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Michel Piccoli, arthouse star, is dead at 94

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In this May 13, 2011 file photo director Nanni Moretti (left) and actors Michel Piccoli and Dario Cantarelli arrive for the screening of *Habemus Papam* at the 64th international film festival, in Cannes, southern France.

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French actor Michel Piccoli, a prolific screen star who appeared in landmark films by directors such as Luis Bunuel — including in his Academy Award winning “*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*” — and Jean-Luc Godard, has died. He was 94.

His family confirmed to French media Monday that he died last week, but they did not give a cause of death.

Though less famous in the English-speaking world, in continental Europe and his native France Paris-born Piccoli was a stalwart of art house cinema.

Beginning his career in the 1940s, he went on to make over 170 movies, working into his late eighties.

His most memorable appearance came arguably during the French New Wave – starring opposite Brigitte Bardot in Godard’s 1963 masterpiece “Contempt,” with his dark hat and signature bushy eyebrows.

But Piccoli’s performances for Europe’s most iconic directors will also be remembered, including for France’s Jean Renoir, Jacques Rivette and Jean-Pierre Melville, Britain’s Alfred Hitchcock and Spain’s Bunuel.

For the Spanish director, Piccoli starred alongside Catherine Deneuve in the 1967 masterpiece “Belle de Jour” and in 1972’s “The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie,” which won the Best Foreign Film award at the Oscars in 1973.

Despite starring in Hitchcock’s 1969 English-language espionage thriller “Topaz,” Piccoli’s career in Hollywood didn’t take off.

In Europe, Piccoli won a host of accolades, including Best Actor in Cannes in 1980 for “A Leap In The Dark” by Marco Bellochio and a Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1982 for “Strange Affair” by Pierre Granier-Deferre.

The actor’s last major role was in 2011’s Nanni Moretti’s “We Have a Pope,” which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival.

Piccoli was married three times, to Éléonore Hirt, the singer Juliette Gréco and finally to Ludivine Clerc.

He had one daughter from his first marriage, Anne-Cordélia. Piccoli stayed with Clerc, whom he married in 1978, until his death.