



Presents

the man of my life

(l'homme de sa vie)

Directed by
Zabou Breitman

Written by
Zabou Breitman and Agnès de Sacy

Starring
Bernard Campan, Charles Berling, Léa Drucker

Produced by
Philippe Godeau

A
Pan-Européenne Production, France 3 Cinéma, Rhône-Alpes Cinéma, Studiouriana coproduction
in association with **Sofica Europacorp** and **Carrimages 2**
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Centre national de la cinématographie

Run time
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wild bunch
99, rue de la Verrerie
Paris 75004 France
T : +33 1 53 01 50 30
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SYNOPSIS

The Enguerrands are getting ready to spend another summer in their villa deep in the verdant Provençale countryside. With Frédéric and his wife, Frédérique, and their son, is their cousins, Grandma, sister, brother-in-law...

The whole clan.

Invited by Frédéric to a barbecue, their solitary, self-possessed, gay neighbour Hugo openly parades his homosexuality. The two men stay up till dawn, exchanging radically different visions of love. As the summer wears on, Frédérique notices a distance opening between her and her husband, and a powerful bond developing between Frédéric and Hugo.

CAST LIST

Bernard CAMPAN	<i>Frédéric</i>
Charles BERLING	<i>Hugo</i>
Léa DRUCKER	<i>Frédérique</i>
Eric PRAT	<i>Guillaume</i>
Jacqueline JEHANNEUF	<i>Jacqueline</i>
Aurélie GUICHARD	<i>Lucinda</i>
Philippe LEFEBVRE	<i>Benoît</i>
Caroline GONCE	<i>Ilse</i>
Gabrielle ATGER	<i>Pauline</i>
Angie DAVID	<i>Anne-Sophie</i>
Léocadia RODRIGUEZ HENOCQ	<i>Jeanne</i>
Antonin CHALON	<i>Matthieu</i>
Anna CHALON	<i>Capucine</i>
Niels LEXCELLENT	<i>Arthur</i>

CREW LIST

<i>Director</i>	Zabou BREITMAN <i>SE SOUVENIR DES BELLES CHOSES</i> <i>aka BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES</i>
<i>Screenplay</i>	Zabou BREITMAN Agnès DE SACY
<i>Director of Photography</i>	Michel AMATHIEU A.F.C.
<i>Sound</i>	Michel KHARAT
<i>First assistant director</i>	Joseph RAPP
<i>Production manager</i>	Jean-Yves ASSELIN
<i>Editor</i>	Richard MARIZY
<i>Mix</i>	Eric BONNARD
<i>Make-up</i>	Marie-Anne HUM
<i>Costume designer</i>	Nathalie LECOULTRE
<i>Production designer</i>	Pierre QUEFFELEAN
<i>Sound editor</i>	Lucien BALIBAR
<i>Quartet's original music composer</i>	Laurent KARCIA
<i>Other original music composer</i>	Liviu BADIU
<i>Location manager</i>	Frédéric GRUNENWALD
<i>Producer</i>	Philippe GODEAU

Interview with Zabou Breitman

AJ: What fed *L'homme de sa vie*?

ZB : I will know only when I see it again. For the moment, I merely know in an unconscious way. When you write, you're absorbed as much with what's between the lines as with the lines themselves. My only certainty was the direction I wanted to go in. The rest barely belongs to me. It becomes obvious to me. I look, I find, I forget, I abandon, I bounce back. That's how I give it all I've got. In the end, all that's left is what I consider essential. Why? I couldn't say. Each image, each plan is surely born in an unknown part of my brain. So much the better.

Why did you choose homosexuality as a doorway to the human condition?

Because it opens onto the unconventional, and that's the perspective I chose to relate what I observed through this little door. It's also a minority, and minorities to me play a fundamental role. They remind us who we are. The minority is the jewel, the core in each one of us. In this film, homosexuality acts like a catalyst in chemistry. A bit like the enzyme that changes starch to sugar. It reveals what love is. It alters our perception of love and shows us its entire scope, which I explore.

What do your characters teach us about love?

That each of us is looking for an answer. It's ultimately a quest, a look that passes from the other to oneself and makes us think about how we stand with regard to love and how love situates mankind in space. More specifically, *L'homme de sa vie* embodies "masculine" love in all its aspects: the son for his father, the father for his son, boyfriend for girlfriend, husband for wife.

How did you make the gradual transformation of Hugo and Frédéric perceptible in the scenes that take pace at dawn?

I did not think I would run into such difficulties. That was the major issue in the editing. I discovered a gap between what we had written and what was there in the image. In the screenplay, the scenes had the desired flavour and colour, but no longer on film. A vital link was missing that would take away the severity, the harshness. I had to create it. Draw out certain moments in such a way that the thought builds itself in three words, three words that float. Like the image. Throughout the film, the image floats. In brief, by going through a rewriting - the process of editing - a painful process when you think you've already finished with it.

Was filming also a painful process?

Except for the work with the actors, filming was almost a formality. What really counts is what happens before and especially after filming. For the famous dawn scenes, Bernard and Charles rehearsed for weeks. That explains how they could sometimes act them out entirely, with added pressure, due to the requirement of filming as the sun was coming up. This restriction threw them into a state of fragility that benefits the film. They allow themselves certain moments and phrasing, and that undeniably adds richness.

Why is the role of the beautiful so important in *L'homme de sa vie*?

I wanted a romantic film, and the basic expression of romanticism is nature. My idea was to put man back in nature, to put him among the elements. I was very lucky to find this magical location, which was unexpected at first. It's as if this terrace had been designed for my actors as a theatre onto the world, the small world they make. The location added something that I hadn't written. The film soars with this magical house. In conclusion, I wanted a romantic but realistic film.

How did you design the beginning scenes of the film?

They were not written in the screenplay. They imposed themselves during the filming. The scenery and the locations were so beautiful that I wanted to show them empty, as if the men had deserted them, or rather not yet taken them over. I wanted to linger there, which gives the film a contemplative side, in seeming contradiction with my personality.

Your characters are not defined either by their past or by their role. Why?

From the moment you set up a past, it becomes tiny. I find that we often confuse purpose and nature. In *L'homme de sa vie*, we know vaguely that one is a chemist and the other a graphic artist, but you could switch them. In the casting, I was attached to the notion that the characters of Frédéric and Hugo be completely interchangeable. Frédéric and Frédérique also have the same name. In talking about the three of them, I'm talking about the same person. Each carries within him- or herself one third of the other. When Frédéric is next to a man, he appears more feminine, and when he's next to a woman, more masculine. It's like a trompe-l'oeil painting. By putting blue next to red and blue next to white, you see a different blue.

In the film, none of the themes you deal with takes over the other. Is that intended?

From the writing phase, I stuck to the idea that neither nature, nor individuals, nor psychology take over the other. A real gamble. Nothing must monopolize anything, and yet it was necessary to attach to something, without explanation, so that the viewer would be in a grey area, would feel uneasy. Let's say I wanted everything to be in the organic state. Water and woods are in the realm of sensuality. For me, sensuality is life, and not words. Apart from the basic exchange in the dawn scenes, the characters don't do or say much in the present time. At dawn, the "under" time emerges with daylight and that's what the viewer perceives. Above that are only conventions, day-to-day life.

How did the work with the actors go?

Léa, for example, would tell me in rehearsal: "I don't quite know what to do", and I would tell her "You listen, you are there." There is a lot in her glances; they contain plenty of subtlety. She has an intelligent presence. She is a reserved woman, and I believe it would have been hard to ask an actress who is not that way to act reserved. It would be like asking someone to act human when they lack humanity. At one stage of the editing, she had disappeared to some extent. By giving her back her place, the film really changed. Frédéric and Hugo's love story became stronger. In a word, that's what it was like directing the actors. The plans appear, they're here, they create themselves.

And the work of co-writing?

I love co-writing. I think it's wonderful. Agnès drove me into a corner, forcing me to answer the questions I was resisting answering. I wasn't getting there, so she led me to make choices that I would have never made without her. And so, in addition to her humour and intelligence, she has an essential quality: kindness.

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Martin Marquet
TEL 310 927 5789
martin.marquet@mac.com

CANADIAN DISTRIBUTION



376 Victoria avenue, Suite 300
Westmount - Québec H3Z 1C3 - CANADA
TEL +1 514 336 9696
FAX +1 514 336 0607

www.christalfilms.com

CANADIAN PRESS

Suzanne Cheriton, Publicist

**RED EYE
MEDIA**

40 Thorncliffe Avenue
Toronto, ON, M4K 1V5
T: 416 805 6744

suzanne.redeye@rogers.com

WORLD SALES

wild bunch

PARIS OFFICE

99 Rue de la Verrerie
75004 Paris - France
TEL +33 1 53 01 50 30
FAX +33 1 53 01 50 49

SALES AGENTS

Vincent Maraval
TEL +33 6 11 91 23 93
vmaraval@exception-wb.com

Gaël Nouaille
TEL +33 6 21 23 04 72
gnouaille@exception-wb.com

Carole Baraton
TEL +33 6 20 36 77 72
cbaraton@exception-wb.com

Silvia Simonutti
TEL +33 6 20 74 95 08
ssimonutti@exception-wb.com

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