

Three Colours: Blue (1993)

Trois couleurs: Bleu (*original title*)

First of a trilogy of films dealing with contemporary French society concerns how the wife of a composer deals with the death of her husband and child.

Director: -Krzysztof Kieslowski

Writers: -Krzysztof Kieslowski (scenario),Krzysztof Piesiewicz (scenario), and 3 more credits

Stars:-Juliette Binoche, Zbigniew Zamachowski and Julie Delpy

Storyline

Three Colors: Blue is the first part of Kieslowski's trilogy on France's national motto: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Blue is the story of Julie who loses her husband, an acclaimed European composer and her young daughter in a car accident. The film's theme of liberty is manifested in Julie's attempt to start life anew free of personal commitments, belongings grief and love. She intends to spiritually commit suicide by withdrawing from the world and live completely independently, anonymously and in solitude in the Parisian metropolis. Despite her intentions, people from her former and present life intrude with their own needs. However, the reality created by the people who need and care about her, a surprising discovery and the music around which the film revolves heals Julie and irresistably draws her back to the land of the living.

User Reviews

Do we like her? Do we feel anything?

11 August 2004 | by [kintopf432 \(kintopf432@hotmail.com\)](mailto:kintopf432@hotmail.com) (St. Paul, MN) – [See all my reviews](#)

Something of a model of directorial focus and control, 'Bleu' seems to be an attempt to answer several related questions: How can a filmmaker express the feelings for someone who won't, or can't, express them herself? Can the director make the viewer understand her, like her, share her feelings? Krzysztof Kieslowski comes very close, finding ingenious, even brilliant ways to get inside the head of his deliberately impenetrable Julie. The frequent 'blackouts,' coupled with the throbbing, somber score (inspired, it seems, at least in part, by Mozart's 'Requiem'), gives us a window into the character's inner life, lets us hear, rather than see, the humanity behind her aloof façade. We understand her--but do we like her? How easy it would be for Julie to become totally unlikable--the way Juliette Binoche plays her, she is blank to the point of coldness, sometimes in ways reminiscent of Catherine Deneuve's Carole in "Repulsion," only with a taut intelligence that character certainly lacks. Somehow, she never does; but, for all the actress's control, the characterization is ultimately Kieslowski's creation, not hers. It's the directorial techniques, and not the acting, that allow us to care about Julie. So, do we ever share her feelings? No, despite all Kieslowski's tricks, we really can't. So often, Americans wrongly write off European films as 'cold,' and that's why it's surprising that this movie, which directly tackles the question of emotional frigidity, and which has such a passionate following among cinephiles, should turn out never to make us feel really anything. Oh, the film has an undeniable emotionalism, a potency, just beneath the surface, yes. But it's never willing to go the extra step and manipulate the viewer in an outright way. It's too respectful of its audience, too intelligent, too careful, for that. And this studied, uncompromising unsentimentality in itself is an achievement Kieslowski should be commended for,

but some may find it makes 'Bleu' into a portrait of grief to be admired, rather than loved.

IMDB

Symbols

Music plays an intricate element of the plot in that it illustrates Julie's efforts to be isolated from everything but cannot do it, such as music cannot be made with a single note but through [harmony](#) with all others and how everyone has (or represents) a different kind of music, such as the union of Julie/Patrice had a special tone, which is quite different and more raw with the union of Julie/Olivier.

A symbol common to the three films is that of an underlying link or thing that keeps the protagonist linked to his/her past. In the case of *Blue*, it is the lamp of blue beads and a symbol seen throughout the film in the TV of people falling (doing either [sky diving](#) or [bungee jumping](#)), the director is careful in showing falls with no cords at the beginning of the film but as the story develops the image of cords becomes more and more apparent as a symbol of a link to the past. In the case of *White* the item that links Karol to his past is a 2 Fr. coin and a plaster [bust](#) that he stole from an antique store in Paris. In the case of *Red* the judge never closes or locks his doors and his [fountain pen](#), which stops working at a crucial point in the story.

Another recurring image related to the spirit of the film is that of elderly people recycling bottles: In *Three Colors: Blue*, an old woman in Paris is recycling bottles and Julie does not notice her (in the spirit of freedom), in *Three Colors: White*, an old man also in Paris is trying to recycle a bottle but cannot reach the container and Karol looks at him with a sinister grin on his face (in the spirit of equality) and in *Three Colors: Red* an old woman cannot reach the hole of the container and Valentine helps her (in the spirit of fraternity).

Production

Blue was an [international co-production](#) between the French companies CED Productions, [Eurimages](#), [France 3 Cinéma](#) and MK2 Productions, the Swiss company CAB Productions and the Polish company Studio Filmowe TOR.

Like the other films in the trilogy, *Blue* makes frequent visual allusions to its title: numerous scenes are shot with blue filters or blue lighting, and many objects are blue. When Julie thinks about the musical score that she has tried to destroy, blue light overwhelms the screen. The film also includes several references to the colors of the [tricolor](#) that inspired Kieślowski's trilogy: several scenes are dominated by red light, and in one scene, children dressed in white bathing suits with red floaters jump into the blue swimming pool. Another scene features a link with the next film in the trilogy: Julie is seen accidentally entering a courtroom where Karol, the Polish main character of *White*, is being divorced by Dominique, his estranged French wife.

Responses

Three Colors: Blue received critical acclaim upon release. [Rotten Tomatoes](#) reports that out of 32 reviews, 100% of them gave the film a positive write-up. Marjorie Baumgarten of the *Austin Chronicle* said: "*Blue* is a film that engages the mind, challenges the senses, implores a resolution, and tells, with aesthetic grace and formal elegance, a good story and a political allegory."

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