

Louis Becker presents

Gérard DEPARDIEU

Gisèle CASADESUS

a
Jean Becker
film

MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE
(LA TÊTE EN FRICHE)

based on the novel by Marie-Sabine Roger published by Editions du Rouergue

SCREENPLAY AND ADAPTATION BY Jean-Loup Dabadie & Jean Becker
DIALOGUES Jean-Loup Dabadie

with the participation of François-Xavier DEMAISON with MAURANE Patrick BOUCHITEY Jean-François STEVENIN Claire MAURIER
Sophie GUILLEMIN composer Laurent VOULZY

photography Arthur CLOQUET A.F.C. sound Jacques PIBAROT Vincent MONTROBERT François GROULT editing Jacques WITTA set design Thérèse RIPAUD
costume design Annie PERIER BERTAUX casting Sylvia ALLEGRE

first assistant director Denis IMBERT A.F.A.R. unit production manager Claire LANGMANN production manager Bernard BOLZINGER
an ICE 3 KJB PRODUCTION STUDIOCANAL FRANCE 3 CINÉMA DD PRODUCTIONS coproduction

with the participation of CANAL+ CINÉCINÉMA FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS with the support of THE CHARENTE MARITIME DÉPARTEMENT and the POITOU-
CHARENTES REGION in partnership with the CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA
and L'IMAGE ANIMÉE with the support of SOFICINÉMA 5 DÉVELOPPEMENT produced by Louis BECKER
international sales STUDIOCANAL

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82 minutes

French release date 2 June 2010

Synopsis

This is a story of one of those unlikely encounters that can change the course of somebody's life: The encounter in a park between Germain, an almost illiterate man in his fifties, and Margueritte, a little old lady who is passionate about reading. There is 40 years and 200 pounds' difference between them. One day, Germain happens to sit down beside her and Margueritte reads out loud extracts from her novels and reveals to him the magic of books from which hitherto, Germain has always felt excluded. To those close to him, his friends in the bistro who until now have always thought him an idiot, the shoe is now on the other foot. But Margueritte is losing her eyesight, and through his love for this caring grandma with all her mischievousness and charm, Germain decides to read and to show that he can by reading to her, out loud, when she is no longer able.

Interview with Jean Becker

How did you discover Marie-Sabine Roger's novel and what made you want to adapt it?

I have someone who scouts for potential subjects for me and who showed me Marie-Sabine Roger's novel "La Tête en Friche". As soon as I'd read it, I fell under its spell. I was immediately attracted by the character of this nice guy, a bit rough around the edges, a victim of his own lack of education and who one might think is a little simple when there are plenty more who are far worse than him. And then, thanks to the fortuitous encounter with an extremely erudite old lady who reveals to him the riches of reading, he evolves. She cultivates his mind.

Why did you ask Jean-Loup Dabadie to work with you on the adaptation?

We've wanted to work together for a long time. I had him read "La Tête en Friche", he liked it a lot, and we finally found our opportunity.

Is writing a pleasure for you?

To me, the best moments in the film-making process are writing and editing. I view the shoot with a certain anxiety because I'm always worried about not living up to what has been written and you have to be constantly as rigorous as possible to make sure you don't deviate from it.

Have you always experienced shoots in this way?

Of course, it's always nice to spend six weeks with the same little gang you've put together. But I have a confession to make: It can also be tedious to have to be constantly answering the same question, "What are we doing?" I always think of Sébastien Japrisot's answer, "I don't know but we're doing it well!" On a shoot, I'm pretty difficult, I'll admit it. I shout a lot, it's true, but once again I know that each mistake that's made will detract from my goal of doing justice to what has been written. Every detail is essential to my mind, because it can really put a shoot in danger. So I do a lot of upstream preparation to avoid that.

When did you think about Gérard Depardieu for the role of Germain Chazes, having worked with him on ELISA?

Very early on. Even before starting to write the script. I gave Marie-Sabine Roger's book to Bertrand de Labbey, my friend and agent. It was he who suggested Depardieu and asked if he could pass on the novel to him. Gérard called me three days later and talked to me with a lot of enthusiasm for over an hour, exploring the smallest details. I think he knows the book as well if not better than I do, which explains the fluidity and the power of his performance. In any case, it was his deep love for this story that reinforced my desire to make the film, as well as the chance to make it with him. And then to play the little old lady, we had an extraordinary 95 year-old actress in Gisèle Casadesus! After one projection, someone said to me: "Those two were made to act another!" and I was really delighted to hear that remark because it reflects the subject of the

film exactly!

You have already directed her in THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND. Why did you want to offer her this role?

Despite her apparent fragility, Gisèle gives off huge strength of character which perfectly fits with her role. And I think it's pointless to extol her talent as an actress.

What about the supporting actors, starting with Claire Maurier who plays Germain Chazes' mother.

I saw a recent broadcast of Cédric Klapisch's FAMILY RESEMBLANCES and that was the trigger: I was immediately convinced that Claire would be able to play the character of this singular and violent mother.

Maurane?

She immediately said yes both because she wanted to do it and she was a little afraid of not being up to it, but she immediately and very naturally got into her character's skin. She certainly is something, that woman.

Patrick Bouchitey as one of his palls from the bistro?

I think he always performs very well and is spot-on with his acting. He also has an amazing personality.

Sophie Guillemin in the role of Germain's girlfriend?

She is a very natural actor. And the couple that she and Gérard make is highly plausible. Granted, there's a big age gap between them but in the end, she mothers him. And I find that really works on screen.

Is finding actors to fit your characters something you find easy?

I have a lot of faith in the choices of my casting director.

What kind of a director are you on set?

You don't direct actors. I don't like that word. I let them do their thing and sometimes we might have a little chat about a misunderstanding.

How did you want the direction of this film to go?

I like making simple movies. As my father often said to me, good directing is directing you don't notice. Otherwise, if you do notice, that detracts from the story because you're concentrating on something other than the essential. My way of directing is therefore all about accompanying the

development of my characters as the plot is described, and each time with the same aim: That after people watch one of my films, they leave a little different from when they arrived in the theater.

Your films all have something in common: They are all nostalgic without being backward-looking. How do you always manage to achieve such a result that is notoriously difficult to obtain?

I don't know. Each time, I'm simply touched by the different subjects, the majority of which stem from books and I mainly use other people's creativity to tell their stories..

One comes out of MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE very moved, without the impression of having given into emotional blackmail. How did you obtain that result?

I don't seek to be maudlin even if some people think so, and I don't think I've gone in for sentimentality. I'm simply trying as best I can to tell a story which has moved me and to translate that emotion to the screen.

Through making your films, do you think you have learned to better tell the stories that move you?

I think I improve each time! No, I'm kidding. What I mean to say is that you always learn something each time you make a film and you try not to make the same mistake twice. And you use your experience from time to time...

Did MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE change much during editing?

I tried to get rid of the moments when the viewer might guess what's coming in the next scene and think, "OK, we get it!" I never hesitate to cut. It's difficult in the start, when you make your first films, because your images are very precious to you. But you should never become infatuated with your own images as a director. I have learned to let go and to focus on the rhythm.

Why did you ask Laurent Voulzy to compose the music for the film's final theme?

It's not a very original answer but I just like his songs and his melodies. Initially, he turned me down because he didn't think he'd have time to do it. But when I showed him the film, he finally agreed. Everything happened very quickly after that. A month later, he sent us a lovely theme that I liked a lot.

Were you anxious before the film was released?

They often say that once the editing is done, the film no longer belongs to you. But that's not true in my case. I am totally involved right up until the theatrical release. We put three years into bringing the film to life and I don't want a little detail like the film's promotion to ruin all our efforts when we're on the home straight. I owe it to myself to be involved. Then after that, when the film is delivered to the public, it's either a big

or average success, or no success at all. And in all of these cases, you simply have to roll your sleeves up and start thinking about the next project.

Interview with Gérard Depardieu

You've already worked with Jean Becker when he directed you in ELISA in the mid-1990s. But how long have the two of you known one another?

I feel like we've always known each other. Through his family, Jean is part of a whole cinematographic tradition whose members have all more or less been like fathers to me: Whether they be actors like Gabin, Blier, Paul Meurisse, Pierre Brasseur and Michel Simon, or writers like Michel Audiard and his extraordinary talent for dialogue, for the whole French language; a talent that is now lost. It's no chance that Jean is one of the rare filmmakers along with Claude Chabrol to have maintained and given life to that frame of mind. He belongs to that kind of popular cinema that is gradually disappearing. You just have to watch his films: What he's interested in are the small details. As in MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE, the encounter between that old lady wonderfully played by Gisèle Casadesus and my character who seems like – and I mean seems like – the village idiot.

Has Jean Becker changed a lot since ELISA?

No, apart from the fact that he is increasingly rigorous. He's suspicious of himself. Jean is obsessive about capturing emotion. He wants you to feel the truth in his films. He doesn't want it to be about escapism. He's one of those directors who can't necessarily formulate the things that they want to obtain. But they truly are the artists because art cannot be explained through words. I make that comparison because of what I see in wine or in sculpture: You have to be a magician. And it's everything that escapes you that leads you to getting it right. You can't explain it. Knowing the director's manual won't make you a great director.

How did you get on board with MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE?

Bertrand de Labbey gave me Marie-Sabine Roger's book. And as soon as I'd finished reading it, I called him to say that Jean really has a talent for choosing magnificent books. In the end, what do you need in a movie other than a wonderful story like this one? I hate special effects. And there are more and more of them in films these days. Jean is the opposite of that. And the novel he chose to adapt is simply overwhelming, in the most noble sense of the term. So to play Germain Chazes, you just have to let yourself go with the flow...

How do you see Germain Chazes ?

He doesn't see the bad in things. He has his complexes but he's hard to rile. He is extraordinarily positive and that's what's wonderful about him. But for all that, he's no simpleton. He could have been me. And in any case, he's just like what I was, as a youth in Châteauroux before heading off on the road aged 13. Just like him, I observed everything, I watched what was going on. So he's somebody I know very well: He has a lot of

humor and a lot of love in him. Look at his relationship with his mother, for example. Even if he gets no love in return from her, he never blames her. And he is loved by that young woman played by Sophie Guillemin. When you see them together, it seems like there's no age difference because he is pure. And contrary to what a lot of people might think, Germain is a real character of our time. To me, he represents what remains of life if you run away from the society on offer to us: The schools that teach our children and by definition destroy their dreams. Germain is outside of any shaping but he clings to certain values and to life despite having taken some hard knocks from it.

Because you know him so well, did you find it easy to become Germain Chazes?

Yes. As I said, you just need to go with the flow of the situations and the script. When I act, I always try to be as close as possible to what people see or what they might see. I don't know what more one could bring to the situation that is there or to the words that need to be said. Above all, I don't think one shouldn't compose. Composition can be disturbing and can lead one into those kinds of stereotypes that I try to avoid.

How did you enjoy acting with Gisèle Casadesus ?

It was a great pleasure because I am a spectator during those moments. It's astonishing and courageous to see a woman of her age learn her lines and focus to that extent. But what I loved was her femininity which is still just as incredible; her flirtatiousness that I see as the result of a good life and a particular kind of love, a hope or a belief. Someone who didn't believe in anything could never age in the same way. Gisèle believes in the birds, in beauty, in turmoil and in sadness, when so many people don't have the courage to go through the turmoil of heartbreak. And when I was acting with her, I saw all of that, all those tremors. And playing opposite her, I was free. Freedom is when you are afraid of nothing, when you're as strong as life itself. As soon as you start to be afraid, it's over. I'm afraid of nothing, and certainly not of existing, contrary to many people who, as they get older, need safeguards.

Gisèle Casadesus compares you to a hurricane when you arrive on set before a scene. Do you agree?

Yes, because that's what I'm like. But when they say, "Action", I'm immediately right in the scene. Moreover, I can just as easily fall asleep in a chair than fidget – I'd tackle it in the same way. Because what counts is the scene and nothing else. It doesn't matter what happens beforehand. As Claude Zidi said: "In any case, you have to do it!"

And do you still enjoy it just as much?

Yes, of course, because I do so many other things when I'm not shooting that it's restful to me to make a film. Moreover, even if movie-making has changed, the crews and the people are still the same, deep-down. I have experienced the enormity of American productions with huge budgets and a galaxy of assistants. That's too much for me. There is no place left for what is spontaneous or natural. In fact, I'm like the character from MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE: living in the present. Because what you experience is there right away. There's

no need to go looking for it. I'm constantly nourishing myself with the present. By that I mean everything that escapes you and that you experience: When you sleep, when you love, when you observe... All that stamps things into your memory like pain, emotions, sounds, colors and smells. And it's these pains, emotions, sounds, colors and smells that I nourish myself with. That's why, before a shoot, I don't think about the character I'm going to play at all, except when the director talks to me about them. With **MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE**, I didn't play around preparing Germain Chazes because he's simply a man who looks at people and listens to them. So all I needed to do to become him was to look and listen.

Interview with Gisèle Casadesus

What do you remember of THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND, your first film directed by Jean Becker ?

I have both an excellent and very clear memory because that film really left its mark on people, and they often talk to me about it. But that doesn't surprise me: It tells one of those very simple and powerfully human stories which often make for the most beautiful films. One which, in any case, remains in the collective memory.

How did you end up working with Jean Becker again on MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE?

Jean called me to say that he was going to send me a book he wanted me to read because he was thinking of me for a role. And I really enjoyed reading "La Tête en Friche", mainly thanks to Marie-Sabine Roger's very colorful language. But of course it was also thanks to the extremely tender relationship between this old lady I was being asked to play and the big old boy played by Gérard Depardieu. So of course I agreed. Then I received the script which Jean had written closely following the book while giving it a very personal note: That love of nature that comes through, without it seeming in the slightest bit faked. I don't live very close to nature. I'm a purebred Parisian who has always lived in the 18th *arrondissement*! But despite not being a country girl, that aspect moved me a great deal. But in any case, I'd have said yes to Jean, even without a script because I trust him completely.

What do you like about working with him?

I found the same kindness he'd demonstrated in THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND, as well as a real efficiency in his way of working – you never waste any time on his sets. Jean is very pleasant in the sense that he asks but he doesn't impose. Everything is crystal clear with him, it's never a struggle. Just like with THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND, everything happened in a very natural and pleasant way. And all the more so given the person I was playing wasn't totally foreign to me.

How would you describe Margueritte?

She's a woman in whom one senses a kind of detachment and amusement from what is going on around her, thanks to the many trips she has had the chance to take. She is sensitive but not complaining. Without seeming so, she's a very authoritative woman.

Why does she get so attached to the character of Germain Chazes, played by Gérard Depardieu?

She immediately finds this man's sincerity and the way he is so natural deeply touching. She soon encourages his thirst to know more. She meets

someone who is frustrated but who wants to improve, to learn things life has been unable to give him until now.

Was the path to becoming this character a complex one?

There is a theory I like, by Pierre Fresnay: You don't enter into a character; the character has to enter into you. Even if I'm not such a wise woman as Marguerite, I didn't have any trouble letting her enter me. I don't know if the end result is convincing but I didn't have any trouble composing this character.

What did you think of the scenes on the bench with Gérard Depardieu that punctuate the film?

Firstly, I was delighted to meet Gérard. Everything was very natural between us. Firstly because I'm old enough to be his grandmother! If God spares me, I'll be 96 in June. And then because it's very pleasant to work opposite such a great professional. He entertained me a lot because during the preparation of the shot, he gesticulates, laughs and talks very loudly. Then, when you hear "Action", everything stops and he is always pitch perfect. You feel carried by him. My only worry was whether or not I'd be up to his level.

Do you still get stage fright when you perform?

In the theater, I've always had it, until the moment I step on stage at any rate. My heart can also beat hard but one is in the hands of the director and crew so you're not solely responsible for your work. And because one abandons oneself completely to it, it is obviously pleasant to find oneself working with a good director like Jean because you know you just have to listen and try to follow his directions.

How has your enjoyment of being on a movie set evolved over the years?

I'm relaxed like nowhere else. On set, you're taken care of in a different way to when you work in theater. It's like being in a little cocoon. In movies, to pick up on what Louis Jouvet said, they create an ambiance around oneself to stop you feeling oppressed. You really have the impression of being someone very important! They're constantly asking you if everything's OK. Who'd complain about that? And beyond that, I'm just as passionate as I ever was about performing, about being there to express emotions that don't belong to you but which you allow inside you. It's still just as pleasant, as time goes by, to feel that emotion rise within.

Filmography, Jean Becker

- 2010 MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE
Based on the eponymous novel by Marie-Sabine Roger
- 2008 LOVE ME NO MORE
Based on the eponymous novel by François d'Epenoux
- 2006 CONVERSATIONS WITH MY GARDENER
Based on the eponymous novel by Henri Cueco
- 2003 STRANGE GARDENS
Based on the eponymous novel by Michel Quint
- 2000 A CRIME IN PARADISE
Based on an original screenplay by Sacha Guitry
- 1998 THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND
Based on the eponymous novel by Georges Montforez
- 1995 ELISA
César for Best Music
- 1983 ONE DEADLY SUMMER
César for Best Actress for Isabelle Adjani,
for Best Supporting Actress for Suzanne Flon
and for Best Editing
- 1967 TENDER SCOUNDREL
- 1965 PAS DE CAVIAR POUR TANTE OLGA
- 1964 BACKFIRE
- 1961 A MAN NAMED ROCCA

GERMAIN: "I know about the Guide Maupassant, it's like the Guide Michelin..."

GERMAIN: "When we left, we were 500, but with some quick reinforcements, we were 3,000 by the time we reached the port."

Selective Filmography, Gérard Depardieu

- 2010 MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE by Jean Becker
POTICHE by François Ozon
- 2009 MAMMUTH by Benoît Délepine and Gustave Kervern
DUMAS by Safy Nebbou
SMALL WORLD by Bruno Chiche
- 2008 BELLAMY by Claude Chabrol
DIAMOND 13 by Gilles Béat
HELLO GOODBYE by Graham Guit
IN THE BEGINNING by Xavier Giannoli
- 2007 DISCO by Fabien Onteniente
MESRINE: KILLER INSTINCT by Jean-François Richet
THE EASY WAY by Jean-Paul Rouve
- 2006 BABYLON A.D. by Mathieu Kassovitz
ASTERIX AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES by Frédéric Forrestier and Thomas Langmann
LA VIE EN ROSE by Olivier Dahan
- 2005 MICHOU D'AUBER by Thomas Gilou
QUAND J'ÉTAIS CHANTEUR by Xavier Giannoli
- 2004 CHANGING TIMES by André Techiné
36 by Olivier Marchal
- 2003 NATHALIE... by Anne Fontaine
TAIS-TOI by Francis Veber
- 2001 THE CLOSET by Francis Veber
- 2000 ASTERIX & OBELIX: MISSION CLEOPATRA by Claude Zidi
THE BRIDGE by Gérard Depardieu and Frédéric Auburtin
- 1995 LE GARÇU by Maurice Pialat
- 1994 GUARDIAN ANGELS by Jean-Marie Poiré
ELISA by Jean Becker
- 1993 COLONEL CHABERT by Yves Angelo
- 1992 GERMINAL by Claude Berri
- 1991 MY FATHER THE HERO by Gérard Lauzier
TOUS LES MATINS DU MONDE by Alain Corneau
- 1990 GREEN CARD by Peter Weir
- 1989 CYRANO DE BERGERAC by Jean-Paul Rappeneau

1988 TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR YOU by Bertrand Blier
STRANGE PLACE FOR AN ENCOUNTER by François Dupeyron
1987 CAMILLE CLAUDEL by Bruno Nuytten
1986 LES FUGITIFS by Francis Veber
UNDER THE SUN OF SATAN by Maurice Pialat
MENAGE by Bertrand Blier
1985 JEAN DE FLORETTE by Claude Berri
1984 POLICE by Maurice Pialat
RIVE DROITE RIVE GAUCHE by Philippe Labro
1983 FORT SAGANNE by Alain Corneau
COMDADS by Francis Veber
THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR by François Truffaut
DANTON by Andrzej Wajda
1980 JE VOUS AIME by Claude Berri
THE LAST METRO by François Truffaut
LOULOU by Maurice Pialat
1973 GOING PLACES by Bertrand Blier

Selective Filmography, Gisèle Casadesus

2010	MY AFTERNOONS WITH MARGUERITTE by Jean Becker
2009	CES AMOURS LÀ by Claude Lelouch
	ELLE S'APPELAIT SARAH by Gilles Paquet-Brenner
2008	INNER CIRCLE by Laurent Tuel
	THE HEDGEHOG by Mona Achache
2006	LE GRAND APPARTEMENT by Pascal Thomas
2005	THE LAST MITTERRAND by Robert Guediguian
	HOUSEWARMING by Brigitte Rouan
	PALAIS ROYAL by Valérie Lemerrier
2000	SPECIAL DELIVERY by Jeanne Labrune
1999	OUCH by Sophie Filieres
1998	THE CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND by Jean Becker
1992	ROULEZ JEUNESSE by Jacques Fansten
1990	HOMME, FEMME, MODE D'EMPLOI by Claude Lelouch
1973	VERDICT by André Cayatte
1949	DUGUESCLIN by Pierre Billon
1948	BETWEEN ELEVEN AND MIDNIGHT by Henri Decoin
1947	ROAD BLOCKED by Jean Stelli
1946	CASANOVA by Jean Boyer
1944	PALEMA by Pierre de Herain
1943	VAUTRIN by Pierre Billon
	COUP DE TÊTE by René Le Henaff
1942	SOWING THE WIND by Maurice Gleize
1934	L'AVENTURIER by Marcel L'Herbier

MARGUERITTE: "Using a dictionary is like traveling – from one word to the next. You lose yourself as if in a labyrinth. You stop and you dream."

Cast

Gérard Depardieu	Germain
Gisèle Casadesus	Margueritte
François-Xavier Demaison	Gardini
Maurane	Francine
Patrick Bouchitey	Landremont
Jean-François Stévenin	Jojo
Claire Maurier	The mother
Sophie Guillemin	Annette

Crew

Director	Jean Becker
Producer	Louis Becker
Screenplay and adaptation	Jean-Loup Dabadie
	Jean Becker
Dialogues	Jean-Loup Dabadie
Based on the novel by	Marie-Sabine Roger
Published by	Éditions du Rouergue
Original Music	Laurent Voulzy
Photography	Arthur Cloquet
Sound	Jacques Pibarot
	Vincent Montrobert
	François Groult
Editing	Jacques Witta
Set design	Thérèse Ripaud
Costume design	Annie Perier Bertaux
Casting	Sylvia Allegre
First assistant director	Denis Imbert
Unit production manager	Claire Langmann
Producer	Bernard Bolzinger
Production	ICE3 – KJB Production
Coproduced by	StudioCanal - France 3 Cinéma - DD Productions