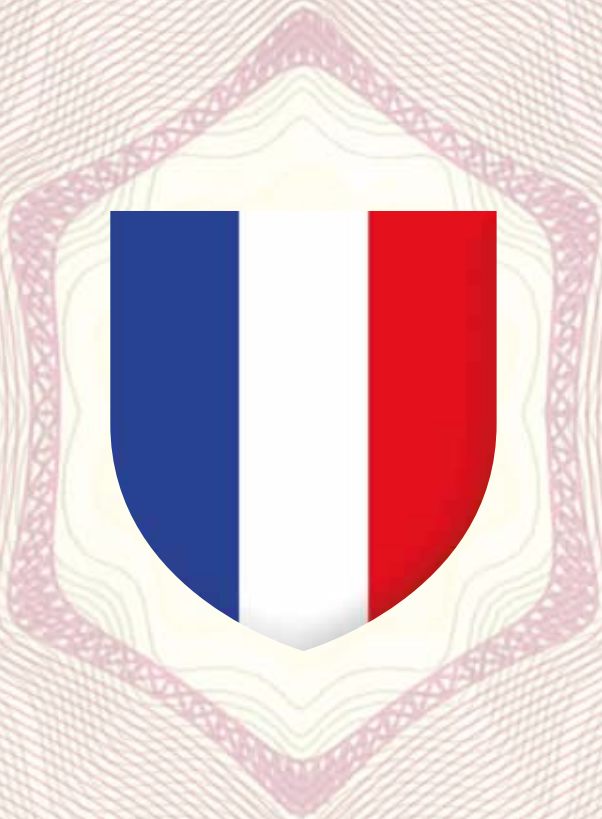


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JÉRÔME SEYDOUX PRESENTS



BENOÎT POELVOORDE

DANY BOON 

# NOTHING TO DECLARE

(RIEN À DÉCLARER)

A FILM BY  
**DANY BOON**

STARRING

KARIN **VIARD** FRANÇOIS **DAMIENS** LAURENT **GAMELON** BRUNO **LOCHET**  
JULIE **BERNARD** BOULI **LANNERS** OLIVIER **GOURMET** PHILIPPE **MAGNAN**  
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AND WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF **THE WALLOON REGION**

MUSIC  
PHILIPPE **ROMBI**

RUNNING TIME: 105 MINS.



# SYNOPSIS

January 1, 1993 – the Euro zone is founded. Two customs agents – one Belgian and one French – are told that their border post, located in Courquain, France and Koorkin, Belgium, is soon to disappear.

Francophobic on his father's side, the overzealous Belgian customs agent, Ruben Vandevoorde is forced into founding the first Franco-Belgian mobile customs detail.

His French cohort Mathias Ducatel, seen by Ruben as a life-long enemy, is secretly in love with Ruben's sister. To the shock of all concerned, Mathias agrees to become Vandevoorde's partner and together they comb the backroads on either side of the secluded border country in their special international customs interception vehicle – a Renault sedan on its last legs.





1. Nom/Surname

DUATEL

2. Prénoms/Given names

MATHIAS

3. Nationalité Française/French Nationality

4. Date de naissance/Date of birth

22 FEBRUARY 1968

5. Sexe/  
Sex

M

6. Lieu de naissance/Place of birth

COURQUAIN

7. Taille/Height

1m82

8. Couleur des yeux/Colour of eyes

BLUE

9. Autorité/Authority



10. Signes particuliers/Distinguish Marks

*Dreams of marrying  
his worst enemy's sister*

11. Signature du titulaire/Holder's  
signature



# INTERVIEW WITH DANY BOON

**When did you get the idea for NOTHING TO DECLARE?**

We were on a promotional tour for WELCOME TO THE STICKS. Probably because there were endless screenings in the northern part of France and in Belgium and I kept crossing back and forth over the border between the two countries. It's no longer there, of course, but I crossed the border so many times when I was a student – either to go to parties or to get a bet down on a horse for my dad – and it always got me very nervous. I had long hair back then and with my artist portfolio and my Cure pins I got stopped and searched by customs every single time. And going through the border now I found a real no-man's-land – empty sentry boxes, boarded up stores, abandoned homes – kind of a ghost town. Like something out of a western. And I immediately thought that was an eminently cinematic setting. So the basis of the film was born right there. And I went out and met with customs agents who could tell me about how it was before, about the changes. Some of them had even caught the last day, closing day, on their camcorders. I also went into the INA [Institut National de l'Audiovisuel] archives on the period and found, among other things, the protest strikes the border closings had set off.

**Although customs is the backdrop for your plot, NOTHING TO DECLARE could also be seen as a love story, right?**

Yes. For me, it is essentially a love story between Mathias Ducatel, the French customs agent I play and a Belgian girl, sister of a Francophobic customs agent, Ruben Vandevoorde. It was a story that actually happened to a co-worker of one of the customs agents I met. His passion for a woman who worked for Belgian customs was looked on poorly by his superiors. This story of impossible love – love undone by difference – is also inspired by the story of my parents actually. My father was Kabyle and my mother French. She got pregnant very quickly and was rejected by part of her family. When you experience that kind of thing as a child, you can't forget it. But beyond the case of my own parents, stories about couples forming across lines of difference – whether it's about social, religious or other differences – is a very common one for people everywhere. So with NOTHING TO DECLARE I was trying to imagine a comedy that could push the racism theme pretty far without the slightest discomfort. Because the French and the Belgians are cousins. Ruben Vandevoorde's francophobia can seem realistic, make you laugh and make you think, all without making you squirm. You can say a lot about patriotism and racism by doing it like this, on the rebound. If you take the word "French" in Ruben's language and replace it by "Arab" or "Jew" or "black" and it suddenly takes on a whole new dimension. That idea is actually used in one scene where Mathias doesn't dare admit his true problem so, over dinner, he tells Ruben that he's



in love with a black girl whose family hates whites. And what does Ruben answer? "What a shame!" and "How sad!" The racist is always someone else, it's never you.

**After the triumph of WELCOME TO THE STICKS, did you feel the pressure writing a follow-up?** Yes, the pressure was very heavy. Lots of directors and producers had explained to me just how hard it was to go back to writing after having a hit. And how, generally, it led to a big flop! (laugh) Bertrand Blier even said to me: "Good luck for your next picture. Because right after LES VAL-SEUSES (GOING PLACES), I bombed!" (laugh). But on a practical level, once I had my story, everything went fine. Although I guess I always had this idea in one corner of my mind that people were gunning for me. And I guess I put a lot of pressure on myself, thinking I couldn't let people down.

**In addition, with success, everyone stops contradicting you and more or less tends to go along with whatever you say for the screenplay, right?** It's true that the relationship changes. And before I gave it out to read I had to do the opposite from what I did with WELCOME TO THE STICKS. Back then I was explaining to everyone that it would be easier to listen to the screenplay than to read it. I was asking people for their indulgence. Here I was asking people to erase that, not to be afraid to tell me what was not working. So I heard all the points of view and I sorted it out afterward. In all, I wrote seven drafts of the screenplay. And the most difficult aspect was striking the right balance between Ruben and Mathias as a duo on the one hand and the other characters in the story. To hold on to the main thread of the plot on the one hand, and never get bored as soon as we moved away from the two heroes of that story.

**NOTHING TO DECLARE also strikes a balance between comedy and emotion, characteristic of your films but also of your stand-up routines.** NOTHING TO DECLARE is of course a comedy but its message – if you pardon

the big word – is deeper than WELCOME TO THE STICKS. It's about showing ordinary racism, which always begins with a little joke or two, apparently innocuous. And in my mind, NOTHING TO DECLARE is also a real love story. That is what's at stake in the movie – can this French customs agent, madly in love with a Belgian girl, get around the anti-French racism of her family and marry her? And it's set against the backdrop of the discontinuing of borders, highly symbolic in the context of the story I'm telling here.

**Is the writing of a film more complex than that of a comedy routine?** Yes, much more complex! When you write a screenplay you have to manage to surprise without destabilizing and to synthesize. In a screenplay, a scene is stronger when you've taken the marrow out and where you manage to get to the heart and the flesh of a situation, but also of the characters, the acting, the lighting and the way it's directed. There's an endless number of parameters before you obtain the result you're after. And between the original emotion or the laugh that was there at the outset of the writing to the final result, you have two to three years where you risk losing that thread. You have to keep that in your mind throughout the entire process. For me, writing a stand-up routine is more like a charcoal drawing. You sketch out the broad outlines and you know that on stage it's going to evolve. Cinema is water color made with very permanent brush strokes and the slightest modification could make the whole piece very ugly. Unlike in the theater, you constantly have your nose to the story and you never step back to take stock. As if you painted first an eye, then an eyebrow, then a nose. You have to have the entire representation of the body in mind or you wind up with something wildly disproportionate. But what I love about making movies is the crew aspect – a whole family going along on a ride, in the same direction, helping a director along or holding him down.

**How is your theater experience helpful in making films?** In 15 years of one-man shows and



meeting live audiences, I think I picked up a sense of timing which is indispensable for comedy. I also have a good ear and I can hear when the dialogue sounds right.

**Did the idea of having Benoît Poelvoorde play the Belgian customs agent come early on?** Yes. Because Benoît's humanity is so huge that, whatever horrible things come out of his mouth, anything will work. That was actually the first time I ever wrote for an actor in particular. I generally don't like doing that because you project what you already know about a person and so you hold back. I prefer to make a character and have the actor take it and run, using his own personality. But Benoît's case is special – he is so richly inventive that those problems simply don't exist with him. So he was a slam dunk choice for this role but, in spite of that, he did manage to surprise me! He showed me things I had never seen in him before. He gives himself entirely in every scene – all of a piece. There are no half measures with him. He gets mad at himself if he trips over a word or mixes up the

order of a line or two. But that never interferes the slightest bit with the sheer joy he gets from acting. He even came over to the monitors to watch the takes he just shot – even though I've been told he never does that. He came to the screening for the cast and crew, though for years he's avoided watching the movies in which he appears.

I have a lot of admiration and a lot of affection and love for him. And we found loads of stuff we have in common on this shoot. We went to the same school, Saint-Luc, he at the Liège campus and I at Tournai.

Our parents had the same resumé – our fathers were truckers and our mothers shopkeepers. We like the same music – Dick Annegarn, in particular, we both know his songs by heart. At the beginning, along with Bouli Lanners and François Damiens, I think they were afraid I'd show up on the set wearing my 20 million tickets sold on my sleeve. I can understand that. It's just that it isn't like that. I'm really happy to have had this phenomenal success but I was not going into this shoot waving it like a banner!





**Acting yourself in your film was an obvious choice, too? And a pleasure?**

I've gotten used to it over time. And now on a set I'm naturally pretty much in control of everything. I also owe that to my experience as a solo performer. When I was just starting out, if something unexpected came up I got destabilized. Now I've learned to manage it, for example through improvisation. But despite that, I tend to prefer the moments when I'm not acting. I must admit, I get enormous pleasure out of directing and watching my actors giving life to my characters.

**How are you as a director of actors?** I do a lot of blocking out beforehand, so as not to tire my actors out with technical stuff. Along the same lines, I storyboard, or have storyboarded, a fair number of scenes. Once I'm on the set, I always block out a scene with technical rehearsal. I always have a fairly precise idea of what it is I want, although I seldom stick to the exact plan. But having that framework frees me up to have fun with my actors. I let them make suggestions and then I set them straight according to what it is I want and to my precise knowledge of each of the characters. I hear everyone out, but then I make my choices. Because I know that an audience can be taken right out of a movie, because one small role doesn't ring true or isn't precisely written or clearly defined. I'm obsessed with that.

**There is the distinct feeling that with respect to the photography and the sets this film is more ambitious than WELCOME TO THE STICKS. What direction did you give your set decorator and your director of photography?** From the customs posts to the restaurant run by Mr. And Mrs. Janus, the sets in NOTHING TO DECLARE are truly one of the film's characters. All of those elements were created for the film and constructed with constant attention to detail. In Ruben Vandevoorde's home, for example, there are three candles, the colors of the Belgian flag. That detail may not even have made it on to the screen but in my opinion it's an indispensable

part of creating the atmosphere that I wanted. And we owe that to Alain Veissier, with whom I had already worked on STICKS. He had a bigger budget for NOTHING TO DECLARE. And we worked far in advance and very closely with the director of photography, Pierre Aïm, who also worked on STICKS. Pierre and I worked on creating a contrast between the wintry exteriors and the warmer interiors, but with one difference: the Belgian customs post has a sort of rustic feel while the French side is much more bureaucratic.

**Is working with the same technical crew important for you?** Yes, but there are no obligations. For example, on the set we decided that Pierre Aïm would not handle the camera himself so that he could concentrate on the light, which was a big job in itself, especially because of the wintry atmosphere. I wanted him to be able to take breaks, get a little perspective on the set, so as not to constantly have his nose to the grindstone. In addition Pierre recommended a fantastic camera operator in Rodolphe Lauga – and his contribution was essential, especially for the action scenes sprinkled throughout the film.

**Filming action scenes, now that's new for you in film making. How did you approach it?** Thanks to Rodolphe and Nicolas Guy, my 1st AD, I discovered and used the Ultimate Arm, a Russian invention perfected by the Americans. It's a robotic arm fixed to the roof of a vehicle which allows quick 360-degree movement around an axis, providing sharp photographic images regardless of speed, terrain or weather. It's funny because I was a little freaked out in that car even though I love doing my own stunts as an actor. Benoît was really scared. He kept saying to me, "You're a nincompoop!" (laugh) He didn't get why I wasn't scared, although we're both hypochondriacs. But I loved horsing around at the wheel of a Renault 4L at breakneck speeds.



And I laughed my head off watching Benoît panic in the seat next to me. But there are no mysteries about scenes like that – it took time to get them. The one on the highway where we lose pieces of the car, one at a time, took us a week to complete. And it was storyboarded in a very precise manner, including especially the points where the vehicles were supposed to hit each other during this chase sequence.

### **Did you change the film much in editing?**

At that stage I once again hooked up with someone I'd worked with on *WELCOME TO THE STICKS* and *DREAM HOUSE* – Luc Barnier. We didn't make any major structural changes, but we worked on the rhythm an awful lot. There was one ten-minute sequence at the end of the picture that I cut. It was a final twist in the writing which just never panned out. A few people had expressed some reservations about the "writer's reversal" but that didn't keep me from shooting it! (laugh) I had started with the idea that very often foreigners become more intolerant than natives when it comes to other foreigners, and that they refuse to let the word "foreigner" describe them. So I had Ruben's father be originally from Brittany and, after having suffered from racism as a younger man, he becomes more Belgian than the Belgians later on. It worked fine on the page but it didn't work in the picture for the simple reason that it took away from Ruben's character, who had to work like the devil at accepting his French colleague. If he himself is of French origins, you wind up thinking "All that for nothing? What's the point?"

**For the music of your film you once again called on Philippe Rombi, who wrote scores for *WELCOME TO THE STICKS* and *DREAM HOUSE*. How did this new collaboration go?** What I wanted this time was different.

On *STICKS*, my directions were about using simple acoustic instruments to get a "Nino Rota sounding" feel, with a few lyrical swells here and there. For *NOTHING TO DECLARE*, there were three basic thematic elements – the customs agents, the love story and the smugglers. He recorded it with an 80-piece orchestra and I am thrilled with the result.

### **Are you more nervous about this release than you were for *WELCOME TO THE STICKS*?**

I've already screened *NOTHING TO DECLARE* in Lomme, in northern France, for an audience that didn't know what they were going to see. I wanted to do this because I felt there were enormous expectations after *WELCOME TO THE STICKS* and so a very great potential for disappointment. I must say they gave me a very rousing standing ovation. That was heartwarming and it has given me hope for what is to come.





# CHARACTERS

by Dany Boon



## THE FRENCH CUSTOMS OFFICERS

They constitute the foils to the Belgian customs officers. They're all ready to go on strike, for example, to protest the closing of their border post, but they really don't know how to go about it. I imagined their Chief (Philippe Magnan) as a disabused character, directly inspired by a customs officer I met, who told me of the inevitable changes in his trade which were going to bring some pretty complicated moments to him. Like the arrival of computers, which he accepted but which he found exhausting even to think about.

The Chief in *NOTHING TO DECLARE* is getting close to retirement and really wants only one thing – to be left the hell alone!

Those under his command – played by Nadège Beausson-Diagne, Zinedine Soualem and Guy Lecluyse – have the smallest roles, but they are nevertheless very important. Like their Belgian counterparts, they are the last of a dying breed. You can see they are very much together as a group, but their number is diminishing all the time.



## THE BELGIAN CUSTOMS OFFICERS

Because the customs agent played by Benoît is so violent, I had to surround him with other characters, so as not to imply that all of Belgium was like him! So there is his Chief, played by Eric Godon, the only one who is capable of putting him in his place and who also represents the vast majority of the Belgian people.

But I also especially developed the role of a customs agent who is much more childlike and naïve, much less sharp-edged and who didn't at all adhere to the racist theorems of one he nevertheless calls his friend. He wears a suit and a cap that's too big for him. He's always a little awkward, like a kid who's dressing up and doesn't really have a sense of the reality.

To play that part, I chose Bouli Lanners, whose work I adore, in all his films including *Eldorado*, which he directed.

As chance would have it, his own father was actually a customs officer! So he really knew the environment. In fact, at 12 years old, his father sometimes put him in the sentry box while he took his nap, telling him not to wake him up unless someone came along in a uniform! (laugh) In any case, it was thanks to Bouli that we got the period customs officer uniforms.

Benoît and he really form a duo that also tells the story of the transformation of the role of the customs officer. Unlike Bruno Wanuxem, Ruben Vandevoorde, because he's out of his mind, is completely adapted to the action and adventure that his job will require of him after the border posts are closed. Because at that point the customs officers went from being bureaucrats sitting at a desk to super-cops, hot on the trail of drug smugglers in the field.





## THE RESTAURANT OWNERS: IRENE AND JACQUES JANUS

Through the couple who own the restaurant called The No Man's Land, I wanted to show what happened to those whose businesses were made obsolete by the closing of the customs posts. All of a sudden, nobody ever stopped there! They are emblematic of an economic world model which is in the process of giving way. But they are also a couple going downhill. The restaurant owner's wife began life with jumbo ambition but, poor thing, just didn't pick the right horse! (laugh) She was very much in love with her husband but he never lived up to her expectations and she holds it against him, even as he is more and more out of touch with what she wants from him and makes more and more blunders. It was interesting watching this couple deteriorate little by little, going crooked to ensure their economic survival.

I had first called François Damiens to tell him I was writing a film about France and Belgium and that I wanted us to work together. I just love his candid camera stuff!

He said yes two years before the beginning of the shoot. In the beginning I thought of him more in the role of Bruno Wanuxem, which in the end went to Bouli, rather than the restaurant owner. But as the writing evolved, I began to see Bouli's soft side was better for the customs agent and François was easy to see as a husband who is under his wife's thumb. Those two are exact opposites on the set. Bouli is very precise, whereas François is very fragile – he needs to be reassured.

To play his wife, I thought of Karin Viard after working with her on Danièle Thompson's *CHANGE OF PLANS* (*LE CODE À L'CHANGE*). We laughed our heads off together! And when I told her I would love to work with her again, she told me that if I had a role for her in my next picture that she would agree to do it. So while I was writing I called her to offer her the role of the restaurant owner's wife and she accepted. I'm very happy – the couple is at once very realistic and profoundly funny.



## THE DEALERS

They are riff-raff working small-time angles. They are there to give the film a more comic dimension. But here again I was inspired by real stories I heard, like the one about the crook who actually got caught with drugs in his butt and tried to get out of it by saying he had no idea how those drugs got up his ass! (laugh)

To play their boss, Duval, I chose Laurent Gamelon, whose work I love and who worked on my first feature *DREAM HOUSE*. He was perfect for the character I see as the outlaw version of Karin Viard's character. He too is very ambitious, but his crew just isn't up to snuff.

Bruno Lochet portrays Tiburce, the very fetching, very game member of the trio. He's got this Marty Feldman type face and there's all this humanity that comes off him, it's incredible.

Then there's Laurent Capelluto, who plays the weak link in the gang. I didn't have to look far to find this very rare gem. He doesn't have a lot of scenes. So the audience has to understand right away that he's a complete dope. At one point I imagined him as being from an Eastern European country, but then I decided it was better if he's just completely uncultured. Michel Boujenah suggested Laurent, who partnered with him in Emmanuel Salinger's *THE HIGH LIFE* (*LA GRANDE VIE*).





## THE VANDEVOORDE FAMILY

Around Benoît's character is his sister who is secretly in love with the French customs agent played by me. There is her father, who is every bit as racist as Ruben – though I cut a bunch of scenes and toned it down so it wouldn't be repetitive. There is also Ruben's wife and his young son, who he's trying to initiate in his pro-Belgian, anti-French ideas, but in vain – which once again tones down the character a bit.

I went through a long casting process to find Benoît's sister. I thought of well-known actresses for the part and then Julie Bernard just took over in the final turn, when there were seven «finalists» left in the field. As incredible as it may seem when you see her on screen, NOTHING TO DECLARE is her film debut. I was convinced from her tests

that she was perfect for the part but I was still worried because she had never shot a movie before. There is a big difference between testing well and doing well on a movie set. You can't let yourself be daunted by the size of the crew, and you have to step up to the plate opposite strong personalities like Benoît Poelvoorde and Bouli Lanners. In short, you have to find your place. And although Julie was very tense the first day of shooting, she was fantastic after that. I was impressed by her performance especially since she had to deliver on such a wide range of emotions – moving from comedy to anger to tears.

Throughout the shoot, Julie was a fountain of ideas and had a very sharp view of her character. In any case, I think it's really hard for a man to write the



part of a woman. In my case, I always feel like it's a little too cliché and I listen very closely to the reactions and comments. And she had the courage to come talk to me about what wasn't quite working for her.

It was also through auditions that I found the actor who would play her father – Jean-Paul Dermont. He has a voice like Brasseur's, but with a Belgian accent. I couldn't see anyone but him in that role. Finally, I had a number of auditions before I finally found Benoît's son, Joachim Ledeganck. With children, I always do it the same way – I select a few of them and I have them do auditions on a scene they've learned. I have them act it once, then we talk and I give them a direction. If they take the indication into account then they know how to act

and they like it. There's nothing worse than a child actor getting pushed into something by his parents. During the auditions, Joachim's acting was true, he had good concentration and more than that he remembered what I asked him to do. There were two kids left in the final cut but the second child was too young. And because we were shooting the scene with Benoît and his son under the stars on two night sessions, I was afraid he would get tired too fast. And that is one of the most important scenes in the film for me.





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 BENOÎT POELVOORDE

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RUNNING TIME: 105 MINS.

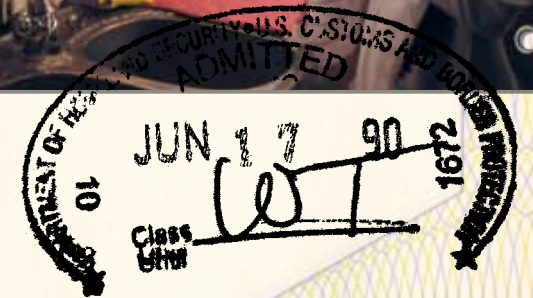


# SYNOPSIS

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Francophobic on his father's side, the overzealous Belgian customs agent, Ruben Vandevoorde is forced into founding the first Franco-Belgian mobile customs detail.

His French cohort Mathias Ducatel, seen by Ruben as a life-long enemy, is secretly in love with Ruben's sister. To the shock of all concerned, Mathias agrees to become Vandevoorde's partner and together they comb the backroads on either side of the secluded border country in their special international customs interception vehicle – a Renault sedan on its last legs.





1. Nom/Naam

VANDE VOORDE

2. Prénom/Voornaam

RUBEN

3. Nationalité Belge/Belgische Nationaliteit

4. Date de naissance/Geboortedatum

12 OCTOBER 1966

5. Sexe/  
Geslacht

M

5. Lieu de naissance/Geboorteplaats

KOORIKIN

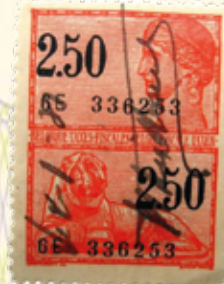
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1m 86

8. Couleur des yeux/Oogkleur

BROWN

9. Autorité/Instantie



10. Signes particuliers/Speciala tekens

Francophobic

11. Signature du titulaire/Handtekening van de houder

Vandevor de



# INTERVIEW WITH BENOÎT POELVOORDE

**How did you come to NOTHING TO DECLARE?** Isabelle de la Patellière, who was Dany's agent and mine as well at the time, was first to talk to me about the project, saying that Dany was writing the part for me. Before that, I had only crossed paths with Dany once, at a convention of movie professionals when he was first presenting WELCOME TO THE STICKS and I had been to see him on stage. It was after seeing him perform that we really met. After the show, we had a drink together and he confirmed that he really was writing a role for me. Then a little later on he sent me the script to read.

**And what was your first reaction when you read it?** The first reaction? Why didn't I have the idea to do a story about customs agents? I'm Belgian! It was right in front of me and I couldn't even see it! (laugh) But I liked the script right away because I thought it was really funny. But the script wasn't as funny as the final result and it wasn't even as funny as the shoot – because we laughed our way through it, from beginning to end. And we could feel that tone just take over the film. In any case, when I closed the screenplay after reading it, I was sure about one thing – I was going to have a ball acting in this movie!

**The world of these customs agents is familiar to you?** No. Unlike Bouli (Lanners), whose father was a customs agent. I don't even have any very clear memories of crossing the border. But I had a great time wearing the uniform. More than becoming a customs agent, I liked playing the law and order role. You put that uniform on and you've got 80% of the character right there.

**And how would you describe the character you play?** Ruben Vandevor de is not just a muscular fellow. He's frightening because he can open fire on anyone without the slightest hesitation. And I mean in a comedy, it takes a lot of gall to have me shoot a guy in the back at minute fifteen. I actually was afraid that I would lose the audience's sympathy because of that scene. But when I saw the film I realized that it was mostly fear this franco-phobic, racist customs agent was going to inspire. And that's what justifies Dany's character's aversion to admitting to him that he's in love with his sister!

**Was it easy for you to slip into this character's skin?** Honestly, it wasn't very complicated. It's even the simplest of all the characters to play. Once you've been arrested by a cop, you know how to play that kind of bad faith. (laugh)

**The character also makes it possible to treat the issue of racism from a comic perspective.** Yes, and with a lot of really gutsy touches, too. I mean at the end of the film I remain a racist. And that's not very politically correct for a comedy. It took a lot of nerve for Dany to do that – he's not peddling any cheap moralistic lessons.

**How is Dany as a director?** He knows very precisely what he wants, so he leaves you a lot of freedom. He carries you and at the same time tucks you in. You don't do a lot of takes with him but he works with you on each one. On a first take, I can't help offering some options. After that, he knows how to take some of them and make them work with what he's after. He works like all the great ones, by ear. But he's first and foremost a guy with



a big appetite, a fun-seeker. He gets an enormous amount of pleasure out of watching others. That's rare for a director. After all, he made **WELCOME TO THE STICKS** so he could look down his nose at everyone. He does just the opposite – he watches us work and laughs. And in that way he gives you highlight sequences that don't necessarily look like that on paper. The scene where Bruno Lochet gets arrested with drugs up his rear end.

Without Dany's eye and the sense of rhythm he imposes, it might have been vulgar or pathetic. But with him the scene takes off!

In a comedy, having a director you can trust is vital because he's going to tell you if you go too far or not far enough. And Dany is a stage performer. He's got the rhythm of his whole movie and every line in his head, like a conductor with his orchestra. So all you have to do is let yourself be carried and enjoy these fantastically well-written lines he's got us saying. In comedies, I've often found myself with some defective equipment on my hands.

**Meaning!** When you've got a mediocre situation and it's poorly written and you ask an actor to transcend the whole thing. The director is counting on you, gives you no direction and he asks you how you would say this line or that line. And that just never works!

**And what do you enjoy about acting in a duo with Dany?** His penchant for laughing. You feel like when he watches you act he's rediscovering his lines and the pleasure he got from writing them. But you don't need to change the dialogue to get there. I might have slipped in a word here or there but always adding it to what was written, never to replace something that was poorly made. And Dany acts as true as he writes. It's like driving an automatic. If you can't handle an automatic, you've really got a problem!

**You also make up an on-screen duo with another of your acquaintances, Bouli Lanners.** This is the eighth time we've worked together. He thinks he's always playing my whipping

boy, but when you watch the film you see it's much subtler than that. He's really fantastic because he's new each time. But we decided this would be the last time. Or else next time he'd be a bad guy and I would be a good guy!

**And in the role of your sister, we discover Julie Bernard...** Isn't she fantastic? She has such poise! But having her in the film is also a reflection of Dany's courage – he went out and found this young woman who had never been in the movies when, with the success of **STICKS**, he could have had anyone he wanted. And the end result is a plus for the movie.

Because the actress disappears immediately behind the character and that makes the inhabitants of this border town that much more credible, and so the town itself is more believable.

**Which scene was most complex to shoot for you?** When I have to deliver the tirade which starts "What do you mean nobody died?!" and continues with a brief history of Belgium. Since the very beginning of my career, this is the first time I learned my lines the night before a shoot. Otherwise, since I'm an instinctive sort, I prefer to dive in when I'm in the dressing room, right before make-up. And when I see the result, I really appreciate the quality of the editing because it all seems very true and precise, whereas I really had a very difficult time with it. Because I wanted to learn it by heart I wound up stalling inside it.

**And on the other side, what was the scene you enjoyed shooting most?** The one where my boss scolds me for not liking Frenchmen and where I answer, "Me? But I'm the most francophile of Belgians!" For someone like myself, who adores Louis de Funès, it was really sweet to play that bad faith in words and voice and in the eyes. Because that's really a scene which might have been in one of his movies. Playing all those moments of bad faith and cowardice, that was really made to order for me!



**Dany explains that you didn't love doing the vehicle stunts. Is that true?** He loves it. He's been in car rallies! I'm not naturally a fearful person but, unlike Dany, I'm not about to get in a car and do stunts when no one's going to see me! In any case, I don't get any pleasure out of it, whereas Dany really has a reckless side!

**This is the first time in a long time that you watched a movie you acted in. Why?** I didn't have any choice because I promised Dany. It had been six years since I watched one of my own movies because it undermines me. And this time, in the course of an evening Dany and I spent together, when Dany said, "For my movie, please make an exception," I answered, "For your movie I'll go!" But when that day rolled around I wasn't feeling too confident. I imagined sneaking out of the theater right after going in. Once I was inside, I stayed, but I was doubly stressed. First because I hadn't seen myself on the screen in such a long time, and second for the film itself.

But Dany pulled off what he set out to do – that balance of humor and emotion. His particular strength, his great talent as a story-teller is that it only really takes him one shot, that first opening sequence shot, and he has set up the entire universe of his picture.

You hear Philippe Rombi's beautiful music and those little bells that set the Christmas tone, you see the snow melting on the window sills, the colors, the sets and Bouli's first line. It's like opening the first pages of a Uderzo and Hergé comic book. Or like watching the first few seconds of a Demy film. The tone is set. Some might refuse to go into that world. But once you're inside, you stay there. Dany is a sorcerer. In his films, everything seems somehow more beautiful – from the newspapers to pocket change... He has reproduced what we loved about Gérard Oury's comedies – the sun shines over Paris like it has never shone before!



# CAST

Ruben Vandevoorde  
Olivia Vandevoorde  
Leopold Vandevoorde  
Louise Vandevoorde  
Mr. Vandevoorde (Father)  
Jacques Janus  
Bruno Vanuxem  
Chief Willems  
The Priest of Chimay  
No Man's Land Customer  
Vanuxem's Brother  
Detective

Mathias Ducatel  
Irène Janus  
Division Chief Mercier  
Nadia Bakari  
Lucas Pozzi  
Gregory Brioul  
Duval  
Tiburce  
La Balle  
Realty Agent  
Brussels Restaurant Waiter  
French Driver  
Country Road Driver  
Truck Driver  
English Driver  
Restaurant Customers

Ferrari Driver  
Asian Heating Technician  
and  
Grizzly the Dog

Benoît POELVOORDE  
Christel PEDRINELLI  
Joachim LEDEGANCK  
Julie BERNARD  
Jean-Paul DERMONT  
François DAMIENS  
Bouli LANNERS  
Eric GODON  
Olivier GOURMET  
Sylviane ALLIET  
Jean-Luc COUCHARD  
Laurent SOBRY

Dany BOON  
Karin VIARD  
Philippe MAGNAN  
Nadège BEAUSSON-DIAGNE  
Zinedine SOUALEM  
Guy LECLUYSE  
Laurent GAMELON  
Bruno LOCHET  
Laurent CAPELLUTO  
Bruno MOYNOT  
Alexandre CARRIÈRE  
Jérôme COMMANDEUR  
David COUDYSER  
Nicolas GUY  
Christophe ROSSIGNON  
Jérôme SEYDOUX & Sophie SEYDOUX  
Roland LEVY & Corinne LEVY  
Jean-Claude LAGNIEZ  
Patrick VO

ELIOT

# CREW

Director  
Producer  
Line Producer  
Screenplay and dialogue  
Artistic Collaboration  
Casting Director  
1st Assistant Director  
Continuity Supervisor  
Storyboard  
Storyboard stunts  
Production Manager  
Associate Producer  
Director of Photography  
Camera Operator  
Still Photographer  
Making-of  
Sound Department

Set Decorator  
Costume Design  
Make-up Artists

Hairdresser  
Best Boy  
Grip  
Editor

Physical Stunt Coordinator  
Vehicle Stunt Coordinators

On-Set FX  
Supervisors

Composer

Dany BOON  
Jérôme SEYDOUX  
Eric HUBERT  
Dany BOON  
Yaël BOON  
Gérard MOULEVRIER - ARDA  
Nicolas GUY  
Isabelle PERRIN THEVENET  
Maxime REBIERE  
Michel DORE  
Bruno MORIN  
Philippe MORLIER - AFR  
Pierre AIM - AFC  
Rodolphe LAUGA  
David KOSKAS  
Arnaud DESCHAMPS  
Lucien BALIBAR  
Stéphane VIZET  
Franck DESMOULINS  
Roman DYMNY  
Thomas GAUDER  
Alain VEISSIER - ADC  
Jean-Daniel VUILLERMOZ  
Pascale BOUQUIERE  
Corinne MAILLARD  
Juliette MARTIN  
Pascal LOMBARDO  
Thierry CANU  
Luc BARNIER  
Pascal GUEGAN  
Jean-Claude LAGNIEZ  
Patrick RONCHIN  
LES VERSAILLAIS  
Jean-Baptiste BONETTO  
Yves DOMENJOUD  
Olivier GLEYZE  
Philippe ROMBI

