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CE FILM NE DOIT PAS ÊTRE
RÉVÉLÉ À UN ENFANT

KARIN
VIARD
GILLES
LELLOUCHE

**MY
PIECE
OF
THE PIE**

A FILM BY
CÉDRIC KLAPISCH

109 minutes
FRENCH RELEASE 16 MARCH 2011



SYNOPSIS



France, a single mother from the blighted industrial north, and Steve, a hotshot trader with a keen eye for the killer deal, are thrown together when he's looking for a cleaner and she's looking for a job.

When Alban, Steve's 3-year-old son, arrives on the doorstep to stay with his dad, Steve might need more than a cleaner. And France might need some payback from the man who almost single-handedly shut down the factory where she worked...



INTERVIEW WITH CEDRIC KLAPISCH

You wrote the screenplay for MY PIECE OF THE PIE on your own...

It's happening more and more often. I wrote WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY, SPANISH APARTMENT, RUSSIAN DOLLS and PARIS alone, too.

There is something joyful and dynamic in writing with other people but I feel that when I write alone, I have more overall control of the project. For example, the dialogues are more intimately linked to a scene, to its lighting, to the actor I've chosen, to the location I've selected; you concentrate on both the aesthetic as well as the words. In this film, although it's a less directly personal and more social subject than SPANISH APARTMENT, I felt it indeed needed a more personal touch.

A STATEMENT AND A COMEDY

What was the starting point for this film?

The starting point is what is going on right now in the world. It scared me a little in the beginning because I always thought making a film about a current topic wasn't a good idea in principle. In general, I know you always have to put more trust in poetry than sociology when it comes to narration. But here, I don't know why but I felt that I had to expose something about our society, that I had to act, fast, about our current social situation.

What exactly were you seeking to expose?

I feel like we are at a major turning point right now and we have to address it. In the same way as the Industrial Revolution swept through rural France at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, the 21st century is now turning the former industrial world on its head with globalization and the digital revolution. In this world that is undergoing violent change, industry no longer has any value. What counts are flows and movements: The virtual is worth more than the real. In writing this film, I understood that it doesn't deal with the opposition between rich and poor, rather that it looks at the relationship between the virtual and the real.

At what point did you decide upon the title?

It came about pretty quickly. MY PIECE OF THE PIE is about how we share the world and its riches. Who earns what? Who pays what? Who profits and who loses? All these questions are asked over and over again and unfortunately are never resolved.

Hence the choice to depict the ruthless world of finance?

Yes. It has changed a lot over the past two decades. There are a few significant dates: Since Nixon abandoned the gold standard in 1976, the dollar no longer has any relation to a physical reality that gives a value to things. Now it's about the value given to a currency being determined by how much we believe in that currency. In 1986, the stock exchange companies linked themselves together to benefit from real time listings and since then, globalization and the digitalization of the market haven't stopped accelerating the relationship between money and fostering a kind of virtualness.

How did you research the film?

I started out from the totally naïve situation of someone who knew nothing about the world of finance. And I tried to see what relationship it had with other areas, with labor in particular. I read books and articles, I met with traders and manual workers and I compared their different viewpoints. As such, the film tells the story of a meeting that is fairly unrealistic – a trader never meets up with laid-off workers – but this film is about what is going on today and is thus every realistic.

Were you ever tempted to make a documentary?

No. I wanted to use this to make a fiction film. And pretty quickly, to make a comedy. That frightened me too: A comedy from something that is fundamentally not funny! But I instinctively felt that was the right path to take. Deep down, when I talk about problems or dramas, it's talking about life. And life is funny. We all know that we're all going to die and not only does that not stop us laughing, it's perhaps that which makes us want to laugh, while we're still here. Often it's the realization of the drama that creates the comic. That's what I like about Molière or Chaplin: They tackle life's problems, and laugh about them. The misery of being an orphan, the horrors of poverty, the atrocities of a dictator, the inhumanity of working in a factory – laughing about it doesn't mask the fact you're exposing it – on the contrary, it accentuates it.



That's also what people like about your films...

I try to not think too much about what people like about me because that's not a good way to work. I am what I am and to be honest, I have often needed to defend that attitude. In France, we tend to laud serious people so much that when you allow yourself to make people laugh or you take serious subjects lightly, it tends to be frowned upon.

INFLUENCES, INSPIRATIONS

Who were your influences?

Firstly, Ken Loach. I know that I cannot have the same kind of radical approach as him with his “Communist” side, in terms of social exposure. I didn't want it to be a militant film. But like him, I did want to tackle a political subject. And I knew that finding the right position wasn't easy. I had in mind Loach's last film with Eric Cantona, LOOKING FOR ERIC, which tends towards true comedy, and which I found was an interesting development for him. But what particularly inspired me was – somewhat bizarrely – NIGHTS OF CABIRIA by Fellini, with the idea that Giulietta Masina is a victim at the start of the film and is even more right at the very end. Deep down, she represents a real loser because she is someone who loses twice and I found that atrocious yet beautiful how we could still laugh about it. That gave me a form and a structure; a real direction.

Then there was also an influence from Frank Capra, with films like LADY FOR A DAY and YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU, and his unique way of taking social subjects and making comedy from them.

What else guided you other than films?

Firstly, a philosophical approach. For example, I reread Hegel's text that inspired Marxism, in The Phenomenology of Spirit, that we call the “Master-Slave Dialectic” on domination and servitude. It explains that even if a master who owns things dominates the slave, the person who works for him still has the mastery of the tool. At any moment, by “delegating” the work, the boss loses some of his power and it's the slave who has an immediate relationship with things that acquires a certain power. A worker who goes on strike today is part of a logical continuation of that power relationship which is inverted. During the strike, the worker has power over his boss. For this film, in the naïve dream of France of taking Steve to Dunkirk, there's a little of that. By taking away his child, she tries to rebel and to clumsily regain a certain power. Those classic questions of “Who works?”, “Who has the power?” are unfortunately eternal – things have scarcely changed since ancient times, from Plato to today, via Marx. It has simply become more complex.

Another approach also guided me: That of classical theater from which I borrowed the character of servant or skivvy. In Molière, the constancy of this theme was a big influence on me.

And all that for the basis for a romantic encounter!

Yes, because among the references, you can also find PRETTY WOMAN, a film that is specifically referenced and is the stuff of all our dreams by taking the mythical figure of Cinderella – she who cleans the floor but ends up a princess. And I wanted to say no, that's not true! The Americans have been very good at making people believe an evil financier can be changed through the love of a girl he picked up from the gutter.

I wanted to say sorry, but it doesn't work like that! So it's an anti-PRETTY WOMAN movie in a way.

With this film, I wanted to avoid the traps of romantic comedy. Instead, I tried to make an advertisement for reality by saying right now, it's much better to stop dreaming.

So this film is an attempt to make entertainment, without however “looking elsewhere” and to say that it isn't only documentaries that can make us look at the world in which we live. We are swamped by the virtual and I didn't want to say, like so many others, “Come and see something that doesn't exist.” You have to make films to make people aware, not just to entertain them.

A NEW FILM WITH KARIN VIARD

Why have you moved away from the “ensemble” nature of most of your other films?

It was a deliberate decision to have fewer people than usual. In PARIS, lots of people liked the fraternal love story of Juliette Binoche and Romain Duris. Someone asked me why I didn't make a film that was just about that, rather than having lots of characters. And I realized – perhaps it's a question of age – that I was ready to tell a story with fewer characters. I've always tended to widen things out, to multiply things, which can sometimes be overwhelming. With this film, I wanted to refocus. I had social conflicts, a powerful character and a victim of the system and I wanted to see what would happen if I put them in the same room. Furthermore, I wanted to work with Karin again. I'd had the idea to make a comedy for children with her. That never happened but the desire remained. Karin and I have this strange thing going on: We started out together, we've seen each other regularly over the past couple of decades and our lives are fairly similar. We live in the same neighborhood, our children are the same ages and we often go on vacation to the same place. There's a strange kind of proximity. I almost feel like we're male and female versions of the same thing. There's an odd kind of mirror thing going on but it makes us pretty close.

Focusing everything on two characters makes the changes in tone in this film even more perceptible and surprising than before. I felt MY PIECE OF THE PIE needed to create a face-to-face conflict and that that would be more interesting than creating multiple shocks. It's a real confrontation between two people. I always thought that paradoxes or contradictions offered the

best narrative drivers. There are certain things that happen in conflicts between two people; duels and dialogues. It's often the foundation of any dramatic tale. In classical theater, mainly in tragedy, there are three fields: Monologue, dialogue and the choir or the crowd. After having made many crowd films, I wanted to explore the simplicity of a dialogue between two characters. They represent opposing forces, and drama or comedy is just that – putting two people opposite one another who are totally involved in their own worlds and then seeing what electricity that produces.

At the same time, you increasingly take sides with one of the two protagonists (in this case, France), with whom the audience most identifies. It's the first time that I've accepted the fact that between two characters, one of them is wrong, and one is right. There was another figure I was particularly interested in when I was writing, which is the figure of Don Juan. The character is wrong, we know that Sganarelle, the Imaginary Cuckold is right, and yet we admire him. The attractive character is Don Juan! I did the same thing – we are fascinated by Steve, we all fall into that trap; let's call it the capitalism trap, that promises an easier life, comfort, wealth and especially glamour. We love that. As spectators, we try to have our piece of the pie. And at the same time, we know the guy is wrong. There are certain ideas I believe in; ideas of sharing, humanity and solidarity, which have become totally ridiculous. Even now in saying that, I feel like it's dumb. One of the things I like in the film is when Steve mocks the character who has a humanist discourse. It's almost my favorite scene. You tell a banker he's a humanist and it's funny! That's what interests me in this film: Why has it become funny that a humanist character is ridiculous? That absurdity is a real thing of our time. Being cynical or inhuman has finally become the norm. MY PIECE OF THE PIE exposes that current cynicism.





GILLES LELLOUCHE AND STEVE

The set-up of the film is the way we see the Steve character.

I met many characters like him while I was writing the script. And I always tend to tone things down to avoid a caricature. The reality is much worse than what I show in the film. I tried to make him appealing, starting from a basically pretty awful reality. I did a lot of research. I met people from the world of finance and there are all kinds of people in that world, like in any world. But some of those clichés about people who work in finance and earn a lot of money are in fact true, and as such, become difficult to convey. The cocaine, the fancy cars, the partying, the call girls, the whole Berlusconi thing. With Steve, I was more seeking to erase those things rather than display all that obvious bling. Fairly quickly, I realized this cleaning woman who becomes a babysitter was going to teach him two things: How to love and how to be a father. She doesn't have much to offer but she gives him those two things with a great deal of generosity. She teaches him to be respectful of a woman and to be a good father, to be more sensitive to others. And in exchange, all he can offer her is money!

How did you cast Steve?

I wrote the part thinking about another actor but he wasn't free at the right time. Then of course, I thought of Romain Duris. I don't know why but I struggled to see him in a relationship with Karin. Plus — and it's a bit dumb — I didn't want him to play all the negative parts of the character of Steve. For me, Romain is too positive, he's too sunny. Perhaps there's also

a bit too much proximity between us, I don't know! The idea of Gilles Lellouche came to me fairly quickly because there's this great thing with him, to do with his sense of humor. He loves drawing on the negative side of his characters. He could bring out that shadowy side that I was looking for. Karin has that same quality. When I spoke to her about the role of the baker in PARIS, I asked her if she felt capable of playing a pretty racist bitch. She replied, "Absolutely!" with a huge smile. She had to be racist; she had to be unbearable but still loveable despite all that. Karin knew how to do it and she had a taste for it. In the same way, Steve needed someone who could go right to the boundaries of being super nasty, a real bastard and an asshole. But that had to remain a pleasure for him as an actor and for me as the director, and, I hope, for the audience, too. Gilles has the capacity to deliver that and I like that.

Tell us about your work with the two actors.

An American actor once said, "I don't act, I react." They both have that same quality, they are both actor-reactors. They draw on a depth of experience whilst putting their trust in a lot of instinct. They can totally go off into improvisation, letting themselves go, whilst performing something very considered with a real mastery of their art. For me, they are the crème de la crème of the acting profession. When you have both those two things — a great deal of technique and a lot of freedom — things happen on the spur of the moment. With them, you have to pay real attention to not being too prepared. We did a lot of work sessions together, making sure not to pursue things to their ends in order to retain a kind of freshness. It was mainly about doing exercises regarding their understanding of the script and the characters. For example, France attempts suicide at the start of the film so she is clearly depressed,

but she's also something of a big mouth and someone extremely active. How does one play those two things at the same time? She had to find something to help her become a beaten victim whilst remaining a fighter. That came little by little. Firstly, she took on the reality of being a manual worker and mother to three children. She went to meet people in Dunkirk and came to the casting sessions for the girls. There is something about the people from the Nord department of France that is both soft and hard at the same time. They are totally sweet but if they need to fight, they are the first to step up. When I told her she had to be more "Dunkirk", I wanted her to be more direct, more raw and less diplomatic. In the same way, Gilles had to do a lot of research and immersion. He came to London with me to meet up with some traders. That volatility of financial markets really feeds your imagination. And it's very difficult to show because at the same time, it's a very virtual business.

DIRECTING TECHNIQUE

How did you construct the visual contrast between the two characters?

I have always put a lot of trust in research. I went to Canary Wharf, really immersed myself in the reality of it all, I met people and took photos. I met traders. Their job is incomprehensible to 95% of people so I tried to translate it. During these scouting trips, I met those brokers who are the last to have jobs where they race about and shout – most are stuck in front of their computer screens – but these brokers aren't satisfied with mouse clicks. They yell and I decided that's how I was going to show the volatility of the world of finance. We shot in a real market where half the people were real brokers and were carrying out real transactions while we

were shooting. Their lives involve so much performance that they really enjoyed being in front of the camera. All the financial people I met were extremely intelligent and Steve is, too. They are brilliant, fascinating, and at the same time, there's a little hint of Iago from Othello.

To return to the visual side of things, I had to find how to oppose these two worlds visually. All the apartments I found in Dunkirk were really brightly colored. There is a fashion for wallpaper with little sparkling floral motifs. Rich people's apartments are always gray. They have a taste for sterilized empty spaces like the virtual apartments I had in PARIS that you see in computer games like Second Life or The Sims.

So it was a little cluttered in poorer homes and minimal in richer ones, which was very interesting. Another opposition is the fact she lives on the ground floor and his place is on the 30th floor. He's always up high, in planes and towers, and she is down-to-earth. The audience isn't necessarily conscious of this but they will perceive it I think. She even says at one point that he lives on Mars. That's the opposition – he's a king of the world and lives in the air.

The cinematography also helps show the contrast between the characters.

For all the night scenes and a few of the daytime ones, we used a Canon camera whilst the rest of the film is in 35mm scope. This combination has never been attempted before.

I wanted to use those mini digital cameras and we realized that they would be incredible in the night scenes, with a fly-on-the-wall feeling without losing any image quality. The carnival and the end sequence were also shot without any additional light and using multiple cameras.

How do you like to use music in your films?

To me, music has an almost metaphysical function. The end of the film without music wouldn't work at all. It's through music that you understand all the thematic and intellectual oppositions in the scene. The heroic notion the music brings tells you to what extent collective strength is more powerful than individual strength. Otherwise they just look like excited people running around in chaos!

The love story between Melody and Steve, the two traders, against Gainsbourg's music could almost have been the subject of a whole other film.

Yes, love between carnivores! This is the first time I've made a film where there isn't an "non-reality" dream scene, like the trip scene in GOOD OLD DAZE or the scene in the perfect street in RUSSIAN DOLLS. Their flashback is a bit of that – a little nostalgic clip, an almost Proustian reminiscence. What they have is beautiful and ideal, even if at the end they are scary. Melody is the "bad" one but she's right. Everything she says is true. According to her own logic, she's right to say France has to "pay" – she abducted a child and in the eyes of the law, she is guilty. I always try to follow the logic of each character, even if I don't share it.

A BALANCE TO FIND

The end of the film must have been tricky to perfect.

When I wrote the first version of the film, it was a real tragic ending and was pretty horrible. She came out of it badly and he came out well. I told

myself that I couldn't just do that. It was too depressing. I'm pretty happy with how the ending finished up because it ends badly but you feel good. He runs away alone in the night, she is arrested by the cops but she's not alone. For me, it describes the state of things today. In fact, it's the opposite to the end of NOT FOR OR AGAINST: Caty gets away with the hold-up and we feel she's not happy. Here, France gets taken away by the cops but she doesn't seem unhappy. The ending is open, just like the world we live in: We don't really know where we are! It's hard to say – yes, everyone seems to agree that we need to bring morals to the world of finance, but nobody really believes it and nobody manages to do it. I believe we should tax financial transactions. Obama and Sarkozy wanted to do it but didn't manage it. It seems like politicians will never be able to control how markets and the world of finance work. But everyone thinks we'll be paying over the years to come. The idea that countries can go bankrupt under the pressure of financial movements is very frightening. There is a huge drama going on, and everyone feels powerlessness against it. Granted, there is no really satisfactory conclusion but we do feel appalled. And for me, that's what counted; not adding depression to that feeling of powerless with which we live.

It seems we're talking a lot right now about the healthy side of indignation because it's "uplifting", as the English-speaking world calls it. It makes you want to get up and to react. In the song written by Loïk Dury, we hear several times him sing, "It's up to you where the world is going to..." and I believe that. Even if the world is in trouble, we don't necessarily have to accept that. I believe in our capacity to rebel, in the idea of resistance. Even if people say it's idealistic or naïve, I want to be on France's side.





INTERVIEW WITH KARIN VIARD

Your first encounter with Cédric Klapisch goes back a long way...

Yes, it was on his first film, RIENS DU TOUT. I did a test and he said to me, "You're no good for this part but I want you to be in the film so I'll write you another." So I played a sales assistant in a department store. It immediately clicked between us. We became friends, whilst each making our own films. He loves actors. But a good actor isn't enough for him. He also needs a good person. By that I mean that to him, a good person is someone who suits him as a human being. In that sense, he is a very moral person. He might have his own neuroses and weaknesses but he is driven by a kind of integrity. He is also extremely kind but he can become very violent when faced with someone whose behavior he disapproves of. He simply can't help it.

Is there a danger of mixing the emotional with the professional?

I avoid feelings like the plague because I very quickly find it stifling. I am immediately overwhelmed by other people's feelings and even as I grow older, it is the same. Some directors are really looking for that but Cédric's not one of them. I've never felt like that with him. He's a free spirit who is very independent. The good thing is that if he's got something to tell me, he just has to look at me. We don't need to speak, we just understand each other. We have a bond and it's not an embarrassing feeling!

How did you end up working together on MY PIECE OF THE PIE?

We worked together again on PARIS, which for me was a small part and we had a great time. So we said that it would be good to do another film together. First, he wrote a project that didn't happen. He worked on it for ages. After that disappointment, he decided to quickly develop a lighter project with people he liked working with. When he offered me the part, there were only a few ideas floating around. It was far from written and I said yes, absolutely, straight away!

What were those initial ideas?

A character, a tone, and a desire to return to his first loves and make a film about social and political issues. After PARIS, which was a very fragmented film with many different characters, I think he also wanted to make something more intimate and less heavy. In the end, with his way of shooting, it wasn't that light. I vaguely followed the writing without interfering. That helped me understand where the director wanted to go. For example, the end took a long time to write, yet he had a gut feeling right from the start. Even when we were shooting it, it was very complicated to develop. And I love that ending. It's strong, moving, and lyrical despite its cruelty.

You went to Dunkirk to meet people close to your character...

Yes. I think Cédric benefited most from that. I knew that world already. I'm from Normandy, which is less north than the Nord department but you still find that same fighting spirit amongst those lower classes that have been sacrificed by our society. There's no question of feeling sorry for oneself, with that fantastic spirit of solidarity of people struck by hard times.

Was the combination of different tones, from comedy to gravity, tricky to play?

What I like about Cédric is that you can always read his films on several different levels, which means several different levels of acting for us. The same scenes can be played with a pretty wide spectrum, from drama to pure comedy. His talent as a director of actors involves combining the two in a single scene. When you perform, it's fun to go further towards one side or the other. And that's what gives the audience that feeling of not knowing where we are going with it and being constantly surprised.

Does he let you make suggestions?

The screenplay was very detailed but we were able to do some improvisation, with the children for example. Always within a very defined framework, I was a bit like the dream master, giving them freedom or a guiding hand. Cédric is the conductor of course, but the film was created together.

France's character is more flexible and more changeable than Steve's...

That's dictated by the story — she's at a crossroads in her life. Everything is closed off to her, she has the right to nothing at all and yet, at the same time, everything is open. At one point, she says she has learned to never make too many plans. She doesn't know where life is going to take her; she just goes with the flow.

Yet your character in the film provokes a great deal of empathy...

And at the same time, there are many moments when you think she's not doing what she should. Or that she's mistaken or she's heading into the wall. She is one of those characters who get themselves into a bad situation because they don't make the right choices. I love that kind of role, that modern-day Robin Hood or Don Quixote who tilts against windmills armed with a skillet and a sieve. I wanted to make a heroine of one of them, a heroine who cleans the bathroom but a heroine all the same.

Watching this film, one also senses your pleasure at once again playing the lead character in a real comedy.

It is very difficult to write a good comedy screenplay with characters that aren't totally see-through. And it's true, when I was offered this role, I snapped it up. I have a lot of energy and often, I'm forced to tone it down. So when I have an opportunity to really get into it, even physically, it's a huge pleasure. But those kinds of roles are very rare.

You say it's difficult to write a good comedy. Is it difficult to act in one?

No. It's difficult to act when it's badly written: When you feel like you're having to catch up with things, that you have to create a life where there isn't one, where you're forced to invent something that doesn't exist in the script. Comedies like THE NEW EVE or MY PIECE OF THE PIE are well written and very successful, but on paper, they are fragile, too. They are poised on subtle little things and require a careful balance. It's very delicate.

How would you define Cédric Klapisch, a director of actors?

He is very attentive, he's nobody's fool and he knows how to talk to actors. For a start, he likes them. He's not suspicious and he's not afraid. He uses them as a starting point; he is curious, interested and extremely demanding. He sets the bar high and his exactingness is equal to his affection. This affection isn't simply handed out, it is earned. To put it simply, he doesn't want to be disappointed.

How was it working with Gilles Lellouche?

Gilles is exceptional because he is so virile but at the same time, his feminine side gives him his humor, his light-heartedness and his liveliness. As partners, we got along very well. And don't even mention his humanity! That said, after the first scene, he confessed that he was petrified at the idea of working with me. I burst out laughing. I asked him why, told him he was crazy. I have just realized: I just did a first film and all the actors who came in for one or two days were terrified at the idea of working with me. Who knows why? They must think I'm some kind of steamroller. But I don't feel like that at all! And it's a feeling I find hard to understand — I'm not afraid of people.

Are you like the character of France?

No, I don't think so. Actually, maybe I am. It's true she's not afraid. Of course there is something of me that appears in each film. It's the sum of all these films that gives the best vision of who I am, with energy as the common denominator. The desire to be cheerful with an underlying anxiety. Yes, that's me.

Do you construct a biography of each character you play?

Not at all and I'm not interested in doing that. I don't like deciding what a character is or is not in advance. It is their scenes that determine who a character is. In this scene, she's this and in that scene she's something else. I don't want to start out with a diktat like telling myself that such-and-such a character is shy therefore I'm going to play her shy from start to finish. We know it's shy people who are capable of the greatest bravery. Of course there are major characteristics that one shouldn't lose sight of, but we work scene by scene. And when you're in those scenes, you have to forget what you decided beforehand. You have to be in the truth of what is being said in the moment. That requires an enormous amount of preparation upstream, on your own, using everything the director has told you. Right at the start, Cédric said to me: "She's a cleaning woman who is obedient. How are you going to stop her being subservient?" I worked on that question for weeks!

Are you aware of being a "popular" actress, one who is close to people?

That's part of my life. I don't like putting on costumes. It doesn't interest me. For the short time we have on this earth, you're better off really being in touch with people. I don't give a damn about masquerades. In one scene, France is at a big dinner, in a wonderful evening gown with lots of people. I knew it had to be believable and not like a sudden shift in the script. This metamorphosis wasn't a disguise – it had to be completely embodied. She had to be able to say, "Me too, I'm allowed to be in this big hotel, I have a place here." You had to be able to feel it, even if you'd seen her doing the cleaning and struggling; when she turns up in an evening gown the next day, she still had to be believable. People watching the film don't realize, but that's an essential part of an actor's job. If there hadn't been that scene in the evening gown in London, I would have constructed my character very differently.

What do you mean?

Even in the most trivial scenes, she needs a kind of panache. She needed to have that potential. Even using a vacuum cleaner, she has to be a heroine. So that Steve can look at her and think she might just pull it off.





And because shooting a film is never in the right order, does that mean that you have to keep the whole character in mind at all times?

It's upstream work that you have to forget on set but which allows you to understand the truth of each scene and how it fits into the puzzle. That's my job and nobody else's. The good thing about Klapisch is that we can take the time beforehand to discuss it together. He can also discuss any weaknesses he perceives or doubts he has and that's wonderful because reacting to a director's doubt allows an actor to answer his or her own questions that might have seemed unsolvable. That's part of a director's job, to tell his or her actors, "I'm a bit worried about that, what do you think?" Directors who are constantly questioning things are constantly creative. Cédric is like that. Christian Vincent is too. They know where they're going but they don't see their script as something immutable and set in stone.

What was your reaction the first time you saw the finished film?

I felt like Cédric had managed to make a film that suited him. That suited him perfectly.



INTERVIEW WITH GILLES LELLOUCHE

Did you already know Cédric Klapisch?

Yes. I had a small role in PARIS. I played the fishmonger who wasn't a particularly nice character. That's what I must represent to Cédric, as it's the common denominator to all the roles he offers me! There is something I really like about him: We are in an age when we are forced to change sides but Cédric doesn't judge. He remains somebody very curious; that's what he is like in life. He's totally genuine. When he meets people for his job, he can spend hours talking to them. And he's not posing, not saying, "look at how nice I am." It's because he's genuinely curious about other people and there's an echo of that in his films. He has this desire to show both what is worst and what is best in people. And that's what I really like – being able to create my character, without feeling any kind of obligation or any temptation to redeem him, because I know that whatever happens, Cédric is fond of him.

I just have to play my character straight, as sharply as possible, because his kindness protects me. He never takes a twisted view. He's generous when it comes to human nature.

At the same time, he knows whose side he is on and is neither lukewarm nor trying to please anyone. The subject forbids him that. But at a given moment, you find yourself a little confused by Steve, who lives in a virtual, dehumanized world that is outside real life. Cédric could have pushed that aspect but he didn't and you end up feeling almost moved by this character because you eventually manage to get inside his head. As such, like any bastard in the world, Steve has his own humanity and charm. I'm not talking about the narration, which chooses sides, but the way in which Cédric portrays people. That's how he manages to avoid easy options and clichés – he toys with them so you can laugh at them.

He flirts with romantic comedy in a way Frank Capra might have done, but we're not in that period when one could still believe in an ideal world. We're in a violently realistic world in which there is scarcely any room for utopia.

Yet the film isn't accepting or cynical...

No, it's a human film and that's what's extraordinary. When you compare yourself to other people, of course there's hope, which comes from Karin's character and those around her. There is a very powerful phrase that her friend, the trade unionist says: "Without the collective, we're nothing." That sums up the film and sums up the era in which we live and I totally subscribe to it. And yet, my character is a solitary figure...

Does France change Steve?

Of course, but in an ephemeral way. She changes the surface but not what's underneath. The cards have been dealt and unfortunately, it's too late. Just temporarily, he regains a little candor and humanity, thanks to her at a certain point, but he'll always be caught up by something. That's what makes this such a contemporary film: It would be difficult to believe in the redemption of a character like that.

What was your initial reaction when you read the screenplay?

The mere fact Cédric asked me to do it was enough to win me over, so keen I was to work with him again. The thing that bothered me most was the end of the film, which isn't the ending that actually made the cut. It was much darker and it shocked me. It was cutting and abrupt. Fortunately, during the shoot, Cédric left a lot of space for impulses and what we felt – he's economic with words and it's up to you to understand what he's getting at. That had already struck me when I read it, that capacity to be on the one hand coldly clinical, and on the other incredibly warm. That's why this film constantly moves between humor and cruelty, love and lovelessness, antipathy and empathy. That was something new for me. Moreover, it's a social comedy and we produce very few of those in France. The British have that tradition, not us. As a result, MY PIECE OF THE PIE is a very politically engaged film without being too hardheaded, and is light without being fluffy.

Did that paradox make it harder to prepare as an actor?

Not particularly, apart from getting into a world that's not my own – that of finance – which, to be honest, I'm not that interested in. To prepare for the movie, I met with some traders to see how they behave. When you talk with them, they're often a little absent. While they are answering you, they're already thinking about deals they can do or those that they are letting slip by. They're not necessarily very intelligent. For me, there is a considered, pragmatic and efficient opportunism there, which isn't synonymous with intelligence. But some of them are brilliant; they are on an almost mystical quest having surpassed the temptation of profit and are living in a virtual world of figures. That doesn't hold any

fascination for me. But the challenge of preparing for this film was accepting to play this character how he is written, without romancing it, without looking down on or up at him, and trying to be as direct as possible. As I knew Cédric was supporting me, I didn't have to search for attenuating circumstances for him – that's what you do when you've decided to sell yourself out and not the character. There aren't so many possibilities either: The psychology of the character is there in the script and it's up to me to adopt it or not. And I wanted to do it because it's great to create a guy who is so diametrically different to me, so cold and so pragmatic. For example, when he takes a girl to Venice, you immediately see that he's not there to look at the Pinault Collection! It's fantastic to play – being free to be what you aren't in real life. But I actually find it takes a superhuman effort to be a bastard. Honestly. In the end, I found I had a certain respect for him because you need to be really brave to be unpleasant. It's much easier to be nice. When you talk about actors who have a reputation for behaving badly on set, I wonder how they manage to be such assholes in front of 100 people who are watching them and criticizing them every day. It's so much easier to work with people who smile at you. Being a bastard, devoid of any generosity and humanity, takes a real effort. So I took immense pleasure in turning Steve into that totally egocentric creature who takes no prisoners. It's always good for an actor to play baddies!

How would you describe Cédric Klapisch as a director of actors?

He's kindly. And that allows you to do anything. As soon as the shot is in the can, I immediately look at his face. He's really gentle and that's great. You never hear him shouting and there's this incredible atmosphere on his sets. It feels very nice. In addition to that, he knows exactly where he wants to take you, with surgical precision. But he does it with such delicacy that his

direction is no longer direction; it becomes a game. It's a lot of fun being directed by Cédric. He says, "Keep that, it's perfect; lose that; give me a little of that; that idea, the same, but a bit less; a bit more of that." So there is a kind natural path that becomes sketched out between you and him, which is pure acting. You might do 67 takes but you do them without balking – he's not a dictator insisting you play his tune. He's open to every melody but knows which one sounds best. So together, you find the right tone, and its light and fun. He is a great director of actors.

Is that combination of tones, comedy and drama constructed on set?

It was pretty well defined on paper. After that, I think the strong relationship Karin, Cédric and I managed to construct sometimes brought out humor where we weren't expecting it and that is fabulous. Lots of unexpected things can happen when you just let yourself go with the flow. Often, all it takes is a glance. We were very keen on the idea that the film could drift between comedy and drama and lead us into the unexpected.

What was your favorite moment on the shoot?

To be honest, I'm a huge fan of Karin Viard's work. In two scenes in particular: When she sings and I come and switch off the radio, I really struggled not to laugh. And the scene with the dinner in London that I take her to with all those big shots from the financial world and she pretends to be Russian. Fortunately, I was supposed to find it funny – that didn't take much effort.

Do you need to see a director's reaction or do you feel it yourself when the rhythm is right in a comic scene?

It's a careful balance. Karin Viard has perfect control over those tempos. It's very impressive because at the same time, you have to let go because to be funny, you have to be generous. But you also have to be very controlled, because within that generosity, you have to stop it overflowing and maintain the perfect rhythm. For actors, comedy is a great art that is similar to that of a musician. And it's underestimated, perhaps because we often do too many bad ones.

You often work on different projects with the same directors. What are the advantages and disadvantages of that?

To be honest, I can only see advantages. The only risk of working too often with someone is that they can lack imagination about you and can confine you to a register you've already explored. For me, I've always fought to not do the same thing twice. With Cédric, my two characters have been diametric opposites with one thing in common. In PARIS, I played an asshole but who nonetheless managed to be very moving in one scene. So I now know that Cédric loves his characters and his actors and he's not a manipulator. For Steve's character, I went into it with blind confidence. And because I have also discovered the man Cédric is in real life, I am all the more confident. That's the big advantage of working on a second project together. Another danger, if you already know each other, is a certain laziness, but with Cédric, there's no risk of that. He involves you and asks for a crazy amount of effort. When you haven't done that, you're floundering and he sees it immediately. Then he's not very nice about it and he's right to be that way.

Do you write a biography for your character?

Yes, always. I don't write a 400-page epic but I need to research it, to give him a past and to know where he's coming from. Here, there are certain givens like in the flashback to his break-up with Melody. I got into that idea, thinking there was certainly an emotional betrayal. The interesting thing about a character like this is that you ask yourself where was the tipping point? When did he give up on real life? It's almost certainly linked to a failed love affair combined with a job that has become omnipresent, increased responsibility and having loads of cash... Gradually, just as it can happen to anyone, you break away from reality and from what is essential. With all the characters I've played, I've needed to establish in my mind what they were like as teenagers. There was already something there – skills or failings – and the question is, what did life do to them? Did it bring them out or stifle them? I don't necessarily, consciously use that during shooting but it helps me feel prepared. And this work doesn't always have to have a direct relationship with the character. For example, I create playlists with tracks that each character would like to listen to and which characterize them. Our job is relatively futile and leaves us with a lot of free time, so once I've learned my lines, which are just the basics, I like constructing these little stories. For me alone. And I never talk to other people about them. It's a personal thing, and I don't like people who talk about their efforts to prove they've done their homework. I do it principally to calm my anxieties, before starting a film.





SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY GEDRIC KLAPISCH

- 2008** **PARIS**
César Award nomination for Best Film
- 2005** **RUSSIAN DOLLS**
- 2002** **SPANISH APARTMENT**
César Award nomination for Best Film & Best Director
- 1999** **PEUT-ÊTRE**
- 1996** **FAMILY RESEMBLANCES**
César Award for Best Screenplay
- 1995** **WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY**
FIPRESCI Prize, Berlin Festival



SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY KARIN VIARD

- 2010 **POTICHE** by François Ozon
- 2009 **CHANGE OF PLANS** by Danièle Thompson
- 2008 **PARIS** by Cédric Klapisch
César Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress
- 2005 **HELL** by Denis Tanovic
- THE AX** by Costa Gavras
- 2003 **SUMMER THINGS** by Michel Blanc
César Award for Best Supporting Actress
- 2000 **HAUT LES COEURS** by Solveig Anspach
César Award for Best Actress



SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY GILLES LELLOUCHE

- 2010 **LITTLE WHITE LIES** by Guillaume Canet
- 2010 **THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ADÈLE BLANC-SEC** by Luc Besson
- 2008 **MESRINE: KILLER INSTINCT** by Jean-François Richet
- 2008 **PARIS** by Cédric Klapisch
- 2006 **TELL NO ONE** by Guillaume Canet
- 2003 **LOVE ME IF YOU DARE** by Yann Samuell



CAST

France
Steve
Josy
JP

Ahmed
Mélody

France's Father
Nick, the broker

Tessa
Lucie

Mr Brown

The CEO at the party

Alban

Julie, the financial analyst

Jessica

Mallaury

Jérémie

The humanist financier

André, the trade unionist

Karin VIARD

Gilles LELLOUCHE

Audrey LAMY

Jean-Pierre MARTINS

Zinedine SOUALEM

Raphaële GODIN

Fred ULYSSE

Kevin BISHOP

Marine VACTH

Flavie BATAILLIE

Tim PIGGOTT-SMITH

Philippe LEFEBVRE

Lunis SAKJI

Juliette NAVIS BARDIN

Camille ZOUAOUI

Adrienne VEREECKE

Guillaume RANSON

Xavier ALCAN

Xavier MATHIEU

CREW

Director
Screenplay

Cédric KLAPISCH
Cédric KLAPISCH

Producer

Bruno LEVY - CE QUI ME MEUT

Original music

Loïk DURY
Christophe "Disco" Minck

Cinematographer
Costume design
First assistant director
Casting

Christophe BEAUCARNE AFC -SBC
Anne SCHOTTE
Antoine GARCEAU
Jeanne MILLET
Sylvie PEYRE
Isabel RIBIS LSA
Francine SANDBERG
Cyril MOISSON
Philippe HEISSLER
Cyril HOLTZ

Script supervisor
Editing
Sound

Production manager

Nicolas ROYER

