



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2020
Official Selection

LES FILMS PELLÉAS
present

Amants (Lovers)

A film by
NICOLE GARCIA

starring
PIERRE NINEY, STACY MARTIN, BENOÎT MAGIMEL



les films
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france•tv distribution

Synopsis

Lisa and Simon are inseparable. They have been passionate about each other since they were teenagers. A tragedy occurs, provoked by Simon's criminal activities. He is in danger and flees. Without Lisa. She waits in vain for news from him. Three years later, she is married to Leo when their paths cross again on an island in the Indian Ocean.

France, 2020, 102 minutes | colour



Interview with Nicole Garcia

by Guillaume Poix

How did this story originate?

For the first time, it wasn't my idea. After *Mal de pierres* (From the Land of the Moon), I was wondering what my next film would be about and that is always a mysterious moment. For me, volition doesn't play an important role in the creative process. I search for something I know nothing about. The project takes shape, little by little, from a fragment of an idea, a detail that acts as a stumbling block. But this time, Jacques Fieschi, the screenwriter I have always worked with, offered me a story he had already developed. He had planned to turn it into a novel. I saw it as an opportunity, opening up a new path for me. You could classify this story as a film noir or a thriller. This is a genre that has attracted me for a long time. For its atmospheres, its way of presenting characters, something icy to host the prospect of murder. I have sometimes constructed my films as investigations

into a past where threats lurk. I need to put my characters in danger. In film noir, I find fear, controlled and sublimated. Danger. Risk. It's good to be afraid for others than oneself: it's undoubtedly an outlet for something.

Why tell the story in three acts?

Three acts, three characters, three settings. Perhaps a geographical echo of the love triangle. More concretely, this three-part rhythm allowed us to play with the ellipses contained in this story, to dig into the personality, emotions and secrets of lovers subjected to the flight of time. Throughout the film, we talk as much about feelings in the present as about their place in the characters' memories, where their source is the most mysterious.

From the first act, death invites itself in. Why is this card played so rapidly?

Lisa and Simon are young, they are beautiful and they have always loved each other. It's almost too much. They come up against the ordeal of death right away. It's accidental, of course, but Simon is trapped by his reaction. It isolates him. His guilty conscience will underlie the rest of the film. He and Lisa find themselves on something akin to a crime scene and their relationship is endangered. From that point on, even in the beautiful blue waters of the Indian Ocean, we know that the darkness will not fade.. It is a tattoo, the indelible mark of the fatal moment they have experienced together and that they will fight to erase, the destiny that they will have to evade.

Would you define the film as a tragedy?

The first shot of the film is the discovery of the original couple, Lisa and Simon. Their naked bodies gradually detach themselves from a black sheet that hugs or devours them. This shot is indeed a warning. Tragedy, like happiness, announces its arrival. There is tragedy in the characters, that's

for sure. Especially in Simon, even if I wasn't totally aware of it when writing. During shooting, Pierre Niney surprised me by taking him down that path. But there are other portents. The character of Nathalie, for example, who reappears in Lisa's life in the third act, while she is living in a bubble in Geneva with Léo, that of powerful people who spend their time between Switzerland, New York, Dubai, Paris... Her return serves as much to designate her as a figure of fate as it does to take a look at these modern societies. I have always filmed money, luxury and the voids that they conceal - in Place Vendôme for example. To talk about feelings and put them to the test, I have often placed my characters face to face with money, a way of lifting the veil on their intimacy, of saying a lot about them.



Tell us about your heroine, Lisa. Who is she?

Of the three main characters, she is probably the most ambivalent. Stacy Martin brought her a personal melancholy, an apparent detachment that is so right for the character. We discover Lisa lovingly devoted to Simon, whom she could forgive for anything because he is her past and she believes in the future. And when Simon abandons her, she falls apart. Her disillusionment is abysmal.

She sinks into a state of prostration and despair. Leo, the second man, is lucky enough to cross her path at that moment. He will be able to «mend» her with the strength of his love, tranquilize her with the power of his money. Like Simon, Lisa comes from a modest background in the working-class suburbs and she attempts to span these two worlds. From hotel school in the Paris suburbs to luxury hotels, her metamorphosis is perfect. She can love and adore a first man, then let herself be adored by a

second. She follows Pirandello's adage of «Come tu mi vuoi». She is what others want her to be. Until the day Simon reappears. Will she follow this crazy and intact love inside her? Has she «weighed» up the security, benefits and comfort of luxury and money? Can she turn back time, or does she want everything, absolutely everything, far from the detachment she displayed at the start of the film? Is she the prey of her two lovers or does she seek to free herself from their hold, to leave the circle of fire in which they confine her? The women I portray in my films are sometimes damaged, mistreated or humiliated by men, often overwhelmed by the fiction projected onto them. Their backs are to the wall. They lose their way, they seek themselves. The film allows them to get back on track. This has always made them like heroines of film noir. That is why I wanted to shoot one and lead Lisa to an epilogue where she shatters her ambivalence.

And Simon?

If we can say that Lisa is ambivalent, we have to say straight after that Simon is a tragic character. As I have already said, what troubles me is that

his darkness virtually imposed itself on me, I didn't sense it when I was writing. At least I didn't phrase it that way. He was the character who was the furthest from me, I was unable to describe his melancholy. It was when Pierre Niney tipped it into tragedy that the whole film revealed itself to me. Like Conrad's Lord Jim, he may flee to the other side of the world, but his guilty conscience devours him and prevents him from living and forgetting. When he reunites with Lisa, who is now living in another world, that of wealth, it is as if he finds the echo of his guilt in this humiliation. But he is stubborn. Unfortunately for him, he will follow her to Geneva, to be offered a «simple life», a room, a coat. He tries to solve for her the impossible equation of their common future. He can tell that he has reached the end of his path, that he is trapped by his past and his condition.

Opposite them both, like a sensitive bull, Benoît Magimel contains some powerful contradictions.

Benoît Magimel has been another great ally for me. But I knew him. He has a remarkable presence as Leo, this taciturn businessman, brutal in his silences, violent domineering and inhabited by his

social power. There is also a pain, gentleness and fragility in him that can no longer be hidden. His love for Lisa is unconditional. Even when he anticipates the conspiracy of which he is the possible target, he continues to love her. Benoît Magimel's magnetism reinforces the character of Leo. He sublimates the grace and cold fury of men who love without return.

Despite its romantic drive, the richness of its sets and image, the film is rooted in the harsh social context of the modern world.

Harsh and even bitter, yes. The film begins in the urban and nocturnal life of today's young people where money circulates rapidly and coldly. Then other worlds reveal themselves, other social pressures. Other barriers that will become humiliating when one of the two lovers turns her back on her original world. Both in social relations, which are increasingly clear-cut and restricted, and in our most intimate relationships, we are all marked by the harshness of this world where we can no longer play without getting hurt. This is, I think, the strongest thing the film has to say about the present.





Nicole Garcia

After studying philosophy and following drama classes, Nicole Garcia takes her first steps in the acting world on the theater stage. While participating in several plays, she is awarded first prize by the Conservatoire. Her subsequent performance in Alain Resnais' movie, "My American Uncle", earns her a place in French cinema as an actress. Then, in 1990, she embarks on her first experience as a film director, with "Every Other Weekend".

Filmography

2020 : Amants (Lovers)

2016 : Mal de pierres (From the Land of the Moon)

2014 : Un beau dimanche (Going Away)

2010 : Un balcon sur la mer (A View of Love)

2006 : Selon Charlie (Charlie Says)

2002 : L'Adversaire (The Adversary)

1998 : Place Vendôme (Place Vendôme)

1994 : Le Fils préféré (The Favorite Son)

1990 : Un week-end sur deux (Every Other Weekend)

1986 : 15 août (short feature)

AMANTS (Lovers)

By **Nicole Garcia**

CAST

Simon

Lisa

Léo Redler

Pierre Niney

Stacy Martin

Benoît Magimel

CREW

Screenplay

Producers

Cinematography

Set decoration

Editing

Original music

Sound

Sound editing

Mix

Costume design

Makeup & hairstyling

Casting

Script supervisor

Storyboard

Production manager

Jacques Fieschi and Nicole Garcia

Philippe Martin and David Thion

Christophe Beaucarne AFC SBC

Thierry Flamand ADC

Frédéric Baillehaiche

and Juliette Welfling

Grégoire Hetzel

and Daniel Pemberton

Jean-Marie Blondel -

Martin Boissau

Sylvain Malbrant

Jean-Paul Hurier

Nathalie du Roscoät

and Jürgen Doering

Laura Ozier

and Frédéric Souquet

Stéphane Batut, Constance

Demontoy and Tatiana Vialle

Mathilde Profit

Maxime Rebiere

Hélène Bastide





Assistant director
Postproduction
supervisor
Set coordinator
Music supervisor

Julie Gouet
Juliette Mallon

Séphora Mayer Esquieu
Frédéric Junqua

PRODUCTION

Producer
In association with

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Mars Films
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Laurent Dassault Rond Point
Impala
Victoire Newman
Pauline's Angel

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Distribution - France
International sales

Mars Films
France tv distribution

france•tv distribution

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Julia Schulte
SVP International Sales
julia.schulte@francetv.fr
sales@francetv.fr
+33 6 34 65 07 05

INTERNATIONAL PRESS RENDEZ-VOUS

Viviana Andriani : +33 6 80 16 81 39
Aurélié Dard : +33 6 77 04 52 20
viviana@rv-press.com
aurelie@rv-press.com