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present

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by **Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern**

with
Benoit Poelvoorde and **Albert Dupontel**

FRANCE-BELGIUM – FEATURE – LENGTH 92 minutes

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FUNNY BALLOONS

LE GRAND SOIR

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SYNOPSIS

Two brothers who are complete opposites : one is a salesman in a chain store, while the other fancies himself the oldest punk-with-a-dog in Europe...

But the twists of modern life will reunite them, putting them both on the street.

Now confederates of the Punk Attitude, the two men put everything on the line to spark off a new revolution...

INTERVIEW : GUSTAVE KERVERN & BENOÎT DELÉPINE

LE GRAND SOIR is the fifth film of these singular filmmakers which has been presented at Cannes in the Certain Regard official selection. And the regard they have toward the society and its marvelous outcasts and rejects is more topical than ever. Following is a discussion with them about the themes they value most.

CHABROL, PIALAT, AND THE OTHERS...

Benoît Delépine : All of the people mentioned in the front credits are those who participated in our films, who are unfortunately dead now, and all had a kind of punk side to them. Chabrol, weirdly enough, is one of them. I'd met him several times in my life -- he was a free spirit with astonishing points of view. He had a great sense of humor and an absolute irony in his eyes which you often had to figure out for yourself. He was a good guy. He didn't take himself seriously and would criticize himself easily...

Gustave Kervern : In the front credits we also wanted to thank people who counted for us, including anonymous people like the bum who lived at the bottom of my building, Joe the Indian. He had an extraordinary laugh and he played a part in AVIDA. Two friends who worked with us on our comedy show "Groland" who disappeared. People we found by chance on the Internet like Paulo Anarkao...

Benoît Delépine : We're bringing out a book called From Groland to the Grand Soir in which we explain that we feel close to the cinema of Jean-François Stévenin, say, an ambitious work, free, simple, the charm of which is often part and parcel of the difficult conditions films are made in.

Gustave Kervern : I like a lot of things in French films. Recently I saw UN MAUVAIS FILS (A Bad Son) by Claude Sautet, which I think is great. Bertrand Blier as well...

We make films in an empirical fashion. It's more difficult to make films like that because everybody is terrorized by the result, by the box-office numbers.

Benoît Delépine : With us, everything is decided at the last moment. With our five films, we've managed to skirt around the system which is tied to the weight of the networks. We're lucky too. We hand in our work at the last minute because we know we have Depardieu -- it's now or never! Poelvoorde and Dupontel are ready and willing! So the screenplay is never finished. It's a Rubik's Cube that's missing a few pieces, but we carry on. We can do that because the films aren't expensive.

OUT OF THE BOX

Benoît Delépine : We speak about the evolution of French film, but there is also the spectator who wants to be surprised, more and more. I think the big machines -- like those comedies where there is a character and its contrary, are heavy marketing. There is more an attraction and curiosity for the abnormal, and that's less frightening.

Take a look at last year's successes -- THE ARTIST is a real risk; POLISSE, as well, and also even THE INTOUCHABLES. When we released AALTRA, everybody said that a film with handicapped people who couldn't walk would never work... I think people are fed up with pre-fabricated subjects and the expected, predictable ways of filming.

Gustave Kervern : For example, and as per usual, our screenplay went through several stages.

Benoît Delépine : We started on a film in which a small-town journalist played by Dupontel loses it and decides to conduct a counter-investigation on 9/11. We decided that played too much into the conspiracy-theory genre and TAXI DRIVER (laughter). So we went off on another tangent.

Gustave Kervern : On Greek mythology in Montpellier with a modern Diogenes, the punk with a dog -- on someone who drops everything to go live in kind of barrel.

Benoît Delépine : And we found it! A kind of cement pipe or conduit where the guy goes to live. It went rather far down and ended up in China (laughter).

Gustave Kervern : We started writing scenes in which there were already two brothers and parents. The latter lived in an apartment in the middle of town, but it was difficult to film so many interior scenes. Everything changed when we got the idea to shoot in an exterior commercial mall zone.

Benoît Delépine : In the word "cinematographer" there is the graphic side of the word and that has always been fundamental in our films. In AALTRA, you see long straight lines, highways, cinemascope. In AVIDA there is a play between painting and the zoo. In LOUISE-MICHEL, it was the contrast between the factory and the Island of Jersey. MAMMUTH, it was a road movie. When you think of this place with its shopping mall, the images give rise to the story -- it was like a modern western.

Gustave Kervern : We didn't want to go back on the road. This is a road movie, but it's circular, all talking place on the interior of this zone.

Benoît Delépine : We work in a very particular manner. We have a small crew and we can

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern

allow ourselves to change or delete scenes at the last moment. A film is like a living being, evolving as time goes by. Gustave and I trust each other. So we are able to rewrite and scene in the morning and propose it to the actors. That's where the pleasure of a shoot comes in -- at each second we are focused on the story.

Gustave Kervern : We never stop improving the screenplay. Because we usually shoot in chronological order, we can ratify some scenes and eliminate others that are useless. In the end, the film is often better than the original screenplay and that's what the actors think too.

Benoît Delépine : In LE GRAND SOIR, there is a scene in which Poelvoorde and Dupontel talk at the same time to their father. During editing we didn't want to cut that! During the shoot, we gave them two angles, things from the punk-with-a-dog, TV technology, for Poelvoorde and Dupontel, because he likes that and owns a Home Cinema. They had to prepare their thing on their own, but the first take was fantastic!

THE STAR OF THE PUNK SHEPHERD

Gustave Kervern : The fact that Benoît had his own dog took a thorn out of our paw!

Benoît Delépine : He's a real punk. He bit the whole crew, everybody has their mark, and our first assistant ended up in the hospital! When you see him eat the balloons or lick his master's puke, it was his idea. He's the opposite of the mutt in THE ARTIST (laughter).

Benoît Delépine : Our point of departure -- a modern Diogenes -- was naturally a punk-with-a-dog, someone who manages to be free and autonomous. Punk was not only the music but a rejection of consumer society without the chic cool bourgeois side. It was sometimes violent but it was also refusing to be a part of society that was heading toward catastrophe.

Gustave Kervern : We've been around punks-with-dogs for a long time. They usually accost us in the street during our show "Groland." We have a good clientèle even if they are not, unfortunately, often seen in movie theaters (laughter). Visually, they are often very handsome or beautiful and they're fascinating people. They're courageous, outcasts, youth from dysfunctional families.

Benoît Delépine : They're adventurers. They travel all over France -- they have to do little jobs from time to time, like harvesting grapes. They've got their love stories and their relationships with their dogs. There's a punk-with-a-dog I see all the time who tells me outrageous things. He takes the train to Germany so he's got hundreds of millions of euros of fines. He's got a USB key full of photos with his girlfriends which he's proud to show off to the cops...

Gustave Kervern : The opening sequence is shot with real punks with dogs. Humanly, they're touching and real characters. From the first shot I find Benoît great. Many people in the street are afraid of them... so if the film can change our look at them a bit...

We're always being made afraid in our society. Even I'm polluted by that. You have to take it on your own to shed your shell and go toward people. It's a daily discipline.

Benoît Delépine : We had a tough time finding the tattoos "Not" and "Dead" which come together in "We are not dead." At first we thought of "Yes, we can but we're cunts." (laughter)

Gustave Kervern : We were giving too many lessons like "Get off your ass!" Whereas we sometimes do shit.

BÈGLAIS, BÈGLAISES

Benoît Delépine : When we first did location scouting in Bègles (a suburb of Bordeaux), you couldn't imagine it. It was a sort of palace, all in marble -- a real temple for consuming!

Gustave Kervern : We've always enjoyed meeting people, choosing extras from the locals. For example, when Benoît rummages through the purchases of the customers in the parking lot and sits in their cars, we came across two charming women who knew us from Groland. We asked them to play in the film and right away we shot a scene and they were astonishingly natural.

Benoît Delépine : Madam Jacqueline, who plays the supermarket customer with whom Benoît has a long discussion, is another amazing adventure. When we were going over the subject, I found a show by Isabelle Giordano in which I heard this lady talk about commercial centers with hallucinating irony.

I found her contacts and we gave her a meeting at the shoot. We saw the hallucinating apparition of a woman wearing a quintessential beret. She put on a wild show, completely forgetting the camera. This lady represents everything we love, she's independent and dignified.

Gustave Kervern : We don't want to direct a character like that. We knew that she talked a lot and that she wouldn't be afraid. That was enough. We asked to talk about being ripped-off, to walk down this or that aisle, but not to recite dialogue. She has an incredible vital force. She's a daily beauty we adore filming.

Benoît Delépine : And Benoît managed to add punctuations to lead the exchange.

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern

Gustave Kervern : I think back to HUSBANDS by Cassavetes. When you look at the minor roles they're all sublime. In France, it's harder to find actors that are forces of nature. That's why we use Belgians, because they're more expansive, they're less afraid of the what others think about them. We pay attention to everybody in our films -- everybody needs something to "chew on."

Benoît Delépine : Nobody is an extra. I don't like that term. It's like they were used as props. We're not great chefs, but we ourselves choose each vegetable (laughter). I'm really happy about the cinema we make for the simple reason that you can feel the good in it. You can observe human nature and say that we have not become robots.

BIG BROTHER(S)

Gustave Kervern : I adore the idea of surveillance cameras. In real life it's hallucinating. In Nice they use them for traffic tickets. For the film we didn't have to set up a system because the supermarket Carrefour let us use theirs. We we're amazed at how our slightest acts and movements are observed.

Malls are hyper secured -- there is never a problem or a punk-with-a-dog! So it was interesting to walk around a place like that with someone like that. He couldn't find his way around because everything is too clean. They're also true places for modern life. In Toulon, for example, the Grand Var Mall is a place where a lot of people take walks.

Benoît Delépine : At the same time, I don't hate these kinds of places!

Gustave Kervern : That's why it isn't really a critique of this kind of place. You can feel good and find an incredible range of people. There's air conditioning, nice armchairs, and the linear rows of products is reassuring.

Benoît Delépine : It's an open-air film studio, without any decorating to do (laughter).

Big brother(s), evokes the tandem Ben / Jean-Pierre. We've known Poelvoorde et Dupontel for around fifteen years, but separately. They both had already done short scenes in our films so we bonded in a way. To bring them together was our challenge -- it was unheard of that two people who had the same taste for film and black humor had never played together. They are two very different personalities and we had to convince them.

Gustave Kervern : We absolutely wanted them. There was no question of playing ourselves in the film and and could think of nobody else. I don't think we could have made the film with them.

Benoît Delépine : I remember Benoît didn't want to make a mohawk. That was a bitch because even with makeup you can see it. We asked the haircutter to cut a little off the sides and he couldn't hold back, sheered it right off (laughter). He saw that and he liked it! Since we were shooting chronologically, Albert must not have felt totally at ease. His character is a salesman, rather anal, who opens up little by little. There is a kind of bond and respect that starts happening. The dynamics between the two brothers is reversed.

TRACKING BUT NOT TOO MUCH

Benoît Delépine : The tracking shot in which Poelvoorde and Dupontel pass from one house to another was not written or planned at all! We found a residential area, but some of the residents weren't there. When the brothers cross the fence, I'm the one who yells, "What the hell are you doing here! (laughter)

Gustave Kervern : The tracking shot just happened, based on an old scene from the Diogenes screenplay!

Benoît Delépine : We don't really think in terms of an evolving mise-en-scène. Before, we thought more about tableaux and, in this film, we decided to move a bit more, shoulder shots with the camera, but not over-doing it. We're not going to get into the Steadicam or the flying camera, that's not us. It's a matter of feeling.

Gustave Kervern : Who knows, maybe one day we'll grasp the essence of the concept?

Benoît Delépine : There's no real pleasure in the staging from a strictly technical point of view. When Benoît is carried from the concert to the trash can we wanted to do that in a single shot, but we let the idea go, it would have taken hours and rather than forcing ourselves, we chose to do it in two shots.

Gustave Kervern : Staging or, mise-en-scène, is questioned differently. Because we shoot few shots that are relatively static, each one must be on the spot. We take a lot of time and effort on the background to express what we want. If possible, something must happen in each scene.

Benoît Delépine : We don't bust our heads over the merely technical. It must be simple.

Gustave Kervern : We don't do shots from below and above, matchings shots...

Benoît Delépine : We pay more attention to the moment of grace. Being too complicated in terms of technique is to risk losing that, because the camera is not in the right place. We'd rather stay close to the action and the instant.

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern

Gustave Kervern : Benoît told us he'd have a hard time going back to a "normal" shoot with matching shots. For an actor, playing in our films means "Don't get it wrong." When Benoît plays his pitch into the micro, we don't cut it off, so it has to be good! For an actor, it's lovely to manage to do his text in one take. And we're happy -- we don't have to fuck with that scene any more (laughter). And we go on to another.

Benoît Delépine : At first, we wanted to make a film with an iPhone! We'd just done MAMMUTH with regular film stock and we wanted a different look, esthetics. During our first location scouts in Bordeaux, we tried all sorts of equipment, blind-tested the result and the iPhone came out on top. Unfortunately we realized that the iPhone played at speeds from 20 to 30 images per second, so it was too complicated to go back to film format, not to mention the problems of sound and lenses.

Gustave Kervern : We might yet make it there one day!

KEKELAND

Gustave Kervern : It's a pleasure for us to meet someone different. The simple fact of organizing a meal with Brigitte Fontaine seduced us. It's the same with her as with the unknown people who attract us.

Benoît Delépine : Brigitte was everything we expected of her. The meal itself was sumptuous. When we told her we thought of her in the role of the mother of the two heroes, she said, "Me? A mother? And on top of that of two losers? Never! I only want to play a witch who smokes in a Brittany forest" (laughter).

We sent her the script the next day, replacing "the mother" by "the witch who smokes in a Brittany forest" and, the next day, she called us, very enthusiastic. During the whole film she wouldn't stop saying, "I'm not your mother!" She's a phenomenon. Independent, imaginative -- people full of humor like her are fabulous.

Gustave Kervern : She knew all her texts. But she knew neither Poelvoorde nor Dupontel. She's kind of like Depardieu -- they smell you out and if they don't appreciate you, they can bite you. They're instinctive and we were lucky she liked us.

Benoît Delépine : What gave us real pleasure, was when Areski Belkacem asked her what kind of guys we were. And she told him, "They're like us." He too bluffed us throughout the film -- his outward calm perfectly counterbalanced Brigitte.

Gustave Kervern : Afterwards we went to see Brigitte in one of her concerts. She was

amazing. Beyond the character, you have to listen to her songs again and again, her texts, her poetic writing...

WAMPAS MELODY

Benoît Delépine : For AALTRA, our producer Vincent Tavier gave himself two months to find the money and we gave ourselves two months to write the screenplay. Chance had it that on that day Didier Wampas had given us a meeting to play in his video clip “Manu Chao.” We played two mafiosos next to a big stack of money. We went to the shoot with Vincent who also played in the video and there we can be seen signing the papers which were the real contracts for AALTRA (laughter).

Gustave Kervern : We know Les Wampas for a long time. At the time they freely gave us the rights to their music. For LE GRAND SOIR, we turned toward them because they have good songs, humor, and a joyous attitude.

Benoît Delépine : And distance too. Poetry. I love what they composed with “Papillon” (Butterfly). They did a great job playing on scene in Bordeaux. We got all the punks from the area into the room. It was wild -- they were all drunk, except Dupontel, who never drinks, and who was scared shitless (laughter).

RESISTANCE / EXISTENCE

Benoît Delépine : Brigitte gave us a great gift in writing a song called “Le grand soir” (The Big Night). It was real call for revolution and was going to end the film. But, in editing, we concluded that such a clear-cut cry didn’t correspond to us. We don’t believe in it, so why give youth the desire to tear everything apart? Rip things apart in a day? And then what? Frankly, our idea was that each tend to his or her own revolution in him or herself.

Gustave Kervern : We want things to move but if we aren’t given the force in this direction, it can’t work. Often, revolutions are carried out violently, unfortunately. We would prefer that politicians have a long-term vision of society. It’s a shame it’s not the case.

Benoît Delépine : What’s interesting in this film is that each character has his or her own revolution, including the parents.

Gustave Kervern : There is never any morality. Jean-Pierre is no symbol of success (laughter). The ideal is found at a slightly smaller level. There were three possible endings. In the screenplay we thought we would end up in Madrague, as frontmen for Brigitte

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern

Bardot (laughter). Then, we wanted to end, on a song by Brigitte Fontaine, by setting fire to a mall, but since we often felt well there, to what good?

As Benoît often said during the shoot, that's like "setting fire to Christmas tree."

Benoît Delépine : What we had foreseen was to do the "Pieds Nickelés" in the bad sense of the term. We went through deep solitude, before finding the end which is on the screen.

Gustave Kervern : Simple things are often what works best.

PLAYERS

Benoît POELVOORDE	NOT
Albert DUPONTEL	Jean-Pierre Bonzini
Brigitte FONTAINE	Mother – Marie-Annick Bonzini
Areski BELKACEM	Father – René Bonzini
Bouli LANNERS	Security Guard
Serge LARIVIÈRE	Direction of the Grand Litier
Stéphanie PILLONCA	Jean-Pierre's ex-wife
Miss MING	The young deaf girl
Chloé MONS	The punkette
Yolande MOREAU	Mother of the punkette

LE GRAND SOIR

A film by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern

CREW

Screenplay Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
Directors Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
Director of Photography Hugues POULAIN
Sound Guillaume LE BRAZ
Editing Stéphane ELMADJIAN
Production Designer Paul CHAPELLE
Costumes Florence LAFORGE
1^{er} Assistant Director Gérard BONNET
Production Director MAT TROI DAY
Post-Production Frédéric J. LOZET
Executive Production Christophe VALETTE
Et ANGA PRODUCTIONS
Producers Jean-Pierre GUERIN
Benoît DELÉPINE
Gustave KERVERN
André LOGIE
Gaëtan DAVID
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