ABCD Films present

Sandrine Kiberlain

Albert Dupontel

9 mois Ferme

UK title : 9 month stretch

by Albert Dupontel

Screenplay and dialogues by Albert Dupontel

Cast : Nicolas Marie, Philippe Uchan, Philippe Duquesne, Christian Hecq (member of the Comedie-Française), Gilles Gaston-Dreyfus and Laure Calamy. With the participation of Bouli Lanners and Michel Fau.

Produced by Catherine Bozorgan

Release date : 16th October 2013

France – 82 min –CinemaScope – Sound : 5.1

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Photos and press release are available for download from the official film website: [www.9moisferme.com/presse](http://www.9moisferme.com/presse)

Synopsis

Ariane Felder is pregnant! Quite a shock considering that she is a high court judge with very strict morals, who is resolutely single. But what is even more surprising is that, according to the paternity test, the father of the child is non other than Bob, a criminal being prosecuted for a violent crime! Ariane does not remember a thing and tries to work out how it could have happened and what the future might hold….

**Interview with Albert Dupontel**

**How did the idea for *9 mois ferme* come about?**

I got the idea for *9 mois ferme* watching Raymond Depardon’s documentary film *10th District Court*, which both shocked and deeply moved me. The idea of a liaison between a judge and a criminal came from there.

I then wrote down notes, snippets of dialogue, bits of information on the justice system, what I wanted to achieve and what was realistic. I made myself write down everything for…well, for the time it took! Personally I think I spent too long. I’d love to be able to write faster but I never manage it.

**Did you meet many magistrates during your research?**

Judge Bernard-Requin gave me plenty of technical advice. He had the main role and presided over the court case in *10th District Court*. He brought to my attention a number of inconsistencies in the script and how the justice system really works. But we decided to keep these inconsistencies in the script. They may shock people from the legal profession but they have their use in the narrative.

**Did you meet Raymond Depardon?**

I met him briefly in Cannes in 2012 when I was there for the film *Le Grand Soir.* I told him that I was an admirer of his work, that was all.

**Tell us about filming in the law courts?**

On paper, it looked like it was going to be impossible to film inside the law courts, but in practise, once we had got permission, the people who worked there were very helpful and welcoming. The interior looks like no place else on earth. No other law court occupies such a historic and prestigious location. The paradox lies in the contrast between the building’s beauty and the dramatic events that take place there on a daily basis…it’s very imposing.

**In all of your films, you address universal themes such as society or in this case justice but you give them comedic value– do you intend from the outset to juxtapose the two?**

I prefer to think I make ‘funny’ dramas rather than comedies. The solution to dramatic crises is often a quick turn of events using gags or dialogue. That’s what makes my films amusing.

**How do you define your creative universe?**

“Universe” is a big word. I prefer to think of it as a “mental cage”. I try and talk about the things that are wrong in society while wearing a comedy red nose (sometimes a blood red nose). As time goes by, the more I feel that it’s the whole of society that’s going off the rails. So I take this quite dramatic situation and try and laugh about it and share it with the public.

**Do you have key visual influences?**

I love the moving image. The moving image allows you to distance yourself from reality. All films and directors, who make films with this in mind, fascinate, inspire and influence me. The best example is Terry Gilliam aka Charles Meatson “famous man-eater” who paid me the honour of accepting (once again) a small part in one of my films….

**Yet there appears to be a greater sense of realism in this film. Was that intentional?**

After *Le Vilain*, a metaphysical fantasy, I wanted to return to a more realistic point of reference and make what I call a ‘comedy of abnormal manners’. The departure from reality is less extreme and so it is easier for people to identify with.

**At one point in the film, your character, Bob Nolan, is described by Sandrine Kiberlain as ‘a nutter and a moron’. How would you describe him?**

Sandrine Kiberlain’s characterAriane describes Bob this way out of spite. I would describe him as a highly intuitive social misfit. He is the only person to have remained in touch with his humanity despite having been excluded from society since early childhood.

His lack of education has never caused him to lose sight of what really matters. This is the reason he is so shocked when Ariane wants to self-abort the child. He is the one who will help uncover Ariane’s humanity to her.

**Explain the choice of Sandrine Kiberlain.**

I was originally looking for a petite, strong-willed, dark-haired actress, not a tall, blond, gentle actress…I was on the verge of giving up (in May 2012) when my producer suggested that we call in Sandrine Kiberlain for a screen test. As well as being obliging enough to do a screen test, and in spite of the angry outbursts required by the script, Sandrine remained both touching and true. She is one of the few actresses who are able to combine comedy and drama, so we quickly got to work.

**How did you prepare the character of Ariane?**

Visually, it was a lot simpler than for *Le Vilain*. We worked on the physical appearance of an extremely uptight woman and a look to suit her eminent position. Sandrine worked alongside the costume designer Mimi Lempicka to achieve this result.

**Did you rehearse a lot?**

I didn’t rehearse as much as I would have liked but enough to find the right characteristics necessary for each part. With Sandrine, we rehearsed the scene when she “judges” her pregnant belly. We spent a lot of time rehearsing that scene because I felt it was the key scene for her character. With Nicolas Marie (M. Trolos), it was also important to rehearse because playing someone with a stammer is much harder that you think. He worked hard and I’m thrilled with his performance.

**Why does the cast include so many actors from the theatre?**

Above all I chose very good actors. It just happened that many of them are great theatre actors (like Michel Fau who plays the obstetrician). It’s really just a coincidence because I rarely go to the theatre.

**There are also many cameo roles in the film….**

Yes, there are a lot, and I found it very touching that they agreed to it.

Yolande Moreau, who plays Bob’s mother (as a baby, she confuses him with a log), lit up the film shoot with her genius for an hour, leaving me hungry for more. I hope I work with her again soon.

Gaspar Noe, Jan Kounen and I are locked behind bars and that made me laugh so much. I thought that made perfect sense!

Then later on in the film there’s Terry Gilliam and Ray Cooper. Their regard for me has always been a huge boost and here their performance is fantastic.

As regards the ‘surprise cameo’ in the film, improvising proved to be very successful, cleverly mastered and hilariously funny. This actor’s definitely got a future….

**In this film you are actor, director and writer. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having these three roles when you are on set?**

The big advantage is that it satisfies my natural desire for self-sufficiency. The disadvantage is the huge amount of work this involves. Since making *Bernie*, I have been helped out by the amazing Philippe Uchan (who plays Judge de Bernard). His presence is vital to me. Apart from this, I think having a role in the film made me closer to the other actors. I was a spectator and an actor alongside Sandrine’s fabulous performance.

**Can you describe a typical day on set?**

On a typical day filming, my point of view will be very different from someone else’s on set. Personally, I see each day as a race against time to record the maximum possible emotion from the actors and get lots of different shots for the director.

**Do you always work with the same crew?**

As often as possible, especially the camera crew and grips. There are certain members of the crew that I always want to work with, even if that means delaying the shooting schedule to wait for them to become available, like the camera operator Stephane Martin and the key grip Francois Comparot. On set, I rely on them a lot.

**What about the soundtrack?**

Like *Le Vilain*, I worked with Christophe Julien. The music’s blend of dramatic tension and melody fits in perfectly with the tragi-comic storyline. The icing on the cake was the song by Camille. I have been a big fan of hers ever since her first album *Le Fil.*

**Is there a link between Bernie, Roland, Darius, le Vilain and Bob?**

They’re all the same but different, at least that’s what I like to think….

**Any ideas for your next film?**

Yes. I’ve already written 20 pages….Work has officially begun…

**Interview with Sandrine Kiberlain**

**Tell us about your role in *9 mois ferme* playing the judge.**

Ariane is a woman who is about forty. She is ambitious and makes a point of being very correct and professional.

She is single and proud of it. She has been through some painful experiences in the past, but she has come out the other side and has moved on. So now she can give her all to her job. She is like many of the women judges I met during research, who consider family life almost impossible with such a demanding job.

I was determined that Ariane would be a likeable character. She never lets her hair down, never has a drink with the other magistrates, but despite this Albert and I always had it in the back of our minds that we didn’t want to make her into a dysfunctional or unpleasant character. We both tried to remember that it was her past that had made her how she was and made her completely immerse herself in whatever she did.

And then all of a sudden she is faced with a huge dilemma. In the film this life-changing event sets up some very different situations that allowed me to play a wide spectrum of emotions. Ariane goes from being in a very traumatic state, to being quite tender and moving, and sometimes even quite ludicrous in certain extreme situations she finds herself in.

When I read the script, I thought what a great character. That’s something I love about films; characters who turn out to be quite different from what you might expect. For example, we get to know Ariane much better when she is drunk and loses all inhibitions.

And then there is her encounter with Bob, played by Albert Dupontel. Ariane and Bob are so different from each other. It’s really interesting to see how they both transform over the course of the film. That’s what I find fascinating in real life too, when you meet someone who appears to be very different from you and in fact your differences bring you closer; you bring new things to each other. These interactions open us up and make us change.

**What is fascinating about this film is how a very traumatic situation is dealt with in such a funny way. Is that how it was written or did you put a lot into it too?**

The theme of justice / injustice that Albert chose is in itself dramatic. What he has written about is quite dark. Bob is the victim of an injustice and Ariane is suddenly confronted with a terrible dilemma. Albert defuses each situation by moving naturally between tragedy and comedy as some people do in in real life.

This aspect was very much there in the script. Then at one point you feel a change. They come together even though they come from two very different backgrounds, the whole thing is quite improbable…….but Albert and I were determined to make it plausible….. but it wasn’t easy! I think a lot depended on what we managed to create inside the *huis-clos* when I become his prisoner. At that point the relationship changes: a judge and a criminal find themselves face to face, how do you make it credible that these two people will have a relationship? I had great trust in Albert’s writing and in his thought processes. He knew exactly where he was going with this film. I believe that Albert’s eye, his directing and his staging make us believe in these two people meeting.

**Were you familiar with the justice system? Did you do any research before you began filming?**

No, not really. I enjoyed thinking about what would make Ariane distinct, what would be “Dupontel” about her. Albert and I discussed her character a lot. He talked to me about Depardon’s films such as *10th District Court*. We also had a real judge working on the film, Mr Bernard-Requin, who told me about his work and his life.

Albert gave me lots to go on. He talked to me about miscarriages of justice, a subject he is passionate about. Albert is a bit of a real-life Robin Hood, he is always trying to be fair and defend the underdog, defend those people who are – or say they are – wrongly accused.

I like listening to Albert talking. When you work with him, you have to submerse yourself in his world.

**And this world of his, did you know it before?**

Yes, I’d seen his films. And I thought the idea for this film was a great one. I think Albert is very shy, like few other people I’ve ever met. If he has gone out of his way to get people to see him differently in this film, it is so we can identify with what is very touching about his character and therefore be kinder and more tolerant.

In all of Albert’s films, including *9 mois ferme*, there is a part of the staging and the filming technique that is specific to him. He has a very personal, very unique vision. You have to go along with it, accept his rules, embrace his vision and his world.

I was often filmed from below, sometimes with my large pregnant belly at the forefront and my face….well, not really to its best advantage. I always went along with it but there was no time to hesitate! But, funnily enough, at the end of the day, I think I was well filmed.

**There are several audacious scenes in *9 mois ferme*, notably your crazy night with Bob. Did you enjoy doing these comedy scenes, which forces you to go one step further and play very raw comedy?**

What was funny was that Albert and I really learned a lot about each other as filming progressed, even though we had rehearsed beforehand.

To add to the farcical side of that crazy night, he asked me to just try some things out, to walk into doors, to play drunk. I’m not very good at doing things if they’re not going to be filmed and if they’re not going to be used. I was scared it might spoil what I was able to give to my performance once the cameras were rolling.

Albert and I weren’t always on the same page. I’d say, ‘I’m going to keep a bit back for the big day.’ And he thought I was just being very casual about the whole thing or that I wasn’t concentrating or that I was dragging my heels. Whereas, I was worried that once filming started, I’d feel I was repeating myself and therefore lose spontaneity.

It was really only on the day of filming that he saw what I was capable of, what I had to give.

On set, you have to give it your all. Albert constantly pushes you to your limit. Not out of cruel pleasure, but because until he gets what he’s looking for– and he’s absolutely right – you have to rework it and tweak it. He’d say, ‘That part could be funnier, she could be more like a dancer.’

Sometimes, Albert would ask me to improvise and I admit I’m a bit scared about improvising. I like to know what is required of me from the outset, and have it clear in my head. I like to stick closely to the script and if someone says to me, ‘Now, improvise’ I’m anxious that it won’t be good enough. But Albert’s direction and all the prep work we did on the character in the run up to filming helped me to let go.

**Before rehearsals began, you were asked to do a screen test. Was it difficult for an actress like yourself, with so much experience, and over 40 films behind you, to have to do a screen test for a part? It’s very common in the US, but not really in France, isn’t that right?**

Yes, but I don’t see it that way. In the US, actors are more excited about the role they might get to play and doing a screen test is no big deal.

I loved the part, I really wanted to do it, and I think that it was very important for Albert to see that, yes I was happy to do a screen test, and that I didn’t have an ego problem. I met Albert in a cafe, as actors do, and told him, ‘I’m very keen, I love the script.’ It was then that he asked me, ‘Would you be happy to do a screen test?’

The screen test was actually very useful to me. It helped me understand a bit more about Albert and the way he works.

We tested three scenes from the film, including the scene where she jumps. It was surreal. We were in an apartment, it was all totally improvised, there was a mattress, and the cameraman was there waiting…Albert knew his team, but I didn’t know anyone. I think he had had real trouble with casting this character; he had almost given up the film because he couldn’t find the right actress. He knew everything depended on our meeting and on my screen test. I thought the screen test was a good idea and would also be helpful. It was quite liberating as once filming began I knew I didn’t have to prove anything as I knew the director was already happy with me playing the part. It also helped Albert to rewrite the character taking into account what I brought to Ariane that was different from how he had imagined her. Originally Ariane’s character was much tougher, far more severe than my portrayal of her.

I wanted her to be touching. If something like that happened to me I would be completely distraught. A person who is vulnerable is always touching, whereas people who can detach themselves from a situation like that and be tough about it, distance the audience too.

**Was it difficult for you the fact that your co-star was also the director? It’s the second time, the first being the film *Quadrille* by Valerie Lemercier. Does it change how you act the part?**

It changes a lot of things. I was more concerned for Albert than for me. At one point I realised, ‘Yes, of course, Albert is also acting in this film!’ I only realised this when we were in costume at the Law Courts. We didn’t have individual dressing rooms. We were getting changed and I saw Albert behind a curtain. A couple of minutes before he had been directing us on the staircase and now he was getting changed into his costume and putting his on his “outlaw’s” earring. I suddenly looked at him and thought, ‘Oh goodness, that’s right. How’s he going to manage now?’

Albert was very approachable and I could talk straight to him. I allowed myself to say, ‘Don’t you think that’s a bit too obvious?” or ‘”don’t you think that there….” And he would think about it and question his decision. He didn’t have an ego problem with this.

**One last question, was it extraordinary to film inside the Law Courts? It’s another world, a theatre…..**

To play the part of a judge, the costumes and the environment help enormously. It’s half the work when you are an actor. Standing on the grand staircase inside the Law Courts is both inspirational and adds a certain authenticity to the role. It contributes something very special, the place is so symbolic, you are thrown into a different reality and you cannot be immune to what goes on there. You take it on board and it helps you. It was awe-inspiring. Particularly standing at the bar in the main courtroom in the Law Courts. The room was packed, as it would be normally, so you really feel like it’s the real thing. That really gives an extra something to an actor.

Credits

Writer and director Albert Dupontel

Producer Catherine Bozorgan

Cinematographer Vincent Mathias (A.F.C)

Camera operator Stephane Martin

Production designer Pierre Queffelean

Costume designer Mimi Lempicka

Sound mixer Jean Minondo

Production manager Yvon Crenn

First assistant director Alain Olivieri

Casting director Antoinette Boulat

Film editor Christophe Pinel

Sound editors Gurwal Coic-Gallas

Nicolas Becker

Re-recording mixers Cyril Holtz

Damien Lazzerini

Key grip Francois Comparot

Gaffer Cafer Ilhan

Digital effects supervisor Mikros Image – Cedric Fayolle

Special effects coordinators Guy Monbillard

Guillaume Castagne

Stills photographer Jerome Prebois

Film score composer Christophe Julien

Closing credits soundtrack CAMILLE – 9 mois ferme

Cast

Ariane Sandrine Kiberlain

Bob Albert Dupontel

Maitre Trolos Nicolas Marie

Judge de Bernard Philippe Uchan

Dr Toulate Philippe Duquesne

CCTV police officer Bouli Lanners

Lieutenant Edouard Christian Hecq (member of the Comedie-Française)

Mr De Lime Gilles Gaston-Dreyfus

Gynaecologist Michel Fau

Ariane’s colleague Laure Calamy