

NORD-OUEST PRESENTS



VINCENT
LINDON

SANDRINE
KIBERLAIN

ANTHONY
BAJON

ANOTHER WORLD

A FILM BY
STEPHANE BRIZÉ

France – 1h37 – Scope – Dolby 5.1

Photo and press kit can be downloaded from
<https://www.wildbunch.biz/movie/another-world/>

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INTERVIEW, WITH STÉPHANE BRIZÉ



What made you want to tell the story of this executive?

The film depicts an executive who is losing the meaning of life as his marriage is disintegrating, and who struggles increasingly to find any coherence in a system he has been serving for years. A system in which it has become extremely complicated for him to impose the orders he receives from above. Many executives told my co-writer Olivier Gorce and me about their personal and professional lives that are gradually emptied of any sense because they are no longer asked to think but simply to execute. We wanted to give an account of the consequences of the work of those who are considered the first lieutenants of their companies but who in fact are simply individuals caught between a rock and a hard place.

The film was of course conceived before the Coronavirus crisis. But it resonates particularly strongly today in showing an essentially incoherent system running out of steam.

No one could have imagined the extraordinary health crisis we are living through. But if it can be seen as an almost unprecedented source of chaos, it can also be viewed as an opportunity to question ourselves. To turn constraint to advantage so as not only to be the losers of history. It's like when our bodies or our psyches collapse and force the machine to stop, indicating that we have forgotten to question something essential yet intangible, a blind spot in our lives. It's a metaphor of

our world disorder on the scale of one individual: the profound upheavals that the protagonist is going through force him to question his actions, his responsibilities and his place within the company and his family.

Even though we recognize the realistic elements of your previous films, we immediately notice a clean break in your mise en scene, notably with *The Measure of a Man* and *At War*.

I'd add *A Woman's Life* to your list. Because the mise en scene of these three films is an idea of capturing reality as if a deal had been made with the main characters that they had accepted the presence of a camera in their daily lives. Here I wanted to re-introduce a much stronger element of fiction, while continuing to work with a cast of non-professionals opposite three professional actors – Vincent Lindon, Sandrine Kiberlain and Anthony Bajon. The camera is no longer placed somewhere that would translate as “I put myself wherever I can”, it is now placed where it makes a much more subjective account of the situation, whether personal or professional. The multiple vantage points in certain scenes reflect the character's feeling of encirclement, of confinement. Problems come from all sides, he feels no respite, like a man at sea on a boat that's leaking everywhere, trying to stop water from gushing in from all the cracks.

So you used multiple cameras for certain sequences?

Three at most, even if it's to suggest that there could be many more. I don't impose any set position on the camera operators, in order that they should be free to re-examine their frame constantly to transmit the electricity, the tension of certain situations. Scenes take a long time to shoot – much longer than what you see in the end – it's an extremely physical moment for everyone. For the image, the sound and the

actors. I multiply angles, jump sightlines, I'm comfortable with jump cuts, a device that must transcribe the character's sense of oppression and suffocation, his feeling that the noose is tightening around him.

How did you build the story?

Of course I don't only see the corporate world or the family as places of neurosis, tensions and violence. We are telling stories of trains arriving late, and a film, a book or a play can help open a window on zones of dysfunction. It's a question of observing the reasons for failure.

With this film, I wanted to build a sort of reverse angle of the previous one, *At War*, by constantly combining private and work sphere, the personal and the professional. All the executives Olivier Gorce and I met have now been excluded from their duties, one way or another, even though they carried out the orders of the system for many years without question. They worked in the engineering or metal industries, banking, care, advertising, insurance or cosmetics. All were gifted with enormous intellectual or management capabilities. All worked for companies owned by international corporations and listed on the stock exchange. These executives talked to us about their unease, their difficulty managing the feeling of having simply become the driving belt of a ferocious system rife with contradictory injunctions. They spoke of their anxiety at not being up to the task expected of them. They are not born executioners

but had the feeling that's what they were gradually becoming, while simultaneously losing the meaning of their personal and professional lives. Some suffered complete burn-out, others felt from grace with their bosses and were pushed aside, and some left before collapsing. All of them talked about the unavoidable impact on their families. Philippe Lemesle is one of them, a well-meaning guy who can feel the water rising up to his mouth and finally allows himself to question what of his personal life deserves to be sacrificed for his work.

And with this story, are we inside the tragically banal life of one of these executives?

Philippe Lemesle, the protagonist, occupies the place of the winner in our modern civilisation, the place of meritocracy, the arena we traditionally call "a great success". How can you say you suffer when you're a part of the social elite? To complain would be both indecent in the eyes of those 'lower down' and also a sign of weakness, which is unacceptable in the eyes of his peers, and in his own eyes. With this place in the world, you cannot, you must not be fragile. It's forbidden, on pain of demotion and replacement by someone younger and more dynamic, or someone who isn't going to argue about what he is told to do. A place of enormous loneliness where you perhaps no longer have a choice. The question of personal freedom is also being addressed.

The film tells the story of a company just before layoffs. In *War* was about the

announcement of redundancy schemes, and *The Measure of a Man* portrayed the daily life of one of these side-lined employees. We have a trilogy that unfolds over three key periods that bear witness to the mechanisms of the destruction of jobs and its human cost.

Each film was built on the previous one. A subject leading to encounters, encounters leading to new thoughts, these thoughts leading to a new subject. The chronology of the social drama was then built backwards. First the long-term unemployed and lastly the story of those who organise this unemployment, passing through the unequal struggle of the employees against the company. It was a question, on a human scale, of relating the causes and consequences of this huge grinding machine. From the point of view of the one who hits and the one who is being hit. And for all that, if a thread of thought has made it possible to build and link these three films, they are not obliged to resemble each. *Another World* draws more deeply on fiction and intimacy with the characters than the earlier two. But in the end, the observation that is made allows us to escape the reductive dialectics of nasty executives versus nice workers to highlight a systemic problem that goes way beyond the position of any individual.

How does Philippe Lemesle, the character played by Vincent Lindon, manage to submit to a system whose contradictions he fully understands?

He doesn't understand the contradictions of the system right away. In any case he is unable to articulate them to himself. He is subjected





to a situation in one sphere of his life – work – that has consequences on another sphere – his family. At the beginning of the film, it is absolutely impossible for him to hear and admit to himself that the obligation of downsizing the Elstonn Group imposed on him will be very complicated – if not impossible – to implement. At first, he is only able to do what he is asked to do. Not from an ideological position, not out of a taste for brutality, but because he has integrated the corporate world's big concept that the problem is not the system itself, but the difficulty or impossibility for its members to adapt to it. Only his manufacturing facility – as well as the majority of those in France, and throughout Europe – are now at breaking point. To do more with less is becoming impossible. Employees – executives and workers alike – have reached their limits. Philippe must accept that he is not the problem before he can confront the hierarchy. He must undertake a Copernican revolution if he doesn't want to lose everything: his family, his mental and physical health.

Is this “other world” suggested by the title the world the protagonist is losing or the world into which he is falling?

Both. The character is moving inexorably away from a world where

his place and actions made sense, and towards a world in which the ethics and morality that shape him at a profound level are disappearing. This “other world”, it's the question of choice faced by Vincent Lindon's character, and simultaneously by Sandrine Kiberlain's. It's the question of what we are willing to do personally and professionally to be in a place that seems to us intrinsically the right one. After more than a year of global pandemic, the title resonates even more and almost ironically in view of this “new world” so widely talked about and doubtless hoped for, a few months ago... this ‘new world’ which will have to be built from the reassessment imposed by the sudden crisis.

The character's personal life plays a major role, much more than in your previous films.

I'm not an academic. What interests me are women and men, and the consequences of their professional choices on their personal lives. In this film individuals – executives – must make decisions that inevitably cause people to suffer. They are asked to give up some of their humanity, bit by bit. And you can't pull on that thread with impunity without the risk of it breaking. All this is not done without worry, anxiety, agonising hesitation. That's what these executives bring home and, little by



little, what was for years balanced becomes unbalanced and all of a sudden, the whole thing collapses.

One of the consequences for Philippe Lemesle is his divorce. But even if Anne, his wife leaves him, she continues to love him.

Yes, because if she leaves the man with whom she has lived for over 25 years, it's not because there is no longer any love between them, but because she has to save her skin. She realises that her daily life has lost all coherence, so she takes the risk and leaves. The idea of courage in the professional sphere comes up several times in the film. But the real courage is showed by Anne. Because she leaves, even though she is frightened for her future. She leaves because their relationship has become a place of renunciation and pain. She, who sacrificed some of her professional ambition for her husband to succeed in his career, feels duped. The tacit agreement she had with Philippe, the trade-off, no longer makes sense, and she dares to give up a comfortable lifestyle most would never consider questioning. And the astonishingly subtle way in which Sandrine Kiberlain reveals Anne's inner contradictions is just breathtaking... devastating.

The film marks a reunion between Vincent Lindon and Sandrine Kiberlain with whom you made Mademoiselle Chambon twelve years ago.

A very powerful reunion because they admire each other so and hadn't worked together for all these years. And if I made three films with

Vincent Lindon during that time, I was waiting for the moment when I could make another film with Sandrine who is an extraordinary actress. That this was done with both of them was an extra gift. Because, without revealing big secrets, the nature of their past relationship resonates in a particular way in the parts they play. It is a privilege to have their trust and be able to work this way with them.

It's your fifth film with Vincent Lindon. Do you fear repetition, telling stories with the same actor?

A film is a subject, a story and characters but to me also a documentary about one or several actors. I absolutely do not believe in the notion of character. The character is first a construction by the screenwriter and later by the viewer. Between the two, on set, I only deal with the living matter in front of me. Sometimes I make films with Vincent's anger, with his doubts, his tenderness; here I have his fatigue and his distress. I invent nothing with an actor, I only deal with what he allows me to have. The actor's talent is his ability to be available. Vincent makes himself immensely available to invest in spaces and stories that I imagine differently each time.

There is also the presence of Anthony Bajon, who plays the son.

It was an extraordinary encounter with a gifted young actor. It's a tricky part, on a razor edge. Anthony is the "symptom-child", both of his family's dysfunction and that of our society, who wants to measure up to his family's and





his environment's expectations but who explodes in mid-air in an act of what is called decompensation. Anthony walks a knife edge with impressive acting intelligence.

Music plays a large part, perhaps more than in your previous films.

Already in *At War* I had the strong desire to go beyond giving a pure account of reality, and allowed the music to express anger, the subterranean rumble of the workers' outrage. Here it was a case of transcribing the permanent inner turmoil of the character. It is evidently played by the actor, but is also powerfully suggested by the music, which I consider an additional writing device.

For each film, I seek out someone I have never worked with. I enjoy working with musicians who don't specialise in film music. This was the case with Camille Rocailleux who had composed very few film scores. I'd heard his work for theatre. I asked him to work around the idea of tension and isolation. He proposed something that isn't pure melody, without venturing into *musique concrète*. A work with strings that he develops over time and enhances daringly a lyrical voice that expresses somewhere far removed from the character's psyche. Like a paradise, maybe a dream paradise, completely out of reach. A place of vanished purity.

Vincent Lindon's character is confronted several times with the question of courage. Is it an important concept in the corporate world?

It is a fundamental concept. Oliver Gorce and I met Christophe Dejours, a psychoanalytic specialist of the workplace, after reading some of his work, *SOUFFRANCE EN FRANCE* in particular. It's a book in which he takes up the concept of the banality of evil developed by Hannah Arendt, the way so-called normal individuals can gradually become executioners. How can certain individuals who could be described as "decent people" accept without protest harsher and harsher constraints that they know endanger their mental, physical and moral integrity as well as that of others? Courage is then offered as a factor of integration and respectability within the group. The courage to do what, deep down, is repugnant to us so as not to be singled out, or worse, rejected by the system.

And for you, where does courage lie?

It's not my place to give some kind of definite answer. The situation in the film questions a man at a time in his life when truths that seemed immutable are falling apart one after the other. This forces him to question fears that he must accept to confront in order to break away from what hurts him. To abandon any idea of one's own humanity, or to flee the place of constraint and suffering by simultaneously renouncing social status and the idea of one's own strength? These are the questions around which the story has been constructed and to which this character will provide his answers.

CAST

Philippe Lemesle	Vincent Lindon
Anne Lemesle	Sandrine Kiberlain
Lucas Lemesle	Anthony Bajon
Claire Bonnet Guérin	Marie Drucker
HR Director France	Guillaume Draux
Olivier – Operations Director	Olivier Lemaire
Site #1 Director	Christophe Rossignon
Union Delegate #1	Sarah Laurent
Juliette Lemesle	Joyce Bibring
Site Manager #2	Olivier Beaudet
Site Manager #3	Jean-Pierre Gauthier
Site Manager #4	Didier Bille
Anne’s Lawyer	Valérie Lamond
Philippe’s Lawyer	Mehdi Bouzaïda
Clinical Psychiatrist	Myriam Larguèche
ER Psychiatrist	Daniel Masloff
M. Cooper	Jerry Hickey

CREW

Director Stéphane Brizé
Screenplay Olivier Gorce and Stéphane Brizé
Producers Christophe Rossignon and Philip Boëffard
Coproducers Stéphane Brizé and Vincent Lindon
Line Producer Eve François-Machuel
Original Music Camille Rocailleux
DP Eric Dumont
Editor Anne Klotz
Continuity Marion Pin
Casting Coralie Amédéo
1st Assistant Director Emile Louis
Sound Emmanuelle Villard and Hervé Guyader
Production Designer Pascal Le Guellec
Wardrobe Isabelle Pannetier
Production Manager Christophe Desenclos
Location Manager Ignazio Giovacchini
Post-production Manager Julien Azoulay

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