



VINCENT LINDON
SANDRINE KIBERLAIN
AURE ATIKA

MADemoisELLE CHAMBON

A FILM BY STÉPHANE BRIZÉ

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REZO FILMS



TS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

VINCENT LINDON
SANDRINE KIBERLAIN
AURE ATIKA

MADemoiselle CHAMBON

A FILM BY STÉPHANE BRIZÉ

WITH JEAN-MARC THIBAUT AND ARTHUR LE HOUÉROU
SCREENPLAY STÉPHANE BRIZÉ AND FLORENCE VIGNON

From the novel by ÉRIC HOLDER, published at the Éditions Flammarion.

WORLD SALES



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Running Time: 1h41 - Visa: 117 102 - 2.35 (scope) - SR DTS



Jean leads a pretty ordinary life: he spends his days happily between his construction sites and his house, with his loving wife and son. He feels comfortable in his routine. One day, as he's picking up Kevin from school, he stumbles upon Mademoiselle Chambon, his son's teacher. She's discreet, elegant, mesmerizing, unlike any woman he has ever met before.

This chance encounter will be a turning point in his well-organized life. An opportunity to change or a folly to regret?

SYNOPSIS

INTERVIEW WITH STÉPHANE BRIZÉ

How did this story come to you?

Florence Vignon, my co-writer, made me discover Eric Holder's book about ten years ago. I had read it, loved it but I would've been incapable of adapting it at the time. Not enough experience as a director and in my personal life to understand perfectly what the main character was going through. Life took care of putting me to the right level.

It's a very simple story. Why did you need this book to write this script?

A bricklayer, married to a woman he loves falls in love with his son's teacher. It is indeed a simple story. It's not the plot that snatched me but more the way Eric Holder translated the emotions of these modest people. With his novelist tools, he talked about these people with fragility and an emotion that seemed to tell me: "Here's what you have to film, this is what you need to face". With Florence Vignon, we started to work on adapting the book. And in the end, we almost certainly haven't adapted it. I sent the script to Eric Holder when we finished our work. In return, he wrote us a very beautiful letter in which he said "it's less an adaptation than an extension, an enrichment, a revealing of an emotion that the novel tried to pass on."





Didn't you want to work with the author?

No. To me, the novel was like an inspiration. Like a perfume or an image that triggers an emotion. Holder's novel was actually ideal to "betray" because it does not have a very complicated plot. It's about the internal voices of characters in the heart of an extremely simple story. So with Florence Vignon, not only did we develop the story with Jean's point of view - whereas the novel puts the teacher much more in the center of the story - we reinvented at least the last third of the story.

So the movie doesn't end like the book?

Yes it does, because the characters are experiencing the same emotions as in the novel, but no because this ending isn't built in the same way at all. I think one must sometime betray a book to transform from a literature emotion to a cinematographic emotion in the most accurate way. Our tools of narration are so different that a literal adaption is often a mistake. Well, it was the case for this novel. Let's not make any generalities.

You often state that your characters are very psycho-analysed. Is this still the case?

Yes indeed. It's very important to me to know how many brothers or sisters they have, what place they occupy in the sib ship, what is their relationship towards their parents, etc. . . Even if all of this stays completely implicit in the film. These are point of reference for Florence and me to understand where they are standing in the beginning of the story and why they are going to act one way or another. Everything must be perfectly coherent.

Jean, like the main characters in your other films, has a sudden rush of awareness. Do you think he missed his life?

Every time a story is built in my mind, it builds itself around awareness and a choice to make. But the case of MADEMOISELLE CHAMBON is a little different from my last films: where an obvious sadness came out from the characters from my previous films, here Jean, in the beginning, is not unhappy at all. Jean, like all of us, is the result of an education, an environment, with its own rules and principles. He leads a simple life but that doesn't seem to weigh on him. There is of course the weigh of the day-to-day routine - how can one escape it? - but he isn't experiencing a crushing boredom. There is just a lot about himself that he doesn't know about and that a lucky encounter will reveal, while he witnesses how all of his certainties flicker.

To me, filming Jean's everyday life was very difficult compared to my other films because, for the first time, I had to film happy people. At least, people with no tension or real embarrassment in the beginning of the movie. I'm not afraid of filming a conflict because I can master its mechanic and there lies something very "spectacular". But filming something harmonious between two people, without boring the audience and falling into sopiness, this worried me a lot. To achieve this, I just had to stop being afraid of things that go too well.

Why did you choose to shoot in Scope?

We first took some tests with a smaller format. But all along the tests of films, I felt frustrated, I constantly wanted to push back the borders of the frame, I felt all cramped in a smaller format. So at one point I wanted to try the scope format. And as soon as I saw the first images, I felt comfortable, the characters found naturally their own space in the frame. This gave some extent to the film, an "epic" dimension to a very simple story.

Do you feel like you took some risks?

Capturing extremely fragile emotions can be made only by taking risks: I like knowing in which direction me and the actors are going towards but not exactly how. There is a script but certainly not learned by heart, no rehearsal, we only know the stakes of the scene and we roll. To me, the moments of truth can only appear in those moments of uncertainties. And eventually, I realise that the less I try to fix things upstream, the more the result looks like the ideal sensation that I had in mind before shooting. For even more than in my other films, there are many scenes where the stakes don't lie in what the characters explicitly say, but between the lines. I just had to trust the power of the situation without being afraid of the first degree of the dialogue that can sometimes appear without any apparent stake.

What did you work on regarding the lighting and the colours?

This time, a lot more than in my previous films, I was very careful with the colour of the costumes and the sets. Not that I didn't care before but my director of photography, Antoine Héberlé, offered me, for this film, a space of dialogue that enabled me to go much further than usual. In the end, the magnificent work he operated on the image helps this realist film to be more beautiful than real life, while respecting the truths of the places and the costumes.





Film after film, a way to tell stories without transitional scenes stands out, the splits are quite radical between the sequences.

I have to proceed like this. Because I like taking so much time inside each sequence, I have to give a lift to the tail so I don't bore the audience. The transitional sequences that exist in the script and that are shot disappear quickly during the editing so that only the essential remains.

Why Vincent Lindon?

Because he moves me profoundly. Vincent has this incredible quality, it's that everything he shows us about him talks about us: our strengths, our weaknesses, our fears and certainties, in short, our humanity. This man is made of power and weakness and he shows it without hiding anything. This makes him extremely powerful and moving on the screen. Furthermore, Vincent has this very rare way of looking credible both as a boss and as a construction worker. I put a trowel in his hands and he becomes a bricklayer. And because he is very skilful, it didn't take him three months of training course to learn how to build a brick wall. To me, it was important that this worker was credible instantly, that his movements were real, that I could film him a long time while working. When I offered him the part, I didn't know how much our relationship would be this powerful on the set.

What do you mean by that?

I mean that in a very troubling way, I understand everything that he feels and I believe he feels the same way about me. As a result, we would fight hard to find the correctness of a scene but never did we oppose ourselves because I believe our inner truths to be very similar.

By entrusting Sandrine Kiberlain with the part of the teacher, weren't you afraid of being charged with manipulation?

I have no doubt some people will see in my choice what you call manipulation. However I don't see where the manipulation is in taking a separated couple to play a couple in love. I would mostly call it pure recklessness. Reality is much simpler than that. As soon as I knew Vincent was going to be in the film, I tried to imagine the actresses, first of all interesting for the part, and second of all those with which Vincent would form a powerful couple. And I quickly thought of Sandrine. She's one of the most talented French actresses and she has a mystery that makes her absolutely overwhelming. I needed that mystery for the character. Of course, I talked about this with Vincent before contacting Sandrine. And he replied: "I'm not denying that it will be confusing to play this story with Sandrine, but if you think that she is the right person, I can't get in the way. She's an exceptional actress and I can't imagine that she would not get the part because of me." So I had the script sent to her, and lucky me, she accepted. They probably talked about it together but it concerns only them.

And there's Aure Atika who plays Anne-Marie, Jean's wife, a factory worker. A very surprising part for this actress.

Yes, probably because as soon as you are marked for a certain role, it's almost impossible to do anything else. And because Aure is a very beautiful woman, people made her play many different parts that only took that into account. It's probably understandable but even if I'm not completely blind, I took the liberty to see something else in her. A blend of strength, kindness and modesty. Everything that, to me, embodies Anne-Marie's character.

Around these central characters there's Jean-Marc Thibault that plays Jean's father.

Of course I needed an actor of a certain age that would have both a visible roughness and a good heart. To me, that was Jean-Marc Thibault. I must admit it was very moving for me to work with him because I remember his duo with Roger Pierre that I often used to watch when I was a child on Saturday nights in Maritie and Gilbert Carpentier's programs.

You're famous for being a very good director of actors. How do you work with them?

Actors, you try to choose them well, you show them you love them and 80% of the work is done. Then you only need to put the camera in the right place, and be a little careful with what is being said. And if moreover the actors don't know their lines, it helps me a lot. But if sometimes a director can help his actors to be even better, you shouldn't forget that great actors also help their director to be good.

However, there's something more in this film than what we're used to seeing.

What's interesting is to go a little elsewhere, to do something different than what we already saw. Not make different to make different. But make different because I look at things and at people with my own two eyes. A look that is neither more nor less accurate than the others, it's simply full of holes and bumps from my story. And in this little space of freedom, almost absolute, that I'm lucky to live between the beginning and the end of a take, I'm looking to capture something very invisible, something that hides between the words, inside the silences and hesitations. Something that has to do with little moments of truth. So I try to erase everything that links to the play, the know-how, and I ask the actors to talk and listen to each other. It might be this that in the end gives the impression that they are not exactly like how we're used to seeing them.

What is the film trying to say?

I don't mean to send messages, but to tell stories to move the audience. Then people can make this story concord with their own and maybe ask themselves at least one question. But they'll choose which one. Me, I look, I'm an observer and I transcribe. Jean is a man that isn't very comfortable with words and expressing his feelings. So it's interesting and moving to look at how he's going to react facing the emotion that overwhelm him and a dilemma that faces him. Leave or stay, here's the choice that he is going to have to make, with all the good reasons that push a human being to act one way or another. Of course I'm not here to judge but to observe in the most accurate way the torments that breed an exceptional situation. And this one is of course exceptional for Jean.

All in all, Jean falls in love with the violin or the woman that plays it?

Of course he falls in love with Mademoiselle Chambon. But the violin plays an important role because the moment where Jean is really troubled by this woman is when he listens to her playing the violin. This violin breaks barriers and opens Jean to a sensibility he didn't know he had. And from that moment on, it's as if he dove in the big pool without knowing how to swim.

Did Sandrine Kiberlain learn how to play the violin?

It was crucial for the role. And Sandrine accomplished an incredible work. Because there's no harder instrument to learn than the violin. Of course, she plays in playback but her movement had to be precise and perfectly in sync - right hand and left hand - so that we would believe that the music really comes out from her instrument. Five months of daily work with H el ene Roblin, violin player at the Op era de Paris, helped by C ecile Moreau, were required to get this result. A meticulous work, where the piece of music is decomposed in little segments, repeated tirelessly, before being put together and repeated again indefinitely.

How did you choose the music?

Even though the music plays a central part in the music, there's isn't that much at the end. There are two pieces that Sandrine plays and another that she listens to with Jean. In the novel, Mademoiselle Chambon plays Bartok. I instantly forgot that idea because I wanted to hear something melodic. I asked a musical counsellor (Ange Ghinozzi) for help and explained to him I was looking for pieces full of melancholy, not virtuoso nor sweet. I told him that to me, the notes that came out from V eronique Chambon's violin were like words that she could address to Jean. It's her way to tell things modestly. I also knew that the first piece she would play would become the theme of the film and would be covered again with different orchestrations. Ange made me listen to dozens of other things and I eventually chose, for the scene where she plays in her apartment,

a piece by Franz von Vecsey (aka Ferenc von Vecsey), a Hungarian composer from the beginning of the century. For the birthday scene, Edward Elgar, an English composer from the 19th - 20th century. These two pieces are full of melancholy and grace and the interpretation by Ayako Tanaka enables us to stay on the string of emotion without falling into sopiness. In fact, she plays the violin like an actress. That is, without any sentimentalism.

And yet it's a sentimental film.

Infinitely sentimental. But as much as I love feelings, I hate sentimentalism. One of the major difficulties lied there. Take into account the feeling of love without every falling into sentimentalism. I had to not be afraid of the emotion without ever getting it by force. Let it come in its own pace, without rushing anything.

Did you have any references?

When you tell the story between two people that missed each other, it's difficult not to think about THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY by Clint Eastwood. The scene where Meryl Streep holds the handle of the car door when she has to decide whether she leaves or stay is completely heartbreaking. It was my tear-drop reference.

You created a real faithful relationship with your producers. Did there interventions play a big part throughout the making of the film?

There are absolutely necessary. I need this trust and work relationship where nothing is left aside. I need real producers by my side, people that have a point of view. Miléna Poylo and Gilles Sacuto are part of these people. From the first lines of the script to the final mix, they support me by questioning and trusting me and sometimes by reassuring me. We've been working together for twelve years, and what moves me intimately in our relationship, is that I can see us evolving and improving from film to film. We grow together, side by side. And it's one of the beautiful stories of my life.



STÉPHANE BRIZÉ

FILMOGRAPHY

Feature films

- 2009 MADEMOISELLE CHAMBON
2007 ENTRE ADULTES
2005 JE NE SUIS PAS LÀ POUR ÊTRE AIMÉ
Official Competition - San Sebastian 2005
César 2006 Nominee:
Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor
European Film Awards 2006 Nominee: Best Actor
1999 LE BLEU DES VILLES
Directors' Fortnight - Cannes 1999
Michel d'Ornano Prize - Best Screenplay - Deauville 1999

Short films

- 2005 UNE VIE DE RÊVES
1996 L'ŒIL QUI TRAÎNE
Great prize - Vendôme 1996
Great prize and Public Prize - Rennes 1997
Great prize - Mamers 1997
Great prize - Alès 1997
Prize for Best Actor - Saint-Denis 1997
1993 BLEU DOMMAGE
Great prize - Cognac 1994

Documentary film

- 2004 LE BEL INSTANT



CAST

Jean
Véronique Chambon
Anne Marie
The father
Jérémy
Workmate Jean 1
Workmate Jean 2
Funeral director's
School principal

Vincent Lindon
Sandrine Kiberlain
Aure Atika
Jean-Marc Thibault
Arthur Le Houérou
Bruno Lochet
Abdallah Moundy
Anne Houdy
Michèle Goddet



CREW

A film by
Screenplay
From the novel by

Stéphane Brizé
Stéphane Brizé and Florence Vignon
Eric Holder, published at the Éditions Flammarion

Cinematography
Sound
Editing
Music
Violin
1st assistant director
Casting
Continuity girl
Set decorator
Costume designer
Line producer
Set manager

Antoine Héberlé AFC
Frédéric de Ravignan, Hervé Guyader, Thierry Delor
Anne Klotz
Ange Ghinozzi
Ayako Tanaka
Emile Louis
Brigitte Moidon ARDA
Nicole Marie
Valérie Saradjian
Ann Dunsford
Fabrice Chevrollier
Laurent Harjani

A production
In coproduction with

TS Productions - Miléna Poylo & Gilles Sacuto
F comme Film - Jean-Louis Livi
and Arte France Cinéma

With the participation of

Canal+, TPS Star
and the Centre National de la Cinématographie

In association with

Rezo Films
and the Sofica Soficinéma 4

With the support of

La Région Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur
in association with the CNC
La Procirep and Angoa-Agicoa
and the MEDIA programme of the European Union
(development)

International sales

Rezo