

Nord-Ouest presents

(GIRL)FRIEND

A film by Victor SAINT MACARY

William LEBGHIL
Margot BANCILHON
Camille RAZAT
Jonathan COHEN

86 min - France - 2017 - 1.85 - 5.1

International Sales

Le Pacte

5 rue Darcet, 75017 Paris

www.le-pacte.com

SYNOPSIS

Fresh out of a painful breakup, Vincent decides he will never again have his heart broken or go through the hassle of living together. Instead, he will share a flat with his best friend Nefeli... who happens to be a girl. The golden rule of the house is that friendship tops romance, and the occasional one night stand, no strings attached, is the maximum space that can be granted to third parties. After several weeks of festive, carefree bliss, Vincent meets Julie, and breaks the rule.

How long before Nefeli finds out?

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR VICTOR SAINT MACARY

What was the starting point of the project?

At 25, I shared a flat with a girl, she was my best friend. Around us, people found it hard to believe that there was no ambiguity in our friendship. This is the starting point of the film. Besides, with my producer Pierre Guyard, we realized that in films we often see “bromances” between boys or between girls, but rarely mixed ones. Yet, it’s not that unusual, even more so nowadays. I feel like in the young generation, boys and girls mix more easily as friends. This thematic corresponds also to our desire to make an exhilarating film, full of energy, of humour, of emotion, a pure comedy.

To make the viewer believe the complicity between Vincent and Nefeli, the casting was a decisive step. What was your strategy?

The central character is Vincent. We rapidly chose William Lebghil. He played a secondary role in LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT, and Thomas Cailley (my co-writer on this film) and Pierre Guyard had always told me how incredible he was, that they saw him as one of the most promising actors of his generation. When I had him read the script, his feedback was very relevant. Then we organized a casting, with William, to find Nefeli. And with Margot Bancilhon, the complicity was immediately visible. There was something really strong, really touching and clear between them. We had to feel their complicity, to see it printed on the reel. It was one of the big challenges of the film.

There is a clear opposition between Nefeli, the exuberant, and Julie, who is more low-key. How did you choose Camille Razat?

Camille brought a funny side to her character that was not so developed in the script. She has a real freshness, a strong temperament. We were happy to choose a girl that hadn’t been seen on the screen before, and make the world discover a new actress.

Frederic, played by Jonathan Cohen, is quite different from Vincent, he is more assured of himself...

Yes, he has an easy-going nature, pragmatic but also a funny clumsiness. He is afraid of growing old. He is quite touching in his will to stay *tuned*. He wears trendy clothes, tries to constantly stay up to date with what’s in style. He is a character inherited from American comedies, the *sidekick* that you can find a little stupid at first, but who says relevant things in the end. He puts Vincent in front of his own contradictions. What’s more, Jonathan looks a bit like Vincent physically, so he represents what Vincent could become. The “bromance” could also work between these two male characters.

Talking about modernity, cell phones and computers are very present in the film.

We had a clear wish to set the film in today's reality. The screens are omnipresent, even more so for people around 25. The difficulty of remaining discreet in the era of Internet, with all the pictures, on all these networks, is a very contemporary question.

Vincent is a very endearing character, namely because of his clumsiness, like in the metro or train scenes, where the film takes on an almost burlesque dimension...

I am very influenced by comic strips. I had put a lot of them in Vincent's room (Bilal, Blutch, Winschluss, Chris Ware...), and unconsciously, I incorporated references that are specific to comics! I wanted the film to pass from very realistic moments to very fictitious moments. I also wanted a mix between genres in humour: the humour of dialogue, the burlesque, the comic of pranks...

This demands a particular attention to the rhythm of the film.

Comedy always asks for rhythm. If the editing does not work, some jokes will just be lost. So I carefully cut the film during the preparation phase with the director of photography, the script girl and the first assistant, in order to insure that the dynamic dimension won't be lost when we edit it. I wanted a frenetic rhythm to narrate the story of a character caught up in a spiral of events. With my editor, we found the structure of the film quite quickly, then it was a matter of tempo, and a search for efficiency.

Why did you want the comics' author Winschluss to direct the opening credits?

I had written a little script for these credits, at the beginning we thought we could ask some of the students from the Gobelins Visual Arts School to make an animation. But on the set I was talking a lot about Winschluss, I am a big fan of his (there's even a Pinocchio album in the film), so my producer told me I should try and contact him. And to my biggest surprise, he accepted right away. He has quite a dark universe, trash, and he was glad to do something easy going, very visual, with gag effects.

How did you work on the screenplay with the different co-writers?

Each one arrived on a different step of the script. Two years ago, I wrote a first version of the dialogues, which looked more like a chronicle. My producer then introduced me to Thomas Cailley, the director of LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT that Pierre had produced. Thomas gave me useful tips for the screenplay picked up during his studies at the Femis (French film school), but also taught me how to believe in myself. It was a kind of maieutic. Then with Audrey Diwan, we totally refurbished the script. It took a long time, but I agreed to work again on it from scratch because I trusted her, she is a long-time friend. Then, Benjamin Charbit concluded the screenplay phase, his work has been short but efficient. The text was almost done, he made it more fluid and gave the last push.

Like a real couple, Vincent and Nefeli have a domestic dispute, and it's spectacular. How did you imagine it?

It's the first scene I wrote. I wanted something very visual, very close to the comics. I think that a friend couple can be as passionate as a classic couple, with the fights, the meltdowns, the jealousy... Best friends can really function like couples, but without sex.

From the very first scene, the screenplay contradicts the genre stereotypes: the girl is the leader, the one with a big mouth, while the guy is quite shy...

I think that it reflects a common reality of today. I wanted a female character which is quite rebellious, a hothead, but at the same time with a Cartesian spirit. She is a lawyer but also quite punk. She is in the driver's seat and Vincent takes advantage of that. He doesn't like to confront people, as we can see in the coffee scene with his mother. His seduction passes by a kind of passivity, even if he has a gift for fast quips that Nefeli likes a lot. He would like to please everyone, but he is afraid to tell the truth because he doesn't want to hurt anybody.

Behind this bulldozer aspect, Nefeli also has a kind of fragility...

I was interested in this aspect of a "giant with clay feet". She seems unsinkable and yet she is almost more sensitive than he is. She can't bear being alone, and is quite exclusive. But she is totally aware of the faults in her personality. It was essential that she also had asperities. To create complex, multidimensional characters was precisely one of the challenges of the script...

Vincent and Nefeli seem that they are still lingering in adolescence. They play like kids...

We don't talk enough in films about 20-somethings, who have graduated from long studies and did not have the time to fully enjoy their time as teenagers. They find their first job, their first flat, and play at being adults. They compensate by the regressive will to do or do again the foolish pranks of teenagers. The balance between adulthood and adolescence is one of the themes of the film.

One of the key scenes of the film is set in an amusement park...

It conjures up childhood, carelessness. And beyond the symbol, I had wanted to create a kind of psychedelic atmosphere, from the visual point of view, especially since the characters were supposed to do drugs in this scene. We wanted to show how much Vincent and Julie are in love and in sync with each other.

The parents are not as conservatives as we could imagine in the first place...

One must not forget that these parents grew up in the 70s! The mother is quite quirky. She loves her son but she likes to tease him. Once the children are gone, this generation of parents have the opportunity to have a second life. And there's a kind of saying "we raised you for 25 years, now it's time to fly on your own!"

You film your characters in their intimacy: bodies, bathrooms...

I wanted the film to be sensual, I didn't want an aggressive nudity, but one that is rather aesthetic and warm. We had to put actors at ease, by explaining things like the choices of

light and angles. We also had a discussion with William concerning the shot of his sex, it was important to me. Seeing the boy naked, it's like introducing a kind of equality. Also, showing the nudity of a character is inscribing him/her into reality.

The fact that the film portrays the 20-somethings of today is also conveyed through the music. We hear a lot of groups from the new French scene: Flavien Berger, La Femme...

It's the playlist of the characters, and in the same time it follows the emotions, the mood of each of them. I listen myself a lot to this new French music scene that I find creative and fertile. They digested the 80s and 90s, so their music is full of references but in the same time very innovative. The digital generation has a broad access to music, that's why we introduced classics like The Supremes or Petula Clark. Today, we pass more easily from one genre to another, we belong less to a particular musical community. We had very in depth conversations with Matthieu Sibony and the Schmooze teams who took care of musical supervision. They were the ones who introduced me to Victor Le Masne who composed the initial score. Victor works with groups like Metronomy, Paradis or Juliette Armanet. He belongs to this new French scene.

You also paint the portrait of this generation that dances and parties a lot, living in the North-East of Paris. At some point we see servicemen walking on the street, like a hint to the terrorist attacks that took place close by...

It's true that at one point during the writing I thought "I'm writing a script in which the characters party all the time!" Finally, it might be the best reply to what's happening: keep dancing, keep having fun. And it's true that when we stroll around Paris nowadays, we come across armed servicemen, they are now part of our city, of our environment. Concerning the North-East of Paris, I wanted to shoot these neighborhoods, a more popular Paris, I didn't want a museum-city. And also it was a matter of realism, they are young people sharing a flat, they can't be living in a bourgeois neighborhood.

Directing films, was it an old wish for you?

No, quite recent. I did not dare think about it, even if it had been probably somewhere in me for a long time. I worked for 7 years in the development department at Gaumont, selecting projects. It's a really good way to learn, I was reading a dozen of scripts a week, good and bad, and going to the movies a lot. I wrote a short-movie script, but I didn't want to film it myself. It's my girlfriend who convinced me to direct it. And then I really felt at ease, I realized it was what I wanted to do.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

VICTOR SAINT MACARY

BIOGRAPHY

After graduating with a Master's Degree in New Media, Victor Saint Macary started to work in television. He worked for one year at the TV channel Comedie! before moving to a consultancy firm specialized in audiovisual (IMCA). In 2008 he meets Capucine Violet, Development Manager at Gaumont. He is hired and spends 7 years.

He debuted as film director in 2014 with his short film *BEAU-PAPA*, starring Jonathan Cohen and Ana Girardot and broadcasted on OCS Cinéma.

In 2015 he leaves Gaumont to fully engage himself into writing and directing.

He then co-wrote the film *LE BRIO* (2017) directed by Yvan Attal and scheduled for French release in November 2017.

(GIRL)FRIEND is his first feature as writer and director, produced by Pierre Guyard for Nord-Ouest Films.

FILMOGRAPHY

Director - scriptwriter

2017 - (GIRL)FRIEND

2014 - BEAU PAPA (short)

Scriptwriter

2017 - LE BRIO by Yvan ATTAL

IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

WILLIAM LEBGHIL

FILMOGRAPHY

Feature films

- 2017 FRESHMEN
(GIRL)FRIEND
- 2016 CHERCHEZ LA FEMME
C'EST LA VIE!
- 2015 LA FINE ÉQUIPE
- 2014 THE NEW ADVENTURES OF ALLADIN
MEMORIES
LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT
- 2013 JACKY IN THE KINGDOM OF WOMEN
- 2010 LES MYTHOS

Television

- 2016 PIGEONS ET DRAGONS
JOSÉ
- 2014 SODA : LE RÊVE AMÉRICAIN
- 2013 SODA : SEASON 3
- 2012 SODA : SEASON 2
- 2011 SODA : SEASON 1

Shorts

- 2016 APRÈS SUZANNE
VICTOR OU LA PIÉTÉ
- 2015 QUI DE NOUS DEUX
- 2014 LES AOÛTIENS

MARGOT BANCILHON

FILMOGRAPHY

Feature films

- 2017 (GIRL)FRIEND
- 2016 LA MONNAIE DE LEUR PIÈCE
- 2015 GOING TO BRAZIL
FIVE
ALL THREE OF US
- 2013 MASSACREZ JEUNESSE
THE DREAM KIDS
- 2012 DÉBUTANTS

Television

- 2014 PALACE BEACH HOTEL
- 2013 TIGHTROPE

Shorts

- 2016 LE CHANT DES CIGALES

CAMILLE RAZAT

FILMOGRAPHY

Feature-films

- 2017 (GIRL)FRIEND
L'AMOUR EST UNE FÊTE
GIRLS WITH BALLS
- 2016 ROCK'N'ROLL

Television

- 2014 THE DISAPPEARANCE
- 2013 CAPITAINE MARLEAU

JONATHAN COHEN

FILMOGRAPHY

Feature films

- 2017 AMANDA
(GIRL)FRIEND
COEXISTER
- 2016 LADIES
DADDY OR MOMMY 2
- 2015 THE COMIC ADVENTURES OF MAX AND LÉON
VICKY BANJO
- 2014 ALL THREE OF US
- 2013 QUANTUM LOVE
SUPERCONDRIAQUE
- 2012 SMART ASS
THE ADULTEEN
LOVE IS IN THE AIR
POP REDEMPTION
- 2011 A PERFECT PLAN
ARMES HANDS
IL ÉTAIT UNE FOIS, UN FOIS
- 2010 THE VILLAGE OF SHADOWS
THE PERFECT DATE
- 2009 LEAVING
SOMEONE I LOVED
- 2005 HEY GOOD LOOKING!

Television

- 2017 HERO CORP : SAISON 5
- 2016 SERGE LE MYTHO
- 2015 HARD

Shorts

- 2014 BEAU PAPA
- 2012 AURORE BORÉALE

CAST

VINCENT	William Lebghil
NEFELI	Margot Bancilhon
JULIE	Camille Razat
FRÉDÉRIC	Jonathan Cohen
ELENA	Béatrice de Staël
HENRI	Hubert Saint Macary
CHRISTOPHE	Christophe Odent
MORLAND	Marie-Christine Orry
PETAMENT	Nicolas Wancycki
<i>With the participation of</i>	Manu Payet

CREW

DIRECTOR	Victor Saint Macary
SCREENWRITERS	Victor Saint Macary Thomas Cailley Audrey Diwan Benjamin Charbit
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	David Cailley
SET DESIGN	Olivier Meidinger
EDITING	Florence Bresson
CASTING	David Bertrand
COSTUMES	Ariane Daurat
MUSIQUE	Victor le Masne
MUSICAL SUPERVISION	Matthieu Sibony (SCHMOOZE)
SOUND	Eric Boisteau Antoine Baudoin Niels Barletta
1st ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Raphaëlle Piani
SCRIPT GIRL	Nina Rives
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Thomas Santucci
POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER	Clara Vincienne
SPECIAL EFFECTS	Alain Carsoux
PRODUCER	Pierre Guyard
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS	Christophe Rossignon, Philip Boëffard
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Ève François Machuel
PRODUCTION	Nord-Ouest Films
IN COPRODUCTION WITH	Njj Entertainment
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF	Canal + and Ciné +
IN ASSOCIATION WITH	La Banque Postale Image 10, Cinéventure 2, Cinéma 11, Indéfilms 6
FRENCH DISTRIBUTION	Le Pacte
INTERNATIONAL SALES	Le Pacte