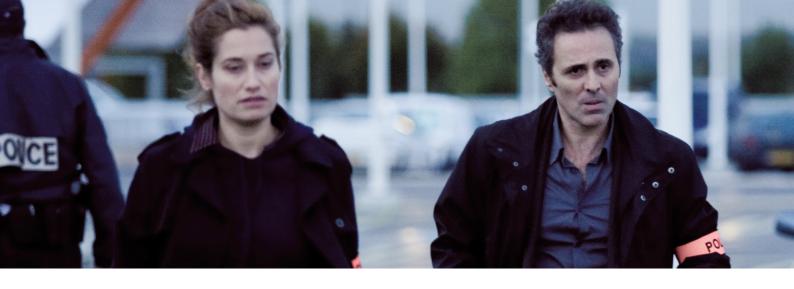
LOCARNO FILM FESTIVAL DEFICIAL COMPETITION a film by Frédéric Mermoud PARTNER COMPLICES

Gilbert **Melki** 

Emmanuelle **Devos** 

Nina **Meurisse**  Cyril **Descours** 



## Vincent and Rebecca fall in love at first sight in a cybercafé. They are young, barely 18 years old, and have a carefree attitude to life.

And yet, two months later, Vincent's body is found floating in the River Rhône, and Rebecca is missing.

Lt Hervé Cagan and his partner Karine Mangin are in charge of the investigation. As they retrace Vincent and Rebecca's doomed love affair, Hervé and Karine find themselves confronted with the flaws in their own lives.

Dès leur premier regard échangé dans un cybercafé, Vincent et Rebecca se sont aimés. Ils sont jeunes, à peine 18 ans, et regardent la vie avec insouciance.

Pourtant, deux mois plus tard, le corps de Vincent est retrouvé dans le Rhône et Rebecca a disparu.

L'inspecteur Hervé Cagan et sa co-équipière Karine Mangin sont chargés de l'enquête. Alors qu'ils remontent le fil de l'histoire d'amour qui liait à la vie à la mort Vincent et Rebecca, Hervé et Karine se retrouvent confrontés aux failles de leurs propres vies.

### How did the film "Partners" come about?

With "Partners", I wanted to explore the issue of love and desire in young people again, and I thought it might be interesting to set this theme in an extremely coded genre such as the detective movie. The genre movie sometimes permits real stylistic freedom in the treatment of the narration and the characters.

### How did the narrative form impose itself, with these two interrelated stories?

"Partners" confronts two antagonistic worlds that the death of Vincent, the young male prostitute, will bring together. On the one hand, the adult world inhabited by solitary, worried, loveless characters; and on the other, the youngsters' world, governed by a carefree attitude and instant gratification.

I had a feeling that these two worlds were impermeable. The intertwining of these two narrative times enabled me to reinforce this idea that two worlds coexisted, almost touching, whereas they are governed by different codes and rules.

This construction allowed me to adopt certain dramatic choices: the account of adolescence is more romantic and elliptical whereas the adults' investigation is more minimalist, based on a temporality closer to the chronicle.

# In this narrative to-ing and fro-ing, the two stories echo each other until they become communicating vessels: the teenagers' sexual one-upmanship and the adults' emotional wilderness...

Indeed, gradually mirror effects are established, as if one of the two worlds were the opposite of the other. For the youngsters, their relationship is seen as something very intimate and exciting, whereas for the adults, the characters played by Gilbert Melki and Emmanuelle Devos represent a sort of `non-couple' who

perhaps feel desire, but it remains unsated, thwarted. Furthermore, the adults' world is sapped by solitude. The teenagers, on the other hand, seem almost magnetically attracted, trying to reform a couple and reintegrate the group.

They have an almost naive relationship with no hang-ups over their bodies and sex. Having said that, their emotional lives remain those of late teens, with all the romanticism and fantasy that that implies.

# The adult generation literally investigates the other generation – the teenagers – explores their space, experiences their dangers, loses itself in their errors, but also emerges transformed...

Certainly, when the film starts, Cagan, the cop played by Gilbert Melki, is on the side of the law – it's through this prism that he decodes reality and tries to re-order the "chaos" he sees around him. Over the course of his investigation, he gradually realizes that he doesn't have the keys to understand what really happened. He gradually learns to let go and to suspend his judgment. And at the outcome of his investigation, Cagan is doubtless confronted with a choice which will overturn his system of values. We could even say that at that point, he is reconciled with his own humanity.

## Was the lust for life which drives these youngsters essential to film their plunge into morbidity?

I needed this contrast for the film to have meaning: Rebecca and Vincent are both animated by a life instinct. They are lively, weightless, and graceful. In the way I filmed them, I tried to capture this choreography through pursuing their glances, their trembling, their hesitations, and their passionate impulses.

### Their passionate impulses which cross the line...

When the line is crossed, when their schemes start getting out of control, the two young people still have their love. At that moment, they know that their destinies are linked, that they have become criminal lovers. Their salvation then depends on the strength of their love.

The 'little transgressions' of your short films go much further in "Partners". Here, the sum of little transgressions leads to a tragic outcome...

I think that fiction must be transgressive, confronting us with our limits, our codes, if only to make us ask questions about the world and ourselves. And it's true that the little transgressions turn into something more rebellious, more visceral. I don't really like the term tragedy because it refers to fate and destiny. Strictly speaking, tragedies, caught in a sort of implacable causality which drag the characters down, don't interest me.

True, I like harsh or somber stories, but ones in which the characters conquer their own freedom and identity, even if it is within the realm of mythology...







# qui s'encastrent ? mplices » confronte deux univers antagonistes que la mort

### écho, jusqu'à devenir des vases communicants : la surenchère sexuelle des adolescents et le désert affectif des adultes...

En effet, il y a peu à peu des mises en miroir qui s'instaurent, comme si l'un des mondes était l'écho inversé de l'autre. Alors que chez les jeunes, le couple est vécu de manière fusionnelle et jouissive, chez les adultes, les personnages de Gilbert Melki et Emmanuelle Devos incarnent une sorte de non-couple, traversé peut-être par un désir, mais qui reste inassouvi, frustré. D'ailleurs, le monde des adultes est rongé par la solitude. Au contraire, les adolescents sont comme aimantés, cherchant à reformer le couple, réintégrer le groupe. Ils ont un rapport décomplexé, presque naïf avec leurs corps et le sexe. Cela dit,

La génération des adultes enquête littéralement sur l'autre génération - les post-adolescents - explore ses espaces,

### Cette puissance de vie qui anime ces jeunes était-elle fondamentale pour filmer leur basculement dans le morbide?

Dans « Complices », "les petites transgressions" de vos court-métrages vont beaucoup plus loin. Ici, l'addition de petites transgressions mène à la tragédie...

Je trouve que la fiction doit être transgressive, se confronter à nos limites, à nos codes, ne serait-ce que pour interroger le monde et nous-mêmes. Et c'est vrai qu'ici les petites transgressions se métamorphosent en quelque chose de plus rebelle, de plus viscéral. Je n'aime pas vraiment le terme de tragédie, car il

## **CREW**

SCREENPLAY
FRÉDÉRIC MERMOUD
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SOUND

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**BRUNO REILAND** 

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COSTUMES

**DOROTHÉE LISSAC** 

**PRODUCERS** 

**TONIE MARSHALL** 

DAMIEN COUVREUR

PRODUCTION COMPANY

TABO TABO FILMS

CO-PRODUCER

**ROBERT BONER** 

COPRODUCTION COMPANY

SAGA PRODUCTION

# **CAST**

HERVÉ CAGAN

Gilbert Melki

KARINE MANGIN

**Emmanuelle Devos** 

REBECCA

Nina Meurisse

VINCENT

Cyril Descours

**ESTHER** 

Joana Preiss

THOMAS

Jérémy Kapone



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