



Festival del film Locarno  
Official selection

LES FILMS PELLÉAS  
PRESENTS

Mélanie Bernier Bastien Bouillon Antonin Fresson Chloé Astor

# The Apple of my Eye

a film by  
**AXELLE ROPERT**



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## Axelle Ropert

Born in 1972, Axelle Ropert started out as a film critic (*La lettre du cinéma*, *Les Inrockuptibles*) before co-writing the scripts of director Serge Bozon's movies, *Mods*, *La France*, *Tip Top*, and *Mrs Hyde*. In 2004, she wrote and directed *Etoile Violette*, a short feature starring Lou Castel, and made her full-length feature début, *The Wolberg Family*, starring François Damiens and Valerie Benguigui, in 2008. In 2012, Axelle made her second feature, *Miss and the Doctors*, starring Cédric Kahn and Louise Bourgoin, which she followed up with a portrait of young French film actors, *Truffaut au présent*. *The Apple of My Eye* is her third feature.

## Synopsis

A boy, a girl. They live in the same building. They share a passion for music. But when they meet in the elevator, Théo doesn't see that Élise is blind. It's hate at first sight. Love takes its time. Will that early misunderstanding bring them together or drive them apart?

A FILM BY AXELLE ROPERT

STARRING SWANN ARLAUD, LAURENT MOTHE, THIERRY GIBAUT, CAMILLE CAYOL, SERGE BOZON, JEAN-CHARLES CLICHET, GRÉGOIRE MONTANA  
SCREENPLAY AXELLE ROPERT PRODUCERS DAVID THION AND PHILIPPE MARTIN COP SÉBASTIEN BUCHMANN SOUND LAURENT GABIOT FRANÇOIS MÈREU SET DESIGN SOPHIE REYNAUD-MALOUF  
COSTUMES DELPHINE CAROSELLE EDITING FRANÇOIS QUIQUERÉ 1ST DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT DELPHINE HEUDE CASTING DIRECTOR TATIANA VIALLE (ARDA) SCRIPT SUPERVISOR LÉILA GEISSLER PRODUCTION MANAGER HÉLÈNE BASTIDE  
ORIGINAL SCORE BENJAMIN ESDRAFFO A PRODUCTION LES FILMS PELLÉAS IN COPRODUCTION WITH ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ARTE FRANCE AND CINÉ + WITH THE SUPPORT OF LA RÉGION ÎLE-DE-FRANCE  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CNC IN ASSOCIATION WITH CINÉMAGE 10 DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF COFINOVA DÉVELOPPEMENT 2 AND COFINOVA DÉVELOPPEMENT 3 DISTRIBUTION FRANCE DIAPHANA INTERNATIONAL SALES LES FILMS DU LOSANGE



Interview with Axelle Ropert



**How did you come up with this idea for a romantic make-believe between a real and a fake blind person?**

As often happens, from a snippet of life I witnessed. Every morning, I'd see a blind mother bringing her child to the local elementary school. First of all, we felt sorry for her, but things soon became awkward because she'd whack people with her cane as she was walking past. Basically, the burlesque and tragic aspects of the spectacle immediately made something click inside me...

**Why make a film in a comedic vein after two films that could be described as romantic drama?**

For lots of reasons. Firstly and simply, I love to laugh in a movie theater. Secondly, comedy is a genre that requires absolute belief in cinema and its basics—dialogue, actors, rhythm. And then, a very contemporary but just as important reason: we're going through a terribly dark and stressful period in Europe, and I've always seen movies as a way of softening ordeals. *In the fight between you and the world, second the world*, as Kafka said enigmatically.

**How did you set about making a comedy?**

From reading numerous interviews with great directors of comedy, I knew it wasn't an easy undertaking, but until you've made one, you don't realize the scale of the task. The film comes off as very lighthearted, but it took a ferocious amount of work. In particular, I am obsessed with hitting the perfect rhythm—not a frantic pace but the necessary rhythm, whether it's slow, fast or moderate, for a particular scene's comic potential to bear fruit. I directed much of the movie by ear, even

closing my eyes during a take sometimes to concentrate on what I was hearing. Another example of the in-depth work required, with regard to the body language of the blind: I made long visits to the Young Blind Persons' Institute to meet youths and counselors. It was a documentary process of observation as a foundation for fiction.



I find that they often skimp on the romance. Frequently, it's a conceit and nothing more, treated very conventionally, with no feeling and too much sentimentality. I said to myself, *Not only are we going to take love seriously, but we're really going to push the envelope!* I'm very receptive to a tragicomic view of existence and I thought that

**Even so, this is a different type of comedy, in the sense that it mixes in a good dose of seriousness, not to say tragedy. Did that choice seem inevitable to you?**

I'm a really big fan of comedies, particularly rom-coms, but

a young blind woman as the main character allowed us to play on both angles—the funniness and tragedy of the character.

**How did you come to choose your actress, the rambunctious Mélanie Barnier?**



It's a film that relies totally on the actors. Without great performances, it was dead in the water. For Elise, we needed an actress with as much talent for drama as comedy, and the nerve to go at top speed without touching the brakes. That's a pretty unique combination. Mélanie comes from the commercial, mainstream section of the French film industry that seems light years from my own, but I love to cast against type. I've done so in all my movies. You mustn't be afraid of contradictions to make movies. Casting actors who are different than you always produces a spark. When I auditioned Mélanie, she had a really uplifting, unique and American outlook. Crazy energy. You let her go to work on a scene and she kills it. She has no fear of ridicule, no self-imposed limits and she doesn't have that concern for her appearance that hampers many actresses.

**At first sight, the film seems to be set in a fairly abstract context, but soon a sense of social and geopolitical context emerges and adds a color to the film that US rom-coms rarely possess. How important was this aspect to you?**

Very important. For me, movies today need to be a big form that catches the zeitgeist in the sophisticated mesh of its nets. When I was writing, there was a lot of talk of Greece and its national debt. I was struck by the lack of future prospects being imposed on young Greeks, and in a more general sense by the mediocrity of the future promised to European youth today. I think it's unbearable for people to be deprived of a «dream.» All this realpolitik applied to people's private lives revolts me. Why should old people dictate the future of the younger generation? It's unbearable! So it was essential for me that my characters, especially the Franco-Greek Papagika brothers, should be struggling, with money troubles, and getting constantly bawled out by grown-up characters (the addiction therapist, the unemployment office counselor, the Greek restaurant owner), and in the end that the movie offers them something very happy—love and music. When reality isn't generous enough, may cinema be so.