

PAULO BRANCO PRESENTS

OUR PARADISE

A FILM BY
GAËL MOREL

STEPHANE RIDEAU
DIMITRI DURDAINE
BEATRICE DALLE
DIDIER FLAMAND

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cinéma





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A film by **GAËL MOREL**

With
STÉPHANE RIDEAU
DIMITRI DURDAINE
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DIDIER FLAMAND

Produced and distributed by
ALFAMA FILMS

FRENCH RELEASE
28TH SEPTEMBER 2011

CAST

Vassili.....**Stéphane Rideau**
Angelo.....**Dimitri Durdaine**
Anna.....**Béatrice Dalle**
Victor.....**Didier Flamand**
First customer.....**Jean-Christophe Bouvet**
Anna's mother.....**Raymonde Bronstein**
Kamel.....**Malik Issolah**
Little Vassili.....**Mathis Morisset**

TECHNICAL CREW

Screenplay - **Gaël Morel**
Original music - **Camille Rocailleux**
Photography - **Nicolas Dixmier**
Art direction - **Zé Branco**
Editing - **Catherine Schwartz**
Sound - **Nicolas Waschkowski, Corinne
Rozenberg, Marie Deroudille and Hervé Buirette**
Production management - **Thierry Cretagne**

A coproduction **ALFAMA FILMS**
and **RHÔNE-ALPES CINEMA**
With the participation of
REGION RHONE-ALPES and **CNC**
Associated production **CLAP FILMES**
With the support of the **PROCIREP**
Produced by **Paulo Branco**
Distributed by **ALFAMA FILMS**

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Running time : **100 min**
Format : **1.85**
Sound : **5.1**
Visa : **123.438**

INTERNATIONAL SALES

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SYNOPSIS

Vassili, an ageing prostitute, who suffers from criminal drives, finds an unconscious young man in the Bois de Boulogne and puts him up at his place. Both men, now accomplices and lovers, prostitute themselves and get used to robbing their customers. However, little by little, the noose tightens. After threats of retaliation, the couple has to flee from Paris. The runaway begins.

INTERVIEW WITH GAËL MOREL

DARKNESS IN TECHNICOLOR

“ Even accomplished, evil retains some unreal quality; perhaps this explains the simplicity of criminals; everything is simple in a dream ”

SIMONE WEIL

J G : Vassili, the serial killer embodied by Stéphane Rideau, kills without any explanation. That was already the case for the character of the infanticidal mother in your previous movie, *New Wave*.

G M : I try not to limit my characters. A character who kills is unfathomable, he is undetermined, as it is often the case in my movies. That is why, most of the time, my dialogues are rather factual than introspective.

- Psychology would be “the hero’s tomb” as Cioran puts it?

- My reference is Brett Easton Ellis and new American literature in general: in Dennis Cooper’s work for instance, the absence of past for the characters does not destroy fiction, on the contrary. They are heroes, not because they are easily solved or positive, but because they are following an itinerary. In the greatest model of literature, Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov’s motives for killing remain unknown. What Dostoïevski explains is what happens within him after the crime, its consequences

If a golden rule in life is to leave an incomplete image of oneself, I like it to be the case for a character’s life. In movies such as Bonnie and Clyde or The Honeymoon killers, not knowing anything about a character stimulates fiction. This share of darkness allows the audience to find a refuge, to project themselves – not that I want to turn them into an active audience but it’s the best way to experience empathy for a hardly acceptable character.

And this is the opposite of gratuitous violence.

SEXUAL APPETITE

- But it could be perceived as such. Don’t you fear that by showing a homosexual , who is both a serial killer and a prostitute, and whose motives you do not explain, you will be blamed for displaying a negative image of homosexuality ?

- I consider that homosexuality belongs to the sphere of sexuality and not to the social sphere. In movies, and in television programs (Plus belle la vie, Avocats et associés – French TV shows), it is experienced by men who work, who go home at night, etc. Whereas, even if that is the case, their sexual reality, where TV can never venture, is very different - countless nightclubs, places to flirt...

I designed my movie as a reaction against the normative representation of our present society, a representation to which I bring a sexual answer. I suggest to a homosexual audience that they identify with a villain. No woman would agree to be showed in a movie in such a domestic way

But I never show this sexual desire in a negative way- the scene of the “threesome” at Vassili’s is the happiest sex scene of the movie.

- Every character in the movie has a problem with age - not only the killer, and not only homosexuals since Anna/Béatrice Dalle is having affairs with teenagers.

- This has often been the case in my movies. To take a single example, in After him, Catherine Deneuve, by losing her son, also loses her youth, and starts befriending post-teenager young people. In Our paradise, the homosexual circle, in which you are perceived as old at forty, enables me to deepen that idea. It is indeed a circle in which whatever your social function is, you don’t have family responsibilities that make you age de facto. There, sexuality is very adolescent and it is one of the reasons why youth is lusted after so much. Lusted after and not necessarily respected, a fact for which Vassili, who hunts and judges, puts the blame on his predators. One of the essential cues of the movie, in my opinion, is the very simple one uttered by the perverted doctor : “An old

queer like me must come up with other pleasures". Presumably, old heterosexuals must do so as well, but this phenomenon is tragically – and sometimes comically- heightened for homosexuals.

DARK HOLE

- We are aware of your passion for actors and actresses. Nevertheless, I notice that both principal actors, Stéphane Rideau and Dimitri Durdaine who acts for the first time in this movie, come from a non-professional background ... Is that a choice?

- First of all, concerning Stéphane Rideau, what you recall is very old. But it is true that he is an atypical actor. This part was a matter of trust- of me trusting him and him trusting me. Immediately, not only did Stéphane accept everything but he wanted everything. As if he already had the character within him, he did not have to put himself in the shoes of a killer. Stéphane is the ideal actor.

As far as the character of the young Angelo is concerned, we quickly found out that it was not a part we should give to an actor. An actor would have liked to add intentions, which is natural. And many people did so during the casting. But I wanted someone whose youth did not commit for the sake of a great cause, even if it was the one of the cinema! Tenderness and trust exist everywhere – including in the relationship with a killer. Angelo had to be completely passive. He only had to know his lines well and to remain in his marks. Compared with other young people, Dimitri Durdaine possesses something very modern in his physical appearance and something eternal in reality : this smooth and soft quality, which Edith Piaf talked about in *Le Brun et le Blond*, is a shell, a defense, that makes him impenetrable, the opposite of acting performance. In the manner of characters in Dennis Cooper's novels or in Greg Araki's movies, who turn out to be abysses when confronted to a disaster. This dark hole, the power of attraction and destruction of the blond Dimitri expressed it ideally. He was found in extremis, at the end of a long casting which went on for months where the risk of overdoing the part was general. This is a future actor!

- And above all, you were looking for a presence.

- I hate it when an actor fakes his idiosyncrasy. A presence is a figure, a voice, a gaze, and as Bresson staged it in *Le Diable* probablement, a gait. These are things quickly identifiable in someone. The presence of an actor is measured by the singularity of these four elements, for instance Deneuve, Cassel, Depardieu, Delon, Dalle...!

- Béatrice Dalle, precisely. You must have been very meticulous in the screenplay, because her arrival in the movie does not distract the attention of the audience from the duet Vassili/Angelo.

- She and her ten year old child displace, refocus the axis of vision over on the two boys. As a reasonable mother but a shady woman, she allows us to question the status of Vassili as a killer since he becomes paternal and protective with her son.

- It is your second movie with Béatrice Dalle.

- I was enthused by the creation of the unexpected couple Béatrice Dalle/Stéphane Rideau, each of them an icon in his own way. Seeing these two icons on which time has passed perfectly restores the impression of two adults waking up too late from their teenage hood.

MIMETIC DESIRE

- She always wears black and nevertheless she is radiant. This also applies to the totality of this dark movie which is filled with colours and light, as always with you. I cannot decide between Caravaggio's intense chiaroscuro and Michelangelo's vivid brightness.

- I leave you with the responsibility of these references! All I can say is that the work on colour is the very function that I attribute to shots. It is on the setting – like a painter, possibly- that I choose perspective, areas where matter is present (brilliance, clothes, stones, snow...)

I always imagine a shot on a physical background. This is particularly visible during crime scenes. I don't want to repeat myself, to be redundant, or in

a nutshell, to be emphatic. That would boil down to using dark colours a dark movie, in lighting characters that I wish to stay in the shadow with dark colours . Ideally, I would like to render this darkness and this shade in Technicolor.

- Let's mention the colour red... Many images of blood are very aggressive, not to say artificial like in all your movies, like in Aldrich's movies. Does blood fascinate you ?

- Blood is like violence. In life, in the street, the coarseness of violence always seems petty to me. You can interpret my use of blood the way you want (don't forget the collection of blood packs at the doctor's) but just as for violence, I try to endow it with beauty by staging it.

- For that matter, you generally demonstrate a strong wariness concerning naturalistic cinema.

- No, that is not what I mean. There is a naturalistic tradition in French cinema which has become a sort of norm, I have nothing against it but I have always defined myself out of it. What I said earlier about homosexuality affects all my characters; they must not be stereotypes of their milieu. They evolve in a circle but they do not embody it. With Faulkner, I have learnt to define my characters through discrepancies in the story, resorting to the possible, rather than reproducing reality in a plausible way.

- For instance?

- Gazes. Staging the audience's gaze, as Hitchcock used to put it and characters gazing at each other. In *Zombie* by Brett Easton Ellis, as with Fassbinder, the story keeps resorting to gazes, rather than to the plot. In the first scene of *Our Paradise*, we wait a long time to see Jean Christophe Bouvet but we hear him while watching the Stéphane Rideau's gaze. Until the movie's denouement, when the child watches the double crime and when he is watched in the act of seeing it, I multiplied scenes of gazing. The most surprising one for the audience is presumably the one with the webcam where, while we believe to be attending a new love scene between the characters, a sequence shot leads to the want ad on the computer. Yes, I like stylized movies and stylized movie directors.

- Since the beginning of the interview, you have often referred to models, as literary as cinematic. An artist who dismisses models, said Gide, only demonstrates his fear of not measuring up to them, and displays a mortal weakness.

- Mimetic desire is creative. I don't believe in spontaneous generation, the desire to make a movie comes from a movie we strongly appreciated. But nothing is as personal as a stylization. What I claim is the affiliation to a family, not the copy of previous stylizations.

- For instance?

- In France, I feel related to very diverse aesthetic propositions from directors such as Ozon, Honoré or Civeyrac. My cult movies which spurred me on before this last shooting are *Natural Born Killers*, *My Own Private Idaho* and *The Honeymoon Killers*.

A COMMANDO OPERATION

- Movies with a huge budget. Whereas *Our Paradise* was directed with limited expenditure.

- My producer, Paulo Branco had a nice phrase: "a commando movie", which exactly defines how this limit did not narrow us but turned out to be an exciting adventure. I left for the front in a permanent state of war, a war where my allies were my crew. – And even the weather, if we think of the snow at the end of the movie.

This small budget would have bothered me for a movie such as *After him*, but for *Our paradise* which cannot be broadcasted on prime time television, I went as far as my desire led me, and I can say that I disposed of all the means necessary to reach this extreme objective.

- Can you explain that?

- Of course, it's perfectly obvious. I did not trap myself within machinery, I did not use a dolly, I limited the amount of travelling, I had no zoom, I had to conceive my focal lenses more precisely, I had to conceive my movie with a different cinematic

grammar from my sequence shots; I had to build my movie differently. This restriction enabled me to be less paralyzed. I had never felt so free to invent my shots. I spoke of homosexuality in other movies, but here, I have the impression that I talk about it differently, that I knew what I didn't want.

- And your soldiers held on.

- I wanted to live this adventure with people I felt to be very strong. Most of them are faithful supporters who adapted to the situation - for instance, I worked differently with my editor thanks to eighteen years of very close collaboration. I changed one essential person: my chief operator so that he would not repeat previous reflexes : nevertheless, Nicolas Dixmier used to be my chief electrician and I was both very confident and very reassured by his new function, by his gaze.

EXPOSURE

- We can imagine that the subject of the movie and the direction of some scenes raised the issue of censorship.

- The official censorship -16-12 rated movies - is doing its job, it's normal even if we can discuss it. The problem lies elsewhere. We think that we are free to say everything because nobody exposes himself. As soon as you expose, you have to deal with insidious forms of censorship. The first one is self-censorship on the part of television channels. The second one is connected to the first one: the audience's automatic prudery or wariness. As far as this is concerned, I grant the utmost significance to the scene of colonoscopy which can seem unrelated to the plot, whereas it is central in defining the identity of the movie. In this scene, not far from the beginning, we see the image of the interior of Angelo's body, whereas we know nothing about him: it was my way of indicating that we are in a limitless movie where everything can happen, where the audience is never better informed, always on the lookout, never at rest.

- To conclude, I picked out a sentence by the scandalous homosexual André Gide before our

interview who thus defines the work of art in Incidences: " Strength and softness, control and grace, logic and abandonment, precision and poetry"...

We could not put it better. It's his work that an artist must order, not the world surrounding him.

Interview by Jacques Grant

Téchiné revealed Elodie Bouchez, Stéphane Rideau and Gaël Morel. The latter quickly gave up acting to become a director. *Our Paradise* gets back to Stéphane Rideau.

Now an ageing prostitute, putting on weight on the verge of his forties, he observes that customers look at him in a different manner not to say a shifty one. When humiliation becomes too powerful, his hatred impulses climb up to the surface and he can go as far as killing. He can also kill in the name of his love for Angelo (the revelation Dimitri Durdaine), his lover, a prostitute as well, but younger, so young that he is almost a child. In their runaway, they will join Anna (the stately Béatrice Dalle) who used to be the queen of the night (in the Queen...) and who now tries to raise up her kid. The tranquility she provides them with for a while, will not be sufficient to quench their thirst for violence. **It is during the sequences haunted by the idea of ageing and the loss of seduction that Gael Morel's perspective becomes extremely striking [...].**

Libération, Next – Philippe Azoury, September 2011

”Dark and lyrical, the road movie of two criminal lovers”

“The gay version of *They live by night* [...] with a touch of Claire Denis (I can't sleep for the neutrality of judgment and the gift for framing) mixed with Jacques Nolot (Before I forget for the self-deprecation)”

“Finding the balance of a movie during its fabrication defines real film directors. Morel is definitely one of them”

Les Inrocks – Jean-Baptiste Morain, September 28th 2011

“Its darkness touches you once and for all”

“A devilish movie, *Our paradise* wants to recapture the impudence of a marginal cinema, its hard liner purity”

Télérama – Frédéric Strauss, September 28th 2011

“The torture of Eros and Thanatos, torn between a perverted innocence and a disquieting maturity where **Stéphane Rideau, as a mesmerizing black angel, and Béatrice Dalle, as a gorgeous surrogate mother, escort the radiant beginner, Dimitri Durdaine”**

Le Nouvel Observateur – Xavier Leherpeur, September 29th 2011

“A desperate song yet looking for hope in a runaway. Certainly, Genet, Jean Louis Bory and Pier Paolo Pasolini would have enjoyed this cinematic scream which will leave traces in the memory of those who like every kind of cinema”

Pariscope – Arno Gaillard, September 28th 2011

GAEL MOREL FILMOGRAPHY

CINEMA

2011 **OUR PARADISE**

With Stéphane Rideau, Dimitri Durdaine, Béatrice Dalle, Didier Flamand

2007 **AFTER HIM (APRÈS LUI)**

With Catherine Deneuve, Guy Marchand, Elodie Bouchez

2004 **THREE DANCING SLAVES (LE CLAN)**

With Nicolas Cazalé, Stéphane Rideau, Thomas Dumerchez, Salim Kechiouche

2003 **UNDER ANOTHER SKY (LES CHEMINS DE L'OUED)**

With Nicolas Cazalé, Amira Casar, Mohamed Majd, Kheireddine Defda

1996 **FULL SPEED (A TOUTE VITESSE)**

With Elodie Bouchez, Stéphane Rideau, Pascal Cervo, Meziane Bardadi

1994 **LA VIE À REBOURS**

With Stéphane Rideau, Paul Morel, Aurélien Morel

TELEVISION

2008 **NEW WAVE**

With Béatrice Dalle, Valentin Ducommun, Victor Chambon

1999 **PREMIÈRES NEIGES**

With Elodie Bouchez, Stéphane Rideau, Aure Atika