeting Marianne Faithful and kissing Mick Jagger in their hotel room. The film magically captures the mood of the '60s, but beneath the social trappings is existential familial pain and dread. You know things are heading south when Zwier chops off the pet turtle's head, making a soup with it and serving it to Dad. No one listens in this family. Zwier, who's determined that someone pay attention, has the last, sad word: he's the suicide in the tub. In the utterly compelling **Dark Light**, a hard-bitten, young thief (Vehelen) meets his match in a battleaxe farm widow, sick with cancer, who thwarts his robbery and holds him prisoner. Her goal is to "tame" her thief, forcing him to accept Scriptures and acknowledge, via the biblical story of Job, the hardships of her life. This is a taut, unforgiving battle of wills, shot through with both moral imperatives and a rejection of the good. Chained to a wall next to a pig, the thief is reminded he's there to do penance. He reminds himself he's there to undo his keeper. God, the farm widow insists, wants him there to bear witness to her healing. Her prisoner goes along and gets along until, understanding her psychology, he lands like a vulture on carrion. 8

—Nancy Naglin