FRANÇOIS KRAUS AND DENIS PINCAU-VALENCIENNE
PRESENT

NICOLAS BEDOS
DORIA TILLIER
NICOLAS BEDOS

MR. & MRS.
ADELMAN

A FILM BY
NICOLAS BEDOS
How did Sarah and Victor manage to put up with each other for more than 45 years? And who was actually this mysterious woman, living in the shadow of a famous husband? Love and ambition, treason and secrets blend together as we follow the odyssey of this extraordinary couple, within the greater story of the past century.
Why did you embark on this film?
I’ve dreamed of directing films since the age of 13. I came at it in a roundabout way – theater, television, writing screenplays, a few cinema roles – but I don’t regret that, because it gave me plenty of time to find out exactly what kind of film I wanted to make. Then there was Doria Tillier. She gave me the courage to stick at it. We have the same cinematographic references. So we fashioned the film and the roles we’d always dreamed of.

Where did the idea for “Mr & Mrs Adelman” come from?
It all started with some improvisations that Doria and I have been messing around with for years, just for fun, to exorcise our anxieties about the future, family, getting old, infidelity, and so on. We ended up inventing a whole gallery of fairly monstrous characters: The husband afflicted with Alzheimer, whose wife is manipulating him in revenge for past betrayals, or the couple who get rid of one of their children to reinvigorate their sex life. All perfectly well-balanced folk! Our improvs would sometimes last for hours. We would bring forth these sort of avatars to spare us from an argument, a ruined evening, or a disastrous weekend. For Doria, whose shyness sometimes even prevents her speaking, the transformation was quite spectacular. By slipping into the role of a libidinous old woman, a skank from Nice, or a North African girl from the housing projects, everything in her changed. Her face, her voice. Our rantings allowed us to tackle serious topics through the prism of humor. One evening, Doria told me she’d written down some of our improvisations, and that she thought it could serve as the basis for writing a film. We started from there, but very soon we moved away from that. We tried to put together a sort of sociological study of the couple, by noting some constants among our friends and parents. It is, often the case, the film draws a line between personal concerns, our own fantasies, and some more universal considerations. Strangely, although the film stretches over 45 years, the structure emerged quite naturally very early on.

You decided to make Victor Adelman a writer. Why was that?
The main subject is not so much the writer but his wife. We drew inspiration for the character of Sarah from several “women in the shadows”, those who operate in the background and often maintain a very ambivalent relationship with their partner’s...
nately I was thinking of the women in the lives of Paul Morand, Saint-Exupéry, Céline, Picasso, and I grew up worshipping Sarah. Our distance vis-à-vis the other was a rich source for the narrative. For example, it wasn’t hard for me to produce a satire of Desir me, love me! And I hope it works as a comedy scene!

The film is a tribute to women, to those in love. I was raised in the company of women, with a mother and three sisters. It was they

...From theatricality, to provocation, or even transgression, is often a very creative couple: Sarah and Victor act out their own story; we're both guilty of that neurosis. From theatricality, to provocation, or even transgression, is often...
Let’s talk about your role as an actor. When writing the film, you were on familiar ground. But interpreting a role like that was more challenging for you, especially with the problem of the character ageing, and the inherent risk of caricature.

If Doria and I had been aware of the difficulties involved in the ageing, we’d never have written this film! It was while we were raising the finances that I started to fret about it. I’d never seen a convincing example of prosthetic ageing in French cinema. We therefore had to experiment with new methods and new prosthetic materials. The involvement of special effects supervisor Guillaume Castagné was decisive. He and his crew were involved from an early stage. Doria and I tested dozens of faces and necks. It was a challenge for all of us. In any case, I wouldn’t have filmed a single scene before we’d done some convincing tests. I’ll spare you the problems in terms of budget and work schedule this caused. Every day, the transformation of Doria took around seven hours, and around six for me. After which, we’d film for around 12 hours to get the most out of each make-up session. We were getting no sleep. The upside was that the exhaustion and shakiness associated with old age required very little acting effort. The prostheses were heavy, the make-up products irritated, especially the filler for the hands, which took my skin off. On top of that, we were totally infantilized by the dressers, who, to prevent any damage to our painted nails (and teeth), would not even allow us to do simple tasks, like fastening a shirt button or lacing our shoes. We ended up actually taking ourselves for our characters. Moreover, during the whole “old age” part, the crew left us to have lunch alone.

How did Doria manage the stress, given that it’s her first big-screen role?

By working her butt off. She signed back up to her former drama school for a few months. In parallel, she worked with a coach. On set, she was concentrating so hard that we were barely aware of each other. I should confess that I was sometimes quite hard on her. The paradox is that we were often in erotic scenes, but there is nothing less sexy than an obsessive director who’s on your case from morning till night. I knew that my exigency was at times hard for her, but I was more worried that one day she might reproach me for not having got the most out of her ability. So the shoot was both fascinating and at the same time quite traumatic. I realized later during the editing that my demands on her had sometimes been unfair. Instead of the 15 takes that I demanded for a given scene, two would have been enough. Or maybe three.

Why did you want to also co-write the film’s music?

My producers introduced me to Philippe Kelly, the co-composer, with whom I shut myself away for the whole summer to create, somewhat haphazardly, the soundtrack I’d dreamed of. In my view, if the opening credits say “a film by”, it might as well really be by me from start to finish. Then if the film is bad, I can’t blame anyone else. As much as I claim full authorship of my plays and books, in cinema, I have participated in projects which in the end have been largely excised of the elements that I felt closest to. Hence my distrust and difficulty in delegating. On that point, I’ve just invested in some editing software.
Has "Mr & Mrs Adelman" turned you into a cineaste?
One does not become a cineaste after directing one film. A cineaste is someone who has their own style, and that style emerges and becomes clear over several films. The question is rather whether I can continue to exercise this profession, and the answer depends on the success or failure of "Mr & Mrs Adelman". My future depends on that. If my work is well received, then yes, I'll carry on trying to become a cineaste. And I'll write books, too, because writing doesn't cost anyone anything. No one comes and reads over your shoulder. One thing is sure, I have just fulfilled the dream of the film-mad youngster I was aged 15.
Where did the idea come from of writing the film as a duo?

First off, there’s the fact that we have the same tastes. Artistically, we are always in tune, on whether a line is a funny, or the merits of a film poster or a decorative object. And since I’ve known Nicolas, one of our favorite games is improvising. We would create characters, and then invent stories to try and add a splash of color in life. Once, I was a withered old lady whose cynical grandson wanted her to change her will in his favor. Another time, he was a rather dumb-ass blogger who was hitting on me online and who was trying to convince me that his seedy site was going to go viral. After a while, without really meaning to, we ended up inventing a range of fairly well-developed sketch characters and some hilarious situations. We both loved the idea of making a film. Although in the end, there’s practically nothing left of our improvisations in the film.

“Mr & Mrs Adelman” covers 45 years in a couple’s life. You and Nicolas are in your thirties, so writing this meant projecting yourselves a long way into the future.

That’s true. Fortunately, you don’t have to have experienced things to write about them. There’s also what you observe with others: Our parents, our friends, our reading. And then, I find that projecting into the future helps you to perceive the present. What’s more, Nicolas may only be in his 30s, but he has read, written, and lived a lot. He has a surprisingly mature take on things in life. As for me, I adore inventing old lady characters, which I used to do often during our improv. That must have inspired Nicolas to imagine me in my seventies.

What autobiographical elements did you put into Victor and Sarah Adelman?

None of the situations took place as they do in the film. But yes, certain ideas are an extrapolation of situations observed in those around us, or even experienced by us. I’d say the character of Victor shares with Nicolas his passion, his excessiveness, and his humor, which can be suddenly light in a serious, profound situation. During scenes, I often found I could hear Nicolas’s
voice in Victor’s lines. But fortunately, Nicolas is less neurotic and a bit more mature. As for my character, the young Sarah on the surface doesn’t seem very sure of herself, whereas in fact, she knows what she wants and what she’s worth. She is clumsy in her interaction with others, but inside, she’s quite balanced, stays focused, and is sure-footed. I’m a bit like that.

It was quite a big risk for you to play Sarah. Not only have you never taken on a role of that scale, but you jump into the unknown by portraying 45 years of a woman’s life, whereas you’ve barely lived half of that. How did you approach that challenge?

I realize now that it was a bit risky. But it was precisely the breadth of the role that motivated me to work. I’m quite obsessive and I’ve got a “good student” side which meant I put in a huge amount of preparation to overcome the stress. For example, before the shoot I went back to my old drama school just to get back into the groove. Behind my fun-loving appearance, I can be very demanding and serious – sometimes too much. During preparation, of course I sometimes panicked at the idea of taking on such a big role, but once on set, it all seemed less scary. Perhaps because I liked my character and I enjoyed interpreting her. The notion of pleasure is quite important for me. The pleasure I derived from being Sarah replaced my fear.

Did playing Sarah as she aged pose any special problems?

Strangely, I found it harder playing Sarah when she was young. I loved the older Sarah, with her natural authority and her distance on things. I suppose the more you like a character, the better you play them. And as I said, I love transforming myself. Slipping inside the skin of someone who is not at all like me is easier than just being myself. It was just a question of not forcing the parts. The Sarah at the end of the film is not an old lady. She’s a woman of today aged 70, in pretty good shape and well preserved. As soon as I realized that I wouldn’t have to act with a stick and use a croaky voice, but simply apply my gestures and my voice more calmly, it all came quite naturally.

What was Nicolas like on set?

I was amazed by his professionalism as a director. He never gave up on a good idea, even when it seemed unfeasible. If it really was unfeasible, then he’d find another good idea. He was very clear on what he wanted, while at the same time accepting other opinions. He always listened to proposals, but didn’t allow himself to be influenced and managed to stick to his own judgment, despite the fatigue and the stress. He might have been at the end of his tether, but he kept his head. The crew were admirable. No one ever complained about the hours, which were sometimes quite tough. It’s a film with many sequences, many period sets, all very different. So we had to keep up the pace to respect the schedule. Nicolas succeeded in carrying everyone along on the adventure. What was special for me was being under his orders. When you know someone intimately and you’re on an equal footing with them, it’s hard to accept that at certain moments, you must consider them as your “superior”. This sometimes jarred with my sensitivities. But that little ego problem disappeared during my scenes with him.
because as an actor, Nicolas is very generous with his partner and totally uninhibited. That relaxed attitude helped me a lot.

Let’s return to the script. What did you find most interesting in the writing process?

Imagining the effects time can have on a couple, and how one’s ideals change over time; money, success or failure. What was also quite fun was imagining how to make each situation into something extraordinary, such as when they meet the parents, the infidelities, the children, money, separation, reconciliation. These kinds of things are common to many couples, but we tried to imagine them in a more fictionalized way.

Certain sequences, like the one in which Victor expresses his exasperation about his son, or when he puts a gigolo in Sarah's bed, are anything but politically correct. Is that just pure provocation? Weren't you afraid of the reactions you might have from more virtuous types?

I'd agree that the film is not consensual, but it is soft compared to some of the ideas we had but left on the roadside to stay in the realm of realism. As for the sequences you mention, they might seem controversial because you don’t always see such things in movies, but that exists in real life. I think they’re authentic in terms of what they say about a couple going off the rails. What disturbs me is gratuitous posturing. But apart from that, not much shocks me, so I’m maybe not best placed to say if it’s politically correct or not.

The screenplay gives Sarah the central role as a woman, because she is the one driving the couple. Did you see it as a concealed declaration of love?

It’s a declaration of love in general. Whether I received it as a personal declaration, I’m not yet sure. We’ll see in 20 years’ time.

Where did your desire to write first come from?

I’ve always loved words and stories. At one time, I used to write lots of poems about my friends, and about predicaments, because short formats suited me well. But writing a film was a different matter. Without Nicolas, I would no doubt never have had the courage nor the skill. He has much more experience, capacity for work, and talent than me when it comes to writing. Why do I like writing? No doubt because with the spoken word, one is hurried by an interlocutor, a framework. With writing, you’re free, and so you express yourself more freely.

Why then did you happen to choose cinema?

First off, because I don’t think I have the qualities of a novelist. And also because I’m an actress. I want to act. Also because cinema, more than other forms of expression, involves a variety of activities, and I love having a go at lots of things. I like making things, I like the “artisanal” side of filmmaking. When I used to do the weather, I liked taking charge of the whole thing: I would write, I would present, and I would direct. The day I needed a 3D model for a sketch in which I parodied the science show “C’est pas Sorcier”, I was delighted to spend the day on all fours with a load of cardboard, glue and paint to make it myself. In this case, Nicolas and I had the idea for “Mr & Mrs Adelman”, and we saw it through. We both like doing things from A to Z. If I was a musician, I would also have helped him write the music.

Did you play a part in directing?

No. He was clearly the director. But I loved it when he asked my opinion. When we were writing, we thought a lot about the camera positions and the rhythm. We both give great importance to the image, including the more geeky aspects of that. We spent a whole summer watching films focusing on the image to find our director of photography, trying to understand the impact of a particular set or color of clothing, or of particular lighting on the mood of a scene. I found that aspect of directing a film fascinating. For me, it was a fantastic observation internship.

What did you ultimately want to convey through this film?

At first glance, it's a love story that shows how people can love for a long time, despite all the traumas, wounds, and even periods falling out of love. But on another level, I think we wanted to make a film about fantasy and reality. There’s also that notion of “living for one’s biography”. It sometimes happens that we do or say things because we want to be remembered as someone who did this or said that. In this case, Sarah and Victor are writers, and love is a variety of activities, and I love having a go at lots of things. I like making things, I like the “artisanal” side of filmmaking. When I used to do the weather, I liked taking charge of the whole thing. I would write, I would present, and I would direct. The day I needed a 3D model for a sketch in which I parodied the science show “C’est pas Sorcier”, I was delighted to spend the day on all fours with a load of cardboard, glue and paint to make it myself. In this case, Nicolas and I had the idea for “Mr & Mrs Adelman”, and we saw it through. We both like doing things from A to Z. If I was a musician, I would also have helped him write the music. How do you feel now this adventure is over?

Very happy. I expected to be exhausted, because the shoot was very tiring, especially when Sarah was older. It took seven hours to do my make-up. Some mornings, I had to arrive at three in the morning to shoot at 10am, and then we finished late. It was sometimes on the job for 19 hours at a stretch. Yet it was intoxicating. I didn’t think I’d be so passionate about this job. So my fatigue evaporated very quickly, and now I’m looking forward to doing it all over again.
Nicolas BEDOS was first introduced to the general public through his television appearances and press columns (SEMAINE CRITIQUE ! by Franz-Olivier GIESBERT, ON N'EST PAS COUCHÉ by Laurent RUquier, LA NUIT DES MOLIERES ceremony, LE DÉBARQUEMENT, contributions to the MARIANNE and ELLE news magazines), but it is through his writing and theatrical stage directing that he achieved wider recognition. Nominated twice at the Molières awards, he directed Mélanie LAURENT, Niels ARESTRUP, Jérôme KIRCHER, Macha MERIL and Guy BEDOS on stage. He also wrote the script for several television and feature films, including FINAL FLOURISH (with Jeanne MOREAU, Claude RICH and Jean-Pierre MARIELLE), THE PLAYERS (with Jean DUJARDIN and Gilles LELLOUCH), LOVE IS IN THE AIR (with Ludivine SAGNIER) and HOPFULLY (with Edouard BERP and Sandrine KIBERLAIN). The three novels he signed were met with great success. The last one, La Tête Ailleurs, has sold more than 120 000 copies. MR & MRS ADELMAN is his first film as a director.
After studying applied arts, Doria TILLIER shifts towards her first love: acting. She takes classes at the Sudden Théâtre, at Studio Pygmalion, at Magasin, then at Laboratoire de l’acteur where she appears for the first time in her own sketches.

**CINEMA**

**ACTRESS**

2016: MR & MRS ADELMAN  
by Nicolas BEDOS

2015: MR & MRS ADELMAN  
by Géraldine ELGRISHI, (short film)

**SCRIPTWRITER**

2016: MR & MRS ADELMAN  
Co-written with Nicolas BEDOS

**TELEVISION**

2012/14: LE GRAND JOURNAL  
by Renaud LE VAN KIM - Weather girl

2014: LE DÉBARQUEMENT  
season 1, episode 2 by Alex LUTZ

2009: ACTION SPÉCIALES DOUAINES  
season 1, episode 5 by Patrick JAMAIN

DORIA TILLIER  
ACTRICE
CAST

Sarah ADELMAN .......................... Dorie TILLIER
Victor ADELMAN .......................... Nicolas BEDOS
The psychologist .......................... Denis PODALYDÉS - Société de la Comédie-Française
The journalist ............................ Antoine GOUY
Mrs DE RICHEMONT ...................... Christiane MILLET

Also starring

Claude DE RICHEMONT ...................... Pierre ARDITI
The school headmistress ................. Zabou BREITMANN
Antoine DE RICHEMONT .................. Julien BOISSELIER
Marc ............................................ Jean-Pierre LORIT

The pediatrician .......................... Nicolas BRINCON
Sarah’s mother ........................... Betty REICHER
Sarah’s father ............................. Ronald GUTTMANN
Sarah’s grandmother ..................... Solange NAJMAN
Victor’s sister ............................. Solveig MAUPU

CREW

Director ........................................ Nicolas BEDOS
Script. Nicolas BEDOS and Dorie TILLIER
Dialogues ................................. Nicolas BEDOS
Camera ................................. Nicolas BOLDUC csc
Set ........................................... Stéphane ROZENBRUM
Editing ....................................... Arny DRINCHE
Costumes ................................. Karen MULLER SERRERU
Music ...................................... Philippe KELLY
Sound ................................. Marc-Antoine BELDENT
Séverin FAVRIAU
Jean-Paul HURIER
French Distribution ................. LE PACTE, ORANGE STUDIO
French DVD release ......... LE PACTE, ORANGE STUDIO
Script Assistant ................... Diane BRASSSEUR
Casting .................................. Emmanuelle PREVOST
First Assistant Director .............. Daniel DITTMANN
Production manager ............... Sylvain MONOD
Management .......................... Frédéric MORIN

Coproduction ......................... LES FILMS DU KIOSQUE
FRANCE 2 CINÉMA, ORANGE STUDIO
LE PACTE, CHAÎNECINÉMA,
UMEDIA

Production manager ............... François KRAUS
Denis PINEAU-VALENCE

In association with ............... CINÉVENTURE,
FRANCÉS, COFIMAGE 27
MONIN & CINÉMAGE 10

In association with ............... UFDN
LA RÉGION ÎLE-D-FRANCE,
LA PROCREP et l’ANGOA,
SOFICINÉMA 11 DÉVELOPPEMENT
MONIN PRODUCTION 5,
A PLUS IMAGE DÉVELOPPEMENT 6
PALATINE ÉTOILE 12 DÉVELOPPEMENT
COFIMAGE DÉVELOPPEMENT 4

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FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS, CINE +
LE FILM A REÇU LE PRIX CINÉMA 2017 DE LA FONDATION BARRIÈRE