

GAUMONT PRESENTS
A QUAD+TEN PRODUCTION

JEAN-PIERRE
BACRI

GILLES
LELLOUCHE

JEAN-PAUL
ROUVE

VINCENT
MACAIGNE

ALBAN
IVANOV

C'EST LA VIE!

A FILM BY
ERIC TOLEDANO & OLIVIER NAKACHE



Gaumont
depuis que le cinéma existe

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WITH
JEAN-PIERRE BACRI CILLES LELLOUCHE JEAN-PAUL ROUVE VINCENT MACAIGNE ALBAN IVANOV
EYE HAIDARA SUZANNE CLÉMENT HÉLÈNE VINCENT BENJAMIN LAVERNHE

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SYNOPSIS

Max has been a caterer for 30 years.

He has organized hundreds of events, and is probably pretty close to throwing in the towel. Today there will be a magnificent reception in a 17th century chateau: one more wedding,

Pierre and Helena's.

As usual, Max has taken care of everything: recruited his wait staff, cooks, and dishwashers. He has recommended a photographer, reserved an orchestra, and arranged for the floral decorations:

in short, all the ingredients to make the reception a success...

But in accordance with Murphy's Law, all his planning will be upset, and everything will go wrong, turning every moment of joy and emotion into a disaster and ending in chaos.

From the earliest preparations to the crack of dawn, we will follow this evening from behind the scenes, from the point of view of his staff, who can count only on the one thing they have in common: knowing how to throw a good party.



AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC TOLEDANO & OLIVIER NAKACHE

When did you first come up with the idea of "Sens de la fête"?

Éric Tolédano: This movie was first conceived in the glum context of the year 2015. Olivier and I may have been feeling a little sad, and felt the need to try for something a little more festive. The idea was to laugh, to have fun, while describing the flaws of the society we live in. And that desire was born at the same time as the idea of offering the main role to Jean-Pierre Bacri...

Olivier Nakache: More anecdotally, I have to say that the idea for a film often transpires while shooting the previous film, because emulation can generate ideas. The first scene of Samba takes place during a wedding: it was a long sequence shot that took us from the dining room to the wings. That was a good resumé of what we wanted to do.

Do you always go about writing in the same way?

Olivier Nakache: Generally speaking, yes. For a year, a year and a half, we research the subject we've chosen.

For this film, we collated memories, because during some of our leaner periods, in order to finance our short subjects, Éric and I did a lot of odd jobs together in the party universe, one of which was working as waiters at weddings. And so in the wings we felt the pressure of the job and we collected a good number of anecdotes about the subject. But while we were writing, we decided to study current wait staffs, in order to see how people working in the shadows make these events so extraordinary. It was during those musings that we began to sketch our characters.

Éric Tolédano : Most of the time, we bring all our ideas to the table, put them on a chart, and then organize them into sequences that we split up to write. Since our two computers sit across from each other, we are each other's first audience, and we send our ideas back and forth to test them. But this time was a little atypical, because a third person joined the group: Jean-Pierre Bacri. Since he is himself a screenwriter, he soon enough tendered his services. And so we had the





luxury of getting his opinion on our various versions of the screenplay, of testing scenes and lines with him in real time, hot off the press. What a dream, because with his music in our ears, we'd set back down to work with renewed energy.

Why did you dream of directing Jean-Pierre Bacri?

Éric Tolédano: Simply because to our minds he is one of the greatest of French actors! We were always impressed by the exactitude of his acting, his sense of rhythm, and his way of delivering a line. With him, everything is always flawless. I remember a scene in which he was on the phone. It was fascinating to see how real it looked. The other actors watched, as if they wanted to learn from him. Besides, we never had as many actors behind the monitor as when Jean-Pierre was playing.

Olivier Nakache: And then if you think about it, Bacri is a synthesis of everything we love about the movies. He is as much at ease and credible in art films as in more lowbrow comedies, such as Didier. He cultivates his rarity, and when he does accept a project, he takes it on fully. He is a person of great integrity and we love the way he operates. With Gérard Depardieu (Let's Be

Friends), François Cluzet (Intouchables) and him, we've had the good fortune to direct great actors.

In what way was marriage an inspiring subject?

Éric Tolédano: It's an event for which every detail is staged. Much like a play: with an audience, regulatory costumes, and roles to play (witnesses, parents, friends...). The complex organization that it requires inevitably creates stress, tension, mixed emotions, and it is a moment that cannot help but exacerbate family issues. It's a context that everyone is familiar with, and which is always a joy to return to, so it was the ideal background. But our principle was to watch the evening through the prism and point of view of the people who are there to work, for whom it is just one more day. That confrontation and discrepancy will necessarily create comic situations.

One senses a true connection with your second film, *Those Happy Days*. Had you thought of it while writing it?

Olivier Nakache: The connection came about gradually. Like with *Those Happy Days*, there is unity of place, a time frame, a staff of group leaders, and

participants. And also Jean-Paul Rouve, and a real desire to be funny. In that sense, you might say it's a kind of "Adult Happy Days".

Éric Tolédano: *Those Happy Days* is a film that crystallized our nostalgia for childhood. Is it because Olivier and I actually met at a summer camp that we often deal with groups in our films? It is in any event what allows us to exist, because cinema is first and foremost a team effort: we meet, we have some great times, we become attached, and then we split up... the better to meet again on other projects.

Did you have any film references in mind?

Olivier Nakache: Yes several, including *Waiter!* by Claude Sautet. Generally speaking, Sautet's entire filmography has great meaning for us. That film inspired our movements between kitchen and dining room. It showed us how to move from one universe to another in one shot, and how to depict the relations between waiters who make up the staff at a big Parisian brasserie. And Sautet sets everything up in such a way that the viewer can immediately enter the story.

Éric Tolédano: *Wild Tales* by Damián Sziffrón was also a reference, because it was a kind of X-ray of



contemporary Argentine society. We were in the middle of writing our movie, when we discovered his film.

Olivier Nakache: And when we saw the last sketch, one of the most brilliant, we realized that our aspirations were the same, because using an evening organized by losers who "adapt", *Le sens de la fête* becomes a kind of mirror image of France today.

How did Gilles Lellouche become involved in the project?

Éric Tolédano: We imagined him from the start as the MC of the evening. Gilles is an actor we particularly like, because he can move so smoothly from one register to the next. For us, he is the perfect embodiment of a rather fragile guy whose dream was to exist in the spotlight, but who ultimately just hosts one wedding after the other. We feel a lot of tenderness and affection for people like that, who sometimes let themselves get carried away with their role, who have a rather approximate hold on reality, and can only take very little distance from themselves.

Olivier Nakache: His character starts out as a cliché. The advantage with that is that we can zoom in on him gradually as the film progresses, fine-tune him and



round him out with nuances. Gilles read the screenplay, and immediately agreed to the project and became very receptive. When we asked him to work on the Eros Ramazotti hit, *Se bastasse una canzone*, or *Lovely Day* by Bill Withers with a singer who specializes in weddings, he did it very seriously. He really played the game. Like Benjamin Lavernhe too, who after having spent three hours onstage at the Comédie-Française each evening, arrived in the middle of the night to perform a complicated scene, harnessed 30 meters up, under an enormous bubble...

This is the third time you've called on Jean-Paul Rouve to play a role in a movie. What do you like so much about him?

Olivier Nakache: With Jean-Paul, it's very special. He has a special place in our cinema. We started out with him. He introduced us to C  rard Depardieu for our first film. He allowed us to exist and progress. And he had the main role in *Those Happy Days*, a seminal film for us, which recalls so many strong emotions and remains an indelible memory.

What is so specific about shooting an ensemble film?

  ric Tol  dano: The problem is that when actors enjoy being together, the set can soon degenerate into a

schoolyard, and you have to play the cop. The advantage though is the sense of mutual stimulation that circulates on location. What is exciting is to make each character exist, and have him develop to fulfill a function in the story. There is something musical about that: we are orchestra conductors and, depending on how the film evolves, we can suggest that the actors add a little note, or go solo. To compose a work that sounds right, you need to create a genuine relationship with each actor.

Olivier Nakache: Uniting in one and the same film universes as different as those of Vincent Macaigne, Alban Ivanov, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Gilles Lellouche, Suzanne Cl  ment or Jean-Paul is very motivating. And every day we stimulate our actors, so that the score sounds creative and harmonious.

Did you elaborate the choreographies for the wait staff in advance?

  ric Tol  dano: We did an enormous amount of rehearsals and blockings so that each actor would arrive at the right place at the right time. It took a lot of work for the illusion to work, and for all those movements to look natural. The only question was "does it look credible"? We were obsessed with that, because what

we like, when we're members of the audience, is to believe everything immediately.

Olivier Nakache: The risk with telling a story that takes place over one evening in one single place is that it could become too theatrical. To avoid that, we needed to find one single property with decors that were varied enough to offer a lot of possibilities for movement. That way the camera is never static, and its movements bring energy and tension that last all the way until the end of the evening.

Éric Tolédano: Our versatile location was inspired by films such as *The Rules of the Game* or *The Party*, and is almost a mirror held up to our own professions. Some people had the feeling that we were actually speaking about the cinema in *Le sens de la fête*, because it mirrors the same kind of ant heap that exists on a movie shoot. In the cinema, there are also a lot of people in the wings who prepare the takes, so that they will be as beautiful as can be onscreen.

Where did you shoot?

Éric Tolédano: At the château de Courances, near Fontainebleau. A 16th century structure that belonged to Louis XIII...

Olivier Nakache: ... and which has the particularity of having thirteen natural sources on its grounds! The terrain was waterlogged, and we had to adapt. I have to say that the shoot was epic, because it was rainy out, and we often had to dodge raindrops. Just as in the film, like Max and his staff, we had to adapt on a daily basis, and for our own technical crew each dialogue was an echo, or a reminder of our own state of mind.

Music plays a key role in this film. How did you approach it?

Olivier Nakache: The jazz of Avishai Cohen accompanied us throughout the entire writing process. Its peculiar tempo and rhythm were an inspiration for us, because it sounds so improvised, but is quite worked out. It was a good fit with the story we wanted to tell. He had never composed any film music before, but since we wanted to reach out to other musical universes, we went to meet him after a concert and asked him to give it a try. He immediately agreed. It was a magnificent surprise, a beautiful encounter.

Éric Tolédano: In fact, we always wanted a musician who would take a look at a different artistic genre. And jazz is the musical genre that fascinates us the





most, because, like in the movies, everything has to be synchronized to produce an emotion. Avishai Cohen's jazz becomes a true character in the film, a musical synthesis, with percussion, darboukas, double bass, piano, all in atypical rhythm. It perfectly illustrates this evening full of surprises and the unexpected. And that is why we wanted the film to end on a real musical number, in which everyone is represented.

Do you think that "Le sens de la fête", a sense of fun, is at time lacking in French cinema?

Éric Tolédano: Many movies, in fact, tell us about how harsh, violent and frightening our world is. This film was written during chaotic 2015, and it does pointedly ask the question: how do we preserve, in spite of it all, our sense of fun?



AN INTERVIEW WITH **JEAN-PIERRE BACRI**

What interested you in this project?

The Olivier Nakache and Éric Tolédano trademark. When I read the screenplay, I rediscovered everything that I love about them, and that we don't often see at the movies: unabashed comedy that makes you laugh, but in which you often sense a great liking for the characters. They have a way of looking at people, a human touch that I love and that moves me. It's what I liked so much about Those Happy Days, and then obviously in Intouchables. I liked that about them before even I met them, because you couldn't be a really bad person and make movies like that.

Do you feel a connection between you and them?

In our writing, yes. It's not for me to say, but what we have in common is our love of humor and the fact that we couldn't write any other way. So even though we each have our own style and way of making movies, you can in fact detect a family relationship between us.

You were present as of the writing of the project. Is that a habit with you?

It depends on the screenwriters and director. Some are very stubborn about their texts – that's not a reproach, because when Agnès Jaoui and I write a film, we're that way too: we work so hard on the writing, on the dialogues, that you need a very convincing argument just to get us to change one line. And all the more so, because what the actors suggest is often something we had already tried and that didn't work. Nakache and Tolédano are very accommodating about their texts. And since I soon saw that they were amenable to suggestions, I wted a few ideas. I remember, for example, that there were hardly any women in the first drafts of the screenplay. There wasn't even a bride. What a shame to talk about a wedding without a bride. That kind of remark prompted some fruitful discussions. And as we went along, a sense of complicity arose between us, and since they were so friendly and open to change, it was very pleasant working with them.



Did the subject of marriage inspire you?

No, because I'm not a great fan of marriage, and the wedding here is just a pretext for bringing people together. It's the way Nakache et Tolédano treat the reception, from the inside out, that inspired me. Because by showing how the staff working in the wings is organized, they draw out the humanity that I love so much. There are quite a few losers on the staff, which creates some comic situations, but emotion too, because people like that are often touching in their disarray. What I like a lot here is that with the staff, we depict a microcosm of society. In every country, there are some talented people, some less talented, but the thing is to make them work together. Not everyone can become the President of France. But even the lowest of the low, a metro conductor... each one of us can do something useful and find his or her place.

You embody a kind of director in this story, because you are a chief of staff. What about this character touches you?

His stubbornness, even with his weakest links. Under his crabby, cantankerous, and exasperated exterior, he is a real mensch. He takes care of his guys, never leaving any of them by the wayside. In real life, I like people like that;



guys like him, who will always give people down on their luck another chance. They often talk a lot of hot air, they like to play the dictator, but once you get to know them better, you realize that they'd give you the shirt off their back.

What is also touching about him is his solitude in the group...

That's right. He watches out for everyone, but no one really has his back. He is going through difficult emotional times, and tries to cope with the sadness and with what he has to get through with here.

What do you enjoy about working on an ensemble film?

It's a great pleasure. Agnès and I have never written a film with just two main roles, surrounded by bit players, because my pleasure is never whole, if I'm the only one really acting. Playing with someone who is just there to deliver lines would make me miserable; that's not why I'm a member of this profession. That ensemble spirit may come to me from the theater, but maybe it's just an attitude, almost a policy, that I happen to share with Éric and Olivier.



What did you learn from the young actors you worked with?

I always learn from people with talent, and there were a lot of them here. On location, I was surprised by their flexibility and sense of improvisation. Éric and Olivier often let people express themselves, so we saw a lot of good ideas come forth. Those young actors were effervescent. You could see that they were truly having a good time acting. Besides, that is what all actors have in common: whatever their age, they love to have fun.

Does an ensemble film where everything is choreographed leave room for improvisation?

It's more difficult. But in any case, I think that when improvising, you can end up with 90% of waste, because most of the time your stuff is too facile, or sophomoric. Nothing is as good as tight writing, thought out and pondered. Even the wisecracks.

What was the atmosphere like on the set?

Both joyous and focused. Éric and Olivier take things seriously. They do a lot of takes to satisfy their demanding natures. I always thought that after 5 or 6 takes, I'd have nothing more to say, but they proved me wrong. Sometimes it worked because they too found inspiration in a scene, and threw us some new lines. On their sets, you work hard to obtain the right results, in any case as they see it, and that takes time. But it was fun, and so I was happy to play along.



CREW

A film written and directed by.....**Eric TOLEDANO & Olivier NAKACHE**
Production.....**QUAD+TEN**
Produced by.....**Nicolas DUVAL ADASSOVSKY**
Yann ZENOU
Laurent ZEITOUN
In coproduction with.....**GAUMONT**
TFI FILMS PRODUCTION
MAIN JOURNEY
PANACHE PRODUCTIONS
LA COMPAGNIE CINEMATOGRAPHIQUE
With the participation of**CANAL+**
CINE+
TFI
In association with.....**SOFITVCINE 4**
A PLUS IMAGE 7
CINEMAGE II
INDÉFILMS 5
Developed with the support of.....**INDÉFILMS INITIATIVE 4**
CINEMAGE 9 et 10 DEVELOPPEMENT
Original music.....**Avishai COHEN**
Art Director.....**Mathieu VADEPIED**
Cinematography.....**David CHIZALLET A.F.C.**
Editor.....**Dorian RICAL ANSOUS**
Sound.....**Pascal ARMANT**
Selim AZZAZI
Jean-Paul HURIER
Casting Directors.....**Élodie DEMEY A.R.D.A**
Natacha KOSSMANN
Marie-France MICHEL
Set Designer.....**Nicolas DE BOISCUILLE A.D.C**
Continuity.....**Christelle MEAUX**
Costume Design.....**Isabelle PANNETIER**
Location Manager.....**Vincent PIANT A.F.R.**
Production Manager.....**Laurent SIVOT**
1st Assistant Director.....**Arnaud ESTEREZ**

CAST

Max	Jean-Pierre BACRI
Cuy	Jean-Paul ROUVE
James	Gilles LELLOUCHE
Julien	Vincent MACAIGNE
Adèle	Eye HAIDARA
Josiane	Suzanne CLEMENT
Samy	Alban IVANOV
Featuring.....	Hélène VINCENT
Pierre	Benjamin LAVERNHE of the Comédie Française
Héléna	Judith CHEMLA
Seb	William LEBGHIL
Patrice	Kevin AZAÏS
Henri	Antoine CHAPPEY
Roshan	Manmathan BASKY
Nabil	Khereddine ENNASRI
Bastien	Gabriel NACCACHE
Bernard	Nicky MARBOT
Kathir	Manickam SRITHARAN
Nico	Jackee TOTO
Laprade	Grégoire BONNET

Photos : Thibault CRABHERR - DESIGN : RYSK

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