

Christmas in July presents

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CANNES 2013



HENRI

a film by **Yolande Moreau**

Le Pacte

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CLOSING FILM

HENRI

a film by **Yolande Moreau**

With
Pippo Delbono and Candy Ming

France / Belgium - 107 mins - 2.39 - 5.1

INTERNATIONAL SALES

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SYNOPSIS

Henri, a man in his fifties of Italian origin, runs a little restaurant, “La Cantina”, near the Belgian city of Charleroi with his wife Rita. Once the customers have gone home, Henri meets up with his buddies, Bibi and René, a regular couple of barflies. Together they kill time over a few beers, chatting about their shared passion: homing pigeons.

Then Rita dies suddenly, leaving Henri lost.

Their daughter Laetitia suggests that Henri gets some help with the restaurant from a “white butterfly”, as the residents in a nearby home for the mentally handicapped are known.

Rosette is one of them.

She is upbeat, kindly and doesn’t see the evil nature of humankind. She is only mildly handicapped, and is really just a bit “odd”. She yearns for love, sexuality, and normality.

With Rosette’s arrival, a new life takes shape.

INTERVIEW WITH YOLANDE MOREAU

What was the starting point for your project HENRI?

While we were scouting for "When the Sea Rises", we ate one day in a small restaurant. The owner was a pigeon-fancier. He explained to us how these pigeons are separated, the males taken thousands of kilometers away before being released, and how they are very faithful birds. The male is in a hurry to get back to its mate, sometimes months later. It was fascinating.

I wanted to combine this story with Henri's dream to fly away.

At the same time, I was listening to a Tom Waits album over and over, especially one song: "Innocent When You Dream".

That music captures the hopelessness of men in their fifties, and was the starting point for "Henri", even though it doesn't appear in the film.

How would you introduce Henri, your lead character?

Henri had been brilliant. He was a former racing cyclist, who met his wife because she presented him with his trophies. But the couple became bogged down in routine. And little by little, Henri became resigned, turned in on himself, and became a bit of an alcoholic.

I like the environment of cafés where men meet to knock back beers, automatically, one after the other. The beer flows and time slips by. And then everyone goes home.

I also like this kind of character of few words. Perhaps to begin with, one might find him not so likeable. He doesn't smile much. But I like him right from the start.

You chose Pippo Delbono, an Italian actor, to play Henri.

I located the narrative in the Charleroi area, in Belgium. There are a lot of Italians in that area who moved there after the war. So I was looking for an actor of Italian origin.

When I met Pippo Delbono, I immediately fell for his charm. We were supposed to just meet for lunch, but I stayed with him until the evening. After that, I had the opportunity to see his excellent stage show "Dopo La Battaglia" at the Théâtre du Rond Point in Paris. It was clear to me, Pippo had to be Henri.

Did you specifically not want to make a comedy film?

I like the tragi-comic. And I like to start with very grave subjects, but humor is never far away.

In particular in the scene in which you appear, in a role which is as chatty as the heroes are taciturn! Did you not want to be the heroine of your own film this time?

Oh! Auntie Michèle! I hadn't planned to play this woman who prepares the post-funeral meal. Instead, I wrote "Henri" thinking I would play Rosette. I'd dreamed of playing a girl like that – a bit wacky, an odd-ball. And then I thought I was too old for the character, and that it would be too hard to be in front of and behind the camera at the same time.

Let's talk about Rosette...

She's in her thirties, she lives in a home for the mentally handicapped called White Butterflies. She has a mild mental handicap, and dreams of love and sexuality.

When Henri becomes a widower and can no longer run his café-restaurant on his own, she comes crashing into his life.

I didn't want her to be passive. I wanted her to be quite forward and a little manipulative. I wanted to show that she's not a victim. She's in charge of her destiny.

What Henri and Rosette have in common is that they don't have the skills to behave socially.

You chose Candy Ming to play her...

I'd met her working on the films of Kervern and Delépine, "Louise-Michel" and "Mammuth", and I was struck by her amazing presence. She doesn't overdo things, she's spot on right away. Her presence in the film is radiant!

There's one scene where the character played by Jackie Berroyer behaves in a pretty questionable manner. Did you set yourself any moral guidelines towards handicapped people?

I didn't want to present Henri and his friends like saints. Their jokes are sometimes close to the bone. When they are looking at Rosette's butt, we, as viewers, are worried that things might get ugly.

It was important to me that the actor who plays Henri wasn't too old. I didn't want there to be any comparison with the serial killer Emile Louis! What's more, Henri and his buddies and the residents of the home have a certain ribaldry in common. They sing smutty songs. The residents sing "Hey, look at my dick", while Henri and his pals sing "What a whore". The preoccupations are the same, universal ones: sex and love.

Mentally handicapped people have always fascinated me. They are a reflection of our own confusion. I very quickly sensed the danger, the traps to avoid: I didn't want to depict the world of the handicapped in a pseudo-poetic way, like something cute. I wanted a bittersweet film. I had to film them at the right distance; up close but without sentimentality or sugariness.

Rosette shares a room with another girl in the home, and when she goes on her escapade with Henri, she can't bear for him to leave her alone.

I wanted to address the difficulty of living in a group. Even with kindly supervisors, it's hard to live in a group.

Rosette dreams of standing out. She dreams of normality, of doing like her brother: having a child, and being part of a couple. But psychologically, Rosette is fragile. When Henri leaves her alone, she panics. And when she opens the window and the wind gusts in, she's terrified. She has a metaphysical fear.

But she's happy and reassured when she finds a reproduction of The Angelus by Millet in the seaside apartment – the same reproduction as in her room at the home.

The dialog is sparse, the film operating very much on a visual level.

I don't like films that are too chatty.

I like writing for the cinema because it involves writing in images.

You can say, "Pass me the salt", and have hundreds of different intentions.

The script was already not very verbal, and during the editing, Fabrice Rouaud continued to slash away. When on paper I manage to convey something in images, I'm happy. For example, the scene in the swimming pool to illustrate Rosette's desire to be in the "gang" of so-called normal people: the handicapped people all have red caps and have to stay in a part of the pool marked off by buoys. Rosette breaks the rules. She goes over to other side. The lifeguard makes her get back where she belongs. No need for dialog there!

As for Henri, he's a man of few words.

It's also a film about incommunicability. Henri and his wife sleep side-by-side, but like two strangers. Henri communicates neither with his daughter Laetitia – who, like his wife, holds him in contempt – nor with Gaël, his 10-year-old grandson, who stays in his bubble, wearing headphones and playing on his PlayStation.

There is little music, the sound taking precedence.

I like it when sounds are altered – it's a deformation from my years of theater with Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeïeff. For example, the comments in the crowd at the burial, that chorus of banalities, is like music. Or when Henri's daughter bursts into the pigeon coop to tell her father about Rita's accident, her voice is masked by the beating wings of the pigeons.

And in the home, group living means the sounds of the refectory, clinking cutlery, chairs being moved – it's all noisy.

As for the music, it is by Wim Willaert, who played in "When the Sea Rises", and who I adore.

YOLANDE MOREAU BIOGRAPHY

Yolande Moreau is a Belgian actress and director. She began her career doing children's shows and a one-woman-show (*Sale Affaire* in 1981), before being spotted by Agnès Varda who cast her in *VAGABOND* (1985). She then joined the troupe of comedy writers Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeïeff, with whom she became well known for her role in the cult TV series *Les Deschiens*. Since the 1990s, she has appeared in films directed by Dominique Cabrera, Jean-Pierre Améris, Yves Angelo, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern, and Noémie Lvovsky, among others. She won two César awards for her first film as director, *WHEN THE SEA RISES* (2005), and a third for *SÉRAPHINE*, directed by Martin Provost in 2009. *HENRI* is her second feature film.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

DIRECTOR

- 2013 **HENRI**
Official Selection in Cannes Film Festival
(Director's Fortnight)
- 2004 **WHEN THE SEA RISES** co-directed with Gilles PORTE
Prix Louis Delluc 2004 for a first film
César 2005 for Best Debut Feature Film

ACTRESS

- 2012 **CAMILLE REWINDS** by Noémie LVOVSKY
- 2011 **THE LONG FALLING** by Martin PROVOST
- 2010 **MAMMUTH** by Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
- 2009 **MICMACS** by Jean-Pierre JEUNET
- 2008 **SÉRAPHINE** by Martin PROVOST
César 2009 for Best Actress
- LOUISE MICHEL** by Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
- 2006 **CALL ME ELIZABETH** by Jean-Pierre AMÉRIS
- PARIS, JE T'AIME** by Sylvain CHOMET
- 2004 **WHEN THE SEA RISES** by Yolande MOREAU and Gilles PORTE
César 2005 for Best Actress
- FOLLE EMBELLIE** by Dominique CABRERA
- 2002 **A PIECE OF SKY** by Bénédicte LIÉNARD
- 2001 **THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS** by Dominique CABRERA
- AMÉLIE** by Jean-Pierre JEUNET
- 1997 **AN AIR SO PURE** by Yves ANGELO
- 1993 **THE SON OF THE SHARK** by Agnès MERLET
- 1985 **VAGABOND** by Agnès VARDA
- 1984 **7 PIÈCES, S.D.B, CUISINE (short)** by Agnès VARDA

THEATER

- 1982 *Sale Affaire* directed by Yolande MOREAU
- 1989 à 2002 Troupe of Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeïeff
Les Deschiens and stage shows

CAST

Henri	Pippo DELBONO
Rosette	Candy MING
Bibi	Jackie BERROYER
René	Simon ANDRÉ
Rita	Lio
Laetitia	Gwen BERROU
Madame Monnier	Brigitte MARIAULLE
Auntie Michèle	Yolande MOREAU
Seller of fries	Serge LARIVIÈRE

And the actors of THE COMPAGNIE DE L'OISEAU MOUCHE

CREW

Writer and director	Yolande MOREAU
Producer	Julie SALVADOR
Director of photography	Philippe GUILBERT
Set design	Marc-Philippe GUÉRIG
Editor	Fabrice ROUAUD
Sound	Jean-Paul BERNARD
	Jean MALLET
Mixing	Jean-Pierre LAFORCE
Original music	Wim WILLAERT
Artistic consultant	Héloïse MOREAU
Assistant director	Frédéric ALEXANDRE
Costume design	Alexandra CHARLES
Make-up	Férouz ZAAFOUR
Associate producers	Christophe JEAUFFROY, Jean-Louis LIVI, Arlette ZYLBERBERG and Antonino LOMBARDO
Coproducers	Jacques-Henri and Olivier BRONCKART
Distribution in France	Le Pacte
International sales	Le Pacte

A France/Belgium coproduction
Christmas In July, Versus Production, France 3 Cinéma,
F Comme Film

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Prime Time and Belgacom

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the Flanders Audiovisual Fund, the Tax Shelter
of the Federal Belgium Government, and Inver Invest

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Cinéma - F comme Film - RTBF - Prime Time

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