



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES PREMIERE
2022 OFFICIAL SELECTION

Moby Dick Films presents

DIARY OF A FLEETING AFFAIR

(CHRONIQUE D'UNE LIAISON PASSAGERE)

A film by Emmanuel Mouret

With Sandrine Kiberlain et Vincent Macaigne

France | 2022 | 100 min. | DCP | 5.1 | 2.39 scope | Color

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Screenings in Cannes:

Saturday May 21 | 7:30 pm: Official Festival Screening (Salle Debussy)

Sunday May 22 | 10:30 am: Reprise Official Festival Screening (Salle Agnès Varda ex-salle du Soixantième)

Sunday May 22 | 6:30 pm: Market Screening (Lérins 1).

Synopsis

A single mother and a married man become lovers. They have pledged to see each other only for an affair and to have no hope of love, knowing well that the relationship has no future. However, they are more and more surprised by their understanding, their alchemy and the well-being of being together...

Interview with director Emmanuel Mouret

By Anne-Claire Cieutat

Your title announces an ephemeral love story, but your film seems to be crossed by a continuous flow, often surprising, playing on a real suspense...

The idea of a chronicle appealed to me because it proposes a dramatic progression by jumps, by ellipses, where at each new rendezvous of the lovers, the audience has to be attentive to a sum of small things that evolve as they go along, where they have to recreate the in-between moments by imagination. The word "liaison" (*affair* in English) is a word that I like very much. "Dangerous liaisons" or "Liaison Secrète" (French title of *Strangers When We Meet*) being such beautiful titles, I liked the

idea of adding the notion of ephemerality, even though an affair is fleeting by definition, so that the title suggests from the start the dramatic stakes of the film. Thus, the spectator knows that the happy moments given to the characters are promised to an announced end. I liked that the suspense was given from the title. As for this sensation of fluidity that you mention, it is the result of an almost uninterrupted flow of words and movements of the characters.

This film succeeds in densifying the notion of daily life, in making us experience a feeling of fully invested present.

What I found particularly exciting about this project is that we are only interested in the moments when the two lovers get together. When the film begins, we see their first date alone. They lay the foundations of their *modus operandi*: they want a relationship based only on pleasure, a relationship without commitment, without love, without projection in time. They both show a certain voluntarism to be in the moment, not to look beyond the present moment. From then on, the stake for the audience is to see if their contract will be respected or not. And we discover at first that it goes very well between them! We see them having a lot of pleasure meeting each time! Then, a consequence of these happy moments, we attend the birth of feelings which they cannot express, because this contract prohibits it to them. Until when will this light relationship last? Can we live a relationship only dedicated to pleasure? Can one love without projecting oneself? These are the questions that I found interesting to develop during these meetings. I saw it as a suspense film about characters experiencing feelings of love that they must contain.

The idea of fantasy appears early in the dialogues, and later becomes a narrative shift...

The fantasy is the expression of a phantasy, a freedom, a recreation, a desire to go further together, something that frees them from a regulated life, something that also binds them. These are probably the only projections they allow themselves together.

Language is central in your cinema, and in this film in particular...

I like the idea that my characters like to talk as much as to make love. Talking means telling about oneself, searching for oneself, discovering oneself in the eyes of the other. When we love each other, we want to discover the other and reveal ourselves. It is a way of exposing and intertwining ourselves. However, we never manage to lay ourselves bare, we want to please, we don't want to say hurtful things. Since they are holding back from admitting that they love each other, they hover around what they are trying to express. They are always careful not to deliver the essential, that would be words of love...

In their conversations, Simon and Charlotte are very open-minded...

What interested me was to tell the story of a special, even exceptional relationship in which my characters feel free to talk about anything. In a way, Charlotte and Simon are firing on all cylinders. And in this freedom of speech comes a pleasure that surprises them themselves. What I found beautiful was that while they were talking about all sorts of subjects, they also managed to form a very intimate and deep bond.

Are the words in this film yours?

I share some of it with Pierre Giraud. In 2015, I was asked to lead a writing workshop. Pierre was one of the participants. In this framework, he wrote two scenes between a man in his fifties and a thirty-year-old woman. At the end of the workshop, he wanted to make a short film out of them, while I saw this as the starting point for a feature-length screenplay, which I suggested he write. Pierre did a first work, and then, liking his two characters very much, I proposed to him to take over and adapt his story in my way to be able to direct it. As I had done with Diderot's text for *Mademoiselle de Jonquières*, I freely adapted the scenario Pierre had drafted.

You have changed the ages of the characters.

What interests me in cinema is not to talk about men and women in general, but to make particular portraits. I liked this idea that Charlotte has three children, one of whom is still small, and that she is trying to take control of her life. I think that's beautiful. She wants to enjoy life, to "climb the trees and pick the fruits," as she says. I loved this couple

***Diary of a fleeting affair* is one of your most tender and sensual films. Touch, through Simon's job or the shots of your characters' hands, is very present.**

I distinguish tenderness from sensuality. *Diary of a fleeting affair* is the story of a relationship, and it was important to me that there were no scenes where the characters yelled or were deliberately mean to each other. What makes the situations all the more cruel, in a way, is this obvious tenderness between them from the beginning. I really like their willingness, their attention to not make a drama. For me, restraint in cinema is much more intense, more moving, and more cruel than a crude, direct expression, without regard for the other. I am more touched by characters who care about the other. For me, this restraint favors projection and empathy. It seems to me to be much stronger cinematographically than putting the guts on the table.

As for the sensuality, I think it comes from not dwelling on it. I don't like deliberate sensuality in painting or film. I like it to be hinted at, but I hate it when it overrides the story. The more restraint there is, the more sensuality comes through, it seems to me.

The only time we hear screams in your film is at the cinema, when Charlotte and Simon go to see Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*...

I told myself that my film could have been called *Scenes from an Extra-marital Life*. The choice of Bergman's film is both to affirm an admiration for this director, but also to give to see and hear the opposite of what is played in my film, namely a couple without any restraint, capable of saying terrible things to each other.

How did you work on the off-fields of your characters' lives?

I love off-screen, so it was very pleasant to evoke through discreet touches, through costumes or dialogues, what belongs to the respective lives of the characters. We imagined Charlotte as a documentalist, as the sequence shot in Jussieu (Paris University) suggests. We didn't want to dwell on this information, but rather to plant a few clues to activate the viewer's imagination.

How did you choose your actors?

The great difficulty of this film is that it relies on two actors, present in every scene. This film could not have been made without two exceptional actors, and it took me a long time to find the obvious couple. When I thought of Sandrine Kiberlain opposite Vincent Macaigne, with whom I had worked *Love Affairs*, it was a trigger. Both of them have a fantasy that brings comedy and gives the film a tone that is both funny and serious, light, sentimental, sincere and deep, without being heavy. I also liked the contrast between the energies of these two actors. Sandrine has a liveliness, a freshness, a particular speed, which differs from Vincent, who is rounder and softer than her in this film. The good surprise is that it was very fluid between them from the first reading.

To play Louise, I needed an actress capable of expressing both the reserve and the audacity of this woman who launches into this sexual adventure.

I am happy to have met Georgia Scalliet, who was a member of the Comédie-Française and has a great experience of theater. I find her particularly moving in this role.

How did you direct your actors?

Diary of a fleeting affair is based on an acting performance that greatly impressed the team and myself on the set. Sandrine and Vincent prepared very well before the shooting, because they had to know the text inside out so that we could film the words "without a hitch". The challenge for me was to capture their work and make it as fluid and uninstalled as possible. I didn't want to make "an apartment film", but on the contrary a very airy and ample film restoring something of the circulation of feelings and desires, something of the grandeur of their adventure. I made very little use of shot/reverse shot so that we wouldn't get tired of the repetitive back and forth. The idea was that we should never really be still, so my actors had to be always in motion. I opted for long takes with a lot of movement, and I really like doing that. Therefore, my direction was almost kinetic, you almost never see the actors sitting. I wanted the spectator's eye to constantly try to catch them. We played a lot with the frame, the appearances/disappearances, off-screen, the backlights, the characters from behind, etc...

On a few occasions, you opt for forward tracking shots, which allow you to experience the internal emotions of your characters...

This is where the narration, through the camera movements as well as the chosen music, decides to say a little more about what the characters feel intimately. Sometimes the narrator and the spectators are a little ahead of them as to what is happening, sometimes we are, on the contrary, late and we have to catch up on what we have not seen. I like when a film forces me to be attentive and I wanted to make sure that the viewer's attention could be held and wanted to concentrate to follow this story. The whole challenge of my directing is to find the balance between what is concealed and what is revealed so that the viewer's attention and imagination are always solicited.

There is this sequence, for example, where Charlotte is from behind and where we feel the emotion that wins over her without seeing her face...

This is what cinema offers. Hiding things allows in some cases to say more than if they were shown, and favors, for the audience, the possibility of mixing its intimacy with the one in the film. Why are the dialogues so cinematic? Because they appeal to the spectator's imagination, just as when you read a book, you are obliged to imagine what is being said, and you ask yourself questions: is the person who is expressing himself true? Does he really mean what he says? Is he hiding something? Then we look for an answer in the faces of the characters, their eyes become like a screen where we try to fathom the most secret thoughts. Sometimes an off-screen "I love you" is stronger than if it is said on camera. The idea is therefore to hide the actors' faces so that we want to see them. The staging is designed so that the spectator looks for confirmation, a concordance or a discrepancy between the dialogues and the faces. I wanted few close-ups so that we are kept in this state of expectation.

Where does this taste for backlighting come from?

You need variety in the points of view, in the distances, in the settings, in the atmospheres. And what I find beautiful about backlighting is that you don't see the faces, only the silhouettes. It is an invitation for the eye to look for an attitude, a small gesture, because everything becomes expressive. Making a film means playing with the spectator's expectations. So you don't have to give him everything and let him play the role of a detective. This is what I expect from cinema when I am a spectator.

How did you choose your settings, which strike a subtle balance between nature and culture?

I wanted them to be varied and often quite large in order to give this story between two characters a lot of scope, hence the choice of Cinemascope and wide shots, whether we are in a museum or in nature, whether it's a shot with dialogue or not. I wanted to make the opposite of an intimate film. This affair had to be a great adventure. So I played with the choice of museums and natural settings that would generate this impression of the spectacular.

The film's cinematography is spring-like. How did you work on its light and colorimetry?

The artistic direction of the film was thought out very early on. This is the advantage of working with the same team for a long time: Laurent Desmet, my cinematographer, David Faivre, my set designer, Bénédicte Mouret, my costume designer. As well as the sound team, and Martial Salomon, my chief editor. From film to film, we continue an uninterrupted dialogue, and everyone prepares the film together, no one works in his or her corner.

How did you choose the music for your soundtrack?

The choice of music is often guided by chance, except for Ravi Shankar, which was in the script. Pierre Giraud had thought of it and I liked this idea, because I grew up with parents who listened to his music. As for *La Javanaise*, which comes up like a chorus, it was my editor's idea, who was inspired by an interview in which I quoted this title. We both liked this theme. And Mozart, I happened to be listening to his sonatas when I woke up during the shooting, and it already seemed to me that they resonated with the film. What is beautiful in this Mozartian lightness is that it is profound. I like the fact that these sonatas are sentimental without saying too much, that they are sweet without being cheesy. They bring an even greater subtlety to the feelings of the characters.

Emmanuel Mouret Filmography

2022 – CHRONIQUE D'UNE LIAISON PASSAGERE (DIARY OF A FLEETING AFFAIR)

Festival de Cannes 2022, Official Selection, Cannes Premiere

2020 – LES CHOSES QU'ON DIT, LES CHOSES QU'ON FAIT (LOVE AFFAIR(S))

Festival de Cannes Label 2020

13 César nominations (Winner of the Best Actress of Female Supporting Role for Emilie Dequenne)

2020 Lumière Prize of Best French Film

2018 – MADEMOISELLE DE JONCQUIÈRES (LADY J)

Toronto TIFF, Platform

6 César nominations (Best Costumes Winner)

2015 – CAPRICE

Festival de Cabourg, Golden Swann of Best Film

2013 – UNE AUTRE VIE

Festival de Locarno, Official Competition

2011 – L'ART D'AIMER (THE ART OF LOVE)

Festival de Locarno, Sélection officielle Piazza Grande

2009 – FAIS-MOI PLAISIR!

2007 – UN BAISER S'IL VOUS PLAÎT

Festival de Venise, Giornate degli autori

2006 – CHANGEMENT D'ADRESSE

Festival de Cannes, Directors Fortnight

2003 – VÉNUS ET FLEUR

Festival de Cannes, Directors Fortnight

2000 – LAISSONS LUCIE FAIRE

1994-1998:

PROMÈNE-TOI DONC TOUT NU ! (moyen-métrage)

CARESSE (court métrage)

IL N'Y A PAS DE MAL (court métrage)

MONTRE-MOI (court métrage)

Musics in the film

- ***La Javanaise***
Serge Gainsbourg sung by Juliette Greco
- ***Swarna Jayanti***
Ravi Shankar sung by Anoushka Shankar
- ***Sonate pour piano No. 11 en La Majeur K. 331 - Tema : Andante grazioso***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Jenö Jando
- ***The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba***
Georg Friedrich Haendel played by Viktor Bijelovic
- ***Adagio for Glass Harmonica in C Major K. 356 (Transcr. for Piano)***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Walter Gieseking
- ***Fantasia in D Minor K.397***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Noemi Györi and Katalin Koltai
- ***Adagio de la Sonate pour piano No. 12 en Fa Majeur K.332***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Anne Queffelec
- ***Sonate pour piano No. 16 in Ut Majeur K. 545 – II Andante***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Jenö Jando
- ***Piano Sonata No. 2 in F Major, K. 280: II. Adagio***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Walter Gieseking

- ***Piano Sonata No. 6 K.284 (Theme and variations – Andante)***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Roberte Mamou
- ***Pancham Se Gara***
Ravi Shankar played by Anoushka Shankar and Ravi Shankar
- ***Lemon Incest / Je t'aime... moi non plus / Initials B.B. / Ma Lou Marilou / My Lady Héroïne / La Javanaise (Medley)***
Serge Gainsbourg sung by Jane Birkin
- ***Andante extrait du concerto pour piano No. 2 en Fa Majeur OP 102***
Dimitri Chostakovitch
- ***Sonate pour piano No. 11 en La Majeur K. 331 - Tema : Andante grazioso***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Jeno Jando
- ***Concerto pour deux pianos et orchestre en Ré Mineur, FP 61 : II. Larghetto***
Francis Poulenc played by Éric Le Sage
- ***Andante grazioso de la Sonate pour piano No. 11 en la majeur K.331***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played by Anne Queffélec
- ***Solomon, HWV 67 Act 3 - The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba***
Georg Friedrich Haendel played by the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra directed by Paul Dyer

Artistic List

Charlotte : Sandrine Kiberlain
 Simon : Vincent Macaigne
 Louise : Georgia Scalliet
 Manu : Maxence Tual
 Carlos : Stéphane Mercoyrol

Technical List

Director: Emmanuel Mouret
 Written by: Pierre Giraud et Emmanuel Mouret
 Image: Laurent Desmet
 Editing: Martial Salomon
 Production Design: David Faivre
 Sound: Maxime Gavaudan, François Méreu & Jean-Paul Hurier
 1st AD: Juliette Maillard
 Casting: Constance Demontoy
 Hair: Jeanne Milon
 Costume Designer: Bénédicte Mouret
 Makeup: Christophe Oliveira
 Production Manager: Arnaud Tournaire
 Producer: Frédéric Niedermayer

A Moby Dick films production
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