

**LUDIVINE
SAGNIER**

UGC PRESENTS

**KRISTIN
SCOTT THOMAS**

LOVE CRIME

A FILM BY ALAIN CORNEAU
STARRING PATRICK MILLE

tiff. toronto
international
film festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2010

PRODUCED BY SAÏD BEN SAÏD SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION DIALOGUES ALAIN CORNEAU AND NATALIE CARTER WITH GUILLAUME MARQUET DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY YVES ANGELO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR VINCENT TRINTIGNANT - CORNEAU SETS KATI WYSKOP EDITING THIERRY DEROCLES
SOUND JEAN-PAUL MUGEL JEAN-PAUL HURIER COSTUMES KHADIJA ZEGGAI CASTING GERARD MOULEVRIER PRODUCTION MANAGER FREDERIC BLUM ABRAHAM GOLDBLAT A SBS FILMS FRANCE 2 CINEMA DIVALI FILMS
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A SUSPENSEFUL THRILLER

Isabelle works under Christine. They think alike. They are quite different. They might be lovers. But Christine takes credit for Isabelle's brilliant ideas. A struggle ensues between these two attractive and powerful women, the two top executives in the French office of an American multinational. Christine has the upper hand and no mercy. Humiliated and nearly destroyed, Isabelle begins to plot her revenge. Imaginative and thorough, calculating and exact, Isabelle makes an outstanding murderer. Every strange, seemingly haphazard thing she does - including a sudden drug dependence and wandering aimless in the rain - is part of her plan to kill. And get away with it.



A FILM BY: ALAIN CORNEAU (*FEAR AND TREMBLING, ALL THE MORNINGS OF THE WORLD, POLICE PYTHON 357*)
STARRING: LUDVINE SAGNIER (*MESRIERE, SWIMMING POOL*) AND KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS (*I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG, TELL NO ONE*) - PRODUCED BY: SAID BEN SAID / SBS FILMS
CINEMATOGRAPHER: YVES ANGELO (*MALABAR PRINCESS, ALL THE MORNINGS IN THE WORLD*) - PRODUCTION DESIGNER: KATIA WISZKOP (*ANGEL, LES DESTINEES, VAN GOGH*)
VERSION: FRENCH - FRENCH THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTOR: UGC DISTRIBUTION



UGC presents

LUDIVINE SAGNIER

KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

LOVE CRIME

(Crime d'Amour)

A film by ALAIN CORNEAU

with PATRICK MILLE

Original screenplay, adaptation & dialogue by ALAIN CORNEAU and NATALIE CARTER

Produced by Saïd Ben Saïd - SBS Films

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SYNOPSIS

Within the sterile offices of a powerful multinational corporation, two women come to a face-off. Isabelle is a young executive under the orders of Christine, a powerful woman she absolutely idolizes. Confident of her control over Isabelle, Christine leads her into a confusing, perverse game of seduction and domination. A dangerous game that goes too far – to the point of no return.

INTERVIEW WITH ALAIN CORNEAU

How long had you been considering LOVE CRIME?

I have had the basic idea in mind a long time. It is one of what I have fun calling “my little Fritz Lang labyrinths” and it can be summed up very simply: after you have committed the perfect crime, of which you will definitely be suspected, how can you prove you are innocent by making yourself look guilty?! It’s a crazy idea, which I thought about a long time before finding a way to develop it. I even talked it over regularly with screenwriters, who all gave up trying. I had to find a way to bring it to life. A breakthrough happened the day I thought the motive of the crime could be humiliation. Humiliation is a strong motive; it can lead to the most irrational behavior. At that moment, I had the idea of creating two stories rolled into one: the humiliating confrontation that leads to the crime, and flowing out of that confrontation, the way in which the criminal proves he is innocent. All that was left, basically, was to develop the form. So I wrote a first draft of the script with a focus on setting up the overall structure.

Is that when Natalie Carter got involved?

Yes. I like looking for different writers to fit the films I’m working on. I thought the work she did with Claude Miller on *A SECRET / UN SECRET* was remarkable. It was a very difficult book to adapt. She has a kind of acuity and subtlety that is rare. Then you have to meet, and it either works or it doesn’t. We hit it off right away, and we got along well together.

In what ways are you complementary?

We are complementary because I am obsessed by structure and plot, and she is more obsessed with character building and psychology. She has the ability to add strong, significant dialogue, which I am not always capable of writing. Also, she likes cinema noir so she understands the plot mechanics and logic involved. When I gave her the first draft to read, she told me she was interested but my two heroines were more like men disguised as women bursting with testosterone! So that’s what we started working on. On the two women, their confrontation and the ambiguity of their relationship, between seduction and manipulation, fascination and rivalry.

You knew they would be women right from the start?

I always thought the characters had to be women. I don’t know how to explain that. First of all I thought, without knowing why, that it would be more spectacular if the labyrinthine plot were feminine. It also comes from something personal: I’ve recently discovered how exciting it is to have women in leading roles. I’ve made a lot of “men’s movies” and I’ve worked a lot – though not necessarily on purpose, I’ve only realized it once the movies are finished – on systems of loss or affirmation of identity through fathers and sons, teachers and students. Exploring this theme with two women seemed even more exciting, maybe also because it is still new to me.

What was the most complicated part of writing the script?

The structure and overall balance, but most of all, in the second part, the plot mechanics and their precision. Getting the clues just right, seeing when and how to reveal them.

Constructing the puzzle, making sure it all holds together, that not one bolt is out of place, is a real art of craftsmanship – but I love it! First, Natalie and I worked a very long time on the confrontation between the two women. We went very deep into their relationship and then pulled back and tightened it up, keeping only the essential. It was also very exciting to work on developing Isabelle [Ludivine Sagnier], since it is through her character transformations that the story finds unity and balance. And that obsessive question: when is she sincere? I hope that, like us, the audience will be just as receptive to the exciting side of the confrontation, almost like a love affair, between these two women – Kristin Scott Thomas and Ludivine Sagnier literally blew me away – as it is to the thrilling side of the Machiavellian plan Isabelle sets up and then pulls strings to set into motion, a real game of leads and suspense created by continual questions: What is she doing? Why is she incriminating herself? Will she succeed in committing the perfect crime?

Did you write the script with certain actresses in mind?

No, I always hesitate to do that. It can lead to great disillusionment. Of course, I called one character Christine but I didn't know it would lead me to Kristin Scott Thomas! On the other hand, as soon as we made progress on the script, Kristin and Ludivine came to mind fairly quickly. Kristin because there was something that just fit. Her sophistication, beauty, authority and cool facade. She has a lot of fun with that. It's a style she can play in with incredible virtuosity and infallible credibility, because she does it with phenomenal intelligence and subtlety. And yet each take was different. Remarkable! As for Ludivine, what I liked was that capacity she has of being very changeable, that self-seeking quality about her – which corresponded to the character pretty well. She is an actress with a huge ability to be very different, even physically, from one film to another, one day to the next. She has that fierce determination in her eye that can play in opposition to her almost infantile attitude. It's very odd, very powerful and works very well.

She also has great emotional capacities. In those moments, she is not afraid to push the limits – with very little artifice. Like in that scene where she breaks down in the elevator and parking lot. Impressive. Obviously, I had no way of knowing before we began if there would be an alchemy between Kristin and Ludivine, in their acting of course but also physically, carnally – that was a gamble, but you can't make a film without taking a gamble. We shot the beginning of the film the first day, and right away I realized that it was working out perfectly between them.

There is something very ambiguous in the relationship between their characters that you never try to resolve.

You mean, "Is it a real physical love relationship or not?" [Laughs.] We don't know. We didn't want to know. In any case, there is trouble and seduction going on. But I don't have the real answer, even if I do think it is platonic love, though a very violent sort. That was actually one of the exciting things about the film when I started to talk about form with Yves Angelo [Director of Photography]. We said we were going to do a very severe film, with a certain intensity, with few shots and minimal material, that would not try to be wildly original filmmaking, but that would be continually ambiguous about the characters. Of course Christine manipulates Isabelle, she is delighted to have her to boss around and put down if needed, but she has two or three facial expressions – which Kristin does very, very well –

when she sees Isabelle is slipping from her grasp, that are heavy, more than just suggestive. She almost looks lost, hurt. And it is not just egotism or pride anymore. For Isabelle, Christine is certainly a mentor, she teaches her how to live, but if the humiliation is so strong and painful it is because she is terribly heartbroken. Also, outside of getting revenge, she commits the crime to become Christine, to push her fascination obsession to its limit. What I like so much about actors, and in this specific case, actresses, is that through their discoveries, inventions, gestures, behavior and expressions that we hadn't anticipated, they are able to express feelings, sensations and emotions that we can't explain rationally.

The character played by Patrick Mille also reinforces the ambiguity of their relationship.

We can definitely ask questions about everything. Does Isabelle sleep with him to, in a certain way, sleep with Christine? Does Christine drive him into her arms just to have greater control over her? They both use him, but between the two there is also a sort of jealousy involved, isn't there? Each of the women tries to get at the other one with what is closest to her, isn't that also a sort of frustrated love? Isabelle's revenge, in any case, targets Christine as much as Philippe. It's a tricky shot to pull off. No surprise that she thought it up, remember she is brilliant...

What made you think of Patrick Mille?

What I saw him do in other films. He can quite naturally seem like that relaxed kind of guy I needed. A Jerome Kerviel of sorts. Someone who is brilliant and clever, but through his actions ends up completely trapped. Also, in this case, he is a coward, spineless even. Patrick could effortlessly take on the look of a young, dynamic, unscrupulous executive and he has the subtlety to be able to simultaneously play seduction and panic. Patrick was fantastic. He truly became the character, who is not the nicest guy but gets hit pretty hard. For what it's worth, he has sincere regrets. But it is too late. Patrick brought the character to life with great honesty, without ever trying to "save" him or be "better" than him.

You spoke earlier about severity as a directorial choice.

Here I am talking like Sainte Colombe in TOUS LES MATINS DU MONDE / ALL THE MORNINGS OF THE WORLD ! The word is scary, but what I mean is that the subject seemed to demand a certain rigor in shot composition and minimal movement. It seemed like a question of honesty to me. The camera could move of course, but the less it moved, the better. Except for the flashbacks, where to increase impact and simplify understanding, we decided to shoot handheld with shallow depth-of-field, whereas for the rest we shot with medium to long focal lengths, and to convert the scenes to black and white.

Once again, you chose Yves Angelo as Director of Photography. Has his becoming a director in his own right changed your relationship?

No. The only difference, when I worked with him again after he had become a director, is that he convinced me to switch to digital. So there was a new, exciting element to our collaboration, something to discover and work on together. Plus, he is more on-purpose than I am, and I like that. When we decide on a certain form of directing, he sticks to it to the end, while I, at the slightest doubt, the slightest question, can forget everything and do the opposite! I'm not really saying that with regards to LOVE CRIME, because in this case everything was accomplished pretty easily according to what we had decided.

In the same way the camera moves very little, there is something very refined, almost stylized, in what you have done with the sets, colors and costumes. As if you wanted to achieve the exact opposite of SECOND WIND / LE DEUXIEME SOUFFLE.

That escapes me completely. In any case, I didn't think of this subject as being treated differently. Once again, I saw a kind of honesty in it. For me, the form and directing always depends on the subject. There was even a moment in LOVE CRIME – it had already happened to me on SERIE NOIRE – when I said: “We're going to do it in black and white.” Everyone panicked, even me!

The advantage of starting out like that from a very strong position is that it requires you to think a lot, to define precisely what you want. And then after that, things get updated. So we came to the conclusion that we would stay within the same family of tints and colors – whether it was the sets, the costumes or the makeup. That reinforced the relentlessness, the harshness of the story, the incredible solitude of all the characters. For the offices, we didn't have to do very much; they were already stylized to begin with. But when it came to the apartments, it's true, we worked a lot on that. Ludivine's apartment is a little like Montand's house in POLICE PYTHON 357. Moreover, something in LOVE CRIME resembles POLICE PYTHON 357: the film was, after all, the story of a man who involuntarily does an investigation about himself and knows he is the person he is investigating. Here there is a bit of that, but on the contrary, Isabelle does it voluntarily, which is why it was so extremely difficult to bring to life. In any case, we wanted Isabelle to have a monkish side to her. Right down to the way she goes to bed, making sure there is not a single wrinkle in her sheets! And the way she makes breakfast in the morning. She is obsessed with organization! If she weren't, she couldn't think up that whole evil plot. There is something in her that could be classified as madness, which Ludivine really knows how to portray and express. Isabelle has a vision of reality that isn't exactly normal. She is on the one hand, a monk-soldier, and on the other, someone who burns with endless frustration. We see how hungrily, almost aggressively, she jumps into her sexual relationship with Philippe. There is an endless kind of whirlpool within her, a personal internal combat. As if she were always asking herself the question: “Who am I?” Which is, by the way, in my opinion, one of the central questions of cinema. And since cinema essentially relies upon the audience's need to identify with the characters, that only makes it all the more troubling: we manage to identify with characters who are not us, so it has to be that despite everything, they are a part of us.

You are known to be a film buff. Did any films serve as references when you started working on LOVE CRIME?

Of course. Films that I love, but I don't make direct reference to them. They range from PLEIN SOLEIL, where the loss/quest for identity is the clearest, to Fritz Lang's L'INVRAISEMBLABLE VERITE, which centers on a ruthless plot like a machine dismantled by a grain of sand. Actually, I love films you can read on three levels. On the first one, you have fun. On the second, you are sensitive to issues of identity, and on the third are the social issues. LOVE CRIME also incidentally reveals a portrait of society and big multinational corporations.

So much so that we can't help thinking about FEAR AND TREMBLING / STUPEUR ET TREMBLEMENTS – since in addition to the relationship between the two heroines, the two aesthetic worlds are pretty close – and about the dramatic events linked to harassment in the workplace that made headlines these last few months.

From the moment I found out the motive of the crime could only be humiliation, I immediately thought of life in the office. Life in an office is synonymous with humiliation and harassment. The news caught up with us and went even further, but even so, it is not really the subject of the film. Because if there is a war between Christine and Isabelle and if there is humiliation, there is first and foremost a strong bond between them, between fascination and even perhaps desire. In any case, Natalie and I were careful to work on those moments of platonic love between the two. Isabelle does not betray Christine directly. It is a series of circumstances: the Americans show up earlier than planned, Christine doesn't answer her telephone, etc. Everything happens a little bit against her will. That wasn't very easy to resolve in the writing, by the way. As for FEAR AND TREMBLING / STUPEUR ET TREMBLEMENTS, of course we thought of it, not only for its vision of the workplace but also for the relationship between the two women. Except that Fubuki, the Japanese woman, was a true mentor and allowed Amelie to become herself and say in the end: "I have come back to Belgium and I wrote." If she seemed like a villain, it was because she had a lot of difficulty being herself when faced with hierarchy, and above all because it was essential to prove to Amelie that she was wrong, that she couldn't go back to childhood, she couldn't become Japanese. The foundations are different. In FEAR AND TREMBLING, Amelie accepted to go so far as to be humiliated because unconsciously she knew she was learning something, even when it was painful. Here, no. It is not the same type of humiliation. In FEAR AND TREMBLING, the humiliation is very formal; in LOVE CRIME it is very profound. Christine really uses the very deepest and most secret things in Isabelle, her greatest weakness, to expose her to public ridicule. That is difficult, even unbearable, to endure and overcome.

We know how essential music is to you. There is very little music in LOVE CRIME.

At first, I even thought I wouldn't use any at all! And then, like the black and white issue, I changed my mind and told myself I needed a few anchors. But that radical starting point made me decide in any case that there would be very little. And all at once – I don't know why, inspiration is always a mystery – I thought of an old 1980's recording of the great saxophone player Pharoah Sanders called "Kazuko". A song with a Japanese musician who more or less improvises on the koto, and Pharoah Sanders on tenor sax, who plays an absolutely sumptuous chorus. It is one of the most beautiful choruses he ever played, with an amazing mastery of breath. It is a very tender song, and at the same time it is a little bit violent. Every note is colossal. It exudes a very strange and entrancing atmosphere, which corresponded to the idea I had of the film. I am always worried about beginning a film without having the music, but in this case I was reassured, even if I didn't know exactly where I would put it. Still, I had Ludivine listen to it before we started shooting, so that she would absorb it. It was my editor Thierry Derocles, who I have been working with for more than twenty years, who found the ideal spot to use it: at the moment of the action, of the "act" I should rather say, of murder. Thierry is a little like Yves [Angelo]: when you say you decide on something, you do it! So there was no question of putting that music anywhere else. We just used the introduction once or twice like a sort of buzzing, mounting fear, and we decided to unleash the music all at once, at that moment. I was captivated by that idea of Thierry's because even if I had already filmed the scene that way, with the music it became even more like an act of love.

INTERVIEW WITH LUDIVINE SAGNIER

Do you remember the first time you heard about LOVE CRIME and what attracted you to the project?

I was a member of the Jury of the Deauville Asian Film Festival. Alain Corneau called me to tell me he wanted to meet me. I remember that before he even talked to me about his project, which at the time was called A PERFECT WOMAN / UNE FEMME PARFAITE, we discussed the films in festival, because Alain is crazy about Asian cinema. It was fascinating. Already, we had a great connection! As soon as I got back from Deauville, I devoured the script. It had been a long time since I had so much pleasure reading a script. A true joy. And what a crazy idea to incriminate yourself to make yourself look innocent! It was like sitting down to a familiar meal and discovering new flavors with every bite. A familiar meal, because I recognized its structure. I saw the meaning in the structure by Natalie Carter, who I had worked with on A SECRET. Her architect's style, the way she has of playing with volume, space, and her sense of dialogue, too. And new flavors because my character never ceased to amaze me, page after page, until the last one. And though I liked the script as a whole, I admit that it was my character that attracted me the most.

Why?

First, she has an incredible character arc, a complex and captivating psychological journey. It begins with her need to identify with this woman who is her boss, who is beautiful, intelligent and successful, and then it very quickly becomes more confusing and ambiguous. She develops a palette of contradictory emotions. It is a great privilege to get to play all that in the same film. Next, there was a kind of wink – intentional or not, I don't know – at ALL ABOUT EVE, by Mankiewicz, which is a fundamental film to me. Both on a structural level and in the idea of a duel between women who defy the hangman. Finally, I knew Kristin Scott Thomas was attached to the project, and that made it even more exciting. Because though I had met her briefly on SMALL CUTS / PETITES COUPURES, by Pascal Bonitzer, we didn't have any scenes together. She is also one of the rare great actresses – you have to admit I have been really spoiled with fine acting partners since I got started in this business – with whom I hadn't worked yet. So to be able to work with her was awe-inspiring – all the more since I had just seen her in I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG / IL Y A LONGTEMPS QUE JE T'AIME by Philippe Claudel – and very stimulating as well. Because you are on extraordinary levels of acting. It was as if I was a skier and I was invited to go down a notoriously difficult slope. The challenge was enthralling.

How would you describe the character you play, Isabelle Guérin?

She is a workaholic, obstinate and methodical. She is essentially driven by work. Which of course hides inner abysses that aren't detailed in this story but can easily be imagined. We all know people like that, who never stop, who take refuge in being overactive. They are often highly emotional people, who manage to build a shell around themselves by being extremely busy. To get to such a high level of competence and excellence requires such a huge amount of work, concentration and determination that they close themselves off to

everything else. Except for when suddenly, the protective bubble they live in bursts for one reason or another, and they find themselves faced with reality, they are more vulnerable than other people are...

Do you understand her? Her development, her actions?

Honestly? No! [Laughs.] I am so opposite from Isabelle in my personality and lifestyle. But that, too, is part of the challenge and excitement for an actress. Especially since Alain and Natalie have written this character so well, she is so thoroughly coherent, realistic and moving, that she is easy to defend even if you don't understand her. When I see Isabelle, I want to say to her, like kids when they watch a cartoon, "No, don't go there, don't go there, there's a wolf!" Completely fascinated at first, she falls right into the big bad wolf's trap. But like Little Red Riding Hood, it's the wolf that ends up getting his throat cut.

In her relationship with Christine [Kristin Scott Thomas], what do you think is dominant: fascination, ambition, a desire to take her place, or a certain form of love or desire?

All of that at once. Her idealization of that woman, who is what she would like to be, is a kind of fanaticism, and that is why she loses her head. Her capacity for discernment, which was so strong up until then, gets mixed up by the fact that she admires that woman, and admires her in a confusing kind of way. In the way she follows her, there is in fact an ambiguous feeling, too, like a suppressed desire. At first she is totally at her mercy, and the other woman, who isn't very straightforward either, knows the game of manipulation so well that Isabelle falls right into her net without even realizing it. There is something passionate and uncontrollable about her fascination with her.

How do you explain her actions? Heartbreak, humiliation, ambition?

What I really liked, and Alain too, was remaining kind of mysterious about Isabelle's motivations. I like the idea that it helps the audience to get lost in Isabelle's unconscious mind, like being in a swamp. In any case, it is obvious that there is not just one motive. Humiliation may be the trigger, but there is everything else that goes with it, frustration, deception, jealousy, coveting, a desire to be like her body and soul, which provokes a physical problem she has a hard time accepting, maybe even a kind of shame, since she is in unknown territory. There is also the heartbreak she feels with Philippe [Patrick Mille], when she realizes she has been used, after diving headlong into her relationship with him. Even if sleeping with him – and it is actually more savage than sensual – was like a way of sleeping with her. The deception is double. That is what I was talking about earlier: often, people who are workhorses are more fragile emotionally. The humiliation is that much more profound. And to explain her actions, there is also that will to preserve her dignity at any price. That is why she starts plotting out her diabolical plan.

You say Isabelle is light-years away from you, but if you had to find something about her that is like you, what would you say?

[She hesitates] In any case, there is always a connection, even if it is tenuous. If Alain chose me, he must have seen something. I think I have such a strong imagination that I can somehow get close to her madness. I like playing crazy women, maybe because I am so terribly normal. They are characters that attract me because they take me on a mental adventure.

What about her touches you the most?

I think it's her solitude. She is so incredibly alone! Even the way she sleeps, stiff, with her arms straight down along her body, is like lying in a coffin. It's terrifying. At the same time, I am not sure she is unhappy being alone because, again, she finds a kind of refuge in it.

Simone Signoret once said, "You don't get into a character, it is the character that gets into you." If you agree with that, isn't it troubling to let a character like Isabelle get inside of you?

I totally agree with Signoret. Of course, saying that can give the impression that there isn't any work involved. When in fact it requires a lot of preparation to make yourself available for the character to come in. You have to lock some doors and open others, protect yourself here and there. A role like Isabelle is not easy every day; you have to keep it under control. It's tough and painful, but later, the results are rewarding!

What was the most important part of that preparation?

All of it. The script, discussions with Alain. Before shooting began, he had me listen to the music of Pharoah Sanders, a saxophone player who is one of his favorite jazz musicians. I didn't yet know exactly what he was going to use in the film, but listening to that music, I immediately understood the mood he wanted. It was a very strong clue for me. So I often listened to it on the shoot, before takes. There is something entrancing, almost exhilarating about that music, which not only helps to endure the solitude, but almost makes you like it... I thought it was one of the keys to empathy that I could eventually have for Isabelle.

Were there scenes you were particularly apprehensive about?

There were several, but most of all, the office scenes! For me, the business world is something totally exotic. I have absolutely no knowledge or experience of it, so being believable at a desk, typing on a computer and organizing files, was a real gamble. Of course, I was also afraid of the scenes where Isabelle breaks down, in the elevator and parking lot. You have to be totally in character. You can't just cry; you have to howl fifteen times in a row before you collapse and tremble like a little kitty. You have to let go, yet retain mastery of the way you let go. Especially since we shot that scene over several days – one shot now, another shot later, the hallway on one day, the elevator on another, the parking lot on yet another...

Without giving the whole plot away, there are certain moments when your character pretends to feel what she is feeling. Did that change your acting approach?

There definitely are endless levels to the role. I thought a lot about that, and then I finally decided to play those scenes straight, with sincerity. Showing that you are acting is useless. What is interesting is that it made me go a long way in my head. It's not a psychological thriller for nothing. I learned a lot from that.

You talked about the challenge of playing opposite Kristin Scott Thomas. How did that go?

Very, very well. We laughed a lot together. But above all, the acting was a great pleasure. She is incredible. She has such intelligence and finesse. With one movement of her lip or a raised eyebrow, she can express so many emotions. Every minute is meaningful, and yet it is never heavy. She has that English side to her, that suggestive self-restraint. There is something feline about her.

What about your two lead male partners, Patrick Mille and Guillaume Marquet?

Patrick melted with great ease into his character, who isn't exactly the easiest person to portray. He played his part with humility, giving him charm and yet accepting to be overshadowed by these women killing each other, which can't be all that easy for a man. I had a different relationship with Guillaume, who played Daniel, my assistant. He is a little like Daniel, actually. He has that good student, hard working side to him. He is a theater actor. He is ambitious but very humble. We had a lot of fun together. I also really like the idea that we never truly know, just like for Isabelle, what motivates Daniel: ambition, a job well done, desire...

What struck you about working with Alain Corneau?

His warmth, his enthusiasm, his smile... but also his mystery! You can't tell what's hiding behind his smile. Alain is a little like Isabelle Guérin. He says so himself. Like her, he is extremely orderly, obsessional, almost fanatic. He has the air of a gifted boy who is imperturbable. Nothing can stop him. Like Isabelle, his determination is unwavering, it pays no attention to obstacles and changes of heart. He always cuts straight to the quick. But the comparison ends there! Everything is organized, thought out, reflected upon. He leaves nothing to chance, which for the kind of film we were making was ideal. We are in a crime drama here, with plot mechanics that have to be perfect, where everything has to be tight. He knows exactly what he needs, which is what I like about working with such experienced directors. His know-how is impressive. Alain is very meticulous. Every detail is essential. On the set, you really get the impression that you are watching him construct a kind of very, very precise model, and so you feel like you are just his tool – but what is exciting is that he asks you to be a high precision tool.

How would you describe his relationship to the Director of Photography, Yves Angelo?

Incredible teamwork and so complementary! They make a great pair; they have very different personalities. Alain can be extremely serious, focused and rigorous, whereas Yves can be a real joker, a goofball, even! We had a lot of laughs together, which was good because I often need to decompress on the set. And yet, Alain gives him a lot of space; he almost lets him lead. He trusts him absolutely.

LOVE CRIME is two films in one. Did you realize that when you were making it?

And how! For logistical reasons, we shot all of Kristin's scenes first. And after three weeks, she left. So I felt a huge emptiness. Even if Patrick, Daniel and the others were there – they came and went – I found myself in a sort of solitude that was very new to me. I am not used to feeling alone as an actress. And that's when – but it must be connected, too – I felt Isabelle's solitude so profoundly. Especially since she is never really herself with her lover, her assistant, the judge or the lawyer, and in her mind she is all alone. So there was a tension in the fact that I could never be myself. I also think that I have never been on a shoot where I was so close to the script supervisor. Because the things I ended up latching on to were details, plot elements, time, logic... I was at the service of the crime drama and the way it unfolded. I clung to that. I was obsessed with continuity as if it could help me resist that feeling of solitude. I remember that when I came home at night, it weighed me down. I had to get Isabelle's solitude out of me. That Isabelle Guérin is definitely not an innocuous character!

INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

What appealed to you when you read the script for LOVE CRIME?

The script itself. I loved the structure, the relentless plot. It was a real thriller, in the classic sense of the word. Also, I really liked the idea of playing such a character. It amused me to play a very mean woman who gets punished in the end!

How would you describe her?

She is a fabulous cinematic character. She is a bit like the stepmother, the evil queen, in SNOW WHITE. All those relationships of power, manipulation, ambition, are something completely foreign to me. What's more, I have absolutely no notion of the world of business and high finance; it isn't a domain that attracts or interests me. So I truly had to create something, and that is what was exciting.

In her relationship with Isabelle, the character played by Ludivine Sagnier, what do you think is dominant: the pleasure of initiation, the taste of power?

For me, it is truly a game of power and pure cruelty, and perhaps even desire, or a certain form of love. There is, in fact, something ambiguous between them, which is never made clear.

It's funny, because that aspect struck me more when I read the script than when I saw the film. But that is probably because when I see the finished film, I can't get lost in the story – I see myself.

What about that surprising “I love you” scene?

I don't believe it! I don't believe in her sincerity, in that “I want to be loved” aspect of her. For me, it is pure manipulation.

We also wonder if there isn't a hint of jealousy when it comes to the relationship between Isabelle and Philippe (played by Patrick Mille), even if she actually encouraged it.

I think she is completely Machiavellian. The true deception, for her, is not getting the job in New York. She wants to be the strongest, the most powerful, number one. Nothing else counts. But once again, maybe I say that because I see myself – because I see myself creating, acting. It's strange, because since then I have made four films and so I have a hard time remembering what was going on inside her in each scene! Especially since I played the character with ease, intuitively and spontaneously. The script was so well written that everything seemed fluid, clear and obvious. How I wanted to act, how Alain wanted me to act... Even if I don't think he wrote it for me, I felt a little like it was tailored to fit and, let's be modest! The casting was perfect! The only thing is that, since the plot is a bit complicated, which is essential in this kind of film, and the machine is so well oiled, we had to be very meticulous and always stick to the script, unlike some other films, where you let things take their course and allow scenes and dialogue to change. It was exacting down to the last detail.

Do you remember how Alain Corneau spoke to you about the character for the first time? Did he tell you why he chose you?

He didn't really talk to me about the character, actually. As to why he chose me, he didn't say; you have to ask him. I think he must have thought of me for the international side of the character, for that image of "cool beauty" that people like to see in me, or at least exploit. I do remember, however, the sparkle in Alain's eyes when he spoke of the story, of his search for the perfect crime and the way the plot unfolded. There was something mischievous about him. It was fun to see the pleasure he had in constructing the plot and shooting it, in showing how the weak become strong, in bringing these Hitchcockian characters to life.

In a similar way, we can feel the obvious, almost wicked pleasure that you have in playing these kinds of characters, who show up in your career on a regular basis.

First, on the strict level of acting alone, they are exciting characters to portray. Second, maybe it is a way for me to exorcise my demons. In fact, I always feel like a victim, so when I play this kind of character, it's like I'm getting revenge!

What do you think is Ludivine Sagnier's greatest asset for playing the character of Isabelle?

She has a sort of honesty and innocence in her eyes, which Alain put to good use. She has such sensitive emotions that you think she is naive and innocent. That works well in the film. That only makes her transformation and development stronger. It was a real pleasure to work with her. She is lively, exacting and very responsive. We immediately teamed up and we even shared a lot of laughs. As if, given the subject and story, we needed to decompress and compensate. It was very enjoyable.

And what was Alain Corneau like to work with on the set?

He is very special to work with. I could say that Alain is like a set of drums, but that wouldn't be strong enough. He is a huge motor that generates energy, that motivates and makes things move. He is very dynamic on the set. He is everywhere. He is behind the monitors, under his little black tent, and you hear him cry, "Cut!" When you meet him, he is an absolutely charming human being, enthusiastic, incredibly cultured, and a sweet man, even if he is decisive. On the set, he is a different person. Totally passionate. His sword is out and he's a fighter!

If you had to keep just one image, one moment or one impression of this adventure, what would it be?

The impression that stays with me is the feeling I had going to that district in La Défense every day, entering that building and thinking, "Luckily I don't do this in real life! I am an actress; I get to go home at night and be someone else tomorrow and forget all about this ruthless, terrifying world." It was a lot more fun to pretend to take that trip in the towers of La Défense, especially in the company of Alain, Ludivine, and Patrick Mille as well, who is fantastic in the film – with that way he has of expressing fear and stress, the pressure weighing him down – than having to do it in real life! I felt kind of relieved that it was "only" the movies.

CAST

Ludivine Sagnier
Kristin Scott Thomas
Patrick Mille
Guillaume Marquet
Gérald Laroche
Julien Rochefort
Olivier Rabourdin
Marie Guillard
Mike Powers
Matthew Gonder
Jean-Pierre Leclerc

Isabelle
Christine
Philippe
Daniel
Gérard
Lawyer
Judge
Claudine
Boss 1
Boss 2
Gérard's Assistant

CREW

Director
Producer
Screenplay, Adaptation, Dialogue
Production Manager
Director of Photography
1st Assistant Director
Script Supervisor
Production Designer
Costume Designer
Costume Supervisor
Head Editor
Music
Set Photographer
Sound
Casting
Post Production Manager
French video rights
International Sales

Alain Corneau
Saïd Ben Saïd - SBS Films
Alain Corneau and Natalie Carter
Frédéric Blum
Yves Angelo
Vincent Trintignant-Corneau
Marie Leconte
Katia Wyszok
Khadija Zeggaï
Karen Muller-Serreau
Thierry Derocles
Pharoah Sanders
Pascal Chantier
Jean-Paul Mugel and Jean-Paul Hurier
Gérard Moulevrier
Abraham Goldblat
UGC Vidéo
TF1 International

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