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# Morasseyx

a film by damien oboyl

# MORASSEIX

A DAMIEN ODOUL FILM

**MORASSEIX**, a village hidden away in the remote depths of the French countryside, presents a gallery of astonishing portraits, characters by turn violent, absurd, occasionally touching in their innocence. "All of them cracked", according to Lili, the hairdresser's daughter, who dreams of leaving for America.

César, however, has no desire to leave. He's greedy for life, a jovial fellow. He loves the locals. Loves them so much that he happily pushes them around, provoking them for the sake of it. To him, despite their individual quirks, they all lack a sense of insolence. Particularly his friend Twelve, named for the calibre of his shotgun. Twelve has a real fascination for César.

Unforgettable boozing sessions, punch ups at the clay pigeon shoots, woodcock hunts where half-confidences are uttered with a clumsy reticence, free-for-all rugby matches and bullfights improvised at dawn with a herd of cows. César has fun with it all, without a care, irresponsible. Maybe a little too much.

Lili is in love with him. He flirts with her happily enough but, when he realises that Twelve has fallen for the young woman's charms, intentionally provokes Lili to despair, taking advantage of her distress in order to push her into the arms of his friend. Lili and Twelve end up getting married. César's made them happy. He was playing. But he possesses neither Twelve's naivety, or Lili's purity. He's not greatly blessed with happiness. He grows ever more desperate, ever more dangerous...

Rich with grotesque comedy and brutal lyricism, alive with a uniquely raw and savage power, Damien Odoul's long-lost feature film debut - previously unseen in this theatrical cut - bears witness to the first flowering of one of the true visionaries of contemporary French cinema.

## **CAST**

**Damien ODOUL** AS CÉSAR  
**Audrey BELLESSERT** AS LILI  
**Pascal PAGNAT** AS TWELVE  
**Valérie ALLAIN** AS THE TEACHER  
**Jean FUENTES** AS JUAN  
**Dora DOLL** AS THE MOTHER

## **CREW**

DIRECTOR **Damien ODOUL**  
SCREENPLAY **Damien ODOUL / Antoine LACOMBLEZ**  
FROM AN ORIGINAL STORY BY **Damien ODOUL**  
DP **Pierre DAVID**  
SOUND **Pascal ARMAND**  
SET DESIGNER **Alain FRENTZEL**  
EDITOR **Marie-France POULIZAC**  
MIX **Gérard LAMPS**  
PRODUCED BY **D.O. FILMS**  
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH **LA SEPT / ARTE**

## **DAMIEN ODOUL BIOGRAPHY**

Born March 15th, 1968, at 10.33pm, beneath the statue of the Virgin and Child in Le Puy, land of the fabled Beast of Gévaudan...  
Entirely self-taught.  
Acted in the theatre from the age of fifteen.  
At twenty, cinematography took over.  
Moved 'home' thirty-six times.  
No qualifications, except for the 100 metres breast-stroke, aged four-and-a-half.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

'**MORASSEIX**' doesn't exist.

I thought it was funny to invent a name like that, which could easily fit that of a village... in another world.

I wanted to present a tragedy, but I couldn't do it. At every turn, I found myself in situations that made me laugh. Knocking around with characters like those I was with at the time gives you a real sense of the burlesque. And then there's my own natural inclination, my love of **Stan Laurel, Buster Keaton** and **Harpo Marx**. The absurd, the quirky, that's what makes me laugh. And because of this tragi-burlesque quiriness, '**MORASSEIX**' is a film that fights constantly against the drama it institutes. Certainly there's despair, but it's a muddled despair, not anti-life, not resigned... rather a despair that stimulates - furious, brimming with insolence and potential, against all the odds.

I tried to show people making a living from petty thievery and growing bored in the country, lost in the middle of nowhere. The community builds itself exactly around this emptiness. The characters meet together, they try to connect, but it doesn't really come off.

César, the protagonist, exists to sow disorder. His position is that of the anarchist. He rejects the rules of the 'clan', possesses no official papers, cocks a snook at the law. He alone doesn't work; he derails everything. The affection he feels for others turns to disgust in an instant. His self-destructive character leaves him torn, volatile. He's always in transit, always on the verge of leaving 'for somewhere new, somewhere else'. This straying of his, at the heart of the film, is linked to the fact that he doesn't want to belong to the world in which he lives but, paradoxically, has no idea where to go. If he manages to scrape a bit of money together, he blows it straight away. For him, death is the only plan. All the same, he's not suicidal in any clinical sense. On the contrary, he couldn't care less. A real nonchalance befitting this character who likes snakes and women.

When I was young, I felt very close to those 'shooting stars', those anarchic figures consumed by flames. I read **Artaud, Rimbaud** and **Villon**... I was fascinated that this last was a member of the criminal Brotherhood of the Coquille. For me, his poetry remains some of the very finest.

In the film, the women appear as individuals whereas the men are shown as a pack. This is in line with everything I detest about men: strong in a gang, cowardly and weak individually. It's why César doesn't join the group. He drags the others along with him, then, when he no longer needs them, returns to his solitude.

At times, some of the characters speak in patois, a dialect that was still in use ten years ago. With hindsight, I realise that the film really has its own language. In those days, we spoke more through metaphor, expressions were richer with images.

'**MORASSEIX**' is a look at a world which is in the process of disappearing. Today, there are virtually none of the types seen in the film left. The new generation is much slicker. Nowadays we say 'agricultural worker', not 'peasant'.

It's the film of a young man. I was trying things out, making sketches. In '**Le Souffle**' or '**Errance**', the black and white imagery seem to me to have real meaning. Here, it's more old fashioned... maybe that's what gives the film its charm today. I'd like the audience to be able to watch it with a child's vision. This first film possesses a sort of 'illegitimacy' I find moving. I was only 23 when I made it. It's a film from which I emerged broken down, split open. I played César, the protagonist. It was very complicated, being simultaneously behind and in front of the camera. It's taken me more than a decade to be able to watch it again.

- Damien Odoul, July 2004

## **DAMIEN ODOUL FILMOGRAPHY**

### **FEATURE FILMS**

#### **EN ATTENDANT LE DELUGE**

aka **AFTER WE'RE GONE (2004)**

35MM, COLOUR, 80MIN

PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS

WITH PIERRE RICHARD, ANNA MOUGLALIS AND DAMIEN ODOUL

**FESTIVAL:** CANNES - DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT, 2004

TO BE RELEASED IN FRANCE JANUARY 19, 2005

#### **"THE TRILOGY OF THE DOUBLE"**

#### **ERRANCE (2002)**

35MM, COLOUR, 95MIN

PRODUCED BY MORGANE PRODUCTIONS, D.O FILMS AND EXCEPTION

WITH BENOÎT MAGIMEL, LAETITIA CASTA AND YANN GOVEN

THEATRICAL RELEASE IN FRANCE BY MARS FILMS, OCTOBER 8, 2003

**FESTIVALS:** TORONTO, STOCKHOLM, 2003 - DUBLIN, 2004

RELEASED ON DVD BY WILD SIDE VIDEO

#### **LE SOUFFLE (2000)**

35MM, BLACK & WHITE, 77MIN

PRODUCED BY MORGANE PRODUCTIONS

GRAND JURY PRIZE AND FIPRESCI PRIZE, VENICE, 2001

BEST DIRECTOR PRIZE, BRATISLAVA, 2001

**FESTIVALS:** TORONTO, MONTREAL, NEW YORK, THESSALONIKI, MOSCOW, HONG KONG, SOUTH KOREA, 2001

VIENNA, SARAGOSSA, BRASILIA, STOCKHOLM, MIDNIGHT SUN FILM FESTIVAL, 2002

THEATRICAL RELEASE IN FRANCE AND DVD BY MK2 DISTRIBUTION, NOVEMBER 7, 2001

MICHEL SIMON PRIZE (BEST ACTOR), 2002

BOUGHT BY CANAL+, 2002

#### **MORASSEIX (1992)**

35MM, COLOUR, 91MIN

WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH ANTOINE LACOMBLEZ

PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH LA SEPT/ARTE

**FESTIVAL:** VENICE 2004 - VENICE DAYS

THEATRICAL RELEASE IN FRANCE BY THEATRE DU TEMPLE, OCTOBER 13, 2004

## **SHORTS**

### **LES BARBOTS (1995/2003)**

35MM, COLOUR, 28MIN  
PRODUCED BY SKYLINE PRODUCTIONS AND D.O FILMS  
BOUGHT BY ARTE, 2002  
**FESTIVAL:** AUCH, 2003  
ARTE SHORT CIRCUIT PROGRAMME

### **RÉMINISCENCES (2002)**

SUPER 8/35MM, COLOUR, 5MIN  
PRODUCED BY MORGANE PRODUCTIONS AND D.O FILMS  
**FESTIVAL:** PARIS TOUT COURT, 2003

### **LE JOUG (2002)**

DV/35MM, BLACK & WHITE, 5MIN  
PRODUCED BY AGORA FILMS  
**FESTIVALS:** CANNES, LE HAVRE, GRENOBLE, BORDEAUX, AIX-EN-PROVENCE (OUT OF COMPETITION), 2002  
BOUGHT BY FRANCE 5, 2002

### **SANS MONDE (2000)**

35MM, BLACK & WHITE, 3MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS  
DIPTYQUE, BONUS DVD

### **MAGIK (2000)**

35MM, COLOUR, 4MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS  
DIPTYQUE, BONUS DVD

### **ELEGEIA (CHANT DE DEUIL) (1995)**

35MM, COLOUR, 6MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS  
UNRELEASED

### **TOB (TÊTE D'OEUF BOUILLI) (1991)**

YOUTH OF MORASSEIX  
35MM, BLACK & WHITE/COLOUR, 13MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS

### **A L'OUEST DE L'ORIENT (1990)**

35MM, COLOUR, 17MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS  
**FESTIVALS:** 'PERSPECTIVES' CANNES, BRATISLAVA, NAMUR, 'NUIT DES JEUNES CRÉATEURS'; 1990  
SPECIAL JURY PRIZE, CLERMONT-FERRAND, 1991  
PRIX DE QUALITÉ CNC, 1992  
BOUGHT BY CANAL+, 1996

### **LA DOUCE (1988)**

35MM, BLACK & WHITE, 13MIN  
PRODUCED BY D.O FILMS  
RELEASED THEATRICALY WITH P. GRANDPERRET'S 'MONA ET MOI'  
**FESTIVALS:** ORLEANS, BASTIA, 1990

## **N.B.**

'**MORASSEIX**', selected in Venice 2004 (in a previously unseen version), will open at the Cinéma Action Christine in Paris on October 13, 2004, following a premiere on October 12, 2004, at the Cinémathèque Française (Palais de Chaillot).

Two major retrospectives of Damien Odoul's short and feature work will take place in 2004: at the Edinburgh Film Festival (August 23-26) and the Tübingen Festival (October 23-24).

<http://www.damienodoul.com>

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Pictures also available at <http://www.damienodoul.com>