

EX NIHILO presents

Karin VIARD Noémie LVOVSKY Jacques GAMBLIN Ulrich TUKUR

Weekends in Normandy



A film by ANNE VILLACÈQUE

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SYNOPSIS

Sometimes it doesn't take much to ruin a weekend in the country. A simple misunderstanding in a supermarket parking lot, one wrong reaction and suddenly everything goes off track. Nothing seems to be going right for Christine. Jean is leaving her, Sylvette and Ulrich, her oldest friends, are a little less friendly these days. Everything's falling apart. But life is always full of surprises.

The lives of two couples, falling in and out of love, as weekends go by.

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE VILLACÈQUE

Weekends is firstly two couples mirroring one another...

It's the starting point for the movie: two couples, two neighboring houses and the surrounding countryside. A simple image of quiet happiness. Christine, Jean, Sylvette and Ulrich were great friends, a long time ago, and the essence of this friendship is undoubtedly still there, but it has been diluted over time. Thirty years later, each couple is terribly dependent upon the other for reassurance as to who they are. So, when at the beginning of the film one of the couples unravels, the other couple starts asking themselves questions. We have all been confronted with this experience: the separation of a couple you are friends with. Everyone's role has to be redistributed. You've obeyed a well-entrenched dynamic that had developed over the years – little habits such as the men together, the women together, in short, it all works like a well-oiled machine and suddenly the group is broken up. And then, abruptly, each one of you feels like a lost being, fragile and very alone. Even when it isn't your own couple that is separating, it still involves you, you are still affected by it. The idea works its way into your imagination. For example, we start to say to ourselves: and what if it happened to us? How would it happen...And what if in return the couple who are separating expects something else from us? They can't wait any longer, they start pressuring us to express our point of view and often to choose sides.

The movie speaks about all of that. It speaks about our fears, but also about love and falling out of love. The film deals with this subject straightforwardly, without being judgmental and I hope with great humor. I wanted to play down the romantic drama related to these issues and set them within the trivial reality of our everyday lives. For, when it comes to couples and separations, it is rarely a question of feelings. Not directly at least. It always crystallizes through other things. Here, it's the country house that is going to quickly become the bone of contention. The inextricably complicated question is, which member of the couple is going to keep this small bit of territory with everything it encompasses (the friends who go with it, the memories, the image of happiness).

This unromantic hard-truth reality of the situation is a sort of reflex, perhaps even modesty; in any case it represents a deep conviction. For in my films, I like to look at the underside, against the grain of what is usually done: first and foremost the trivial, the ordinary, that which has no value, what we generally avoid looking at, because in the end I believe this is how we get to the essence of things, to feelings and to people's truths.

Instead of making a chronicle about couples, you chose a very restrained mechanism, with something akin to unity of place and the recurrent time period of weekends that gives the story its tempo.

The film is rather lean, minimalistic even. I wanted to show invisible and complex things, the "almost nothings" in life. But in order to do so, to show "almost nothing," you have to be subtle, to film with parsimony. You can't move every which way. So I said to myself: speak about life, but stay in one place, like good documentary filmmakers do when they want to open our eyes to the world. Let's see what happens. And so for this reason, and not out of some formal or theoretical concern, the movie takes place in practically one

spot: the area with the two country homes and the street that links them. Then just a few sites that are connected in a very concrete way with these houses (the train station, supermarket, beach etc.) And everything happens during the weekends. All the rest, that is to say generally the "city" side to the characters' lives, stays off screen. We will never know everything about these characters and so much the better. I hate the idea of knowing everything about the characters in my films. In my mind, they are autonomous, there is something inscrutable in their lives that makes them very dear to me.

This minimalism is a constraint, naturally, but it is above all a game, and a wonderful driving force. My co-screenwriter Sophie Fillières and I had a lot of fun. We had to imagine what happened between each new weekend. We had to surprise ourselves and the audience too. As a result, we had a few surprises during the writing process. There were versatile characters, who show a different side of themselves every weekend, like Christine. The stable, unchanging characters are Sylvette and Ulrich. And then there is the mystery person, Jean, who only shows his true colors at the end of the film.

Interestingly, the choice to only show what happens during "weekends" in the lives of these four characters, gave us total liberty for the narration. It allowed us to constantly change the point of view, to vary the way we look at the situation by going from one character to the other. And, beyond the four main characters, others could appear during the course of the film and take over for a while. There's Pascale of course, the character played by Aurélia Petit, who is a true surprise guest in the story. There's also Françoise, Sylvette's mother who knows how to put things simply and truthfully when all the others are unable. Gisèle Casadesus, who plays her, lent the character her wonderful face and deeply moving voice. There is also the boy met at the beach who appears in the film without making any waves and his unexpected gentleness. A kindness that does everyone good. For me, gentleness is only achieved through conquest: I always start with anger and rebellion, I can't help myself.

In fact, from the first scene, where Christine comes into contact with an aggressive young woman in the supermarket parking lot, the tone of the film is set, which is at once funny, but also scathing, and especially explosive. We don't know whether to laugh or take it all seriously. This scene plays an important role in several ways.

Yes, first of all because it immediately brings a tension that doesn't let up, or at least doesn't let up very much. I would have liked to have made a calm contemplative film, with beautiful landscapes and melancholy moments. But here it is, a tense film, which is filled with offbeat questions, surprises and dramatic turns of events. There may have been a happy time for the four friends, but we won't ever see it. From the onset, we see that this happiness is being called into question. Christine took a parking space from a woman who is possibly "going through a difficult time" as her friend Sylvette suggests to her. Soon, it's Christine who will accuse her husband's new companion of taking her place. There is a kind of permanent race in the film, a race to be in the right place despite what life has in store, and more often in spite of others. But is there such a thing as the right place? A place that would protect us from fear and from falling out of love? As Sylvette says, "even here we are never at peace."

"A relationship is always pathological, more or less" says Sylvette and Ulrich's friend.

It's something I could easily have said myself, being deeply convinced of its truthfulness. But here I have someone saying it at an inopportune moment, when it would have been better to stay quiet – at least that is what the others seem to be thinking right afterwards. At this point in the film, what he says appears to be extremely stupid. Everything depends upon the context. There are people who have the knack of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, putting their foot in their mouths without knowing it, or systematically saying what shouldn't be said. It's a comic device that I'm fond of, because it plays with truths and pretense. Putting your foot in your mouth is sometimes the only way to unravel inextricable situations. For example, when the antique dealer says to Christine: "Well, when you don't want it any longer, you just don't want it." He has clearly touched upon a sensitive subject, and the film shows us in many ways how sensitive Christine is. We could expect her to react badly. But, coming from this stranger, at that moment, she can accept it. Stuck in her social relationships, in a role that she built for herself, with her next-door friends who have known her for thirty years, she isn't able to question who she is, nor what she really wants. But this one encounter, this ever so slight shift of the lines in a world that is closing in on her with its rigid codes – which in the end are nothing more than her habits – opens up the perspective for her of becoming a free woman.

How did the work with the actors go?

Something magical happened to me for this film. The four actors I wanted to play the four main characters all accepted. Even better: I wanted a veritable commitment from them, without hesitation or misunderstandings. And I had it.

I knew them all as actors, through their work. But meeting someone is something different. It's very moving to meet an actor. An actor in flesh and blood, who is suddenly no longer just a close up on a movie screen. We had our first meetings. And it was very powerful each time.

With Karin, it was immediate, and very evident. I want to say clearly that I would not have made the film without her. It's not even sure I would have felt like making it without her. A screenplay is like a math problem. Sometimes the equation is difficult to solve. That was the case for this project. I knew I would need Karin to solve the problem, to respond to my own questioning, to give me solutions to the impossible situations I had come up with. She said yes three days after having received the screenplay, before even meeting me. From that moment on, I knew that the concrete work had begun. An actress like Karin represents a huge reserve of energy and conviction for a film. It's especially, beyond talent, a human truthfulness that you imagined and seems extraordinary, extravagant, maybe even improbable, but starts to all of a sudden take shape before your very eyes. So she made the film possible. She opened up wonderful spaces for me, especially when I was pulled in contradictory directions by my screenplay: is it funny? Is it tragic? Karin made it possible to be both at the same time.

Noémie was in the midst of finishing *Camille Rewinds*. She was entirely engaged in finishing the film, but she found time for me. She also needs to win over and observe others. So we both got to know one another. At first she seemed unsociable, unpredictable. It takes a lot of gentleness and patience to approach her, to really see who she is. You're never certain if you've really ascertained who she is. But that is her charm.

A very powerful charm, linked with a sharp cinematic intelligence. I selfishly tried to absorb everything she could offer me. I filmed her with great care, trying not to rush her, to obtain what I like most about her: her smile, her fragility, and the twinkle in her eye. I tried to capture her intensity, and at the same time to play it down. She forced me to use intellectual and emotional gymnastics of which I didn't think myself capable. In the end, I saw that I did it and I was proud. As for her, she always pushed me to be better, stronger and to reach for the unexpected.

I met Ulrich in Frankfurt. We spent an entire day together. An entire day with a stranger is a rare thing to be done. He was waiting for me in the morning at the train station, very elegant, with a 1930's coat and hat. It was snowing; we walked through the streets, had something to eat, to drink and we laughed a lot. I really leaned on him during the preparation and the shoot – all the time to be truthful. He's someone you can depend upon. The ideal friend in fact. His character evolved thanks to him. In the beginning he was almost bland: a person who doesn't react, who seems to flee problems rather than face them. Maybe the character was a tad cowardly and spineless in my mind. But little by little, naturally and without forcing it, the character began to fill in and flesh out, without being imposing. Ulrich used great virtuosity in his acting with subtle expressions and mini-reactions. He understood that the film was taking place there, in this almost nothing and he filled that very specific space. Often I didn't see it right away on the set, because his character isn't or is rarely in the foreground. It was when watching the rushes that I truly understood the depth of his work. And it was during editing that we rediscovered what he invented.

Jacques gave a particular intensity to our first meeting. He's a very secretive person. You get the feeling that it could be a long, but fascinating road to get to know him. In my mind, the character of Jean was perhaps the most difficult to play. In a certain way, if I project myself into the film, I'm evidently in love with this character. So I asked Jacques to do what he needed to do so we'd fall in love with him. I asked him without really asking him, but he perfectly understood my unspoken wish. He stayed fragile, opaque, tormented. A bit distant, like his character. Someone who is always more or less "elsewhere." After the final sequence, which we shot the week before the last week of filming, he let go of something, as if he were entirely liberated, as if he himself had overcome something during the course of the film.

What were your aesthetic choices for this project?

They came naturally from the narrative. Although many things were purposely not addressed in the story, the things that I chose to show were naturally favored with a certain "readability." We shot simply, often head-on, leaving a maximum amount of space for the actors. Inside a shot, everything was important, even the most seemingly insignificant details.

Generally the set up went quickly. Pierre Milon, the cinematographer for all my feature films, and I have acquired the same reflexes over time, which allows me to give more time to the actors. All the same, we had to find a cunning way to work with atrocious weather conditions during the entire film shoot. Nature and the passing seasons were very important elements to give the film a veritable scope and make the story credible, as

it is supposed to happen over a two-year period. The bad weather forced us to constantly modify our shooting schedule. And sometimes the content of the scenes themselves. Every day, during a two-month period, we watched in vain for Spring to arrive, to see the first buds on the flowers and the first leaves on the trees. But in the end, I'm very happy with what we see on the screen: snow right in the middle of the month of March was entirely unhoped-for. There was also an incredible evening when the fog fell on the scenery while we were shooting a sequence with a meal in the garden. The fog gave the sequence an unreal dimension that worked very powerfully at this moment in the story.

The shoot was intense, fast-paced, at times thwarted, which gave the film a particular rhythm. It's a film that moves quickly. During the edit, Nelly Quettier and I decided to accentuate this pace, to never dwell on a scene and to be in something that was almost musical, in particular during the transitions from one scene to another, from one weekend to another. Moreover, the choice of one musical score very quickly became an imperative.

Bach's concerto unfurls during the course of the film, accompanying joyous as well as sad moments. It's a concerto that I listened to very often during a certain period of my life, on vinyl, the same version that was used for the film. There was something almost too evident in this choice: a film with four characters, a concerto with four pianos. But the tone was set and afterwards we were never able to separate ourselves from it. The music carried us and gave us confidence in what we were doing.

Many things happened during the editing process. Many questions crossed my mind concerning the story's ultimate meaning. I decided not to close the door, in other words to leave the film open to discussion and interpretation.

The final image then isn't an image of a couple. Concerning the couple, I didn't want a conclusion, because in my mind it is once and for all an unsolvable, inexhaustible question. So I preferred to leave the audience with the image of a father and daughter, whose relationship is appeased, the image of a successful transition, even if Fréhel's song adds a note of melancholy to this ending.

Then, is love "lost?" Like Fréhel's lovers?

Yes, but the love was there. It existed. And so did desire.

ANNE VILLACÈQUE

After majoring in Philosophy, then completing film studies at Fémis film school, Anne Villacèque directed documentaries and then fiction, in turn. Her first feature film, *Little Darling*, was chosen for the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 2000. *Weekends* is her third feature film for cinema.

FILMOGRAPHY

2013	WEEKENDS – feature film
2011	E-LOVE – Television film - Forum de Berlin 2011 – SACD Prize 2011 TV New Talent Award
2007	THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF MARRIED LIFE – documentary
2005	RIVIERA – feature film – In official competition at Locarno
2003	HEY! GIRLS – documentary
2001	NEZHA, THE SERVANT - film documentary
2000	LITTLE DARLING – feature film – Gan Foundation – Director's Fortnight, Cannes
1998	THE MISFORTUNES OF VIRTUE - documentary
1996	THREE LOVE STORIES OF VANESSA – documentary – Jean Lods Prize – SCAM young talent award
1995	EMBRASSER POUR EMBRASSER – short film documentary
1993	DEUX PETITES AMOUREUSES – short film documentary

KARIN VIARD

CINEMA FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 WEEKENDS Anne VILLACÈQUE
LOVE IS THE PERFECT CRIME Jean-Marie and Arnaud Larrieu
LULU IN THE NUDE Solveig ANSPACH
Sarat Film Festival, best actress award
- 2012 ON AIR Pierre PINAUD
- 2011 SKYLAB Julie DELPY
MY PIECE OF THE PIE Cédric KLAPISCH
POLISSE MAIWENN
Crystal Globe award, best actress
- 2010 POTICHE (Trophy Wife) François OZON
NOTHING TO DECLARE Dany BOON
- 2009 CHANGE OF PLANS Danielle THOMPSON
MY FATHER'S GUEST Anne LE NY
- 2008 PARIS Cédric KLAPISCH
BABY BLUES Diane BERTRAND
HAPPY END Jean-Marie and Arnaud LARRIEU
- 2007 IN MOM'S HEAD Carine TARDIEU
ALL ABOUT ACTRESSES MAIWENN
- 2006 AMBITIOUS Catherine CORSINI
Alpe d'Huez Comedy film festival, best actress award
LA FACE CACHÉE Bernard CAMPAN
TRUE ENOUGH Sam KARMANN
LES RANDONNEURS À SAINT-TROPEZ Philippe HAREL
- 2005 THE AX COSTA-GAVRAS
HELL Danis TANOVIC
- 2004 THE EX-WIFE OF MY LIFE Josiane BALASKO
THE CHILDREN Christian VINCENT
- 2003 THE ROLE OF HER LIFE François FAVRAT
THE HOOK Thomas VINCENT
- 2002 SUMMER THINGS Michel BLANC
Cesar for best actress in a supporting role
FRANCE BOUTIQUE Tonie MARSHALL
- 2001 CHILDREN'S PLAY Lournet TUEL
A HELL OF A DAY Marion VERNOUX
TIME OUT Laurent CANTET
- 2000 ENCHANGED INTERLUDE Michel SPINOSA
- 1999 MES AMIS Michel HAZANAVICIUS
CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY Diane KURYS
- 1998 THE NEW EVE Catherine CORSINI
BATTLE CRIES Solveig ANSPACH
Cesar for Best actress and Lumiere Awards best actress
- 1996 FOURBI Alain TANNER
LES VICTIMES Patrick GRANDPERRET
HIKERS Philippe HAREL

1995 WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT ME? Christian VINCENT
LA HAINE / HATE Mathieu KASSOVITZ
ADULTERY : A USER'S GUIDE Christine PASCAL

1994 THE FAVORITE SON Nicole GARCIA
FAST Dante DESARTHE
THE SEPARATION Christian VINCENT
UNE VISITE (film short) Philippe HAREL
TAKE ME AWAY Michel SPINOSA

1993 WHAT A WOMAN WANTS Gérard JUMEL
HEADS ABOVE WATHER Xavier DURRINGER

1992 LITTLE NOTHINGS Cédric KLAPSICH

1991 DELICATESSEN CARO & JEUNET
25 DÉCEMBRE 1958 – 10:36 (short film) Diane BERTRAND

1990 TATIE DANIELLE Étienne CHATILLIEZ

Noémie LVOVSKY

FILMOGRAPHY as an ACTRESS

2013 WEEKENDS Anne VILLACÈQUE
MY OLD LADY Israël HOROVITZ
SADNESS CLUB Vincent MARIETTE
ÉTATS DE FEMMES Katia LEWKOWICZ
JACKY IN WOMAN'S KINGDOM Riad SATTOUF
CHEZ NOUS C'EST TROIS CLAUDE DUTY

2012 CAMILLE REWINDS Noémie LVOVSKY
FAREWELL MY QUEEN Benôit JACQUOT
COMING HOME Frédéric VIDEAU

2011 17 GIRLS Delphine and Muriel COULIN
SKYLAB Julie DELPY
HOUSE OF TOLERANCE Bertrand BONELLO
Nominated for best actress in a supporting role César

2010 GUILTY Vincent GARENQ

2009 ENSEMBLE NOUS ALLONS VIVRE UNE TRÈS TRÈS GRANDE
HISTOIRE D'AMOUR Pascal THOMAS
FREE HANDS Brigitte SY
COPACABANA Marc FITOUSSI
THE FRENCH KISSERS Riad SATTOUF
Nominated for best actress in a supporting role César2010
BUS PALLADIUM Christopher THOMPSON
COCO Gad ELMALEH

2009 UNLIKELY ROOMMATES Emilie DELEUZE

2008 A SIMPLE HEART Marion LAINE

2007 ACTRESSES Valéria BRUNI TEDESCHI
Nominated for best actress in a supporting role César2008

2006 L'ÉCOLE POUR TOUS Eric ROCHANT
LE GRAND APPARTEMENT Pascal THOMAS

2005 ONE STAYS, THE OTHER LEAVES Claude BERRI
BACKSTAGE Emmanuelle BERCOT
Nominated for best actress in a supporting role César 2004

2004 KINGS AND QUEEN Arnaud DESPLECHIN
ILLUSTRE INCONNUE Marc FITOUSSI

2003 FRANCE BOUTIQUE Tonie MARSHALL

2002 IF I WERE A RICH MAN Gérard BITTON

2001 MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS Yvan ATTAL
Nominated for best actress in a supporting role César 2002

JACQUES GAMBLIN

CINEMA FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 WEEKENDS Anne VILLACÈQUE
24 JOURS Alexandre ARCADY
HIPPOCRATES Thomas LILTI
- 2012 L'ÉPREUVE DE LA VIE Nils TAVERNIER
PARIS COUNTDOWN Edgar MARIE
- 2011 BLIND MIND Xavier PALUD
DEAR THEO (short film) Paul LAVOIE
- 2010 HOLIDAYS BY THE SEA Pascal RABATÉ
THE FIRST MAN Gianni AMELIO
- 2009 JUST THE THREE OF US Renaud BERTRAND
THE NAMES OF LOVE Michel LECLERC
- 2008 INSPECTOR BELLAMY Claude CHABROL
Van Gogh Brush with Genius François BERTRAND
- 2007 THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE Rémi BEZANÇON
A WIDOW AT LAST Isabelle MERGAULT
- 2006 THE TIGER BRIGADES Jérôme CORNUAU
LES IRRÉDUCTIBLES Renaud BERTRAND
SERKO Joël FARGES
IN YOUR WAKE David OELHOFFEN
FRAGILE Martin VALENTE
- 2005 HELL Danis TANOVIC
- 2004 HOLY LOLA Bertrand TAVERNIER
25 DEGREES IN WINTER Stéphane VUILLET
- 2003 NICKEL AND DIME Sam KARMANN
- 2002 CARNAGE Delphine GLEIZE
SAFE CONDUCT Bertrand TAVERNIER
Silver Bear Best actor 2002 – Berlin International Film Festival
- 2001 BELLA CIAO Stéphane GIUSTI
MADEMOISELLE Philippe LIORET
- 2000 CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLANDS Jean BECKER
THE COLOR OF LIES Claude CHABROL
- 1998 DR. AKAGI Shohei IMAMURA
- 1997 MAUVAIS GENRE Laurent BÉNÉGUI
PROPER ATTIRE REQUIRED Philippe LIORET
- 1996 PÉDALE DOUCE Gabriel AGHION
UNE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR À LA CON Henri-Paul KORCHIA
- 1995 'TIL DEATH DO US PART Robert GUÉDIGUIAN
LE PETIT MARGUERY Laurent BÉNÉGUI
LES MISÉRABLES Claude LELOUCH
- 1994 GIRLS WITH GUNS Jean-Paul SALOMÉ
ADIEU PRINCESSE Jorge-Paixao DA COSTA
- 1993 ALL THAT...FOR THIS?! Claude LELOUCH
- 1992 THE BEAUTIFUL STORY Claude LELOUCH
- 1990 THERE WERE DAYS...AND MOONS Claude LELOUCH

ULRICH TUKUR

SELECTIVE FILMOGRPAHY

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2013 | WEEKENDS Anne VILLACÈQUE |
| 2012 | HOUSTON Bastian GÜNTHER
EXIT MARRAKECH Caroline LINKE |
| 2011 | ZETTL Helmut DIETL
WHEN PIGS HAVE WINGS Sylvain ESTIBAL |
| 2010 | WITHIN THE WHIRLWIND Marleen GORRIS
LARGO WINCH 2 Jérôme SALLE
DER GROSSE KATER Wolfgang PANZER |
| 2009 | THE WHITE RIBBON Michael HANEKE
CITY OF WAR: THE STORY OF JOHN RABE Florian GALLENBERGER |
| 2008 | SÉRAPHINE Martin PROVOST |
| 2005 | THE LIVES OF OTHERS Florian HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK
THE AX COSTA-GAVRAS |
| 2002 | SOLARIS Steven SODERBERGH
AMEN COSTA-GAVRAS |

CAST

Christine Karin VIARD

Sylvette Noémie LVOVSKY

Jean Jacques GAMBLIN

Ulrich Ulrich TUKUR

Pascale Aurélia PETIT

Charlotte Iliana ZABETH

Françoise Gisèle CASADESUS

The boy on the beach Paul BARTEL

The antique dealer Philippe REBOOT

The woman at the supermarket Aurore BROUTIN

Flo Laure CALAMY

Marc-Antoine Marc BODNAR

Charlotte 2 Jeanne RUFF

CREW

Director Anne VILLACÈQUE

Screenplay and dialogue Anne VILLACÈQUE and Sophie FILLIÈRES

In collaboration with Gilles TAURAND

Cinematography Pierre MILON

Editor Nelly QUETTIER

Sound Yolande DECARSIN, Jean MALLET

Production design Dorian MALOINE

Costumes Bethsabée DREYFUS

Casting Maya SERRULLA

Produced by Nicolas BLANC

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