

ANNE-DOMINIQUE TOUSSAINT PRESENTS

VINCENT LACOSTE
CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG
DIDIER BOURDON
ANÉMONE
VALÉRIE BONNETON
MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS
NOÉMIE LVOVSKY
LAURE MARSAC
WILLIAM LEBGHIL
ANTHONY SONIGO

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
**LES
BEAUX
GOSSES**



A FILM BY
RIAD SATTOUF

Jacky

IN THE KINGDOM
OF WOMEN

INDIA HAIR
BÉATRICE DE STAEL
FRED WEIGHARDT
ANAMARIA VARTOLOMEI
AVEC LA PARTICIPATION CÉLESTRIELLE DE
VALERIA GOLINO - EMMANUELLE DEVIS
SCÉNARIO ORIGINAL ET RÉVISÉ PAR RIAD SATTOUF AVEC JOSÉE BESPIÈRES
MONTAGE VÉRONIQUE GILBERT AVEC JEANNE MARIE RIAD SATTOUF
DIRECTION DE PRODUCTION TONY M. GREEN
PRODUCTION GÉNÉRALE GÉNÈVE MAFEO GUYOTON - MONTELEONE ANJANI
ASSOCIATION MONTAGNAN ALAIN COPPOLA LUCIANO DI NERI ALAIN RICCI ALAIN TUFFREY
PRODUCTION ASSOCIÉE BRUNO MULLER AVEC YVES MARIE GARNIER VALÉRIE GÉLÉRY
MONTAGE JEAN PIERRE LANTIERE COORDINATION RÉDACTION LE GRAND TROUQUA GUYOTON MONTÉLI
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PRODUIT PAR ANNE-DOMINIQUE TOUSSAINT AVEC RIAD SATTOUF
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JACKY CINDERELLA

Jacky in the Kingdom of Women is based on a short story published in 2005 in my comic book series *Pascal Brutal*, and also on *Cinderella*.

The first time I heard the folk take, I was 6 or 7 and still living in Syria.

Like all children, I wondered: why doesn't Cinderella rebel against her family, which mistreats her?

Why, when she finally runs away, does she still try to go to the ball like everyone else?

Why are there so many girls at the disposal of one sole Prince Charming?

Why does Prince Charming prefer Cinderella, submissive and weak, to her half-sisters, who seem a lot more lively and entertaining?

Why does Cinderella forgive her family at the end?

Why does the story end with a wedding?

When I asked these questions, I was told: because that's the way life is.

There are thousands of versions of the Cinderella story, one of humankind's most famous folk tales.

So I wanted to try my hand at my own version of it, but switching the power from men to women in order to see what it might say about patriarchy and the cultural conditioning of the sexes.

GIRL POWER

When I was a teenager, I was not what one might call an alpha male (or a Prince Charming). This gave me a particular vision of social and human relationships, like that of a monkey who lives on the fringe of the group, observing it without being a part of it.

Obviously, the boys who had the most success were the strongest and handsomest, and the dominant girls were the most voluptuous ones. We didn't see many well-built girls, comfortable with their bodies, going out with short, skinny guys. What strange phenomenon governed this? Why was physical force the privilege of boys and not girls? Some girls, very uncomfortable with their bodies, were built like tanks but nonetheless seemed weak and helpless. What spell held them back? Some small, skinny guys came off as wild beasts, and yet many of those large, meek girls could have knocked them out if they had been brought up to do so.

And why did swarms of guys dance around the same pretty girl in nightclubs, seemingly recreating the ballet of spermatozoids targeting one sole egg? This seemed normal to everyone... but was it?

The question my film asks is not "What would the world be like if women had been in power for the past 3000 years?" but rather "How would our world seem to us if we switched the roles?"

In *Jacky*, men are sex objects for women. Michel Hazanavicius is sort of the movie's "naked bombshell".

Also, I wanted men to be more sensitive and gentle. They are entitled to show their emotions. They are "fragile". Jacky

cries a lot. He is a hopeless romantic, and his sensitivity gets the better of him.

So I wanted to use cinema's "virility codes": competition and fighting among men, protecting weak and sensitive girls, happy endings glorifying conservative weddings.... and put the shoes on the other foot.

Jacky in the Kingdom of Women is a romantic comedy that throws appearances into question.



BLASPHEMY AND LANGUAGE

In the world of Bubunne, important and authoritative words that would (normally, in the French language) be masculine are "feminized". For example, "blasphemy" becomes "blasphemery". "Underwear" becomes "undums".

It was important to show how sexual domination operates via language.

I also wanted a specific alphabet, to be used not only in the film's posters, but also in the characters' handwriting. Like the gothic alphabet, which is scary, the Bubunne alphabet is marked by uniformity, violence, a certain ambiance. Fanette Mellier, the graphic designer, based her work on the spider and its web. It was important for the coherence of this society.

When Anemone says the word "dummy", it is amusing, but it also takes on a terrifying aspect in this society. The women who employ it do so to express their domination with pride. For example, one of the worst insults in French Canadian is "fat, dirty dog". I wanted to play of this linguistic relativism which can be very comic.



JACKY THE CONSERVATIVE

I am very interested in adolescence and the questioning (or lack thereof) of traditional family values by younger generations. It is fascinating to see how conservative systems employ their forces to prevent this questioning from ever taking place.

This is what Jacky undergoes in his totalitarian society. Everyone has the same dream. They all want to live the same life, thinking that their minor behavioral variations make them free-standing individuals. Jacky collaborates with the regime, and does so happily. His relationship with Julin, a sort of good fairy who tries to impress upon him another vision of the world, serves no purpose.

But as soon as Jacky is rejected from the system, his rebellious spirit is the only thing that will save him and lead him to bring about a change in the entire society.

Adolescent rebellion is the key to change and progress in human society. Especially when it causes us to question "parental truths". Jacky is a perfect example. The Colonel, who revolts against her mother, is another. Nothing should compel us not to judge our parents.

But how do we do this when we live according to the myth of the fourth commandment, "Thou shalt honor thy father and mother"? What do we do if they are evil?

RELIGION AND VEILERY

In my film, the "veilery" is no different from a dress. It separates the sexes and makes them uniform.

Islam and the Muslim world are part of my life and my imagination. I grew up in a small Sunni village in Syria in the 1980s, where my father's family lived in the same fashion in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, give or take a more few hours of electricity. I broached this subject in my book "My Circumcision" published in 2004.

All my aunts and female cousins wore veils. Women had fewer rights than men, who decided everything. And yes, most women were happy like this and ardently defended their way of life.

This is not specific to the Muslim world. It corresponds to the social and legal organization of human relationships found all over the world. It is called the patriarchy, the authority of men over women. This is the subject of my film.

VINCENT LACOSTE

Vincent played an ugly boy in "The French Kissers". It was his first role. I wanted to use him in my second film and give him the role of the handsomest boy in the village, the perfect catch. After our first film together, we become friends. We understand each other without having to spell everything out.

Vincent has a sensitivity and a sense of comic timing that I appreciate. He is unique. And I love screaming at him to make him cry.

MY BELOVED ACTORS

It seemed perfectly obvious to me that I would be working again with Vincent Lacoste, Anthony Sonigo, Noémi Lvovsky and William Lebghil, with whom I did commercials.

For the rest of the cast, it all came about with great ease. I chose Michel Hazanavicius for the "good fairy" because I find him very handsome, candid and protective.

Didier Bourdon was one of my childhood idols when he was with the comedy troupe "Les Inconnus". He is an exceptional actor, extremely sensitive. The way he described the world in his sketches fascinated me. He is one of the reasons that I wanted to describe society with humor.

As for Charlotte Gainsbourg, she is not only one of the most beautiful women in the world, but someone who, for many people, belongs to a sort of nobility.

The first time I went to meet her, she made me wait for five minutes at her door. I could hear sounds coming from within but she didn't open. It was perfect: I knew then and there that she would be an excellent Colonel.

Valérie Bonneton has a very funny dual nature. She wavers between the funny and the strange. She is very pretty but there is also something ominous about her. She was perfect for the sheriff, who is both terrifying and smiling.

As for Anémone, I have always adored her and have always been moved by her ugly duckling roles. There was something very cruel about her in the movies she did with the comedy troupe "Le Splendide", even though she was attractive. Then one day I read an interview in which she said she regretted having had children. I knew then she would make a perfect dictator.



GEORGIA AND REALISTIC SETS

We decided to shoot in Georgia because we needed realistic sets. I wanted things to look as genuine as possible. The country has many vestiges of communism right in the middle of the countryside. Ideally, I'd like to have shot the film in North Korea.

For the Palace of the Grand Mushery we used the castle in Gori, Stalin's home town. We shot the village scenes in Tserovani, in the suburbs of Tbilisi. We used locals as extras in Jacky's village. They were very interested by the themes in the script. Some of the women in the village even wore pants for the film for the first time in their lives! They laughed and

took their roles very seriously, making fun of their husbands, all of a sudden so submissive...

Only the interiors of the houses were shot in studio. I designed all the sets, including the special effects for the mini Mushery and the Grand Mushery...

SUBMISSIVE COSTUMES

At first, I imagined the men wearing a helmet with a light bulb constantly lit on their heads. But this was impossible for technical reasons.

When I thought up the idea of the veileries, the idea was to minimize their virility. The actors were pretty impressed, and watching them was pure joy. The costume renders the man submissive. They are forced to change their gestures, to bend. And their face stick out so much, it really transforms their personality.

LOVE

When a society separates men and women as radically as in *Jacky*, sexuality becomes purely a means of procreation. Of course, this makes everyone totally sexually frustrated. This is what happens to Corune, the grocer's daughter, who fantasizes about Jacky's calf. The same goes for Valerie Bonneton, who loses it while attacking Jacky in the forest, as well as for Jacky himself, who secretly masturbates in front of the Colonel's picture. Beliefs and superstitions are a means of imposing the power of one sex over the other. They prevent all freedom of thought and especially sexual freedom. This is what makes conservative societies an absolute nightmare.

Riad Sattouf

VINCENT LACOSTE



RIAD SATTOUF, ENLIGHTENED TYRANT?

After *The French Kissers* came out, I continued with high school and made movies a little on the side. I was very afraid that the work would just stop. My parents were pushing me to finish school, and Riad blackmailed me: if I didn't graduate, he wouldn't let me play Jacky. So I graduated! Riad hasn't changed the way he works with actors since *The French Kissers*. He is open to suggestions and can change dialogue from one day to the next, even though he has total mastery of the universe he has created. Jacky is a complex role, very far from me. During preparation, we often discussed the variety of emotions, especially in the first part

of the movie, when Jacky is being beaten and is always in tears.

Riad is very demanding with me and has no problem screaming at me during the shoot when he thinks my work is lousy. Usually I agree with him and realize I have to try harder. This doesn't make him a tyrant. He is caring and tries to get the best out of me.

We've known each other since I'm fifteen. We've become friends and see a lot of each other. We are in total confidence together and I enjoy being directed by him. It is thanks to Riad that I make movies, and I feel grateful to him. He is the person whose opinion mean the most to me. It is both reassuring and nerve-wracking because I don't want to disappoint him.

MEN/WOMEN, A USER'S GUIDE

I really grew attached to the character of Jacky. He is still a child, naïve, persuaded that people cannot make him suffer. It was great learning to play a man with no virility, especially when we discover him under his veil. No guy in the film has it easy. In real life I'm not incredibly virile but I have a deep voice that I had to learn to efface. The costume and the heavy shoes also helped us to find the right submissive attitude.

Being in a world ruled by women is no fantasy. There is nothing exciting about a dictatorship, be it run by men or women. What happens to Jacky is a real downer.

Concerning the actresses, I'm not at all into the game of seduction, not even a playfully. I love women, but on set they are simply my coworkers. Noémi has a very maternal and generous relationship with her partners. If you start playing the seduction game, it's embarrassing. You get trapped by it!

In this film, Riad talks about the freedom to love without social constraints or the "reflexes" that we have inherited from history. I deeply believe this as well, like Jacky. He has only one goal: to seduce the Colonel, with whom he is madly in love, even if the obstacles seem insurmountable. Riad celebrates the unending possibilities of love, and this is both moving and courageous.



DOWN WITH CONVENTIONS

Inverting the power struggle between men and women changes nothing of the relationships between the oppressors and the oppressed. The world Riad describes is both real and imaginary. This is where he is brilliant and original. At its heart, his film is a love story, but there is nothing facile or stereotypical about it.

Getting lost in the craziness of the script was a delight, because I know the person behind it. I immediately understood his intentions. Despite its wackiness, *Jacky* has real depth. It is provocative in that it is very critical, not toward a religion or a particular society, but toward the modern world in general. Oppression, dictatorships, old

patterns we've been lugging around for centuries: Riad talks about all this with guts and conviction, but without becoming preachy.

It is very rare to read a script that is so politically incorrect. Most of what I read are romantic comedies, sweetly off-the-wall and consensual. But as a movie-goer, I am not only into the off-beat stuff. That would be unbearable.

THE COMEDY TROUPE *LES SPLENDIDES*

Every character in the film is incredibly well-conceived. Each one has his or her particularity. All the actors have something to dig their teeth into, even those with the smallest roles. Riad's way of rehearsing with all the actors was amazing. No one felt lost or less important. I remember some wild improvisation I did with Anthony: we were both veiled and acting like monkeys – one aggressive, the other submissive. This was the best way for us not to have fits of hysterical laughter during the shoot.

From the second Riad chose his actors, it no longer mattered whether we'd known each other since *The French Kissers*, like Noémi, Anthony, William and myself. We have a certain connection, but we're not a clan. With Noémi, there are no limits. She doesn't act; she just is. This forces you to be reactive, like in ping pong. In the scene in *Camille Rewinds* when she faints and comes back to the present, she actually drank a mixture of coffee and salt so that she would really lose consciousness.

With Didier Bourdon, it's hard to stay serious. I've been a fan of his comedy since *Les Inconnus*. He is a modest and tender man. When his character had to beat me, he was very nervous about hurting me, even though I can take blows pretty well!

With Charlotte, we shot a lot of our scenes sitting comfortably on couches. I'd let myself get carried away by

who she was or what she was telling me. During our love scenes, I almost got the impression she loved me. That was pretty cool. She too is very modest. I noticed that she took lots of notes in her script, but besides that, I was unable to pierce the mystery of her acting.

UNIDENTIFIED FILMIC OBJECT

I don't like the expression UFO. For me the film is a romantic comedy à la Riad. His sense of humor is impossible to define. He likes science fiction and bizarre, unlikely things. He cracks up while watching documentaries. Personally, I'm a fan of dark humor – Monty Python, John Belushi and Peter Sellers.

DIDIER BOURDON



RIAD SATTOUF, ENLIGHTENED TYRANT?

That suits him well! Seriously, he really is enlightened. His face is luminous and on set, he follows a precise guiding line. Riad is anything but a tyrant. He is cool and demanding. Improvisation wasn't the general rule, as it was in *The French Kissers*, which was more a slice of life. The *Jacky* script was complex, a universe teeming with ideas, a more unwieldy infrastructure.

I'm not a big fan of comic books. I only knew Riad's first film and his drawings that appear in newspapers. When we met, I realized that he remembered the sketches of *Les Inconnus*

better than I did. This was both flattering and destabilizing for someone as shy as I am.

We really clicked. There was an immediate energy that we still feel to this day. Working on his movie was a very joyful experience, and its success is the result of teamwork. We tend to concentrate on the directors and the actors, but the role of Anne-Dominique Toussaint and the whole crew was just as crucial.

MEN/WOMEN, A USER'S GUIDE

Matriarchy is just as much of a nightmare as patriarchy! It reminds me of a memorable line: "Capitalism is the exploitation of men by men. Communism is the opposite." Acting feminine without going all out "*Birdcage*" was thrilling. The men in the film are submissive. They're allowed to snigger but not laugh. The costumes are diabolically effective. We were hunched over like old folk, which made body language complicated. I spoke with my hands a lot in the film. My character is like a sort of mother hen, tending to her progeny, overseeing their schoolwork and proud of her idiotic first son.

When we wrote with *Les Inconnus*, we always bore in mind the pleasure of disguise. With this film, the "veilery" serves a different purpose. It had to be credible and we had to wear it as naturally as possible. It was wonderful work for an actor. I found it touching. It reminded me of the pomp in the French Revolution.

Finding myself in a world where women rule only to repeat the same nonsense as men is not my thing. Riad advocates the freedom to love. This is a theme that moves me. It is universal and more topical than ever.



DOWN WITH CONVENTIONS

When we started with *Les Inconnus*, we were mavericks of sorts. Lots of people slammed doors in our faces. I like people who try new things. To do so, you need talent, which is the case with Riad. He talks about tolerance with humor and without being aggressive. Sometimes humor can make people uneasy because it can carry many layers of meanings. I recently saw Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers* again: Riad has the same way of making a scene both sweetly funny and chilling.

I'm not a pessimist concerning the weight of the politically correct. Nowadays, people talk a lot about Islamism because they're scared, but *Jacky* is not provocative about it. The film

has a bittersweet, tactful and humane way of questioning totalitarianism and the world today.

With hotbed issues like racism and intolerance, you have to show your teeth without being preachy, or else you achieve the opposite effect of what you set out to do.

THE COMEDY TROUPE *LES SPLENDIDES*

When we made a movies with *Les Inconnus*, we went about it the same way as Riad, rehearsing with everyone, including the smallest roles. It's important not only for the quality of the acting, but to prevent actors from feeling excluded. I really appreciated how Riad went about this, and during the shoot, every actor, even those with just a few lines, had something to dig into.

Before the shoot, I sometimes improvised with the boys who played my sons, and Riad kept what he wanted. When we shot in Georgia, he gave me carte blanche with the scene in which Jacky sees his family again. It was the first time I discovered Georgia and it really left an impression on me: a wild castle, amazing places, sweet and gracious people despite the political tension.

Riad managed to create team spirit despite our very different personalities. For example, Noémi is capable of doing 150 takes without feeling tired. I am still influenced by my classical training at the Conservatoire de Paris and my experience in café-theatre, which is more based on instinct and listening to your partner. Between us, the dynamic was easy to find: it is all in Riad's writing. We form a strange couple. Noémi is baroque and I have my own madness. It was perfect. With the young actors, including Vincent, I spent a lot of time discussing and laughing. The connection was created off set, but it can be felt on screen. All we needed at

times was to exchange a knowing glance and the scene would work.

Working as part of a troupe is wonderfully motivating. You just have to be careful about the cocoon aspect that it can cause.

AN UNCLASSIFIABLE COMEDY?

In Riad's humor, there is a gentleness that is at times... ferocious! He told us that in his family, relationships were either intimate, loving or cruel. The film shows all that. Jacky is a character who, like certain animals, is able to forget the pain others cause him. Even though he is stupid, we are moved by him. Every character is put through the wringer. I love that because it had a bearing on real life.

I also like the film's duality: it is both wildly imaginative and realistic. It is a subtle dose that, by avoiding seriousness, ends up moving the viewer. Riad didn't choose his subject by chance. He is digging into his past, his personality, his guts. The worst thing for a movie is to provoke a lukewarm, polite reaction. *Jacky* will leave no one indifferent.

Charlotte Gainsbourg



Riad's film takes a risky but very amusing stance in his criticism of totalitarianism and his way of turning the power struggle on its head. Riad has every right to take on such a subject. The world he has imagined is wild and crazy, but it is above all the reflection of his point of view of our society.

I knew his drawings and I had seen *The French Kissers*, but it was only when I met him that I took the plunge into his universe. The script for *Jacky* was funny and mysterious, surprising in the way it invented a language that was at times hard to grasp. Riad had me read it with without giving me the keys in advance. Then he told me about the locations in Georgia, the costumes and ambiances in order to explain the reality in which he wanted to anchor it. His explanations were fascinating. I loved the idea of a world that wasn't

entirely imaginary, even if what goes on in it is totally surrealistic.

The idea of composing a character as terrifying as the Colonel was thrilling. Riad ended up winning me over with his enthusiasm and the strength of his intentions. At the same time, he is very modest and somewhat indiscernible, which isn't at all a problem for me. But even after having spent a month on the shoot in Georgia and having seen the film finished, I still don't know who he is!

CAST

Jacky Vincent LACOSTE
The Colonel Charlotte GAINSBOURG
Brunu DIDIER BOURDON
The General Anémone
The Sheriff Valérie BONNETON
Julin Michel HAZANAVICIUS
Tata Noémi LVOVSKY
The mother Laure MARSAC
Vergio Anthony SONIGO
Juto William LEBGHIL
Corune India HAIR
The grocer Béatrice DE STAËL
Franku Fred NEIDHARDT
Zonia Anamaria VARTOLOMEI
Mit Kronk Riad SATTOUF
Bradi Vune Valeria GOLINO
Anchorwoman Emmanuelle DEVOS

CREW

Director Riad SATTOUF
Producer Anne-Dominique TOUSSAINT
Co-producers Romain LE GRAND
Florian GENETET-MOREL
Frédérique DUMAS
Screenplay Riad SATTOUF
Cinematography Josée DESHAIES
Editing Virginie BRUANT

Original Music Riad SATTOUF
Costumes Olivier LIGEN
Set designer Alain GUFFROY
Production manager Oury MILSHTEIN
First assistant director Alain CORNO
Sound Yves-Marie OMNES
Valérie DELOOF
Sound Mixer Jean-Pierre LAFORCE
Makeup artist Silvia CARISSOLI
Hair Pierre CHAVIALLE
Location manager Henry LE TURC
Post-production manager Christina CRASSARIS
Continuity editor Magali FRATER
Casting director Juliette DENIS

Production LES FILMS DES TOURNELLES

Coproduction PATHÉ
ORANGE STUDIO
ALVY DISTRIBUTION
FRANCE 2 CINÉMA

In association with COFIMAGE 24
SOFICINÉMA 9
LA BANQUE POSTALE
IMAGE 6
CINÉMAGE 7

With the participation of FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS
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CINÉ +

With the support of LA RÉGION ILE-DE-FRANCE