

Local Films presents

# sweet evil

L'enfance du mal

directed by  
Olivier Cousse



## Synopsis

Céline, a fifteen year-old girl, is constantly on the move since her mother's imprisonment. After escaping her tutors, a well-known couple Mr. and Mrs. Van Eyck take her in. Céline becomes determined to stay with the couple and tries quite successfully to please them. She cleverly wins their trust with her deceptive charm. Until one day a series of discoveries about Céline's intentions test the Van Eycks's faith in her...

## Genesis of the story

I had been driven mad by the triumph of demagoguery, dogmatism, simplistic dualities and hypocrisy. *Sweet Evil* was born from this exasperation, as an attempt to validate and come to terms with our common complexities and contradictions, the light and darkness that make us human; an attempt to make visible the shadows that exist in all of us and to confront them with rational thinking rather than stigma. I realized it would be necessary to take the characters to the extreme limit of their desires in order to return from that threshold with a measure of humility and suggest that human relationships are never all that simple. This is why, just like madness sometimes reveals something about reason, it was necessary to turn certain ideas on their head, so that the teenager Céline is as much a victim as an instigator. I wanted to create the conditions for a mental effervescence that engenders considered thought rather than moral reflexes. Hence, from the very beginning, it was very clear to me that nothing in the movie should indicate that this or that character is good or evil. They are merely human – so very human.



## The characters

The fifteen year-old Céline has already been intimately confronted with violence and understands that it is a part of the world she inhabits. She trusts no one but herself, and is exceptionally capable of adapting to her circumstances. Her inner strength has helped her erect fortress walls around psychological wounds that would otherwise annihilate her. This strength sustains her in her determination to be reunited with her mother, from whom she has been separated. But her personal code of values, cobbled together in adversity with whatever elements were in her reach, is idiosyncratic, immature and truncated.

Henri, the judge, is the guardian of society's values. Whether the laws it is his duty to enforce are fair or unfair is not for him to say: they exist to define the range of what is possible. Within that range, what is allowed soon becomes confused with what is normal. Outside, on the other hand, is an area where taboos, unregulated urges, disorder and, worse of all, sexual drives reside. There is little doubt that Henri has long ago chosen this profession, like many others in his case, to defend himself

against the dizzying pull that these uncharted areas obscurely exert upon him – in order to escape certain insidious captivations. Nevertheless, one of these captivations suddenly takes hold of him in the form of Céline.

As for Nathalie, wasn't she, as well, waiting for Céline all along? How many years did she wait in vain, how many useless doctor appointments did she go through to fulfill her desire for motherhood, a desire her husband Henri was never able to satisfy? Hers is a profound loneliness, a slow wearing away of desire and intimacy, of hope and happiness. She is resigned, perhaps morbidly so, but for her resignation is much less frightening than solitude and old age. She makes feeble efforts to engage with her community, on vague charitable grounds, and mostly to persuade herself that she wasn't born in vain.

## **The thriller**

Besides the fact that it is purely enjoyable, playful, at times even perverse entertainment, the genre of the psychological thriller seemed to me the most appropriate choice for this story. The idea was to challenge the viewer's moral positions, to constantly promote doubt and uncertainty with regard to the various pretences, lies and red herrings of the plot, and also to elicit in the viewer a number of conflicting responses to Céline's irresistible charm – if not just the comforting notion that the judge simply walked into a trap. The thriller seemed the right genre for a captivated, but not captive, thought.

*Sweet Evil* is also a tale of desire, and in that sense, to my mind, it required a certain reserve. Not showing everything was a way of allowing the viewer to remain connected to his or her imagination and to perceive the story from within, rather than simply observe it from the outside.

**Olivier Coussemacq**



2007-07-07  
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## Olivier Coussemacq

After 12 years as assistant director, both for TV and the big screen, Coussemacq's first work as a movie director, *Paroles en libertés surveillées*, a one-hour documentary about inmates serving long sentences in a French prison, was selected for the Festival Cinéma du Réel at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Three short-feature films followed in succession: *Pas perdus* (which earned Jacques Penot an award for Best Actor at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival), *Le Larbin*, and finally *La Concierge est dans l'ascenseur*, a comedy with Catherine Jacob, which has since aired multiple times on television.

He then wrote the thriller *Traquée* directed by Steve Suissa, which prompted him to devote himself more fully to script writing. His script for *Le désert de la mémoire* received a special mention from the Scriptwriting Awards Jury. He was selected by Emergence, the International Summer University of Cinema, for his script *Corps Etrangers*.

In 2009, he completed work on *Sweet Evil*, his first feature film marking the beginning of his collaboration with Nicolas Brevière, and of his film production company Local Films.

He is currently working on his second feature film, *Nomades*, produced by Local Films.

## Anaïs Demoustier

Anaïs Demoustier was born in 1987. In 2003, she began her acting career in the acclaimed film, *TIME OF THE WOLF* (Michael Haneke). Her positive experience encouraged her to continue acting, and to begin her professional training in Lille and New York. In 2007, Anaïs was cast in *THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON* (Christophe Honoré) and *GROWN UPS* (Anna Novion, 2007) which earned her a Golden Swan as Best Actress at the Cabourg Festival, the Best Actress award at the Festival de la Réunion, and a nomination as Most Promising Actress at the 2009 César Awards. For her role in Juliette Garcias' *BE GOOD* she has been nominated once again for a 2010 Cesar Award as Most Promising Actress. Most recently, she can be seen in Isabelle Czaika's *LIVING ON LOVE ALONE* and in Olivier Coussemacq's *SWEET EVIL* and will soon be shooting opposite Juliette Binoche in *SPONSORING* by Malgorzata Szumowska. This year, Anaïs will be presented as French *SHOOTING STARS* 2010 at the Berlin International Film Festival.

## Pascal Gregory

Pascal Gregory joined the Choir of the Paris Opéra at the age of 12. A pupil of the Périmony Drama School, and later an external student at the Paris Conservatoire, he made his on-screen debut in *Docteur Françoise Gailland* (1975), and soon thereafter played the role of Klaus Kinski's virgin son in *Madame Claude* (1977). Two decisive encounters were to mark his early career: the first, with André Téchiné, who gave this mere beginner the key role of the Brontë sisters' brother (*Les Sœurs Brontë*, alongside Isabelle Huppert, Isabelle Adjani and Marie-France Pisier) in 1979; the second, with Eric Rohmer, who cast him first in theater plays, then in *Le Beau Mariage*, and finally made him one of the main protagonists of *Pauline à la plage* (1983) where he discoursed and flirted alongside Arielle Dombasle. Always loyal to his actors, the prominent French New Wave director recontacted Gregory in 1993 for *L'Arbre, le maire et la médiathèque*.

Gregory's career reached a new level in 1994 with his portrayal of the Duc d'Anjou in Patrice Chéreau's *La Reine Margot*, a role for which he was nominated for a César Award. Chéreau and Gregory's collaboration further includes the theater (*Dans la solitude des champs de coton*, 1995) and cinema (*Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train*, 1998), and culminated on screen with *Gabrielle* (2005), in which the actor garnered special praise for his interpretation of a bourgeois husband abandoned by Isabelle Huppert.

Since the 1990s, Gregory has emerged as a professionally free and unafraid actor showing audacity and eclecticism in his choices. He was in turn striking as a brawny inmate (*Zonzon*, by Laurent Bouhnik, 1998), comical as a chronically indecisive attorney (*La Confusion des genres*, which earned him a César nomination in 2001), and pitiable as the stuttering father in *Pardonnez-moi* (2006). This sophisticated actor is similarly at ease in period pieces, from the story of Joan of Arc to Proust's *Time Regained*. Though he enjoys action movies (*Nid de guêpes*, 2002) and blockbusters (he was Edith Piaf's impresario in *La Môme*, with Marion Cotillard, 2007), he is especially fond of directors who practice a more intimate form of their art, like Zulawski (*La Fidélité*, 2000) or Doillon (his turn in *Raja* was widely noticed). In an interview in the French daily *Libération*, he declared: "In my life, I've blown all the official things. (...) I prefer to live in the margins, where there is more air to breathe."

## Ludmila Mikael

The daughter of the painter Pierre Dmitrienko and a concert pianist, Ludmila Mikael followed a prestigious path by joining the Comédie-Française in 1967. A student of the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique, she obtained the First Prize with the role of Grouchenka from Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the Second Prize in Tragedy with the role of Hermione from Racine's *Andromaque* and the Second Prize in Classical Comedy with the role of Camille from Alfred de Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*. While pursuing her career in the theater, she made her silver screen debut in 1966 in Christian de Chalonge's *Le Saut*.

Her first important role in a film was Françoise in Etienne Périer's *Des garçons et des filles*, alongside Nicole Garcia and Marc Porel. She came to prominence in 1969 with *La Chasse royale* by François Leterrier, with Sami Frey and Claude Brasseur. She was the mistress of Vincent (Yves Montand) in *Vincent, François, Paul et les autres*, by Claude Sautet. At the theater, she received the Molière Award for the best comedic actress for her role in *Célimène et le Cardinal*.

She then plays both in large film productions (*The Sergeant*, by John Flynn, 1968; *Dien Bien Phu*, by Pierre Schoendoerffer, 1991) and in more intimate "auteur" films (*Noce blanche* by Jean-Claude Brisseau, 1989).

Since the 1990s, she has acted in several supporting roles both in popular comedies (*Coup de jeune*, by Xavier Gélin, 1992; *15 Août*, by Patrick Alessandrin, 2001) and in films by young directors (*Bord de mer*, by Julie Lopes-Curval, which received the Caméra d'Or from the Cannes Film Festival in 2002; *Le Tango des Rashevski*, by Sam Garbarski in 2003).

## Crew

<b>Director</b>	Olivier COUSSEMACQ
<b>Screenwriter</b>	Olivier COUSSEMACQ
<b>Producer</b>	Nicolas BREVIÈRE
<b>Cinematographer</b>	Alexis KAVYRCHINE
<b>Sound</b>	Julien N'GO TRONG
<b>Editing</b>	Stéphanie ARAUD
<b>Sound Editing</b>	Benoît ALRIC
<b>Sound Mixing</b>	Christian FONTAINE
<b>Costume designer</b>	Coco BARANDON
<b>Set designer</b>	Michel CARMONA
<b>Music</b>	Sarah MURCIA

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