

SILENZIO

AFTERWARDS

FIDÉLITÉ FILMS PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH WILD BUNCH

AFTERWARDS

A FILM BY GILLES BOURDOS

WITH
ROMAIN DURIS
JOHN MALKOVICH
EVANGELINE LILLY
AND
PASCALE BUSSIÈRES
REECE THOMPSON

SCREENPLAY BY MICHEL SPINOSA AND GILLES BOURDOS
BASED ON THE NOVEL *AFTERWARDS*
BY GUILLAUME MUSSO, XO EDITIONS

FRENCH RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 24TH, 2008
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At the age of eight, Nathan had a «tunnel of light» near-death experience while trying to save a little girl. Pronounced dead, he inexplicably returned to life.

Twenty years on, Nathan is a brilliant New York lawyer, bruised by a painful divorce and barricaded into his job, far away from his ex-wife Claire and their daughter. At this point, a mysterious doctor enters his life. Doctor Kay claims he can foresee exactly when certain people are going to die. With all his life's cornerstones shattered by Kay, Nathan finally discovers why he came back.





How did this project come into being?

What originally started me off on the project was a novel I happened to read. The story dealt with some of my own obsessions in a catchy, gripping way. It left me with the same sort of material as I get from reading a crime report: a raw chunk of drama, a piece of narrative, a character's itinerary, a substance boiled down to its essence.

The next day I told my producers, Marc Missonnier and Olivier Delbosc, what I had gleaned from a single reading of Guillaume Musso's novel. They reacted very encouragingly. Their determination and amazing ability to act fast gave me great impetus all through the film.

Were you already thinking in terms of images or were you attracted by a more human element?

At first I was attracted by the story of initiation: how Nathan, faced with the possible imminence of his own death, learns to be mortal and embrace the incalculable, irreversible, tragic sides of life. It is not about being reconciled with death; to my mind, death will always have its radical strangeness. For Nathan, it is more a matter of coming to realize the essential precariousness of life. Once he sees that, he can open up completely to himself, to other people, and the world.

But yes, I do think primarily in pictures. I have obsessions that constantly make me react as a filmmaker: visual themes such as the color white, car crashes, reflections of light, whistling noises, floating particles, etc.

In the early stages of the project I kept quiet about my own obsessions, especially with death, so as not to scare everybody off. Guillaume Musso's book helped me tackle this fixation by approaching it through a genre, the supernatural fantasy.

How did you construct the story and your characters?

Working closely with Michel Spinoso, I write what is more like a musical score than a movie script in any standard sense. It enables everybody down the line to do their job properly. If the score is right, my coworkers—mostly the same key crew as on my previous film—understand my intentions very quickly. Everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.

A statement by François Mitterand led us like a beacon through the writing process: «The wonder is in the moment and we always realize it too late.» This thought lay at the heart of our discussions. We worked very hard to bring this tough, arrogant New York lawyer to the edge of the desert and the very simple, very gentle moment when he repaints the chairs of the woman he loves. It is a moment of fullness and simplicity. All his fears and hopes have gone. All that is left is his absolutely pure concentration on brushing the white paint onto the chair. Once he has accepted the fragility of human existence, the grace of the moment can finally be bestowed on him. He has untied the knots and is ready to make up with the woman he has loved ever since he was a boy. It is the end point of the journey of initiation that Kay has taken him on through the film.

Selected filmography

Director and screenwriter

2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)*
2004 *INQUIÉTUDES (A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES)*
1999 *DISPARUS*
1993 *RELÂCHE, short movie*
1989 *L'ÉTERNELLE IDOLE, short movie*
1986 *UN CADEAU DE NOËL, short movie, co director with Michel Spinosa*

Screenwriter

1994 *EMMÈNE-MOI (TAKE ME AWAY) by Michel Spinosa, co writer with Michel Spinosa*

Did the themes of the film trigger any discussions between you and your crew?

The person I spoke most with after Michel Spinosa was my other friend and very close collaborator, the cinematographer, Mark Ping Bing Lee. We repeatedly had long chats about questions such as, how do we face the inevitable? How do we accompany our loved ones to their end? How do we disentangle the knots before saying goodbye to each other? How can we make this ordeal a chance to make up with the people we love? These are all questions that everybody asks themselves in the course of their lives and I have been lucky enough to express as a filmmaker.

At what stage did you choose your actors and what guided your choices?

I always believe that when it comes to casting, a project casts itself. For example, the script found its way to John Malkovich without my having to contact him directly. He liked it and came to us of his own accord.

More or less the same thing happened with Evangeline Lilly. Her instant enthusiasm on reading the script won me over. In a way, she chose the project instead of vice-versa! I don't believe in the idea that there is only one actor capable of playing a certain part. There is no such thing as a predefined character. It's all a matter of meeting and interpretation. But of course, now that the film is finished I find it hard to imagine it with other actors.

It so happens that I live in New York and the script was originally written for an American actor but that idea started to bother me as I brought the project forward. I felt the need to anchor my feelings through a European actor. Then I saw *THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED* and I immediately wanted to offer the part to Romain Duris.

In your film, all the places have significance...

In the way I go about working, places have to be very expressive and so choosing them is every bit as important a step as the writing. People generally think in three stages: writing, shooting, and editing. For me, there is a crucial fourth stage that comes between the writing and shooting—the stage of visual preparation and location scouting. That is when I really define the visual world of the film.

Color is critical. I grew up in Nice, surrounded by blues, ochres, and dark greens. In New York and New Mexico I found that color and light give that same perception of life. I do a great deal of preparation on the places where we work.

You choose your locations with a clear idea of what you want to say. Do you look for a spot that encapsulates «the magic of the moment»?

In every scene, I'm looking for the chemistry that can emerge from the combination of a particular place, sounds, actors, and lighting. I like to try and catch the truth of the moment while keeping a grip on the form. I try my best to be spontaneous and delicate.

Your cast is a subtle mix of actors. How do you work with them?

I direct them very little. I have no hard and fast technique. I adapt to each actor. My ears are always open. All that really matters to me is to make the actor feel confident. I wouldn't presume to give directions to John Malkovich. The day before, we meet for ten minutes to read through the scene and establish the character's intentions. We arrive on the set having agreed on the exact meaning of every line of dialogue. The fact that the sets, costumes, and acting space were all chosen beforehand creates a strong intention that the actors can naturally fit into. So my directing style is more subterranean than frontal. It is not explicit or psychological. It's a collaborative process.

Many things belong to the actors. They can sense the inner rhythm of their character and the music of their body, which sometimes leads them to suggest something different from what I had in mind. They are often right and I try to take on board what they give me. John is dazzlingly intelligent and thoughtful.

Romain Duris is a hard worker, very conscientious and very involved in all his projects. I like his fragile sensitivity very much. He has a wonderful ability to be constantly listening to his acting partner and the situation.

Acting in a foreign language is the most complicated thing an actor can do. It blocks his spontaneity. This difficulty was a powerful bond between Romain and me because I also found it hard at times to get my meaning across to the American crew members.

Evangeline Lilly has all the simplicity and humanity of her character inside her but there is a tendency among American actors to respond very strongly to situations and it was probably there that I, as a European filmmaker, put a little more work into suggesting that she tone down her expressive American acting style.

Were you surprised by what your actors gave you?

They always hit the tone I had in mind but the intensity sometimes varies. For example, in the scene where Nathan confides in Dr. Kay and tells him about his childhood, I never expected the two men to bond so closely at that stage in the story. Yet both actors spontaneously felt the urge to get close to each other, and so a basically informative scene was turned into a truly emotional one.

What makes you happiest about the film?

Working on this film, I learned one thing: facing up to our fears is not incompatible with the joy of being alive. Quite the opposite.



*Selected Filmography**Screenwriter*

- 2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos, co writer with Gilles Bourdos
 2004 *INQUIÉTUDES* by Gilles Bourdos, co writer with Gilles Bourdos
 1999 *DISPARUS (A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES)* by Gilles Bourdos co writer with Gilles Bourdos
 1989 *L'ÉTERNELLE IDOLE*, short movie

Director and screenwriter

- 2007 *ANNA M.*
 2000 *LA PARENTHÈSE ENCHANTÉE (ENCHANTED INTERLUDE)*
 1995 *EMMÈNE-MOI (TAKE ME AWAY)*
 1990 *LA JEUNE FILLE ET LA MORT*, short movie
 1987 *LA RUE OUVERTE*, short movie
 1986 *UN CADEAU DE NOËL*, short movie, co director with Gilles Bourdos

What drew you to this story?

Gilles and I had both just come from making very dark films, *A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES* in his case and writing *ANNA M* in mine. *AFTERWARDS* gave us an opening, a chance to express ourselves in a different vein, a brighter, less tormented register, even though the heart of the subject is still distinctly serious. We also liked the idea of working within a genre and the original novel had some appealing features from a scriptwriting point of view: a catchy beginning, a twist in the tail, characters who develop strongly through the story, and a real narrative arc. We also found in the book some very interesting worlds to explore. Gilles read it very early on, before it became a bestseller, and instantly had the urge and the brio to make it a movie.

How did you go about scripting this particular story?

When Gilles and I work on a script, we like to do the research. Whatever the theme may be, we have to go out there and meet the people at the heart of the subject, the ones who think it and experience it. So we went out and researched, among other things, near-death experiences and palliative care units. That gave birth to the character of Jeremy, who does not appear in the book. I wanted Claire to be a botanist, so we set about researching the plant life of deserts and Gilles came up with this desert flower, the Queen of the Night, that blooms only one night a year. It was a beautiful symbol of our central theme, a little gift from nature! Another thing that gave us the urge to go into the desert was reading the novels of François Cheng, not for any 'western' aspect but for the stripped-down bareness, the solitude of self-reflection. This research led us to directions and scenes.

What did you see emerge in the film that may not have been in the script?

I made a modest contribution to some of the editing stages and so I saw the film under construction. I did not discover it as a finished whole. In a film script, there are always parts that you care strongly about but a reader can skim over without noticing. A reader can come across a three-line scene, like Dr. Kay (John Malkovich) in a taxi on Manhattan Bridge, and not be able to visualize, like we can, what its effect will be. Another example, the scene where Kay pays a call on his mother-in-law, has nothing special about it on paper. But we pictured that scene very clearly when we wrote it and it was a real pleasure seeing it there on the screen, for real. Gilles stuck to his guns on those scenes, and that was another reason we were glad to be working with Marc and Olivier as our producers. It is good to feel backed up by producers who see the same film as you and really understand how important such scenes are.

Were there any scenes that you were especially pleased to see for real?

I loved the way Romain Duris managed to let himself go in the kind of functional scenes that have to be there on paper because they convey essential information. When writing them, you script the dialogue as best as you can and keep your fingers crossed! But what Romain and John Malkovich did in those scenes, the chemistry that happens between them, I can't thank them enough for. And I have a real soft spot for Pascale Bussières. Her role meant a lot to me.





How did you join the project?

I had already worked with Gilles on his previous film and he likes my work. He wanted to find the same emotion that I usually give to my pictures. He did not talk much to me about the story. He mostly described the human aspects.

How would you describe your light?

I try to find the best way to use the light to serve the story in each scene. When I'm on the set, I try to capture the important things without organizing too much ahead of time because I'm not in control of the weather or other outside elements. Besides, the director's point of view can always change and I'm always ready to adapt.

What did Gilles Bourdos tell you about the story? What kind of tone did it suggest to you?

This project took me to a world I'd never been to: New York. When I told Gilles, I think he was happy for what it could bring to the film. We talked a lot about the basic themes of the story. In the past I used to do a huge amount of preparation, like other DPs, but I did not find that way of working fulfilling. Now I work in a different way. I'm not saying it's better or worse. I approach things with a completely empty mind and I look at what is there. This is the approach that suits me best. I have stopped trying to twist life to fit into a preconceived vision. I look around me and use whatever fits.

Were you touched by the spiritual resonance of the film?

AFTERWARDS has a strong philosophical content that lifts it out of the ordinary. There is an element of humanistic fable in it. To me, it is about the way people approach what is beyond them.

The film contains different worlds that sometimes conflict with each other, such as the lawyers' office and unspoilt nature. How did you handle each world and achieve the visual continuity between them?

It was all already organized in the writing. All I had to do was piece together what was already there. When you shoot in a natural environment, you make use of what is available. The light in a city is easy to control but I forced myself not to do that and go on playing with whatever was available.

The film is not all of a piece. It highlights the dichotomy between two worlds.

Selected Filmography

- 2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos
 2004 *CAFÉ LUMIÈRE* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
INQUIÉTUDES (A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES) by Gilles Bourdos
 2002 *SPRINGTIME IN A SMALL TOWN (XIAO CHENG ZHI CHUN)* by Zhuangzhuang Tian
 2001 *MILLENIUM MAMBO* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
 2000 *IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE* by Wong Kar Wai
AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER (MÙA HÈ CHIEU THANG DUNG) by Anh Hung Tran
 1999 *A TIME TO LIVE AND A TIME TO DIE (TONG NIEN WANG SHI)* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
 1998 *FLOWERS OF SHANGHAI (HAI SHANG HUA)* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
 1997 *GOODBYE SOUTH, GOODBYE* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
EIGHTEEN SPRINGS by Ann Hui
 1993 *IN THE HANDS OF A PUPPET MASTER (XI MENG REN SHENG)* by Hou Hsiao Hsien
 1986 *DUST IN THE WIND (LIAN LIAN FENG CHEN)* by Hou Hsiao Hsien

How did you go about working with Gilles Bourdos?

I like working on a knife edge, close to the cliff. I take the director there with me and we both have to face it. We discussed many things over a long period. To start with, Gilles gave me a whole lot of location scouting photographs to get me into the mood of the film and urged me to listen to music by Alexandre Desplat. It helped me understand his priorities. I also told him how I saw it. It meant a lot to me, even though everything can change. He liked to see how I adjusted to the situation amid all the excitement and rivalry on the set. The American set hands were all a little nervous because nobody really knew how I worked, but that in itself created strength and a constructive tension. We all worked together to make the most of every moment.

With all your experience, what did you do on this film that you had never done before?

Every movie is an opportunity to discover and experiment. For this one, I always used the same Kodak 250 ASA daylight negative film, regardless of the circumstances, day and night. I don't think anyone had ever done that before. Everybody was very surprised and even I was curious to see what it would produce. It gives a subtle but noticeable difference to the contrasts and hues.

What makes you happiest about the film today?

I really enjoyed the talks I had with Gilles each evening. My English is not always as good as his but we often understood each other beyond words. I gained a lot from our discussions and comparing our reactions to the rushes. This movie gave me the chance to work with excellent actors and a very good crew. It was not necessarily easy for them to accept my way of doing things. I had to cope with all sorts of difficulties that other people weren't aware of, but I had Gilles' trust and the set hands stood behind me, even though they didn't always know what I was aiming for. That kind of attitude is very rare.



How did Gilles present the project to you? What did he ask from you as a composer?

We had been discussing the project for three years already. Gilles had been talking about immateriality, light and the tricks it plays, whiteness, transparency, reflections. He absolutely did not want a genre film music or an eerie, scary music. He wanted to set himself apart from all that, with a more poetic, more abstract code.

In Gilles' movies you need long swathes of music, gusts that come and go, intense bursts or accelerations, and always that kind of underground river that keeps on flowing. We also try quite simply to play, have fun, enjoy playing with the picture, going to and fro between the music and the images. To fulfill what was needed I had to stay the distance, always bringing out the poetry and mystery of each scene, the drama, the childhood memory, the grief and loss. The rhythmic movement makes you think it is action music but actually, above all, we are playing with all these emotions.

Did you start writing the music before you saw the images?

I waited to see the images before I got started. Knowing Gilles' work, I felt sure the images would be too strong to avoid being influenced by them. I write music for films because the picture beguiles and inspires me. I need a visual concept on which to ground myself, which is why I find it hard to imagine myself writing concert music.

How did Gilles react when you showed him your music?

I offered him several melodies, several themes, several moods to connect with the picture. Some of them were too vivid or not vivid enough and we made the choice together. This can be a fatal test because when the director is there in the room, some things become glaringly obvious. The director's energy and relationship with the picture project themselves onto what I have written. After that, I fine-tune it and explore other avenues that soon become obvious. I work equally closely with all directors. We are very involved, side by side, and glued to the picture.

In this film, all the actors have a particular voice. Did that nourish you?

It is very important. Just as I can shut my eyes and talk to you, so I can shut my eyes while I am working and listen again to the music I am composing to see how it fits with the voices and effects on the soundtrack. John Malkovich's voice is not George Clooney's. If I write music to follow on from a speech by George Clooney, I won't use the same sounds as if it follows on from Romain Duris. What I want is a blend in the noblest sense of the word, like a perfume is a blend of fragrances, a real palette of sounds, with the voice merging into the sound of the chosen instrument or section of instruments.

Were there any scenes that you especially enjoyed setting to music?

I really enjoyed writing the music for all the intertwined scenes at the end, and also the flashback to the lost paradise, which was beautiful to imagine. The need to find a poetic world that was neither illustrative nor overstated inspired me considerably. I wrote this music quite quickly. When you have a good rapport with a director, there is an exchange, a generosity that lets you work fast. Directors get the most out of their actors and other collaborators by throwing their heart into it. When that happens, my ideas come pretty quickly.

Selected filmography

- 2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos
LARGO WINCH by Jérôme Salle
LE MERVEILLEUX MAGASIN DE MR MAGORIUM (Mr. MAGORIUM'S WONDER EMPORIUM) by Zach Helm
LUST, CAUTION (SE, JIE) by Ang Lee
- 2007 *À LA CROISÉE DES MONDES : LA BOUSSOLE D'OR (THE GOLDEN COMPASS)* by Chris Weitz
L'ENNEMI INTIME by Florent Emilio Siri
LE VOILE DES ILLUSIONS (THE PAINTED VEIL) by John Curran
- 2006 *THE QUEEN* by Stephen Frears
QUAND J'ÉTAIS CHANTEUR by Xavier Giannoli
SYRIANA by Stephen Gaghan
- 2005 *DE BATTRE MON CŒUR S'EST ARRÊTÉ (THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED)* by Jacques Audiard
- 2004 *LA JEUNE FILLE À LA PERLE* by Peter Webber
INQUIÉTUDES (A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES) by Gilles Bourdos
- 2003 *LES CORPS IMPATIENS (EAGER BODIES)* by Xavier Giannoli
- 2001 *SUR MES LÈVRES (READ MY LIPS)* by Jacques Audiard
- 1996 *UN HÉROS TRÈS DISCRET* by Jacques Audiard
- 1994 *REGARDE LES HOMMES TOMBER* by Jacques Audiard





How did you feel when you first saw the movie version of your novel?

I was thrilled. Right from the very first images we are plunged into an atmosphere of poetry, drama and mystery. The tension is constant and the rhythm never falters. Gilles Bourdos' directing bowled me over. I love the way he films the city and the elegant virtuosity of his shots, but what touched me most was the emotion that the film gives off. Some scenes are truly poignant and continue to haunt you long after the movie is over.

What do you think about the choice of actors to play your characters?

It's a dream cast! You empathize with Romain Duris—you feel his pain and bewilderment. John Malkovich is sensational, as if he wouldn't be! He is unnerving at the start of the film and full of compassion at the end. As for Evangeline Lilly, she lights up the movie. I remember how Gilles Bourdos filmed Julie Ordon in *A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES* and I knew he would work wonders with Evangeline. I also love the scenes with Pascale Bussières. In just a few scenes, she gives depth and humanity to her character. That was important because the readers of my novel were especially moved by the character she plays and her relationship with Nathan.

Did you write your book with a film version in mind?

Ever since my first novel, people have always said my writing is filmic. It is a fact that I belong to what they call the 'VCR generation' who discovered movies directly on the TV instead of in our local arthouse, which meant we were able to play the same scenes over and over and 'deconstruct' the film, figuring out how it fits together and what makes it work. This obviously influenced my writing style with a visual aspect, a very segmented structure, and a tension that runs all through the story.

*How did the meeting with *Fidélité* take place?*

I am incredibly lucky in that my novels always attract the attention of movie producers and directors. As soon as *AFTERWARDS* was published, I was bombarded with offers for the movie rights. I set three conditions that I considered essential for the film version: it had to be shot in English, partly in New York, and with an international cast. Olivier Delbosc and Marc Missonnier were on the same creative wavelength. My meeting with Gilles Bourdos also clinched it. He called me up one night and spent an hour and a half describing his vision of the film to me. I realized we were talking the same language and Gilles had understood the meaning of my novel perfectly.

Afterwards has already been read by millions of people in France and around the world. Do you think your readers will enjoy the movie?

I am sure they will because the movie version is faithful to the novel's philosophy. At any rate, they will find the same level of emotion in it. In the four years since the novel was published and the film version was announced, its readers have eagerly awaited it. I receive thousands of letters and emails each year and meet a lot of people at book signings. It is really strange to see how demanding readers have become these days towards the screen versions of books they like. Many of them are afraid the novel will be dumbed down. I'm happy for them now because I know they won't be disappointed. Far from it!



What did you like about the script?

I had met Gilles Bourdos before for his previous film (A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES) and his special way of seeing things intrigued me. I had the same impression at once when I read the script of AFTERWARDS. It is a very intelligent adaptation of Guillaume Musso's novel, densely woven, moving, and profound.

How would you define Nathan?

I liked the character's path of development, from being very enclosed when we first meet him and gradually opening up to love. Nathan has not accepted the tragedy that befell him. He has taken refuge in his job to the point of being estranged from his daughter and wife, whom he actually loves above all else. There are so many ways of acting an enclosed person. It's fascinating. I tried to imagine Nathan as being a fortress with a treasure, a gift, locked up inside it.

How did you approach your character? Do you feel close to him?

The character is very far removed from me, except in the importance he attaches to love. Although he is enclosed, the failure of his love affair gnaws at him. I tried to reduce everything that might seem likable about him to a minimum, to make him impenetrable. I wanted to make the audience want to go and find him and discover what made him like this. Nathan is a man of sobriety and density. For a long time, whenever I played a role I was always scared that my character would be boring. I was terrified of being a passive character. Now I'm less scared. I look for the strength inside. I am fascinated by a character's interior.

Did the story give you food for thought? Are you interested in the themes it deals with?

Obviously, there is always something in every character that speaks to you privately. I loved the fact that Nathan had kids and I loved playing the role of a father. But I also had to imagine the loss, the absolute pain of losing a child.

In the film, you see yourself as a child. How did that make you feel?

I was really pleased with Gilles' choice of the young boy. We had talked about it a lot and he had seen a large number of children. Eventually, he came and told me he had found the one, but the boy had a lisp! It was funny because I also had a lisp when I was young. It created an instant rapport between me and the boy.

How did things go with John Malkovich?

We began by shooting the scenes in New York showing Nathan in his loneliness and his relationship with Doctor Kay. John Malkovich is a great actor. He has a marvelous aura. I was really pleased with what we were doing. We began the first day with a scene where Nathan is on the phone with Kay. We had the idea there could be a brotherliness between our characters - or a fatherliness, or some sort of kindred spirit, at any rate - and although we didn't deliberately act it, it seems to me that this brotherly or fatherly affection comes across, not because of any acting talent we may have, but because of a human element, a chemistry. There are other ways of making something seem credible but it is so much nicer when it comes naturally and sincerely.

In every scene, John stunned me. He is one of those rare actors who go with their partner's intention one hundred percent. He infects his responses very subtly. He surprised me at first because he conjures up a rather brooding air of mystery.

How did you work with Evangeline Lilly?

From the very first moments I spent with her, I sensed an incredible depth to her. As well as being very pretty, she is also very gentle and profoundly human. She has a wifely, motherly dimension that makes her completely credible. For Nathan, she is a cause, a goal, and an issue at stake, and Evangeline is all three things at once. We come from different worlds but it was beautiful to meet her.

Having first been intrigued by the man, what did you think of the director?

Gilles and I did some read-throughs with Evangeline without going into details. Then, during production, I was surprised to find he had a fantastic ability to guide us along and bring us into a situation where we could give. His ears were always open and he was amazingly articulate, always ready with the exact word to bolster our performance. We shared a common challenge that brought us close together, him as a director having to deal with the complications of shooting in the USA with three different film units, and me as an actor having to perform in English.

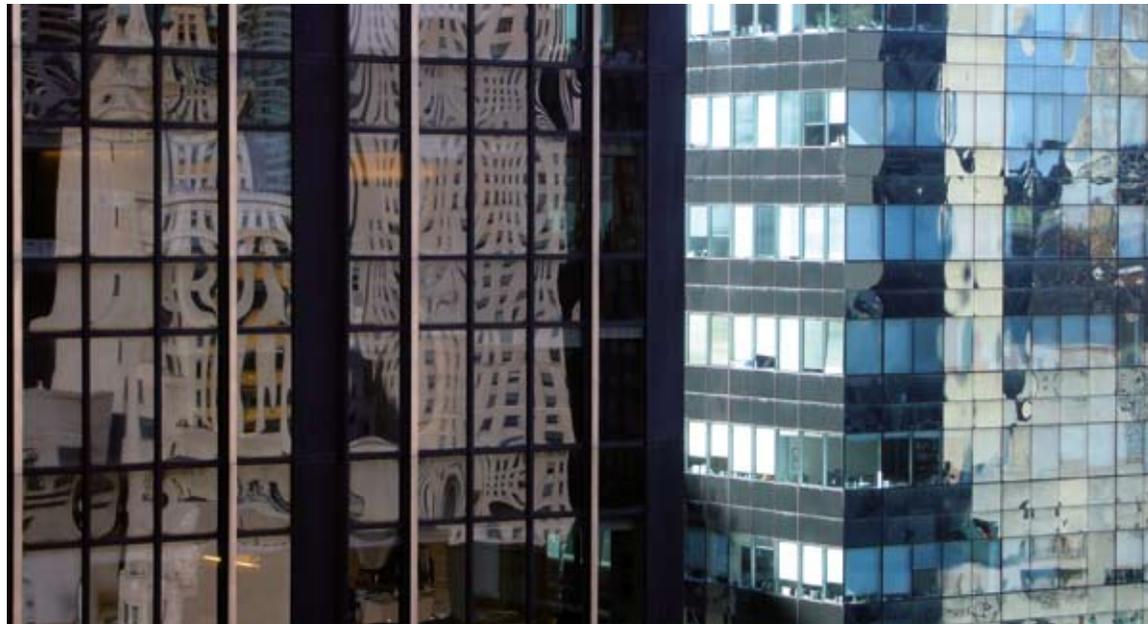
Can you say at this point what place the film will have in your career?

The film has the subtle knack of getting all the proportions right: the locations, the emotions, and the ties between the characters. It has a very important place in my career because it is set elsewhere. I have always loved making films abroad. After all the work I put into my English, I realized that when my intentions were right, my English was right! I had the same kind of experience with the piano in Jacques Audiard's film. If you find the character, you also find the talent he needs to ply his trade. For me, it was a way of getting out of myself and into my character.

Selected filmography

- 2009 *PERSECUTION* by Patrice Chéreau
 2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos
PARIS by Cédric Klapisch
 2007 *MOLIÈRE* by Laurent Tirard
 2006 *DANS PARIS (INSIDE PARIS)* by Christophe Honoré
 2005 *LES POUPEES RUSSES (THE RUSSIAN DOLLS)* by Cédric Klapisch
DE BATTRE MON CŒUR S'EST ARRÊTÉ (THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED) by Jacques Audiard
 2004 *ARSÈNE LUPIN* by Jean-Paul Salomé
EXILS (EXILES) by Tony Gatlif
OSMOSE by Raphael Fejtő
 2002 *DIX-SEPT FOIS CÉCILE CASSARD (SEVENTEEN TIMES CECILE CASSARD)* by Christophe Honoré
L'AUBERGE ESPAGNOLE (EURO PUDDING) by Cédric Klapisch
 1999 *PEUT-ÊTRE (MAYBE)* by Cédric Klapisch
 1998 *GAUJO DILO* by Tony Gatlif
JE SUIS NÉ D'UNE CIGOGNE (CHILDREN OF THE STORK) by Tony Gatlif
 1996 *CHACUN CHERCHE SON CHAT (WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY)* by Cédric Klapisch
56 FOIS PAR SEMAINE by Raphael Fejtő
 1995 *LE PÉRIL JEUNE* by Cédric Klapisch





How did you first come into contact with the project?

The script was not originally sent to me for a role, it was sent to my production company, Mr. Mudd, because the movie was to be shot in North America by a French crew and they needed help with the logistics.

What made you want to act in the film?

I thought the script was well written and the role of Doctor Kay was very interesting, but other than that, I responded to the story as a whole rather than the role in particular. What struck me was the combination of a typically European sensibility, attitude and themes with a thoroughly Hollywood-style efficiency. I was very impressed with the script.

I also found that the project was emotionally more satisfying than many films you see in Europe. The characters were well defined and you cared about what happens to them.

How did you prepare yourself for the role?

To my mind, preparing for a role involves numerous rehearsals and working sessions, but given the time frame and methods of moviemaking, you can more or less rule that out!

In any case, I'm not sure you have to get into the character's psychology. First you have to read and get to know your script. You have to know what happens in the film and what is going to happen to your character, and then act the scenes as they were written and perceived by the director. As it happened, most of my conversations with Gilles Bourdos were about the film in general, but with a special emphasis on the dialogue and the way it should be spoken.

To get close to the subject, I also read a book Gilles gave me by a woman who runs a palliative care center in France. It was very interesting. It all makes you think about what a life is, how fast it goes by, and what it is worth. Finding out how people confront the various stages of death was an enriching discovery, the way they go from refusal to anger and from acceptance to hope, and sometimes even to transcendence. I have some personal experience of the matter. I have always associated with people older than myself, or more adult than me. Such people have never been hard to find!

Can you tell us about your character, Doctor Kay?

He is a man who appears in Nathan's life like a mystery and seems to know how long some people have left to live. In the script, he is described as somebody who accompanies people who have only a short time left. As the story unfolds, we discover other aspects of him. That's as much as I can say without spoiling the story.

But what I can say is that his character changes as his relationship with Nathan develops. Kay makes the young lawyer face up to the idea of death, and maybe even his own.

Kay lives under a kind of curse. It can't be easy to believe in life when you go around 'seeing' that certain people are about to die. Kay works in a palliative care unit but he doesn't only see them there; it can happen to him in a restaurant or on the street.

What is your view of Gilles Bourdos?

He is a moviemaker of style and he works with a director of photography, Mark, who also has style. I think his film *A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES* deserved more success than it received. Gilles has an innate visual sense and his artistic taste is very sound. Fortunately, those are qualities shared by many film directors. Where Gilles stands out is that he is also very good at directing actors. He really watches his actors perform and always gives them constructive comments. That is pretty rare. In my experience, it is very unusual to have a visual talent and also be a good director.

Gilles keeps an open mind but he knows what he wants. He always went to work with great enthusiasm. He obviously likes actors, which can't be said of every director I have worked with. I can think of some who would have preferred to work with puppets. Gilles is not like that. He likes his actors, he likes to watch them and see what they do, and that was a pleasure for me.

How did you work with Romain Duris?

I like Romain very much as a person and he is an excellent actor. He works enormously hard. I had already discovered his work in France through my children before we met on this film. He is intense but naturally so, not like some actors who strike annoying postures. What he did was all the harder because he was acting in a language that wasn't his own. It takes real guts to take on a role like that in a foreign language. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him.

What do you think this film can bring people?

Any piece of work that is good can touch people and make them think about themselves. If the audience comes out of the film thinking about the way they live, the value of life, the value of the moment, and what they feel about the people around them, it will be wonderful.

Selected filmography

- 2008 *ET APRES (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos
BURN AFTER READING by Joel and Ethan Coen
CHANGELING by Clint Eastwood
- 2006 *KLIMT* by Raoul Ruiz
ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL (id.) by Terry Zwigoff
- 2005 *COLOUR ME KUBRICK* by Brian Cook
THE LIBERTINE by Laurence Dunmore
- 2003 *JOHNNY ENGLISH* by Peter Howitt
UM FILME FALADO by Manoel de Oliveira
- 2002 *THE DANCER UPSTAIRS* actor and director
RIPLEY'S GAME by Lilliana Cavani
- 2001 *VOU PARA CASA* by Manoel de Oliveira
HÔTEL by Mike Figgis
KNOCKAROUND by Brian Koppelman and David Levien
- 2000 *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* by E. Elias Mehrige
LES AMES FORTES by Raoul Ruiz
- 1999 *LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ* by Raoul Ruiz
BEING JOHN MALKOVICH by Spike Jonze
JEANNE D'ARC by Luc Besson
- 1998 *THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK* by Randall Wallace
- 1997 *CON AIR* by Simon West
- 1996 *MARY REILLY* by Stephen Frears
THE OGRE by Volker Schlöndorff
MULHOLLAND FALLS by Lee Tamahori
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY by Jane Campion
- 1995 *O COVENTO* by Manoel de Oliveira
PAR-DELA LES NUAGES by Michelangelo Antonioni and Wim Wenders
- 1993 *IN THE LINE OF WIRE* by Wolfgang Petersen
- 1992 *SHADOWS AND FROG* by Woody Allen
OF MICE AND MEN by Gary Sinise
- 1990 *THE SHELTERING SKY* by Bernardo Bertolucci
QUEENS LOGIC by Steve Rash
- 1988 *DAINGEROUS LIAISONS* by Stephen Frears
- 1987 *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* by Paul Newman
EMPIRE OF THE SUN by Steven Spielberg
- 1985 *ELENI* by Peter Yates
- 1984 *PLACES IN THE HEART* by Robert Benton
THE KILLING FIELDS by Roland Joffé





What persuaded you to take part in this project?

When I discovered the script, I fell in love with the story and the message of the movie. The story touched me and bowled me over. It struck a powerful chord in me. I was scared that I might miss out on the role because of scheduling problems and I tried to keep calm but I couldn't stop thinking about it. When I finally met Gilles, I felt as nervous as a beginner. We were both equally anxious about how the other would react. We quickly realized we were on the same wavelength.

What seemed special to you about the project?

I think it took a Frenchman's sensitivity to write a story like this. I often find that scripts have no heart, no soul nowadays. They are coldly mechanical and often not very inspired, especially in the United States. Here, I suddenly found myself reading a story as gripping as a thriller, with wonderful dialogues, relationships that everybody can relate to, and a dose of magic on top! The movie manages to talk about death while giving hope; it talks about separation while making love stronger. Everything Gilles said about the way he saw the film appealed to me, and so did the work of his cinematographer, who is a master of light.

Can you tell us about Claire, your character?

Claire is a woman who has lost half her family, in a way. We first see her living alone with their daughter, far away from Nathan. She is a botanist searching for a very rare flower. She is broken but still on her feet. In spite of all the pain she has been through, she is also a woman who believes in love and beauty and that life is something very, very precious that does not last forever. She is a very strong character and very gentle at the same time. That paradox and depth of character made me really want to play the part.

What does the role mean to you?

It's my first proper part for the big screen, and size really does matter! On the TV, I know what works and what doesn't. Making this movie, I had to go back to basics. I needed a different kind of self-awareness, a different sense of the frame and the effect it would have on a big screen. I also had to adjust the balance between what is overacting and underacting. The project was a real stroke of luck for me because it offered me a key part without being on the screen the whole time. I don't carry the film. I had been hoping for a role where I could fit in and learn a lot by working with wonderful people, and that's exactly what happened!

How did you work with Gilles Bourdos?

Gilles is a really nice guy. He combines a European culture with something you only find in the United States. He lives in New York and his influences are very wide-ranging. You can sense it in everything he does. He has a rich character.

I was surprised to discover that the relationship between the director and actor is universal. You have to find a rhythm, you have to learn to «dance» together. You have to find your space, and I think Gilles and I found it pretty quickly. We corresponded by email for a long time, and paradoxically that helped us get to know each other well. When you meet for a drink, you can get away with being superficial but when you communicate in writing, you really have to say things. When we met on the set, we both knew who the other person was and working together was that much more enjoyable.

Cinema

2008 *ET APRÈS (AFTERWARDS)* by Gilles Bourdos

Television

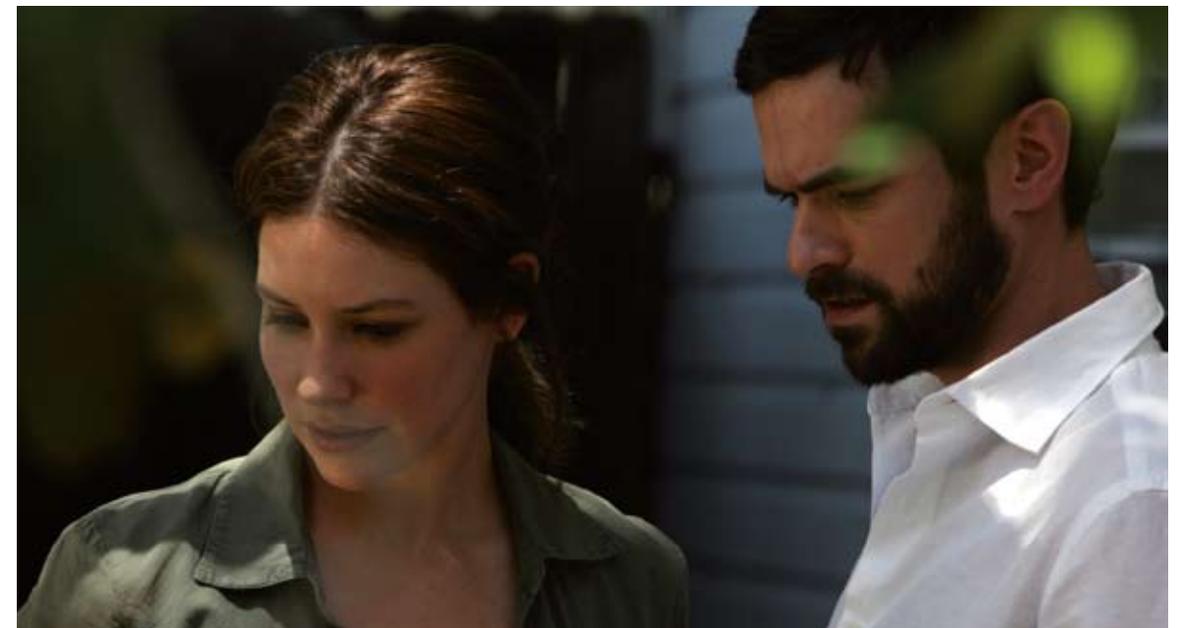
2004-2008 «*Lost, les disparus*»
82 episodes, seasons 1 to 5 - role of Kate Austen

How did you act with Romain Duris?

There again, it was surprising to find how the acting experience is universal. Romain and I clicked at once. In our acting, we both gave each other as much inspiration and space as possible. Romain is charming and generous. We very quickly built up a relationship that allowed us to work perfectly. We got along really well and then when the time came, we each donned our character and everything fell into place.

Do you know how this film will fit into your career?

I think that every role we play teaches us something about ourselves. By working on aspects of a character, you find out things about yourself. I had to think myself into the part of a mother, and as I don't have any children yet, I wondered about all sorts of things. The film made me think a lot about my life and my priorities. I think this story has the same effect on everybody, whether or not they acted in it! I am one of those people who believe we all have a reason for being on this earth. I also believe that the more love you give to those around you, the more chance you have of attaining it.







*Nathan
Kay
Claire
Anna
Tracey
Jeremy
Docteur
Mother In Law
Lawyers*

*Rachel
Admission Clerk
Haitian Spokesman*

*Romain Duris
John Malkovich
Evangeline Lilly
Pascale Bussières
Sara Waisglass
Reece Daniel Thompson
Bruno Verdoni
Joan Gregson
Mark Camacho
Robin Wilcock
Edward Yankie
Carlo Mestroni
Glenda Braganza
Leni Parker
Henri Pardo*



Directed by
Screenplay by

Based on the best seller by
Director of photography
Music
Sound

Editor
Production designer
Costume designer
Casting
Executive producer
Canadian co-producer
German co-producer
Executive producer
Line producer
New York executive production
In coproduction with

Produced by

In association with
With the participation of

Internationales sales

Gilles Bourdos
Michel Spinosa
Gilles Bourdos
Guillaume Musso, Xo Editions
Mark Ping Bing Lee
Alexandre Desplat
Pierre Mertens
Valerie Deloof
Cyril Holtz
Marc Doisne
Valerie Deselne
Anne Pritchard
Mario Davignon
Andrea Kenyon, C.S.A.
Christine De Jekel
Christian Larouche
Dirk Beinhold
Christian Gagne
Daniele Rohrbach
Salty Features
Akkord Film Produktion
Wild Bunch
M6 Films
Christal Films
Fidélité Films
Olivier Delbosc
Marc Missonnier
Mr. Mudd
Canal+
TPS Star
M6
Wild Bunch

Interviews: Pascale & Gilles Legardinier

