



# PLACE PUBLIQUE

A FILM BY  
AGNÈS JAOUÏ

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LÉA DRUCKER KEVIN AZAÏS NINA MEURISSE SARAH SUÇO  
HELENA NOGUERRA MIGLEN MIRTCEV OLIVIER BROCHE  
YVICK LETEXIER FRÉDÉRIC PIERROT ÉRIC VIELLARD

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SCEEPPLAY, ADAPTATION, DIALOGUES  
BY **AGNÈS JAOUÏ AND JEAN-PIERRE BACRI**

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*Le Pacte*

5, rue Darcet - 75017 Paris  
tél : 01 44 69 59 59  
[www.le-pacte.com](http://www.le-pacte.com)

## SYNOPSIS

Castro was once a very famous TV host. As he grows old, his popularity is declining, but his cynicism remains intact. Today his driver Manu takes him to the house warming party of his longtime friend and producer Nathalie. Everyone is invited: from reality stars and actors to the eccentric farmer living next door. H el ene, Nathalie's sister and Castro's ex-wife, is running around as usual, trying to convince guests to sign a petition in support of an Afghan refugee. She barely notices the arrival of their daughter Nina, who just published a book in which the main characters borrow heavily from her parents flaws...

It's a lovely afternoon in the countryside near Paris. The champagne bottles pop and party is in full swing. But everyone is dancing on a volcano.



## INTERVIEW WITH AGNÈS JAOUÏ & JEAN-PIERRE BACRI

**Your film is called *Place Publique (Town Square)* but takes place in a private garden...**

Jean-Pierre Bacri: ...which, thanks to the miracle of social media, manages to become a *place publique*! We wanted to address this recent clamour to be recognized, even in a group of friends, by a 'like' on Facebook that validates the breakfast we just recorded and posted... Andy Warhol was both right and wrong: today everybody is seeking one minute of fame rather than fifteen, but otherwise he hit the nail on the head.

Agnès Jaoui: It's fascinating, this feeling that if something wasn't recorded, then it never happened.

I actually started keeping a journal when I was 11, for exactly that reason: if something that happened to me wasn't recorded somewhere, I felt as though the fact of having lived it was worthless. Going back to Andy Warhol, it's admittedly fifteen minutes, but those fifteen minutes can occur repeatedly. Everyone wants to be a celebrity, to be recognized all the time - obviously teenagers, but the same applies to adults, too.

**Indeed, what you mock is the celebrity born of social media...**

A.J.: Fame - and the power it brings - is a theme that has always interested us, and now there is a new order around it.

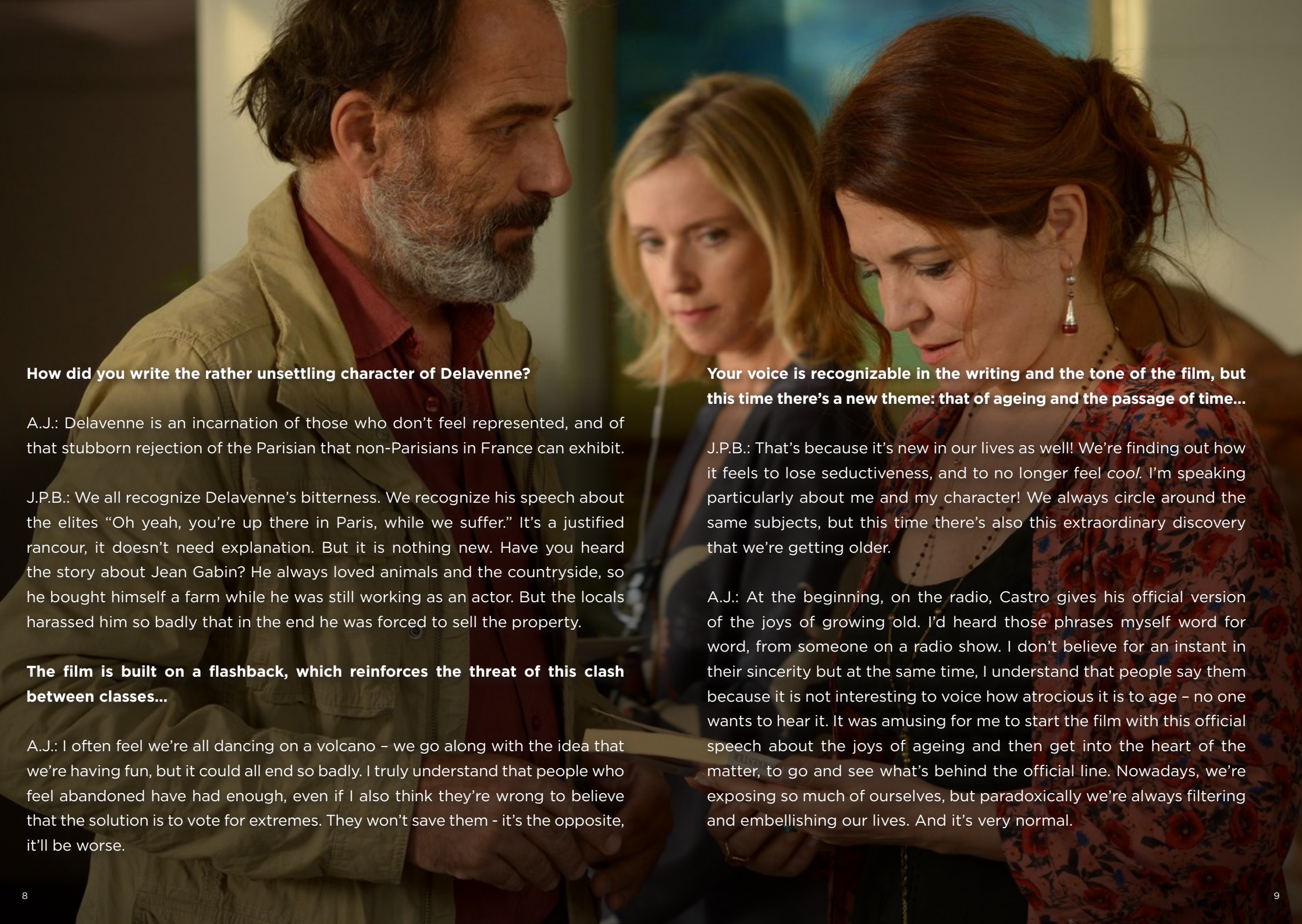
J.P.B.: We're not trying to tear down social media, everyone takes from it what works for them. It's not like there is only good on one side and only bad on the other.

A.J.: Especially since there are some YouTubers who are very ambitious and who do things really well. There are even some who truly commit to a cause. Social media democratizes celebrity, it facilitates access to it. Those who continue with traditional TV activities, like Castro, are losing their power quickly and are becoming 'has-beens'. Younger generations don't watch TV anymore, things are totally different.

**In *Place Publique*, you seem to be having fun confronting the different social classes.**

A.J. We continue to want to talk about the differences between classes because they still exist. It's a theme which seems inexhaustible, even if those differences are less marked than before. Manu thinks he's friends with Castro, but the moment Castro feels like it, he shows he has the power to put Manu back in his place. We also wanted to talk about the elite, dancing and singing without realizing that the lower classes around them don't share their enthusiasm and are feeling unrepresented and ignored...

J.P.B.: ...and they can see the complicity that exists between the elite. When the mayor shows up to Nathalie's party, we understand perfectly well that she prefers to satisfy the desires of this rich Parisian who rubs shoulders with famous people, than those of Delavenne, the local guy working in the fields.



**How did you write the rather unsettling character of Delavenne?**

A.J.: Delavenne is an incarnation of those who don't feel represented, and of that stubborn rejection of the Parisian that non-Parisians in France can exhibit.

J.P.B.: We all recognize Delavenne's bitterness. We recognize his speech about the elites "Oh yeah, you're up there in Paris, while we suffer." It's a justified rancour, it doesn't need explanation. But it is nothing new. Have you heard the story about Jean Gabin? He always loved animals and the countryside, so he bought himself a farm while he was still working as an actor. But the locals harassed him so badly that in the end he was forced to sell the property.

**The film is built on a flashback, which reinforces the threat of this clash between classes...**

A.J.: I often feel we're all dancing on a volcano – we go along with the idea that we're having fun, but it could all end so badly. I truly understand that people who feel abandoned have had enough, even if I also think they're wrong to believe that the solution is to vote for extremes. They won't save them - it's the opposite, it'll be worse.

**Your voice is recognizable in the writing and the tone of the film, but this time there's a new theme: that of ageing and the passage of time...**

J.P.B.: That's because it's new in our lives as well! We're finding out how it feels to lose seductiveness, and to no longer feel cool. I'm speaking particularly about me and my character! We always circle around the same subjects, but this time there's also this extraordinary discovery that we're getting older.

A.J.: At the beginning, on the radio, Castro gives his official version of the joys of growing old. I'd heard those phrases myself word for word, from someone on a radio show. I don't believe for an instant in their sincerity but at the same time, I understand that people say them because it is not interesting to voice how atrocious it is to age – no one wants to hear it. It was amusing for me to start the film with this official speech about the joys of ageing and then get into the heart of the matter, to go and see what's behind the official line. Nowadays, we're exposing so much of ourselves, but paradoxically we're always filtering and embellishing our lives. And it's very normal.

**Without denying that obvious, the film's take on ageing is not so dramatic...**

A.J.: Of course! At least we still have that: the power to dedramatize!

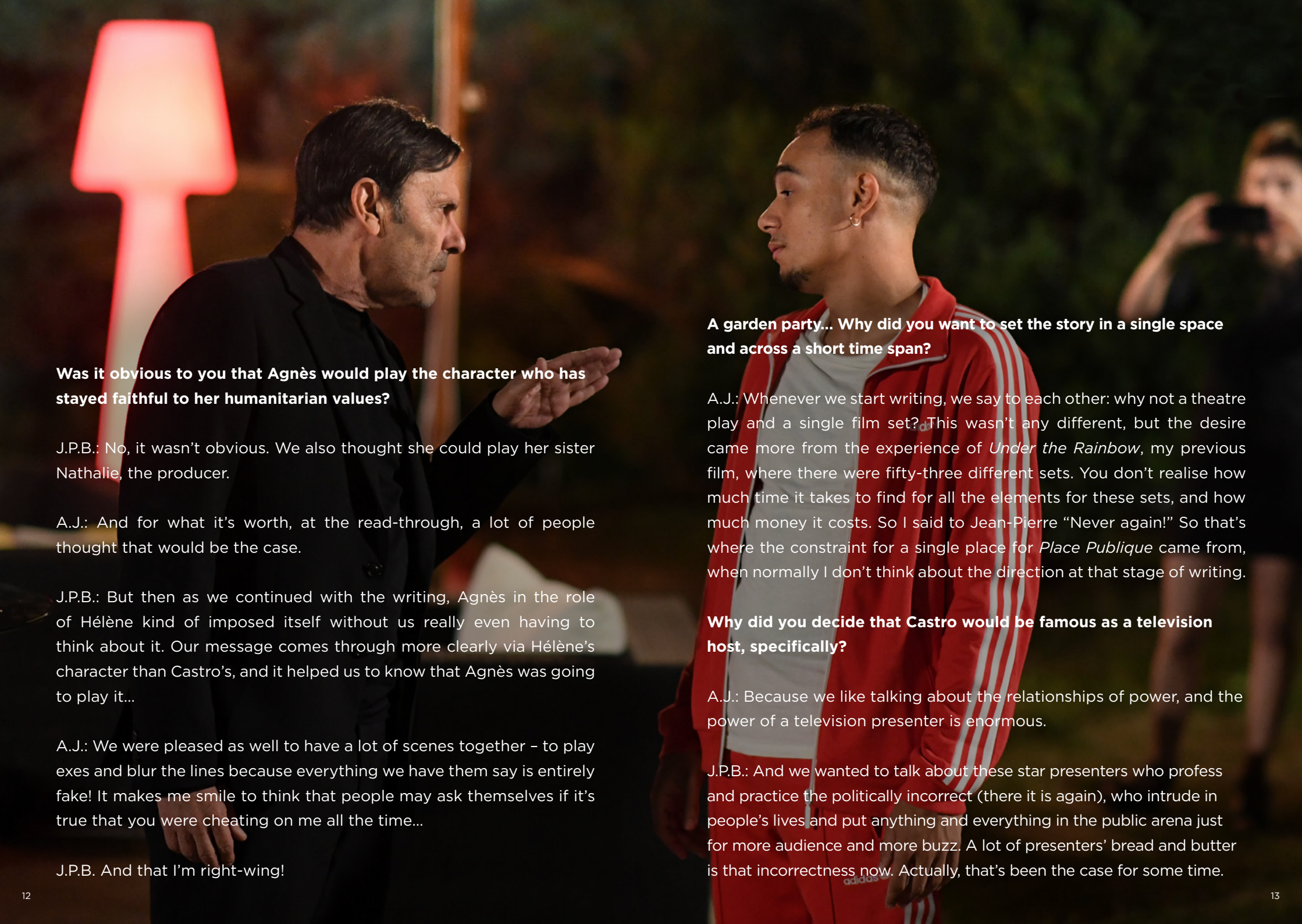
***Place Publique* also addresses our faithfulness - or the lack of it - towards the commitments and ideals of our youth...**

J.P.B.: We don't only age physically. Our values and our convictions age too, they change, they get lost... There are rebels who end up as reactionaries. When H el ene asks Castro what happened with his convictions, he responds, cynically: "We evolve..."

A.J.: It's important to clarify that we started writing before the 2017 French elections. Marine Le Pen was very powerful, the left was beginning its descent into hell and Macron wasn't even in the picture yet. Honestly, I was afraid, I felt terribly stressed. I was born in 1964 and grew up with this assumption that there won't be another war, and much less new concentration camps. And then, we were seeing this resurgence of certain demons. We seemed to be settling into this depoliticization of the young generation, who view the left and the right as six of one and half a dozen of the other. That's what Nina, our daughter in the film, does. I felt it was urgent to talk about that disappointment and that disengagement at a moment when we'd been living through the terrorist attacks... With this propensity to oppose the cynicism of the far right and the simplistic idealism of the far left.

J.P.B.: And we can clearly see that today cynicism, which we can also call the politically incorrect, is riding on a wave and enjoys some surface appeal. Everyone allows themselves to be influenced by this kind of thoughts.

A.J.: We've wanted to talk about the politically incorrect for some time, in the way that anyone attempting ethical thought is seen as a relic, and thus exposes himself to the modern jeer: "politically correct".



**Was it obvious to you that Agnès would play the character who has stayed faithful to her humanitarian values?**

J.P.B.: No, it wasn't obvious. We also thought she could play her sister Nathalie, the producer.

A.J.: And for what it's worth, at the read-through, a lot of people thought that would be the case.

J.P.B.: But then as we continued with the writing, Agnès in the role of Hélène kind of imposed itself without us really even having to think about it. Our message comes through more clearly via Hélène's character than Castro's, and it helped us to know that Agnès was going to play it...

A.J.: We were pleased as well to have a lot of scenes together – to play exes and blur the lines because everything we have them say is entirely fake! It makes me smile to think that people may ask themselves if it's true that you were cheating on me all the time...

J.P.B. And that I'm right-wing!

**A garden party... Why did you want to set the story in a single space and across a short time span?**

A.J.: Whenever we start writing, we say to each other: why not a theatre play and a single film set? This wasn't any different, but the desire came more from the experience of *Under the Rainbow*, my previous film, where there were fifty-three different sets. You don't realise how much time it takes to find for all the elements for these sets, and how much money it costs. So I said to Jean-Pierre "Never again!" So that's where the constraint for a single place for *Place Publique* came from, when normally I don't think about the direction at that stage of writing.

**Why did you decide that Castro would be famous as a television host, specifically?**

A.J.: Because we like talking about the relationships of power, and the power of a television presenter is enormous.

J.P.B.: And we wanted to talk about these star presenters who profess and practice the politically incorrect (there it is again), who intrude in people's lives and put anything and everything in the public arena just for more audience and more buzz. A lot of presenters' bread and butter is that incorrectness now. Actually, that's been the case for some time.

### **And Pavel's character, whom H  l  ne has trouble convincing to sign her petition to help the immigrants?**

J.P.B. That scene was important to us, where he says, "There are too many immigrants!" We've heard it so many times from immigrants, or French with foreign origins...

A.J.: And at the same time, it's perfectly logical. Just because you are a victim, it doesn't mean you are in solidarity with other victims. When you get on a bus that's already packed, you don't want more people to get on at all. It's human nature!

J.P.B.: And then it's a reflex. Pavel has made an effort to integrate and claims to behave well - which is also implying that it's not the case for all immigrants... He feels the hate around him, he's a victim of the rise of the Front National and so he turns against the immigrants who could hurt his cause.

### **The film never stops moving, keeping in step with its characters...**

A.J.: That's how I imagined the direction: passing from one space to the next, from one character to the next, in a fairly choreographed dance. In my previous films, there were sometimes calmer moments, but this time I knew that we would always be in movement, and that the guests needed to form a lively crowd, a group of individuals with a life of its own. The extras, some of who were seasoned actors, were extremely well-chosen by Marie-France Michel, with whom I've always worked and who is now a casting director. I'd shown three films to my team: Robert Altman's *A Wedding*, Nikita Mikhalkov's *An Unfinished Piece for Mechanical Piano* and Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*. Obviously, we also watched other films that take place in one evening, like Blake Edwards' *The Party*, but those were my three references.

### **How was it collaborating with the DOP Yves Angelo?**

A.J. We understood each other very quickly, and I loved his images, his eye, working with him... We talked a lot about the right distance for the shots, and he suggested pretty quickly that we use long lenses to give a deep depth to the field, which is actually what Renoir did, and what creates for me this sensation which is typical for cinema.

### **This depth allows you to play with the background action and to direct the party from the point of view of the characters who observe, discuss, plot...**

A.J.: The screenplay was already written to include not only the party but also the private moments of each person, their own issues and this game of social masks. Everybody is supposed to have a good time at a party, but we all know perfectly well that behind these facades there are personal dramas, big or small, serious or not. The life of these scenes also involved a lot of work on the sound, which, with only four people in the shot, still leads the audience to believe that the party is going at full swing around them! We mixed it with Cyril Holtz, who has an impressive sensitivity and ability to fine tune.

### **Was it difficult to direct the sensation of continuity of the day?**

A.J. The weather was brutal, it rained a lot, it was the worst summer in thirty years! So we had to rely on the imagination to make believe that this was a summer's day. Fortunately, we'd written in that it would rain in the middle of the day, so that at least helped to justify the changes in the light. Besides, Yves is a magician, he somehow managed to re-create the sun even when it was pouring with rain! So, we played with the clouds, Yves' talent and the cinema's ultimate ability to suspend disbelief. When you re-watch Altman's *A Wedding*, it's so interesting to see that suddenly there is more daylight, more shadows of the night, or more grey hues, without any real coherence, and that it doesn't really matter!





## **In your casting, we find some of your regular actors but also some new faces...**

A.J.: Like many others, we found Kevin Azaïs' performance in *Love at first fight* breathtaking. And in fact Jean-Pierre had just shot with him in *C'est La Vie!* Eric Veillard has been a friend for thirty years, I met him in theatre school. We almost worked together a number of times, and this time we made it happen! I met Helen Noguerra on *Rio-Paris*, a show of Brazilian songs with Nathalie Dessay. I like her a lot. And Sarah Suco played my daughter in *Aurore*, she's funny and unique. Olivier Broche has this immense power both in the comic and in the emotional register. And as for Nina Meurisse, she's been our 'cinema daughter' since *Under the Rainbow* - I find that her kindness and her simplicity come across on screen. We'd already worked with her more recently on a theatre production, a reprise of our plays, where Léa Drucker, too, showed what an incredible acting talent she is. To tell this story of a party, we knew that we could mix up a lot of friends with whom we'd already worked: Frédéric Pierrot, Olivier Doran, Grégoire Æstermann, Sam Karman, Evelyne Buyle...

## **How did you choose the YouTuber Mister V?**

A.J.: We watched loads of YouTube videos and came across Mister V. The public over twenty-five does not know who he is, but for the young generation he's one of the most famous. My kids couldn't believe he'd do my old fogey film!

J.P.B.: Yes, he's one of the two or three most successful YouTubers of the moment.

**What about the decision to film *Le Quintet Oficial*, the group you formed with Fernando Fiszbein, who also created the film's score?**

A.J.: Initially I didn't think of them, particularly because I wanted to have French songs rather than Latin music. But then, as time went by, I said to myself "Stop lying to yourself, there's only one thing you want: to film *Le Quintet Oficial*!" Why would I go looking for a group I didn't even know when I already knew and liked them, and they can sing in French, with this accent that I love! We had a lot of fun choosing the songs, which I wanted them to reinterpret in their style and bring back memories for listeners everywhere. I love the cover version they did of Claude François.

**You composed the film's musical theme yourself...**

A.J.: Well, that's quite a funny story. Every day when I'd arrive on set, walking through the alley leading up to the garden with my bag on my back, I had this tune in my head. I was asking myself where it came from. We were working with Fernando Fiszbein on the film's soundtrack, going through old tracks and then, since we still needed one more, he said, "why don't we put in the one you've had in your head during the shoot?". Elise Luguern, the music supervisor, went to the SACEM (the composers' association) to find out who the composer was, because I thought it must be some well-known Cuban music. But no, it didn't exist, it was mine.

**And you made Castro/Jean-Pierre Bacri sing *Les Feuilles Mortes* (*Autumn Leaves*, famous song interpreted by Yves Montand)?**

A.J.: I already knew Jean-Pierre could sing very well, I'd been wanting to make him sing for a while. And then I heard *Les Feuilles mortes* and I said to myself "What an incredible song, I would love to put this in a film..."

J.P.B.: This song reflects the subject of the film, of time passing by. And then we finish on *Osez Josephine*, which preaches this idea of pleasure – particularly sensual pleasure – without restraint. The lyrics are beautiful: "*avoid the toll booths / never suffer / just make the horses neigh with pleasure...*" Each time we start writing a project, Agnès says to me, "We need to have lots of songs."

A.J.: It's my dream to make a musical...

**And you Agnès, why didn't you sing?**

J.P.B.: I didn't want her to!

A.J.: He lets me do the directing but singing? It's a step too far. Seriously, though, it's just that my character didn't have any reason to sing.

**The dancing scene, to *Motivés* by Zebda, allows for the expression of the cultural differences between characters, as well as the more intimate issues...**

A.J.: Yes, there is a lot at stake in that scene, starting with Hélène and Jean-Paul, who is still faithful to their militant past, and so is kind of her hero! When the Zebda song starts, everyone joins the dance, thanks to the evocative power of music in general, and especially of this tune for their generation. I have a lot of admiration for this group, especially when it comes to their commitment, which I find joyful, positive and combative.

**Agnès, what was your experience with this particular shoot and its specific challenges?**

A.J.: Each shoot is different and I am still learning. For *Place Publique*, I enjoyed the troupe-like nature of it – every day I was coming back to the same place, with the same actors. It made it much less lonely than my previous films.

**And you, Jean-Pierre, don't you want to try your hand at directing?**

J.P.B. Still no! I just give my two cents when Agnès needs them. I have pretty much tacit permission – well, as long as I submit a request for permission – to be able to say things to actors, or tell Agnès to tell them.

A.J.: And he's there every step of the way.

J.P.B.: Well yeah, otherwise she'd be all alone, including when she's directing herself. I'm there for her...

**The film's ending is romantic, and reunites two people from very different social classes: Manu, the driver and Nina, Castro's daughter...**

A.J.: That was really important for us. Probably because we are a bit daft – not only politically correct but also romantic! We believe in love, in youth and in the possibility of happy endings. We have, in spite of it all, hope for humanity. We can't stop ourselves from hoping.



# SCREENPLAY AND DIRECTION

## AGNÈS JAOUÏ

(Director, screenwriter, actress)

### SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

#### **As Director and Screenwriter**

- 2018 - PLACE PUBLIQUE co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri
- 2013 - UNDER THE RAINBOW, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri
- 2008 - LET IT RAIN, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri
- 2004 - LOOK AT ME, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri  
*Cannes Film Festival 2004 - Best screenplay award*
- 2000 - THE TASTE OF OTHERS, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri  
*César 2001 - Best film, Best screenplay, Best supporting actor, Best supporting actress, and 5 nominations including Best director, Best editing and Best actor*

#### **As Screewriter**

- 2018 - PLACE PUBLIQUE co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri
- 2015 - THE EASY WAY OUT by Brice Cauvin, co-written with Brice Cauvin and Raphaëlle Valbrune
- 1997 - SAME OLD SONG by Alain Resnais, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri
- 1996 - FAMILY RESEMBLANCES by Cédric Klapisch, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri and Cédric Klapisch  
*César 1997 - 3 awards including: Best screenplay*
- 1993 - KITCHEN WITH APARTMENT by Philippe Muyl, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri and Philippe Muyl
- 1993 - SMOKING/NO SMOKING by Alain Resnais, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri  
*César 1994 - 5 awards including: Best film and Best screenplay*

#### **As Actress**

- 2018 - PLACE PUBLIQUE by Agnès Jaoui
- 2017 - AURORE by Blandine Lenoir
- 2015 - I'M ALL YOURS by Baya Kasmi
- 2015 - THE SWEET ESCAPE by Bruno Podalydès  
*César 2016 - Nomination for Best supporting actress*
- 2013 - UNDER THE RAINBOW by Agnès Jaoui
- 2011 - THE DANDELIONS by Carine Tardieu
- 2008 - LET IT RAIN by Agnès Jaoui
- 2005 - NINA'S HOUSE by Richard Dembo
- 2003 - LOOK AT ME by Agnès Jaoui
- 2000 - THE TASTE OF OTHERS by Agnès Jaoui  
*César 2001 - Nomination for Best supporting actress*
- 1997 - SAME OLD SONG by Alain Resnais  
*César 1998 - Best supporting actress*

# SCEENPLAY

## JEAN-PIERRE BACRI

(Screenwriter, actor)

### SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

#### As Screewriter

- 2018 – PLACE PUBLIQUE co-written with Agnès Jaoui
- 2013 – UNDER THE RAINBOW co-written with Agnès Jaoui
- 2008 – LET IT RAIN co-written with Agnès Jaoui
- 2004 – LOOK AT ME co-written with Agnès Jaoui  
*Cannes Film Festival 2004 – Best screenplay and 5 nominations*
- 2000 – THE TASTE OF OTHERS co-written with Agnès Jaoui  
*César 2001 – Best film, Best screenplay, Best supporting actor, Best supporting actress and 5 Nominations including Best director, Best editing and Best actor*
- 1997 – SAME OLD SONG by Alain Resnais, co-written with Agnès Jaoui  
*César 1998 – 7 awards including: Best original screenplay*
- 1996 – FAMILY RESEMBLANCES by Cédric Klapisch, co-written with Agnès Jaoui and Cédric Klapisch  
*César 1997 – 3 awards including: best original screenplay*
- 1993 – KITCHEN WITH APARTMENT de Philippe Muyl, co-written with Jean-Pierre Bacri and Philippe Muyl
- 1993 – SMOKING/NO SMOKING by Alain Resnais, co-written with Agnès Jaoui  
*César 1994 – 5 awards including: Best film, Best director and Best original screenplay*

#### As Actor

- 2017 – C'EST LA VIE by Éric Toledano & Olivier Nakache  
*César 2018 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 2015 – THE VERY PRIVATE LIFE OF MISTER SIM by Michel Leclerc  
*César 2016 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 2015 – TOUT DE SUITE MAINTENANT by Pascal Bonitzer
- 2013 – UNDER THE RAINBOW by Agnès Jaoui
- 2012 – LOOKING FOR HORTENSE by Pascal Bonitzer  
*César 2013 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 2008 – LET IT RAIN by Agnès Jaoui
- 2003 – LOOK AT ME by Agnès Jaoui
- 2002 – FEELINGS by Noémie Lvovsky  
*César 2004 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 2000 – THE TASTE OF OTHERS by Agnès Jaoui  
*César 2001 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 1999 – KENNEDY ET MOI by Sam Karmann  
*César 2000 – Nomination for Best actor*
- 1997 – SAME OLD SONG by Alain Resnais  
*César 1998 – Best supporting actor*
- 1997 – DIDIER by Alain Chabat
- 1992 – KITCHEN WITH APARTMENT by Phillipe Muyl
- 1985 – SUBWAY by Luc Besson  
*César 1986 – Nomination for Best supporting actor*

## CAST

HÉLÈNE	<b>Agnès Jaoui</b>
CASTRO	<b>Jean-Pierre Bacri</b>
NATHALIE	<b>Léa Drucker</b>
MANU	<b>Kevin Azaïs</b>
NINA	<b>Nina Meurisse</b>
SAMANTHA	<b>Sarah Suco</b>
VANESSA	<b>Helena Noguerra</b>
PAVEL	<b>Miglen Mirtchev</b>
TITI	<b>Olivier Broche</b>
BIGGISTAR	<b>Yvick Letexier</b>
JEAN-PAUL	<b>Frédéric Pierrot</b>
VINCENT	<b>Éric Viellard</b>
GUY	<b>Grégoire Āestermann</b>
MICKEY	<b>Sam Karmann</b>

## CREW

DIRECTOR	<b>Agnès Jaoui</b>
SCREEPLAY, ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUES	<b>Agnès Jaoui</b> <b>Jean-Pierre Bacri</b>
ORIGINAL SCORE	<b>Fernando Fiszbein</b>
CINEMATOGRAPHY	<b>Yves Angelo</b>
EDITING	<b>Annette Dutertre</b>
SOUND	<b>Ivan Dumas</b> <b>Raphaël Sohier</b> <b>Cyril Holtz</b>
PRODUCTION DESIGN	<b>Denis Hager</b>
COSTUMES	<b>Charlotte David</b>
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	<b>Mathieu Vaillant</b>
PRODUCTION MANAGER	<b>Cyrille Bragnier</b>
PRODUCERS	<b>Saïd Ben Saïd</b> <b>Michel Merkt</b>
COPRODUCTION	<b>SBS Films</b> <b>France 2 Cinéma</b>
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF	<b>Altice</b> <b>France Télévisions</b> <b>Le Pacte</b>
IN ASSOCIATION WITH	<b>Cinecap</b> <b>Cineventure 3</b>
FRENCH DISTRIBUTION AND INTERNATIONAL SALES	<b>Le Pacte</b>

