

RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS PRESENT  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH LE PACTE

EMMANUELLE DEVOS AND GABRIEL BYRNE

# JUST A SIGH

A FILM BY JÉRÔME BONNELL

*Le Pacte*

Rectangle Productions present

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WITH

EMMANUELLE DEVOS AND GABRIEL BYRNE

1h45 - Fr/Bel/Irl - 2013 - SRD - 1.85

**International Sales**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Between two representations of a play she performs in Calais, Alix meets a mysterious Irishman on the train bringing her to Paris for the day. Drawn towards him, she follows him, loves him, for a few hours, before facing what could be a new life...

## CAST LIST

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Alix</b>     | Emmanuelle Devos  |
| <b>The man</b>  | Gabriel Byrne     |
| <b>Rodolphe</b> | Gilles Privat     |
| <b>Diane</b>    | Aurélia Petit     |
| <b>Olivier</b>  | Laurent Capelluto |

## CREW LIST

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Directed by</b>               | Jérôme Bonnell   |
| <b>Screenplay</b>                | Jérôme Bonnell   |
| <b>Photography</b>               | Pascal Lagriffoul - AFC  |
| <b>Editing</b>                   | Julie Dupré  |
| <b>Sound</b>                     | Laurent Benaïm   |
| <b>Sound editing</b>             | Julie Brenta   |
| <b>Sound mixing</b>              | Emmanuel Croset  |
| <b>Costumes</b>                  | Carole Gérard  |
| <b>Art direction</b>             | Anna Bachala   |
| <b>Casting</b>                   | Isabelle Ungaro  |
| <b>Script</b>                    | Christine Catonné  |
| <b>First assistant director</b>  | Guillaume Huin   |
| <b>Production manager</b>        | Diego Urgoiti-Moinot   |
| <b>Head of post-production</b>   | Mélanie Karlin et Eugénie Deplus   |
| <b>Make up</b>                   | Barbara Schneider  |
| <b>Hair stylist</b>              | Ainhoa Eskisabel   |
| <br>                             |  |
| <b>Producer</b>                  | Edouard Weil   |
| <b>Produced by</b>               | Rectangle Productions  |
| <b>Coproduced by</b>             | Scope Pictures<br>Element Pictures<br>France 3 Cinéma<br>Alvy Distribution |
| <br>                             |  |
| <b>With the participation of</b> | Canal +<br>Ciné +<br>France Télévisions<br>Le Pacte                        |
| <br>                             |  |
| <b>With the support of</b>       | Eurimages<br>La Région Île-de-France                                       |
| <br>                             |  |
| <b>With</b>                      | Cofinova 8<br>Cofinova 9   |

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As far back as I can remember, the vague, unconscious seeds of this film were planted when I first saw François Truffaut's *The Soft Skin* as a teenager. I was particularly impressed by the long night sequence in the provinces during which a third wheel, played by Daniel Ceccaldi, (reminders of whom may exist in my screenplay in the character of Rodolphe), unknowingly prevents two lovers, played by Françoise Dorléac and Jean Desailly, from being alone. I was struck by the harrowing suspense of the scene, built on practically nothing - a simple adulterous lie - and especially to what extent Truffaut was able to transform the pure present-ness of the moment into cinema. The tension is disproportionately greater than the actual, banal situation. .

Hence my initial wish, to make a movie whose main subject is the suspenseful blow-by-blow account of a love affair, treated in real time. Based on that deep-seated but playful desire, the rest of the story and its time-span emerged gradually, almost of their own volition. And then there was also the desire, after *J'attends quelqu'un*, to work again with Emmanuelle Devos. I already imagined her participation when writing the first lines of the screenplay.

It was while writing it that my real subject caught up with me. I stumbled on a quip by Tristan Bernard that summed up with pitiless precision what I was trying to do: "What seems to be love, is always love."

My subject was the apparently fictional, but actually very real, idea that even if a love story lasts only a few hours, it is no less intense, and no less important in the context of an entire life.

The profound issues that came up while I was writing it continue in a direction I never tire of taking: subsisting links with childhood, fears of the (adult?) world, of one's future life, of a border with no return that one is about to cross. Here we are dealing with characters halfway through their lives, but each caught up in very personal emotions. Our characters are themselves surprised when they fall victim to their own sentimentality. They thought that long experience had given them a certain distance from things. That is exactly what touched and fascinated me.

The subject is a forty-three year old woman. Being that age today is something very different from what it was only ten or twenty years ago. At her age today

there are still many vestiges of adolescence. At her age today some women still have children. We are living in a new world in which we will all – or so they say – live to be a hundred

And just for the fun of it, what kind of a day will someone have, who suddenly finds herself without a cell phone or bank card in 2011? What kind of obstacles does that imply, and what kind of new-found freedom? I wanted to evoke, or 'use' that context, so typical of Western society today, without falling into the trap of psychosocial argumentation.

Because what is most important for me are sensations. That again has to do with the notion of time, probably the first issue that comes up in cinema. It reflects an obsession I have been examining, little by little, ever since my first film: formally reducing certain ellipses, or making them occur unexpectedly; suspending time, the better to accelerate it, like in a musical score; searching for a harmony between moments of suspense and moments of quiet contemplation.

Time is just as much the central issue of the film and of the eventful occurrences of the day, as it is of Alix's life. Pregnancy at her age is for Alix, still childless, something unimaginable. With it comes the idea, old as the world, but here pressingly concrete, that life will never again be the same. In a way, one is finally saying good-bye to a world of prolonged childhood.

Furthermore, aside from the fantasy of the 'passing stranger', the choice of making her lover an Englishman is not insignificant. Alix speaks to him in his own language, in a language not her own, and so in a way, she is still playacting, still on stage, just as she has been her entire life. Life helps her to act well, as much as vice versa.

Here my own love of actors is a fortunate coincidence, because this story within a story moves me in a particular way. It may be part of the great pleasure I take in this project, and remains an essential question: how do you film an actress playing an actress? A job one does as much to hide as to show oneself off; a life in which renouncing childhood is unthinkable; in which one always runs the risk of losing touch with reality. Such considerations, however, need to be treated with infinite precaution. One must never succumb to clichés or over-indulgence. My wish is to examine nuances and avoid caricature. What interests me here is not 'what you see' when an actress is acting, but 'what it does to her'.

# JÉRÔME BONNELL

We will privilege high angle shots – both discreet and more obvious – with the camera often overhead, tracing the romantic (or divine) movement of the destiny being played out, while sustaining the tension, the suspense of an absolute present. The camera will move freely, but without any needless agitation. It will never leave Alix, as it accompanies her POV. It will also film her eyes, her hands, and each clock she encounters. It will treat Paris (terra incognita for me until today) and its shifting cityscapes like the episodes of a tale, like the background for a treasure hunt or an initiatory journey, with the idea that Alix, on a trip or brief visit, is experiencing a parenthesis between two performances in Calais.

We will breathe with her, we will identify with her fears, her lies... and her truth. We will be there with what she sees and hears. We will never film a body whole during scenes of lovemaking, but we will not deprive ourselves of doing just that during the onset of desire. We will favour sequence shots for “set pieces” (onstage, in audition, during disputes...), but intercut intimate scenes, although never losing sight of the overall musical rhythm in which time becomes in turn threatening, and then hovers in suspension.

A lot of preliminary work will go into our exploration. The actors will have texts to read and will discuss with each other their roles, the screenplay and its scenes, and most importantly, everything that takes place off screen. We will choose to show some things, not to show others. Such a balance will work only if each alternative exists, not only in theory, but rigorously real. It is that kind of rigor that will give us a sense of freedom when shooting. Because what I care about most is the pleasure my actors take in acting and my own surprise at what they come up with.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### Feature films :

- 2013 JUST A SIGH (Le Temps de l'aventure)
- 2010 THE QUEEN OF CLUBS (La dame de trèfle)
- 2007 WAITING FOR SOMEONE (J'attends quelqu'un)
- 2005 LES YEUX CLAIRS
- 2002 OLGA'S CHIGNON (Le chignon d'Olga)

### Short films :

- 2009 QUATUOR
- 2003 NOUS NOUS PLÛMES
- 2000 LISTE ROUGE
- 2000 POUR UNE FOIS
- 1999 FIDÈLE

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