Synopsis

With lots on his mind, Max takes off for a long weekend alone in his beach house. Three years after they all fell out, his buddies rock up to spring a surprise birthday party on him there. The surprise is total and Max's welcome nothing less than reserved. He insists on presenting a happy front that rings hollow and lands the whole group in unexpected situations.

Children have grown, babies have been born, priorities have changed. Separations and the ups-and-downs of life… When everybody decides to stop telling their little white lies, what remains of friendship?

Interview GUILLAUME CANET

**How did the idea of a sequel to *Little White Lies* germ in your mind?**

For a really long time, the idea was totally alien to me, due to the painful memories I had of the whole experience. *Little White Lies* grew out of a curious context: a long stay in the hospital with MRSA and septicemia complications. There was a chance I would die but none of my friends came to visit me. That brutal ordeal and bitter experience of friendship drove me to write *Little White Lies* in six weeks, which explains the movie's raw emotions that some people found excessive. Some characters reflected the downsides of my personality, or things I don't like in human nature. The shoot was not a whole lot of fun either. And, above all, the day it was released, one of my best buddies was killed in a motorcycle accident. That shut the whole thing down for me. Obviously, the movie's success was completely anecdotal in the light of that tragedy. So, I shelved *Little White Lies* for years until I stumbled across it on TV one evening. I found myself laughing, feeling moved and enjoying the encounter with the characters. But it still didn't occur to me to prolong the experience in another film.

**When did the idea click into place?**

During the promotion of *Rock n'Roll.* It struck me that I'm reaching an age where we—the people close to me and myself—do not have the same reaction to things as ten years ago. In that time, we may have lost a parent, got remarried or had children. Our priorities are no longer the same. We have less time to do things, and so we tend to talk to each other more honestly. That made me want to plunge the characters of *Little White Lies* into situations where old scores are settled. "Being friends for twenty years doesn't mean we're friends forever." And to see if, when all their home truths have been said, they'll stick together or not. That's why the movie begins after the big fallout with Max (François Cluzet), whom none of the bunch has seen for years until they decide to pay him a surprise visit on his birthday. It couldn't be worse timing for him, given the trouble his business is in and the personal problems he's having, with his recent separation from Vero (Valérie Bonneton).

**The tone of *Little White Lies2* seems even darker than the first one.**

This film is more cynical, in the sense that the characters say things to each other's faces rather than keeping quiet. And the outlook is bleak in some cases because they have lost their illusions. I continue to show imperfect characters that keep their problems buttoned up inside, but the underlying idea is that together, despite their disagreements, they will end up stronger and better able to withstand events. In other words, there is a light at the end of the darkness you mention. I just wanted to avoid tipping into sentimentality, as may have been the case at times in *Little White Lies.* I've changed. I wanted the emotion to be taut and restrained, never plaintive.

**It took only six weeks to write *Little White Lies.* Was the writing process longer for *Little White Lies 2*?**

Yes, because this time there were several stages. I started out writing with Rodolphe Lauga, who helped me get my story down on paper. Batting it back and forth with him really inspired and motivated me. He added a humorous twist that I adore, and that gives the film a really fresh flavor. After a while, however, I needed to face my characters alone and reappropriate the story, boiling it back down to the essence of what I wanted to say. I wrote another draft and gave it to my actors to read. They literally threw it back in my face! They didn't see the point of doing a sequel if that's all I had for them. Obviously that cranked up the pressure. If any one of them said no, the whole adventure would be over before it began. In hindsight, I see the positive impact of their reactions, which encouraged me to push the situations I had developed to their logical conclusions. I got back to work, and six weeks before the shoot I finally met with enthusiastic reactions. Despite all the ups-and-downs, it was a great pleasure to reconnect with these characters.

**Among them, there are two new faces, starting with Alain, played by José Garcia.**

Pretty early in the writing process, I decided that Max and Vero had separated. In *Little White Lies,* they were the perfect, steady couple, surrogate parents to all the other characters, welcoming them to their vacation home and taking care of everything for them. Their breakup would obviously create tensions in the group. And I dreamed up the character of Alain, a rival of Max's in the restaurant business. Alain is a shark who tries to take everything Max has—his wine, his house, his ex-wife. In my eyes, he represents the Max of nine years earlier. Combative and self-confident. A juggernaut. A bundle of energy. Max's younger alter-ego.

**Why choose José Garcia to play him?**

Initially, I was thinking of Yvan Attal, who was a fantastic scene partner in *Rock n'Roll,* but there were scheduling issues. The night before Yvan told me he couldn't do it, I had been sitting next to José at a dinner party, and I never stopped laughing. It occurred to me that his gift of gab, humor and energy would be perfect for Alain. That dinner was a very happy coincidence.

**The second new face is Sabine, Max's girlfriend. How did you devise this character?**

I wanted her to be very kind and gentle, very understanding with him. Far removed from Vero's authoritarian streak. Sabine's life so far has not been all fun. She had to battle with disease. Then she met Max, who is older than her, and fell in love. She is very indulgent of his cranky side.

**To play Sabine, you chose Clémentine Baert, who recently co-starred with you in Cédric Anger's *L'Amour est une fête.***

I was looking for an actress that the public might not know, in order to heighten the disconnect with the rest of the group, whose faces are all instantly recognizable. I had a very precise idea of what she should look like, but I took a fairly unorthodox approach by googling "French actresses" and poring over hundreds of photos to find the best fit with my mental picture of the character. I drew up a shortlist of actresses whose previous movies I watched. Clémentine was on that list, and suddenly I remembered thinking she was fabulous in Cédric's film. She was the obvious choice.

**Were some of the characters especially tricky to write this time around?**

The easiest for me was definitely Antoine (Laurent Lafitte), because he is the one who has changed least, a painful fact that the others don't fail to pick up on! The story of Vincent (Benoît Magimel) with his new boyfriend took me the most time to get down. Primarily because, of all of them, Vincent is the one who is least like me—unlike him, I never fell in love with one of my buddies—but above all because I wanted to avoid taking easy options, such as making him fall back in love with his wife. It took me some time to pin down what I wanted to say with Vincent: he is a straight man who struggles to come to terms with his gay side, and when he does, he does not necessarily achieve the emotional fulfillment he expected. He undoubtedly feels happier with a man than a woman, but he can still desire his ex-wife, without wanting them to get back together.

**What was it like for you on set compared to *Little White Lies*?**

I was less nervous. Less sad, especially. Shooting *Little White Lies* was a grueling experience for me. I remember one night when Christophe Offenstein, my DP, found me alone in the living room sobbing my eyes out. This time around, I could take a step back from the story, and more importantly I had greater experience of managing the tensions and mix-ups that are inevitable on an ensemble movie. I just got on with things.

**So your interactions with the cast must have been different?**

On *Little White Lies,* they were in happy-go-lucky, midsummer mode, nowhere near the levels of discipline required to make an ensemble movie, which must be blocked really tightly to make sure all the characters get to shine. I blew up at them several times. That was not the case this time. Nine years have passed. They are all more mature and professional, and much more switched on as a result.

**How did you work with DP Christophe Offenstein to define the look of the movie?**

I chose to shoot off-season to capture a different light and atmosphere compared to the first movie, which was set in the middle of the summer vacation. That's why we chose to open the story on a rainy day with the deck of the house littered with broken branches. Similarly, throughout the film, we pushed the envelope on the density and darkness, while not completely erasing the light, so we're hinting at the color of the space the characters inhabit. Since Christophe and I both know the region very well, we instinctively knew what time of the day was best for a particular light. In terms of framing, as usual, I relied heavily on long lenses to achieve a depth of field, with some characters maybe out of focus in the foreground, to create a proximity, a connection between actors and with the audience.

**As in all your films, the soundtrack plays a crucial role. What were you aiming for this time?**

Listening to music is a source of inspiration when I'm writing, so I have the film's playlist in my mind before the shoot. On set, I play the relevant song before we shoot the scene. This film has the same soul feel that dominated the soundtrack of *Little White Lies.* It's no coincidence, for example, that we hear Nina Simone, whose cover of *My Way* accompanied the ending of *Little White Lies.* There was a clear desire for continuity in the soundtrack of the two films.

**Did you restructure the story much in the editing room?**

Yes, and it was another tricky stage in the process. *Little White Lies 2* is shorter than the first one. I shot a lot less and left less room for improvisation than on the first one, but I still had to cut scenes I loved. The major difficulty is striking the right balance between the various storylines while bringing each character fully to life and resisting the temptation to give some more space than others at times.

**Do you already want to be reunited with them in ten years' time?**

Right now, no, because I have nothing more to say, but ten years ago I couldn't picture it happening, so never say never. There's a chance that when I'm 55, I'll think, hey, why not? It also depends on the public's reaction to *Little White Lies 2.*

Interview François Cluzet

**What made you agree to do *Little White Lies 2*?**

When the offer came in, I was delighted at the prospect of working again with Guillaume, who directed me in two big hits. It was also an opportunity to reconnect with a character, which has never happened to me before, and with my fellow cast members and their characters, against the backdrop of so many shared experiences and memories. So, on paper, it was a very enticing idea, but it had to be something more than an old pals' reunion. That's where Guillaume's screenplay really impressed me, starting with how he captures the passing of the years in the film's opening. It's immediately apparent that Ludo's death has had a terrible impact on the bunch of friends, and so the tone of this picture will be different than the first one.

**What has happened to Max, your character, in the intervening years?**

Max struggled to get over Ludo's death and lost his self-confidence. He admits it. He lost everything: business success, his wife, and his friends, who were a second family for him. But pride prevents him from revealing the reality, especially the severe financial trouble he is in. He finds himself caught between the old, high-roller Max and the Max he has become, riddled with self-doubt. Deep down, I think Max is the perfect candidate for life on a desert island, where he's no trouble for anyone. Right now, however, he feels unloved and alone. In reality, his new girlfriend Sabine makes their relationship work because she genuinely loves him, irrespective of his financial or social status. But there is a sense that their love is a step on the way to a new life for Max.

**Was it easy to slip back into the character?**

It was interesting to try to imagine what had happened in the intervening years, and especially how he broke up with Vero. Coming up with those answers was part of my process before the shoot, with the sole aim of freeing my mind on set and giving my scene partners all I have. That's when the character truly comes to life, and even more so with a director like Guillaume who plays to perfection on the interactions between his various characters.

**What was the shoot like for you, compared to the first *Little White Lies*?**

No different. Firstly because Guillaume always works with the same people, so when you walk on set, it's hard to believe nine years have gone by between the two movies. And secondly because it's exhilarating to work opposite actors with such range, sensitivity and authenticity. Another similarity between the two shoots was the intensity. Guillaume is like that.

**What appeals to you about working with Guillaume Canet the director?**

My trust in him is total. I never argue with his choices because I know that on top of writing the dialogue, he has lived and breathed it. It will, therefore, be pitch perfect. Guillaume possesses a particularly truthful sensitivity, which gives the film its grace and expresses itself all the way into the editing room. I'm impressed by the completely fluid balance between the characters. He is endlessly creative and never gives up. Like a world-class athlete. Over the years, he has become a more confident director, capable of more audacious and powerful choices. As a director, he has no time for sentiment, while he is the exact opposite as a friend. It's a delicious irony because his films always revolve around love and friendship. His friendship comes out in his loyalty to his actors, and I'm a prime example.

**What will be your abiding memory of this adventure?**

The moment before the shoot when we all gathered around a table for a read-through. We were all slightly intimidated by the prospect of being reunited and discovering the new script. Then, as we progressed through the scenes, we realized that Guillaume had succeeded in taking all the characters forward without leaving anyone by the wayside. When the table-read was over, we looked at each other with a colossal desire to get started, to take up the challenge he had laid down.

Interview MARION COTILLARD

**What made you want to participate in the second *Little White Lies* adventure?**

Obviously, I was eager to find out what Guillaume had in store for the characters almost a decade later, but as usual I was anxious. You're always anxious to read a script by someone you love, respect and admire, even though I know Guillaume is always to open to discussion about your character. He puts so much of himself into each film. He always brings real depth to the subject, while working hard to dream up the best setting for his story. I read several drafts of *Little White Lies 2.* I'm very tough with Guillaume because I know how talented he is and how far he can go. From my vantage point, I try to encourage him to get there. That's why I didn't say yes right away. I waited until I was entirely won over. And when that moment comes, it's sheer delight! The emotion of being reunited with the characters overwhelms you.

**What has happened to Marie, your character, in the intervening years?**

I was really surprised with what Guillaume had come up with for her. In the first film, Marie was the most luminous and idealistic of the bunch. There was a hint of fantasy in her desire to travel, to understand humans and the world. Barely a decade later, she's the most disillusioned of all of them. Partly because she has found it hardest to move on from the tragedy that affected their lives—the death of their friend Ludo. In the sequel, Marie is still the misfit. She still smokes weed, but tops it up with booze now. Her nonchalance has a different resonance now, particularly in her relationship with her son, whose very existence she seems to deny, like in her opening scene when she forgets him in the taxi.

**Did your bring a different approach to Marie for *Little White Lies 2*?**

No. I had drawn inspiration from several people I knew to create her, and I did the same this time, adding one extra person to complete the set.

**Was the atmosphere on set different than on the first movie?**

Yes, because we all knew how tough on Guillaume the original shoot had been. Back then, he told us to let ourselves go in order to develop a natural chemistry that audiences would see on screen, but he wasn't able to keep us in check. The shoot was out of control, and that hurt him. We didn't realize at the time, but we found out when he articulated things during the promotion of the movie. In the light of that, we behaved differently this time so we were more present and receptive for Guillaume, while keeping the vivacity in our interactions and without rejecting what we really are—a bunch of buddies who like having a blast together.

**What most appeals to you about working with Guillaume Canet the director?**

The fact that he is totally in his element. It's beautiful, and moving even, to see someone achieving fulfillment, no pun intended. Despite all the difficulties inherent in shooting a film, his pleasure at being on set translates itself into very creative energy. Not to mention that he is a fabulous director of actors.

**What is your view of his take on friendship?**

Guillaume tackles the things that happen in his life head-on, with a truly honest gaze. Sometimes it's an inspiration for his writing, and sometimes it works the other way around: something he has dreamed up will resonate unconsciously in his personal life. His take on friendship has evolved since *Little White Lies.* He has worked almost non-stop in recent years, which has led to him gradually withdrawing into himself and away from his friends. That's exactly what he shows through the character of Max in *Little White Lies 2.* It's very easy to grow apart from the people with whom you used to share everything. In that respect, he shows that friendship is like love: it soon crumbles if it isn't underpinned by powerful moments and shared experiences.

**What will be your abiding memory of *Little White Lies 2*?**

The first day of shooting, all together again in Max's house. It was such a strong feeling, which resonated in the way the characters—and we, the actors, in our lives and work—have evolved and grown over the years. For Guillaume, this film was a longstanding dream. He had no idea if it would ever see the light of day, until he finally came up with a script that he liked and won us all over. Shooting a sequel is always a risky undertaking. It was logical for there to be doubts on all sides, so that first day, seeing his dream come to life was a moment of rare intensity, emotion and excitement.

Interview GILLES LELLOUCHE

**What made you want to be part of *Little White Lies 2*?**

*Little White Lies* was a really important movie for all of us. There was an immediate thrill and excitement at the idea of being reunited with the whole gang and with my character. Followed by the fear that the second movie would not hit the same heights. It was an unprecedented challenge for me, but I had complete trust in Guillaume. We had long discussions about the character and, like the others, I raised my apprehension about making a sequel. All the actors read each draft of the screenplay with the highest of expectations. We were very vigilant and most likely a little annoying.

**How has Eric, your character, changed in the intervening years?**

*Little White Lies* was inspired by Guillaume's memories and impressions of moments we all shared on vacation together. Likewise, for this film, he drew on what we have become, how our lives, moods and personalities have developed. In the first movie, Eric was a hyper version of real-life me. He was the most immature of the gang. In the second movie, he's a father raising a kid on his own, and he's the most mature of all of them. I was expecting flip Eric, so I was pumped to find that Guillaume had concocted a deeper, subtler, more human Eric. You feel that the passing of time has been beneficial to Eric.

**Was it easy to reconnect with the character after nearly a decade?**

It soon clicked back into place. Likewise, his interactions with the others. But the film also reflects the years that have gone by. Winding up in the same location with the same cast, same characters and same crew—all nearly ten years older—was a strange feeling, especially for someone like me, with a natural tendency to get nostalgic. I was more shaken up than I expected on the first day of shooting. And it all helped me find Eric. The film and the shoot were like taking two steps back, then two steps forward again.

**Was the atmosphere on set different this time around?**

The major difference lay in the fact that, in a decade, we have all moved on in our private lives and in our careers. With the obvious exception of François, we were all up-and-coming young actors back then. I have to confess, I was apprehending a real battle of egos, but it never happened. Guillaume was also much more relaxed. I know now, from personal experience, how tricky it is to direct a large cast and still make each actor feel special. Guillaume had warned his crew that they would be up against a crazy gang of indisciplined, loudmouth freaks, and so they had to be even more focused than usual. In fact, it was the opposite. We were better behaved and far more serious than on the first movie. The atmosphere was more professional.

**What appeals to you about Guillaume Canet the director? Has he changed a lot in a decade?**

Guillaume hasn't changed. He knows exactly where he wants to be and goes there with astonishing perspicacity and resolution. He's always one move ahead. And when we work together, our friendship drives us to be harder on each other than on anyone else. There are no quick fixes or easy ways out. We work much faster because, almost like brothers, we know what the other will do, so we cut through a lot of nonsense. Sometimes it can hurt, but usually it's for the best.

**What memory will you take away of this whole adventure?**

The first day of shooting, when we all returned to that house, went back through that gate. Like our characters in the movie. I was overwhelmed. It was like delving into a trove of memories ten years on. Lots of images, feelings and smells came rushing back. It's that idea of throwing yourself back to propel yourself forward.

Interview LAURENT LAFITTE

**What made you want to participate in *Little White Lies 2*?**

It had never occurred to me that there would be a sequel. It was Guillaume who drove it along, while keeping us all in the loop from the start of the project, so we could all discuss our character with him. I have to say, we didn't go easy on him. It must have been tough for him at times, brutal even, simply because we all set the bar so high, especially Guillaume. There is a special commitment, and extra pressure, involved in making a sequel to a box-office success. We were all eager to do it, but not if anyone felt halfhearted about it.

**What has happened in the life of Antoine, your character, in the intervening years?**

Out of all of them, Antoine is the one who has developed least, who has stayed pretty much the same as in *Little White Lies.* On a personal and social level. Remember that interactions in the group are strongly influenced by issues of status, success and failure. Antoine works as personal assistant to his friend Eric, who has reached out to help him, but never misses an opportunity to put him in a humiliating position. Antoine endures it all, but his naivety also means he is the only one to really connect with the children. In some respects, he is an overgrown teen, who innocently believes he'll build a bright future for himself. While that makes him endearing, at 45 years old, it's maybe time for him to get moving.

**Was it easy for you to slip back into character?**

No, he didn't come right back to me. To be honest, I had a kind of battle of egos with the character. Antoine was my first major role in movies. Since then, I've worked on lots of different projects and fewer comedies with naive, aging teen-type characters. Becoming Antoine again gave me a sense of regressing as an actor, so I initially resisted putting myself back in his skin. Guillaume pointed it out right away. He was seeing me, not Antoine. He was completely right. If I couldn't throw myself into it and have fun, I should have turned the role down. That unblocked everything.

**What was it like on set in comparison with *Little White Lies*?**

The way we get along has hardly changed. Personally, I hadn't been back to Cap-Ferret since the *Little White Lies* shoot, so there was an element of nostalgia that was reassuring but also kind of scary—going back to a place that was so important in my life—especially as I hate looking back.

**What appeals to you in Guillaume Canet's work as a director?**

On *Little White Lies,* he seemed extremely stressed out. It felt like he was unhappy out of frustration at not being able to be part of the gang he was filming. He has often said that he didn't enjoy the shoot. This time around, his anxiety was exactly where it needed to be—focused on his directing and on how to get across what he expected of us. So everything seemed more enjoyable for him. Nothing is ever simple on a film set, but this time the difficulties were more tangible.

**What do you think of his take on friendship?**

I see Guillaume as a loner who's afraid of being alone. He is very independent, wants to experiment and always needs to follow through on whatever he decides to do. That requires a form of solitude, but with a sense of being supported and loved. It's in contradiction with his independent spirit, but that dichotomy sets the tone for the *Little White Lies* movies. This is a bunch of good friends who sometimes lob grenades at each other. That's where the two films get their edge from. It's not a teddy bears' picnic. They all have their ideal vision of friendship, and dream of reaching their own expectations, but the reality is different because they're not made that way. It's even more obvious in *Little White Lies 2* because it revolves around a simple question: do we have to be friends now because we've been friends for fifteen years? More broadly, what makes people stay friends?

**What image sticks in your mind of this whole adventure?**

The sunrise, where we're all sitting in a row on the lawn of the house. The cliché is soon shattered by an automatic sprinkler whirring into action. That scene sums up the movie. An ideal of friendship colliding with reality.

Interview BENOÎT MAGIMEL

**What made you want to be part of *Little White Lies 2*?**

When Guillaume called to offer me the movie, I immediately said yes. Partly because Guillaume is my friend, and partly because I was interested in the idea of rediscovering Vincent nearly a decade later. In movies, growing old with a character is incredibly rare. Hit movies often try to surf the wave to squeeze as much out of it as possible, but Guillaume's thinking is just the opposite. His integrity is genuine and he felt a real need to reveal more through this great bunch of buddies. The more personal it is, the more universal it becomes.

**What has happened to Antoine in the intervening years?**

Obviously, he continues to share a strong bond with his ex-wife Isabelle. A love like theirs cannot be undone. It's just that, at some point, they stopped taking pleasure in each other's company. Vincent realized that he enjoyed being with his buddy Max more than with his wife. That led to him falling in love with Max. It wasn't physical attraction. Now, years later, Vincent is with a guy who is the same age as Max. Together, they have what Vincent would have liked to have with Max, but Max could not handle his best friend's vision of him. It undermined their friendship. It feels like Vincent tried everything to reassure Max and preserve their friendship, but it didn't work. Except that despite years of not seeing each other, despite grievances and sore points, friendship prevails. With Max and all the others. The need to be reunited overwhelmed them.

**Was it is easy to slip back into character?**

It felt very natural, as if he'd only been gone a day or so. It was very pleasant to rediscover his gentleness, his uncommon sensitivity. Vincent is always looking out for the others, and for Max in particular, of course.

**What was it like on set compared to *Little White Lies*?**

After that shoot, we all pledged never to make another ensemble movie again! None of us had been able to provide the necessary discipline for a film that requires take after take so that the viewpoint of each character comes across on screen. We all let ourselves go and it was a battle for Guillaume to keep us in line. That was exacerbated by his sense of being excluded, which obviously created tensions. That was all going through our minds when we arrived on set this time around, but Guillaume had more control and sense of perspective, so everything felt less intense.

**What appeals to you in the work of Guillaume Canet?**

I'm in awe of his hyperactivity. I can't work out how he combines work with all his various passions. As soon as the shoot was over, he was heading off to a horseriding competition! He goes faster than everyone else. He already has the film edited in his head when he's on set. That made the shoot a kind of long-distance sprint. Also, Guillaume has that rare talent for inspiring people, cast and crew alike, to follow him. Thanks to regular meetings, briefings and updates. I rarely saw such a committed crew. He creates an environment where people want to get to work.

**What do you think of his take on friendship?**

With this film, Guillaume offers a very thoughtful consideration of the times when you feel deserted by your friends even though you may have provoked their desertion. Friendship means not holding a grudge over time. Nobody's perfect, and Guillaume very subtly points out that you need to accept people's flaws, their moments of cowardice, their weird moments, without being over-critical or judgmental. At the same time, you need to get stuff off your chest to keep the relationship healthy. Or else there's a big chance of winding up all alone.

**What's the first thing that springs to mind when you think of *Little White Lies 2*?**

The scene where we're all sitting on the lawn outside the house. A moment of serenity, with us all being there for each other. That sums up every actor's attitude on set, giving as much in front of camera as off camera when just feeding scene partners lines. We had each other's backs. That was really moving.

Interview PASCALE ARBILLOT

**What made you want to participate in *Little White Lies 2*?**

It's not every day you get a chance to be reunited, nine years on, with a bunch of friends and characters you built from scratch to become a part of audiences' collective memory. In theory, I was very keen, and when I read the screenplay, Guillaume's visionary talents leaped off the page. Not everything is written down, but you know exactly what he wants and where he wants each scene to take you. I'm swept off my feet by the way he addresses issues of friendship that have always intrigued me. The question at the heart of *Little White Lies 2* is fascinating. Deep down, why continue to see the same friends? I have always feared friendships getting stuck in a rut more than relationships. The idea of seeing the same people for 15-20 years and playing out the same role—yes-man, comic, pain in the ass, and so on—can really freak me out. Especially as, generally, you don't leave your friends. But that's precisely what the film is about. What does it mean to leave your friends? Is it betrayal? Is it being honest with yourself? The screenplay brilliantly captured those themes and made me even more excited about being a part of the movie.

**How has Isabelle developed over the past nine years?**

Incredibly. It was as if she was restrained. Now she is released, alive, sunny and happy. Which clearly does not stop her feeling afraid or being hurt. She got a real slap in the face but she picked herself up and moved on.

**Was it easy to slip back into character?**

It was easy to be Isabelle again, but a lot less easy to play a woman who's happy. It's a problem I often encounter! Anyway, I never tried to analyze her, I didn't try to second-guess things. For instance, I never wondered if she had forgiven Vincent, her husband, or not. I took her one day at a time, one scene at a time.

**Was the atmosphere on set different than on the first movie?**

Yes, because there was a kind of insouciance on *Little White Lies,* whereas this time around, we were much more aware of our responsibilities. Just like careers, friendships develop in different ways. Guillaume was smart enough to shoot the movie in chronological order. In the opening scenes, when everybody meets up again for the first time, we were sniffing around each other, and Guillaume made sure he got that on camera. You can see it's all a bit awkward, exactly as it's supposed to be. That sets the tone for the film and marks the beginning of a story that culminates in scenes where the atmosphere seems to be straight out of the first movie.

**What appeals to you in working with Guillaume Canet the director?**

His insane energy. His enthusiasm. The fact that he is always two or three steps ahead. Since *Little White Lies,* he has acquired even more assurance and control of technical issues and the set, without losing any of his enthusiasm or his love for actors. The striking thing is how he spots everything in his actors—the tiniest glance or movement—and incorporates it in the scene. He is always ready to listen and he listens well.

**What image of this adventure will stay with you?**

Us all, soaked to the skin, with Guillaume in a wetsuit gleefully swimming around to give instructions to the three cameras filming us. That sums up the energy and enthusiasm of the experience.

Interview CLÉMENTINE BAERT

**How did you join the cast of *Little White Lies 2*?**

As if in a dream! One morning, I received a call from Guillaume, who told me he really liked my scene with Gilles Lellouche in Cédric Anger's *L'Amour est une fête,* and asked if we could meet. Right away. When I got to his office, he asked me if I'd seen *Little White Lies.* It so happens that's the only one of his films I haven't seen. I told him so, obviously. Even then, I knew enough to keep up when he started telling me about the new character Sabine in the second movie. When we were done, he just asked me if I wanted to play Sabine. My jaw hit the floor. I thought maybe it was a prank with a hidden camera! I said yes, of course, even though I had a play lined up for more or less the same dates. It took 24 hours to reorganize schedules and I was one of the gang!

**How would you define Sabine?**

Sabine is driven by her inner strength. She is slowly bouncing back after going through a hard time when she was sick. Surrounded by a bunch of buddies constantly ripping on each other, she's happy to take a back seat. Even so, while she's not the loudest, she's not in awe of them. It was a role that required an ability to listen because, deep down, what defines Sabine is her love for Max. It's real passion. She isn't a trophy wife, just the opposite. I imagine she must have had one or two serious love affairs before she met Max. She is very considerate, the kind of person who remembers people's birthdays and things. And she has finally found the guy who makes her feel whole.

**How did you prepare for the role?**

Actually, I took my inspiration from a couple I know, bound like Sabine and Max by a secret. We remain on the outside, but cannot fail to be touched. On paper, you might wonder what this gentle woman is doing with this frantic, stressed-out guy, but you soon realize she sees through his agitation. He becomes unbearable precisely because he tries too much, he is too considerate and too hard on himself. Sabine sees the generosity hidden behind the facade. And to play the character, I had a real stroke of luck, with the reality of my character mirroring my experience as an actress turning up on a set where the whole cast and crew were real buddies. Art imitating life. Besides being on top of my lines, my job involved playing with the moment, making the most of my position as this chick who rocks up and is cool with everyone, but they have other, more important issues on their minds. So the character came together on set.

**What did you enjoy about working with Guillaume Canet?**

He is an exceptional director of actors. Using his own acting experience, he knows what to say, and when to say it, to have maximum impact. He is extremely attentive and finds solutions to inextricable situations. Above all, although he lays down markers, he leaves room for you to have fun and bring something to the table. He'll let you do another take if you want, because he trusts his actors. His attention to detail means he knows exactly how a particular suggestion from an actor can improve the story he has in mind. So, he's alert to everything on set, and his precision gives the actors even more freedom. You never leave the set feeling frustrated.

**What memory from the shoot will stay with you?**

The light over Arcachon Bay. The sunrise that we all shared—cast and crew together—will always be a unique and magical memory. The fits of laughter likewise.

Interview VALÉRIE BONNETON

**What made you want to participate in *Little White Lies 2*?**

How could I say no to Guillaume? With *Little White Lies,* I had one of my best experiences in movies, and it was thanks to him, so I spontaneously wanted to come back to be reunited with them all, but I needed Vero, my character, to exist, despite her separation from Max. That provoked a hint of frustration at the prospect of being less present with the others. I needed there to be touching moments with Max despite our break-up. I discussed it in detail with Guillaume, who really took it that way in the screenplay, with the important role that the house plays as a symbol of all they built up together. It becomes a character in the movie in its own right.

**Tell us what happened to Vero in the intervening years.**

Counter-intuitively almost, she has evolved. She has stepped up and shaken off years of not daring to be herself because with a guy like Max around somebody had to look after everything. She kept everything ticking over in the house, especially when the gang came to stay. She always kept her head on her shoulders and now she lets herself go a little. She has fun. She puts herself first. It's a freedom that comes at an age when you're no longer scared to say who you are. A new life begins for her.

**How did you work on the character?**

Even after almost a decade, I hadn't forgotten Vero. I slipped straight back into her skin. Especially opposite François, an indisputably excellent actor that I know very well. Everything becomes so delightfully fluid. By the time you get on set, you've done all the heavy lifting through long discussions about the character with Guillaume. To my mind, one scene was crucial: when Vero and Max fight on the phone. We talked about it so much with Guillaume and he came up with really smart ways to use the fact that they cannot see each other. It becomes even more powerful, reinforcing the idea that now they have parallel lives. Vero is a great role to sink your teeth into because there are the moments of tension with Max, followed by much lighter moments with Alain, who provokes her to leave her comfort zone, even though she doesn't succeed in letting go completely.

**What was the shoot like for you compared to the first *Little White Lies*?**

Despite my character interacting less with the group, I think I spent more time with the others in five days on set than in the whole shoot on the first movie. Most likely because my character prevented me from joining in the fun on the first movie. This time around she has changed. I had five wonderful evenings with everyone. Over the last decade, we have all moved forward in our careers and our lives, and that engenders a definite assurance.

**What is it about Guillaume Canet's work that appeals to you?**

Guillaume constantly surprises me. He sets the bar incredibly high, while remaining very attentive even to tiny phrases that we might come up with for our characters. He is so open-minded, you can really go for it. He is also different from others in the way he works. Before the shoot, he brings together the whole cast to set out what's going on between all the characters. It's a bit like rehearsing for a play, but there is hardly ever time for it on a movie. So when we arrive on set, everything flows more easily. On top of that, he loves working to music, so he will play the tracks that will go with this scene or that scene. I am particularly sensitive to music. It immediately brings out the emotions in me. Last but not least, Guillaume has the talent to dream up comedies that transcend the genre because they are shot through with the ups-and-downs of life.

**What will be your abiding memory of the shoot?**

The breathtaking beauty of that house, which I hadn't seen for nearly ten years. It is so moving to return to a place that holds so many memories. Nostalgia just whacks you in the face.

Interview JOSÉ GARCIA

**What pictures did you have in mind of *Little White Lies* before signing up for the second movie?**

First of all, the memory of a group of fine actors. And Cap-Ferret, which does not get a lot of attention from filmmakers. And the story about a bunch of friends in the grand tradition of French comedies by Yves Robert or Jean-Marie Poiré. Above all, *Little White Lies* is a generational movie, which not only tells the story of its protagonists but of the period as a whole.

**What made you want to join the gang?**

From the first pages of the script, I realized that Guillaume had gained in depth and intensity without losing the ability to capture the spirit of the times. And the role Guillaume offered me was a gift on two levels—a comedic character who packs a real punch, and the chance to cross swords once more with François Cluzet. In Christian Vincent's *Quatre Etoiles,* my character tried to offload a house onto him, and here I find myself trying to take all he has, including his house. I think we have something going, because François is very easy to get riled up! It's a real pleasure to work with him.

**Tell us about your character. Who is Alain?**

Alain is one of Max's rivals in the restaurant trade. It's easy to imagine them putting one over on each other in various deals that they may have been involved in. Alain is hungry for success. A real competitor. Seeing Max in apparent decline, down if not yet out, Alain is desperate to take everything from him—his house, the best bottles in his wine cellar, his wife... He is a cross between Caligula and Attila. With that depraved smile and the twinkle in his eye of a guy who razes everything in his path. At the same time, he is most likely the best thing that could happen to Max, whose control freakery started to stick in everyone's throats despite his generosity. By turning everything on its head, Alain indirectly unshackles a lot of things in Max's mind.

**How did you make the character your own?**

He's a guy who mostly took shape on set, with the pleasure of working with François again, as well as Valérie Bonneton, with whom I worked on my first movie as the male lead, *La Mort du Chinois.* So I knew both my "victims" well. And I was carried along by the thrill of seducing Valérie and infuriating François without ever being too demonstrative. Alain is one of those characters who never reveals his intentions. One of those fascinating bastards to play because it's all sweetness and light. The main thing is never to force it. His phony sympathy is a delight for an actor, but it is only on set that you work out exactly where to set the dial.

**What attracted you to working with Guillaume Canet?**

First of all, Guillaume is a workaholic and a perfectionist. And I love that! He is a true craftsman in the way he pieces together the story and in his vision of the characters. But he constantly brings reality into his meticulously constructed framework of events. And he urges us, the actors, to do that, so that every scene feels fresh and natural.

**What do you think of his take on friendship?**

In *Little White Lies,* it was pretty harsh, with a lot of egotistical characters not particularly eager to see their buddy in the hospital in case it would ruin their summer vacation. Guillaume really put his finger on how easy it is for friends to take each other for granted. You wind up giving less and less while taking more and more. That's why that movie went way beyond a film about a bunch of friends. Over the years, Guillaume has matured, of course, and in this movie he brings the same acuity to other concerns and other aspects of friendship, with the characters deciding to say things to each other's face rather than keeping quiet.

**If you were allowed only one memory of the shoot, what would it be?**

Cracking up laughing with Valérie Bonneton during our sex scene, when Alain suddenly gets even more turned on after spotting a framed photo of Max near the bed. He makes the bed rock so hard it knocks the photo over. That kind of scene is always slightly awkward to shoot, never easy, but in this case it was absolutely hilarious.

CAST

Max FRANÇOIS CLUZET
Marie MARION COTILLARD
Eric GILLES LELLOUCHE
Antoine LAURENT LAFITTE

Vincent BENOÎT MAGIMEL

Isabelle PASCALE ARBILLOT
Sabine CLÉMENTINE BAERT
Vero VALÉRIE BONNETON
Alain JOSÉ GARCIA
Alex MIKAËL WATTINCOURT
Catherine TATIANA GOUSSEFF
Jean-Louis JOËL DUPUCH
Nassim HOCINE MÉRABET

CREW

Director GUILLAUME CANET
Written by GUILLAUME CANET
 RODOLPHE LAUGA
Produced by ALAIN ATTAL
Director of photography CHRISTOPHE OFFENSTEIN
Production designer PHILIPPE CHIFFRE
Film editor HERVÉ DE LUZE
Sound RÉMI DARU
 JEAN GOUDIER
 JEAN-PAUL HURIER
Costume designer CARINE SARFATI
Musical supervisor EMMANUEL FERRIER

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