

FRÉDÉRIC BOURBOULON & JÉRÔME SEYDOUX present



THIERRY LHERMITTE RAPHAËL PERSONNAZ NIELS ARESTRUP

# Quai d'Orsay

A FILM BY BERTRAND TAVERNIER

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## SYNOPSIS

Alexandre Taillard de Vorms is tall and impressive, a man with style, attractive to women. He also happens to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the land of enlightenment: France.

With his silver mane and tanned, athletic body, he stalks the world stage, from the floor of the United Nations in New York to the powder keg of Oubanga.

There, he calls on the powerful and invokes the mighty to bring peace, to calm the trigger-happy, and to cement his aura of Nobel Peace Prize winner-in-waiting. Alexandre Taillard de Vorms is a force to be reckoned with, waging his own war backed up by the holy trinity of diplomatic concepts: legitimacy, lucidity and efficacy.

He takes on American neo-cons, corrupt Russians and money-grabbing Chinese. Perhaps the world doesn't deserve France's magnanimousness, but his art would be wasted if just restricted to home turf.

Enter the young Arthur Vlamincq, graduate of the elite National School of Administration, who is hired as head of “language” at the foreign ministry. In other words, he is to write the minister's speeches. But he also has to learn to deal with the sensibilities of the boss and his entourage, and find his way between the private secretary and the special advisors who stalk the corridors of the Quai d'Orsay – the ministry's home – where stress, ambition and dirty dealing are the daily currency. But just as he thinks he can influence the fate of the world, everything seems threatened by the inertia of the technocrats.



**Quai d'Orsay, three-way interview:  
Bertrand Tavernier, Antonin Baudry et Christophe Blain**



- [Bertrand Tavernier, how did you come upon the graphic novel \*Quai d'Orsay\*?](#)
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** A friend of mine, a journalist named Edouard Duprey, who actually appears in the film, came over dinner one night and brought me the first volume of *Quai d'Orsay* as a gift. It had hit the bookshelves a few days earlier. I read it that night, from beginning to end. The next day I asked my producer and business partner, Frédéric Bourboulon, to buy the film rights. I was struck by the perfect balance between the tantalizing comedy and the reality of the characters, situations and dialogue, which all rang true. Political advisors in ministries work like crazy, in a constant state of chaos. I'm very interested in work environments. In fact, work is both the subject of, and the driving force behind, *Quai d'Orsay*, in the same way that it was in *L.627* or *It All Starts Today*. And then there's the "chronicle" aspect to it all, which for me is extremely cinematographic.
- [Quai d'Orsay came out in June 2010, right between the Cannes screening of \*The Princesse of Montpensier\* and its theatrical release. Were you already in search of a new subject then?](#)
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Yes, I was working on a couple of ideas but I happened upon *Quai d'Orsay* totally by chance. I was instantly enthusiastic. I couldn't let it slip through my fingers. And without having given it much thought, I realized it was the total opposite of the film I'd just finished. *Quai d'Orsay* plunges us into a modern, contemporary reality, that of a government ministry. It is the diametrical

opposite *La Princesse*, a love story that takes place in of 16<sup>th</sup>-century France with the religious wars as a backdrop. And *La Princesse* is itself a far cry from James Lee Burke's Louisiana in *In the Electric Mist*. Also, *Quai d'Orsay* concerns a world I don't know at all, the daily grind of diplomacy. I'm very motivated by the desire to explore worlds, eras and places I don't know. The power and interest of this extraordinary graphic novel is that it uses comedy to show an aspect of politics that we never get a glimpse of in the media.

- [As the authors of the graphic novel, at what point did you envisage a possible film or TV adaptation?](#)

- **Christophe Blain:** As we were writing, we thought it was a possibility, but we didn't pay it much heed because we were concentrating on finishing the book. As soon as it came out, we received three offers at the same time, including a TV series that the producers suggested we direct ourselves. But Bertrand's offer seemed the best, and the most palpable.

- **Antonin Baudry:** Honestly, at first I was against the idea of an adaptation. I thought that the graphic novel was cinematographic enough. I was afraid we'd kill it, turn it into a spinoff of itself. But I changed my mind when I met Bertrand: his desire, his lucid reasons for wanting to do it and the care he took to maintain the spirit of the graphic novel. And then there's his personality and everything he represents in cinema. Just one meeting with him and I said: "This is going to be an adventure. Let's go for it."

- [The strength of the novel is how it uses images to distance us from reality. Weren't you afraid that film might make it almost too real?](#)

- **Antonin Baudry:** Writing is all about finding solutions. At first I had in mind a very specific experience that I myself had lived through at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Christophe found a way of telling this story with his language, that of the graphic novel. With Bertrand, we used another language, another medium, that of film. This brought its share of challenges. And required totally a different set of solutions to approach the same subject with its contradictions, its techniques, its humanity... Adaptation is a two-fold translation of sorts. It's not just about translating the graphic novel, but also about translating the story itself. Working together was a very happy time. Bertrand immediately made it all feel very brotherly. Everything flowed well among us. At times, as we were writing, he'd switch on the warning lights: "Watch out. You're making the same kind of mistake Richard Thorpe made in such-and-such film from 1952!" Often I'd watch the film in secret at night, and I'd see that Bertrand was right. It was wonderful to be connected to the technical side, to the writing itself, and also to the history of cinema. It was my greatest professional experience ever.

- Christophe Blain:** There's also the question of rhythm. Bertrand's internal rhythm is different from Antonin's, and from mine too. Nevertheless, he managed to maneuver his personality into our work. The graphic novel *Quai d'Orsay* is already a fusion between Antonin and myself, in both form and content. Bertrand's voice and take on things pumped new blood into it all. Stories become interesting when there's something strange about them. If they're told in a perfectly naturalistic manner, they fall flat. They need to be stylized. They need to generate something uncanny to make them seem more real, so that they have the look and feel of life.
- What impression did you have of Bertrand Tavernier before you met him? What films and aspects of his cinema were important to you?
- Christophe Blain:** My favorite film is "Let Joy Reign Supreme", which I've seen over and over at different points in my life. When I was younger I found it lively and colorful. Now I'm more struck by its gravitas, its melancholic side. When I watch Bertrand's films, I see a pattern which is his own, and which I also see in *Quai d'Orsay*: a lot of dense exposition, full of information that we don't necessarily pick up on at first; then, gradually, things take shape, the stakes become clearer, and we start to understand the characters' apparent - or not so apparent - motives. His films often end wistfully, with one character forced to come to terms with himself.
- Antonin Baudry:** For me, Bertrand is a director who knows how to put fiction in exactly the right place, so that it can speak the truth. That's what I find interesting. We're in a sort of limbo, a mixture of the true and the false in which the latter manages to somehow bring out the former. He has a flair for entertainment, but still finds a way for fiction to bring out the truth. Especially, as he just said, in his relationship to the workplace. In *Quai d'Orsay*, when Arthur starts writing the same speech for the 30<sup>th</sup> time, the situation on the screen is funny, but it rings true. I should know, because I experienced it.
- For you, Bertrand, was it obvious that you would adapt the graphic novel with its authors?
- Bertrand Tavernier:** Without a doubt. I'd never have considered anything else. In the movies, people often buy the rights to books without thinking of involving the author in the project. That would have been a mistake in the case of this graphic novel. It contains so much quality dialogue and astute visuals that I couldn't have done without Antonin and Christophe. Once the three of us got

started, it was as if we were sucked into a vortex. We couldn't stop working. We finished the first draft in ten days.



- **Antonin Baudry:** Are you kidding? Eight days! I live in New York, so Christophe and Bertrand joined me there. We'd work nonstop, sometimes until 4 or 5 in the morning with just a quick lunch or dinner break... if we stopped at all.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** We couldn't stop laughing. I asked tons of questions. And often the answer to my questions would lead to scenes that aren't in the book. The more answers I'd get, the more questions I'd bombard Antonin with. And the more I wanted to understand, for example, how a speech was written, at what time of day, and what kind of implication it would have on the character's life at home... In Maupas' office, where did that cat in the corner of the panel come from? Why do political advisors suddenly get hungry when they're asked to prepare a minister's answers at the National Assembly?
- **Antonin Baudry:** In fact, not only do the minister's answers have to be written, but so do the MPs' questions. When I told Bertrand about this odd situation, he immediately wanted to incorporate it into the script.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** In fact, it is the first time that movies show what the advisor Cahut calls the "sham of democracy." It's also forbidden to go on the internet.
- **Christophe Blain:** Working with Bertrand allowed us to tap into a hidden well of situations of which Antonin and I had taken note while writing. A lot of them were wonderful but unfortunately we couldn't fit them into the book. It would have meant weighing down the narrative with several pages just to recount a fact or detail that ended up coming across as too anecdotal. Bertrand's curiosity reactivated our penchant for documentary, which managed to work its way back into the film.

- The book is a comedy about the thirst for power, a coming-of-age story and an insider's chronicles about life in a ministry. But in the film you needed to construct a dramatic arch that spanned from beginning to end.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** That's a recurrent problem that I tried to solve in *L.627, It All Starts Today, Holly Lola* and even *Life and Nothing But*. All these films contain multiple actions that either repeat or exist simultaneously. Over the course of the films, a connection is created that winds up holding them together. In *Quai d'Orsay*, we needed to use the crisis in Lousdem (Lousdemistan in the film) as the underlying theme that builds up to the grand finale, Minister Taillard de Worms' speech at the UN. This speech was in the second volume, which I hadn't yet read. I only discovered it when I arrived in New York.
- **Antonin Baudry:** It's true. The speech marks the dramatic crescendo. This was Bertrand's first intuition and we immediately agreed with it.
  - One of the big changes in the film is Arthur's girlfriend, Maria. Unlike in the book, they live together. She has a job and is committed to a social cause. Her daily life is the opposite of her boyfriend's.
    - **Bertrand Tavernier:** I felt the need to know more about Arthur's partner. To make her exist and to anchor her in reality. I figured she could serve as a mirror. She could level the playing field and put him into question. She is a teacher and she is fighting for a family of illegal African immigrants. This gives another arch to the film, a subtext that runs throughout. And it leads to an unexpected line from the minister to Arthur: "We're not animals." Jean Aurenche often said: "Everything we add is a sort of gift to the author."
    - **Antonin Baudry:** That's something we added, but there are also things we removed, especially concerning Arthur's imaginary world. His science-fiction dream-life.
    - **Bertrand Tavernier:** I cannot find *Star Wars* references interesting. I'd have treated them wrong. Poorly. For me, we had to find his imaginary world elsewhere. You have to respect the original work, but also stray from it. You have to work on new things that transform the film into a new work. Less can be more.
    - **Antonin Baudry:** These science fiction scenes brought up another question: how do you represent the inner life of a character? In the graphic novel we proceeded by visual metaphors, references to codified cinematographic worlds. Metaphors that it was impossible to cut and paste into the film for the reasons that Bertrand just explained. But he suggested something else: that we

come to understand Arthur's inner life via the way others see him. Especially Maria. I found that idea powerful and moving.



- [Did you agree on everything? Did your points of view diverge? Did you spar?](#)
- **Antonin Baudry:** No, the way it usually worked was that one of us would make a suggestion, the second would approve it and the third would chime in with "Okay but how about also trying this too..." We'd usually help one another to try to find better solutions.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** One of our rare points of contention concerned what music Arthur listened to. Antonin wanted Metallica and I wanted Led Zeppelin! *(laughter)* Also, I was very insistent about showing the last speech being written. The one the Minister gives at the UN. It seemed crucial to me.
- **Antonin Baudry:** The scene we wrote is a meeting that really occurred. In fact, one of the fifteen that really occurred, each with its own variations. So the meeting in the film is a condensation, a synthesis of reality.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** We had to avoid falling into the trap of using the graphic novel as a storyboard for the movie. We wanted to respect the spirit of it without faithfully reproducing Christophe's drawings. For example, how do you transpose to the screen the image of the minister who keeps popping up everywhere? How do you express the novel's sheer graphic madness? For example, I suggested having the files go flying up in the air each time the minister rushes into the office of his secretary, Martine. Like a tornado: the sound of him stomping is a harbinger of the ravaged office. But we never see him walk from room to room. He hangs up his phone, stands up, and in a fraction of a second, he's in Martine's office. It's very elliptical, almost supernatural, and yet it seems perfectly realistic on screen. In fact, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs

told me that the flying files was an excellent way of showing Taillard de Worms' personality.

- [Did the fact that you wrote it in New York, cut off from France, play in your favor?](#)

- **Christophe Blain:** I had just finished six months of nonstop work on several albums. It was an unusually intense period that culminated with our writing the second volume of *Quai d'Orsay*, with work sessions that often lasted until dawn. I was literally on my last legs. That was followed by my in New York. I got off the plane thinking "Bertrand is going to put everything in order. With his methodical mind, we definitely won't be up working till dawn." But the first thing he said was: "I came here to work with you, so let's make the most of it. If we have to, we'll work until the middle of the night!" I almost fainted.

- **Bertrand Tavernier:** I like the idea of being cut off from my daily grind in France: the SACD, Little Bear, fixing the washing machine. Starting with *The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul*, I've always tried to work elsewhere if possible. It affords you certain degree of freedom: you can't rely on your habits, your routine. We wrote *Quai d'Orsay* in New York just after Hurricane Sandy had ravaged the region. In the streets, we'd skirt around cars crushed by trees. One of our rare lunch meetings took place in a fancy Italian restaurant. Rain was pouring into it. We changed tables three times, then had to shift around the third table to avoid the raindrops. Because the rain was less concentrated than we were ! (*laughter*)

- [Was it obvious from the start that you would keep the chapters with citations from the Greek philosopher Heraclites?](#)

- **Antonin Baudry:** Yes. They shed an unexpected, somewhat absurdist, light on the situations in the ministry. When we were writing the graphic novel, I didn't think Christophe would go for it, but in the end he found the idea amusing. So it found its way into the film quite naturally.

- **Bertrand Tavernier:** We kept certain ideas, got rid of others and added new things. At the end, Antonin had some radical suggestions. Heraclites citations reduced to one or two words: "Hulls" or "Tension!"

- **Antonin Baudry:** But you forgot to say that "Hulls" is followed by five pages of commentaries!

- **Bertrand Tavernier:** We wondered how moviegoers would react to a card that read "Hulls." With Romain Le Grand and Florian Genetet-Morel from Pathé, we spent a great deal of time discussing the order of the quotes, in order to create a

real progression. They're not mere trifles. They give you some breathing room and let you proceed from one moment the next, from one set the next. One of my favorites is: "A fool who must orate is frozen with fear."

- **Antonin Baudry:** It's quite something. In the history of cinema, it's definitely the first time that Heraclites' quotes are used in intertitles! (*laughter*)
- *Quai d'Orsay, the book and the film, deal with a period that is relatively close but certain details (cigarettes, computer screens) make it seem distant already...*
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Those were two important points. As for the cigarettes, we checked it several times with Antonin. We ended up having to get rid of the ashtrays in the courtyard at Quai d'Orsay.
  - **Antonin Baudry:** Bertrand couldn't believe that I would smoke all day long at the ministry, both in my office and during meetings! But I would say that the real break between the two periods was September 11th and the war in Iraq. Those two events created a period of disorder and chaos that is still the case now. Today's political and geopolitical stakes are similar to those of 2002-2003. The differences are more manifest in details like cell phones and computers...
- **Christophe Blain:** On the other hand, if *Quai d'Orsay* had taken place in 1998, it would have been a whole other era. Pre-internet.
- **Antonin Baudry:** You're right. Back when I worked at the Quai d'Orsay, the minister used to call constantly, day and night. Nowadays, in addition to his calls we'd be getting text messages and masses of emails on our smartphones.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** In 2002-2003, politicians were less under the influence of nefarious communication advisors. In any case, Taillard thinks he can do without one. He considers himself his best communicator.
- *Bertrand Tavernier, in Quai d'Orsay, why did you want to change so many of the people you usually work with?*
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** It was part of the challenge. As I said before, I set out to explore a world I didn't know, and I wanted to do the same thing with my crew. I like to feel that every film is the first. Not to fall prey to routine, repetition, reflexes. I try hard to avoid, as Jacques Brel said, "waking up one morning with a gram and a half of facility." There may have been a comic side to *L.627*, *Holly Lola* or *Safe Conduct*, but *Quai d'Orsay* is my first real comedy. Yes, it's a comedy grounded in a political reality. It's thought-provoking. But it's a comedy

nonetheless. So trying my hand at a new genre made changing crews easier. The bold and inventive lighting in Philippe Lefèvre's *A Night* introduced me to the talented camerawork of Jérôme Alméras, who was an assistant cameraman in *D'Artagnan's Daughter*. I also felt a great bond with my new editor, Guy Lecorne, whose work I admired in films by Bruno Dumont and Guillaume Nicloux. As for the music, I paired off my usual composer, Philippe Sarde with Bertrand Burgalat who did the rock songs. Finally, of the four young actors in *The Princesse of Montpensier*, I wanted to continue working with Raphaël Personnaz, who seemed to me perfect for Arthur Vlaminck. I loved Anaïs Demoustier in *Living on Love Alone* and *Belle Epine*, and I thought that the young couple they formed would be spot-on. And I wanted to see Anaïs in a comic role, where she was quick, vivacious and sexy. *Quai d'Orsay* is also the first time I've worked with lots of other actors: Niels Arestrup, Julie Gayet, Thierry Frémont, Thomas Chabrol... Not to mention those who had already done colorful or powerful bit parts in other films of mine, like Bruno Raffaelli, who played Maginot in *Life and Nothing But*. I wanted to give him a role worthy of the talent he shows at the Comédie Française in plays by Goldoni, Anouilh or Edouard Bourdet.



- [Did you discuss possible actors as you were writing?](#)
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Yes, a great deal. In fact, I was worried about Antonin and Christophe's reaction to Niels Arestrup for Maupas or Bruno Raffaelli for Cahut. I felt that they were slightly apprehensive. Often I find that scriptwriters worry about those things. They wonder whether certain actors will be able to enlarge their palettes and try something different from what they've done before.
- **Christophe Blain:** We were preoccupied by the actors. We were creating powerful, larger-than-life characters. Who would be able to play them? It's like

transposing reality with drawings. Being faithful to reality isn't what matters. It's finding the right way of interpreting it.

- **Bertrand Tavernier:** I asked Antonin and Christophe to sit in the the first read-throughs with the actors. That way I could introduce Raphaël Personnaz to Antonin. In front of me I had the two faces of Arthur.
- **Antonin Baudry:** I remember that spectacular, first meeting with Niels Arestrup. He and Bertrand were two wild animals who would eventually tame each other. Maupas' high-pitched voice and phrasing had something musical about it. Niels was worried about imitating him. Bertrand put me through a nightmarish experience when he asked me to imitate the real Maupas in front of Arestrup. Niels looked daggers at me, terrified by the idea of using that voice and that phrasing. I was extremely uncomfortable and I stupidly kept on doing my imitation, all the while afraid he'd start strangling me! Obviously, from the first day of the shoot, Bertrand tried to get Niels to find his own musicality. Something strong and original, in keeping with the movie's energy.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Several times Niels said to me: "You're asking me to do the opposite of what I've done for 30 years. It requires an enormous amount of concentration." He had to use an introverted range that is very different from his normal, extroverted self. All he did was watch a video of the real Maupas and appropriated one his tics: stroking his hands.
- **Antonin Baudry:** In the end, he comes very close, except for one small detail. Niels plays Maupas like a tiger about to jump down the throat of the person he's speaking to. There is a hidden savagery which is borderline perverse. In his eyes you can see he's lived through a lot, that he has a dark past. The real-life Maupas and the one in the graphic novel are more empathetic. The one in the film is more ambiguous, both gentler and more threatening.
- [Was finding an actor to play Taillard de Worms as easy? Because we know the model, the person who inspired him...](#)
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** The actor who kept popping into my head was Thierry Lhermitte. I gave him his first role in *Let Joy Reign Supreme*, then a small role in *Spoiled Children*. He is an actor who surprised me in films by Laurent Heynemann, Véra Belmont, and in several Guillaume Nicloux movies that Little Bear produced. But over the years his talents haven't been fully maximized. This is often the case with certain actors. Their enormous potential remains unexploited due to the conformism, lack of audacity or laziness of decision-makers. When I asked Thierry to play Taillard de Worms, I offered him exactly

the same kind of challenge I'd given Michel Galabru in *The Judge and the Assassin*, where he played Bouvier, the serial killer.

- [Since \*A Private Affair\*, this is Thierry Lhermitte's first big role in an ambitious film. Did the challenge make him especially motivated?](#)
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Obviously. For him, the challenge was particularly difficult in that we all knew what minister inspired Taillard de Worms. Thierry couldn't fall into the copy-cat trap. He needed to forge his own path. From the first read-throughs, he suggested something original, which was his way of appropriating the character: he wanted to reinforce every one of his statements with an extravagant gesture that would illustrate it. So the minister would act out lightning, a spiral, priorities... Taillard often uses parables, so he never stopped. Rarely have we seen a character miming so many cosmico-geometrical concepts ! *(laughter)* It's exhilarating to watch because his roles in movies and plays over these past years have been pretty serious. I felt like I was bringing back the madcap Thierry Lhermitte from his days with the Splendid Theater, with a certain maturity to boot. And what made it all click was that he and Raphaël Personnaz immediately became as thick as thieves. It's unusual to see such instant complicity. In general, I pay as much attention to actors who "act" as to those to "react". And Raphaël did a wonderful job playing off, reacting to, the whirlwind that is Lhermitte. With his facial expression and gestures, he could offer up to fifty variations of despondency, annoyance or amazement.



- [Christophe and Antonin, did you go on set often?](#)
  - **Christophe Blain:** Seven or eight times. The mirror effect was very odd for me. What was most striking was meeting Raphaël Personnaz. He was Antonin. He immediately understood how he dressed back then, his mentality, his reactions to the parallel universe of the ministry. He even managed to copy

the way he held his cigarette. He recomposed the character based on Arthur from the graphic novel and his meeting with the real Antonin.

- **Antonin Baudry:** It almost made me go crazy. Bertrand asked me to play to an extra in the scene where Arthur is temporarily working next to Maupas' secretary. His desk is in the way and visitors keep bumping into him. I was one of them. I suddenly said to myself "What am I doing? I'm abusing this guy who is a version of myself from 10 years ago!"
- During the shoot, you discovered a different Tavernier: the ship captain...
- **Christophe Blain:** Is there that big a difference? I don't think so. When Bertrand shoots, he's constantly clowning around, making jokes, singing... He knew our dialogue by heart, but when the actors spoke it, he'd burst out laughing, as if hearing it for the first time. He is extremely concentrated but tries to make everyone on set laugh. I loved how joyful it was. I jotted down and sketched Bertrand's shticks and routines. Maybe I'll do something with them one day.
- **Antonin Baudry:** I was really impressed by how he wields his authority in such a nonconventional manner. The connections he creates are like no other. He taught me a lot. He's a true leader.
- **Bertrand Tavernier:** Shooting *Quai d'Orsay* was pure magic. The actors were perfectly attuned, the crew was motivated and efficient. In general, the need to be rigorous shouldn't prevent you from having fun or clowning around. You have to concentrate, get what you want, and then remove the pressure. Working as an assistant to Jean-Pierre Melville branded me forever. The atmosphere of harshness, terror and humiliation that he imposed on his sets... I was 20 and I said to myself: "If ever I become a director, I'll have to create another kind of work environment." It's like in music. Great conductors are known for their humanity, not for being tyrants. Never forget what Aurenche said: "Above all, a director should make his crew want to impress him."
- **Antonin Baudry:** It worked for me. I always wanted to impress you! (*laughter*)
- What do the two of you, Christophe and Antonin, think of the finished film?
- **Antonin Baudry:** I haven't seen it mixed or color-corrected, but the copy I saw threw me for a loop. It's incredible how Bertrand managed to pierce through the mystery of a world he doesn't know, how he went beyond mere literary adaptation. His *Quai d'Orsay* tells how human beings are swept into a maelstrom of conflicting forces, objectives and tensions. And ideals as well. Also, he shows great respect for his characters. That is very important for me. All of the

characters are based on people I knew, worked with, and sometimes really liked. I couldn't have collaborated with Bertrand if I'd felt that he was making fun of them, or being disdainful.

- **Bertrand Tavernier:** You have to love your characters and take pleasure what makes them funny. But you cannot laugh at their expense or try to act smarter than them. For example, I didn't want Valérie Dumontheil (Julie Gayet) just to be the advisor who takes a low blow at Arthur at their first meeting. I wanted to give her character another dimension. During their trip to Africa, her behavior is beyond reproach. When their car is surrounded by demonstrators, she overcomes her fear and bravely leaves the vehicle. The advisor Cahut also impresses me. Despite his rough side, his analyses of the Middle East are very germane... coupled with his obsession with sandwiches!
- What you're saying sums up the tone of the film: you don't try to make the characters come across as saints, but you're not lampooning them either. This delicate balance culminates in the last sequence, when Taillard de Worms makes his speech at the UN: there's something grand about it, but the line that follows is a real stinger.
- **Antonin Baudry:** It corresponds exactly to what I went through in the beginning of 2003, during the crisis in Iraq. The minister was in a state of permanent exaltation. He would tell everyone how he was saving the planet, but in private, he had a great deal of distance from his positions. I can still hear him railing "We're busting our asses but we won't even make it into the history books. Or if we do, it'll be in a tiny footnote."
  - **Bertrand Tavernier:** In fact, Taillard doesn't realize he has made one of the greatest speeches in the past 30 years of French history. I have to pay tribute to my producers' stubbornness. Thanks to Frédéric Bourboulon and François Hamel, we were able to shoot the scene at the Security Council. Quite an unusual situation: having an actor give a landmark speech in the same place it was given 10 years earlier.
- **Christophe Blain:** In the end, *Quai d'Orsay* is like a chain. At both ends, there are flesh-and-blood characters; in the middle, a sort of graphic incarnation. Everyone who has seen it so far thinks it's a real feel-good movie. Starting with our book, Bertrand constructed a work of his own. The underlying themes of his earlier films are all there: the music by Philippe Sarde, the chronicle aspect, the depiction of the workplace. At the same time, there are tonalities that he had never broached before: farce, burlesque, the absurd. *Quai d'Orsay* is more than satisfying. It makes me happy, and this is even better. It makes you laugh, smile and think. If you ask me, the balance it strikes is sort of perfect. It's the idea of

cinema we all dream of.

**interview conducted by Stéphane Lerouge**



## *CAST*

ALEXANDRE TAILLARD DE WORMS  
ARTHUR VLAMINCK  
CLAUDE MAUPAS  
STEPHANE CAHUT  
VALERIE DUMONTHEIL  
MARINA  
SYLVAIN MARQUET  
GUILLAUME VAN EFFENTEM  
ODILE  
MARTINE  
BERTRAND CASTELA  
NATHALIE  
MOLLY HUTCHINSON  
JEAN-PAUL FRANCOIS

**Thierry LHERMITTE**  
**Raphaël PERSONNAZ**  
**Niels ARESTRUP**  
**Bruno RAFFAELLI**  
**Julie GAYET**  
**Anaïs DEMOUSTIER**  
**Thomas CHABROL**  
**Thierry FREMONT**  
**Alix POISSON**  
**Marie BUNEL**  
**Jean-Marc ROULOT**  
**Sonia ROLLAND**  
**Jane BIRKIN**  
**Didier BEZACE**



## ***CREW***

Director	<b>Bertrand Tavernier</b>
Producers	<b>Frédéric Bourboulon et Jérôme Seydoux</b>
Co-producers	<b>Valérie Boyer et Romain Le Grand</b>
Associate Producer	<b>Florian Genetet-Morel</b>
Director of production	<b>François Hamel</b>
Scenario and dialogues	<b>Antonin Baudry, Christophe Blain et Bertrand Tavernier</b>
1st Assistant director	<b>Laure Prevost</b>
Continuity	<b>Françoise Thouvenot</b>
Casting director	<b>Marie-France Michel</b>
DOP	<b>Jérôme Alméras</b>
Set photographer	<b>Etienne George</b>
Set designer	<b>Emile Ghigo</b>
Sound engineer	<b>Jean-Marie Blondel</b>
Original Score	<b>Philippe Sarde</b>
Costume designer	<b>Caroline de Vivaise</b>
Costumes	<b>Patricia Saalburg</b>
Head make-up artist	<b>Agnès Tassel</b>
Production Manager	<b>Sylvain Bouladoux</b>
Editor	<b>Guy Lecorne</b>
Mix	<b>Olivier Do Huu</b>