

THE GROCER'S SON

SYNOPSIS

It's summer and Antoine has to leave the city to help his mother in the family grocery store in a village in Provence. His father is sick and unable to drive the truck from hamlet to hamlet, delivering to the few remaining inhabitants.

Antoine is pleasantly surprised by his encounters with the villagers - stubborn, funny, irascible folk whose joie de vivre is contagious. Antoine rediscovers life in the hills, and maybe love.

CAST

Antoine..... Nicolas Cazalé
Claire..... Clotilde Hesme
Antoine's Father..... Daniel Duval
Antoine's Mother..... Jeanne Goupil
François..... Stéphane Guérin Tillié
Lucienne..... Liliane Rovère
Old Man Clement..... Paul Crauchet
Hassan..... Chad Chenouga
Fernand..... Benoît Giros
Sophie..... Ludmila Ruoso

CREW

Director..... Eric Guirado
Written by..... Eric Guirado - Florence Vignon
Producers..... Miléna Poylo & Gilles Sacuto
Cinematography..... Laurent Brunet
Sound..... Nicolas Favre
Cast..... Brigitte Moidon
Set design..... Valérie Faynot
Costumes..... Ann Dunsford
Editing..... Pierre Haberer
Music..... Christophe Boutin
Mix..... Emmanuel Croset
Production manager..... Christophe Désenclos
A co-production..... TS Productions
..... Rhône Alpes Cinéma
With the participation of..... Canal+
With the support of..... la Région Rhône Alpes,
..... la Région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur
and..... Centre National de la Cinématographie
In association with..... la Sofica Cofinova 3
With the support of..... la Procirep, Angoa-Agicoa

FRANCE • 96' • COLOUR • 1.85 • STEREO DTS SR

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TS PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS

NICOLAS CAZALÉ

CLOTILDE HESME

LE FILS DE L'ÉPICIER (THE GROCER'S SON)



A FILM BY ERIC GUIRADO

DANIEL DUVAL JEANNE GOUPIL STÉPHAN GUÉRIN-TILLIÉ LILIANE ROVÈRE
PAUL CRAUCHET CHAD CHENOUGA BENOIT GIROS LUDMILA RUOSO

Screenplay Eric Guirado and Florence Vignon Cinematography Laurent Brunet (AFC) Music Christophe Boutin Editing Pierre Haberer Sound Nicolas Favre Vincent Hazard Emmanuel Croset Casting Brigitte Moidon (ARDA)
Set Design Valérie Faynot Costumes Ann Dunsford Assistant Director Dominique Henry Unit manager Pierre-Yves Jourdain Script supervisor Sara Prim Production manager Christophe Désenclos
Produced by Miléna Poylo & Gilles Sacuto A coproduction TS Productions - Rhône-Alpes Cinéma with the participation of CANAL+, with the support of Région Rhône-Alpes, Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
and Centre National de la Cinématographie in association with sofica Cofinova 3 with the support of la Procirep and Angoa-Agicoa International Sales Les Films du Losange Distribution Les Films du Losange

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AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC GUIRADO

► How did you take an interest in traveling grocers?

A few years ago, I made a series of filmed portraits of traveling tradesmen in southern and central France, such as bakers, photographers and bargemen, for a regional TV network. I spent all my time on the road with them and my camera. I was a great fan of road movies and a radio program called *Là-bas si j'y suis* by Daniel Mermet, who travels round meeting people, telling their stories and making their daily lives seem so exceptional. Even so, it was only after my first feature, *Quand tu descendras du ciel*, that I started shooting documentary portraits of traveling grocers. I felt the need to get back to a more intimate, personal way of shooting and to “do battle” with the frame and lighting in a realistic context. For about 18 months, I filmed traveling grocers in Corsica, the Pyrenees and the Alps.

When did you get the idea for *The Grocer's Son*?

The first draft of the screenplay dates back to 2000. At the time, the film was called *Antoine and his clouds*, and was meant to be my first feature. For various reasons, I put it to one side, promising myself to return to it one day. When I shot those portraits of traveling grocers, in the back of my mind it was to help write the film and to confront what I had imagined with the reality.

The film shows a family that has fallen apart...

What links the family members is this shadowy area of things left unsaid and misunderstandings. The characters rarely talk to each other and when they do, they lie or twist reality. Even so, deep down, I think they're a pretty ordinary family, with nothing very remarkable about them. They do their best to lead simple lives, which is why Antoine saw that he had no future there and ran away.

Besides Claire, the characters often find it hard to express their feelings...

Sure, they're reserved, discreet, timid or shy people who don't make any particular effort to improve their lot. They're indecisive, which can make them alternately irritating and endearing. They remind me of certain characters in Wim Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* or *Paris, Texas*, who say little but keep moving forward.

The film shows the countryside empty of all but its elderly inhabitants...

That's a reflection of my own life and documentary experience in the south of France. The villagers you see in the film cling onto their way of life as long as possible for reasons of personal preference and pride. Traveling storekeepers offer them some kind of autonomy. Some elderly people insist on walking to the grocer's van every day to stay physically fit and keep in contact with the world. I was deeply touched by their isolation. A mailman told me that in some very remote places, people subscribe to the local newspaper simply because it means they're sure to see him every day, and so will have contact and maybe a chat with at least one person every day. It's the same for traveling grocers.

The relationship between Antoine and Lucienne, played by Liliane Rovère, is very strong...

At the start of the film, Antoine isn't particularly outgoing, when in fact he has a lot to learn from the people he meets. Lucienne is the only one to remind him of a few home truths and call him a little idiot! She puts him in his place and opens his eyes to the world around him. In his own way, the character played by Paul Crauchet, Old Man Clément, also contributes to Antoine's development. Paul Crauchet and Liliane Rovère both have extremely motivational personalities and they grasped exactly what I expected of their characters.

From the start, you give the film an upbeat tempo...

The rhythm was already in the screenplay, I just hammered the nail home on the shoot. I wanted Antoine to be shaken up, caught up in a movement that challenged his way of thinking and prejudices, and swept him away in spite of himself. Despite his strong initial resistance



(at the beginning, he's focused solely on his own desires), Antoine eventually opens up to others. He learns to listen to them, observe them and be attentive to them. For him, it's a whole revolution for him, and like all revolutions, it can't take place quietly and calmly. With the countryside as the backdrop, that was my principal concern every day on set.

That countryside, which you film lovingly...

Of course, I grew up in the country and I still feel a very strong bond. When I was young, I started taking nature photos, trying to capture the light, shapes and the full range of matter and color of a forest, for example. I'm still sensitive to that beauty but also wary of it. In editing, I cut out the moments that were just “too beautiful” because they did nothing for the story and distracted us from the real subject.

Where did you get the idea for them to paint the van?

From the beginning, I wanted Claire, who's very impish, to bring a whimsical dimension to Antoine's more taciturn character. To an extent, I could picture her slapping a red nose and clown's make-up on him to get him to smile. When she starts painting the van, she injects some life into this dormant village and shakes up people's habits. She's a breath of fresh air blowing through. There's something almost blasphemous about the way she paints the father's sacrosanct van.

Have your documentaries given you fresh insight for the characters of your films?

In the big city, people tend to have a false or clichéd view of the countryside. I see the country as a place of contrast and paradoxes, which I have always been keen and curious to film. My documentaries were the perfect chance to share people's daily lives. In a documentary, I like to find people's humanity - tiny heroes lost in the landscape - and I try to bring out that which is exceptional in each of them, while still doing my job thoroughly and with discernment. The portrait of an old shepherd in the Jura mountains, which I shot 10 years ago, still inspires me today when I approach the construction of my characters. ■

