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PRESENTS

Rapt

A film by
LUCAS BELVAUX

*2009 / France / 125 min. / 2.35:1 / Dolby-Surround-DTS / Not Rated / in French
with English subtitles*

A Lorber Films Release
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LONG SYNOPSIS

Stanislas Graff (Yvan Attal) is the chairman of a large company and a wealthy industrialist – a successful, powerful man, with a wife and two children. On the surface, Graff seems to have everything, but in fact, he leads a double life, keeping a mistress on the side, and risking his fortune at gambling. Though Graff has been careful to keep his two lives separate, everything is about to change.

One morning, as he leaves for work, Graff is kidnapped, locked in the trunk of a car, and scuttled off to a secret location. Bound in handcuffs, he begins a torturous ordeal that will forever change his life. Locked in a dark cell and treated without any trace of humanity, he suffers physical and mental anguish that grows worse with every day.

Immediately, the police begin investigating every angle of Graff's life, searching for evidence that could lead to his kidnappers' identities. His wife is questioned, and in the course of the interrogation reveals that she and her husband kept separate rooms, hinting at the discord in their lives that Graff had managed to protect from public scrutiny.

Graff is informed that he is being held hostage for ransom amounting to 50 million Euros. In order to prove that they mean business, the kidnappers sever one of his fingers with a knife and send it to the police. Graff is forced to write a letter revealing that if the ransom is not paid by that Friday, he will be killed.

Tension spreads between Graff's family and business colleagues. The group quarrels over whether to pay the ransom, while his wife and family, fearing for his life, are ready to pay any price to save Stanislas' life. But as details emerge in the press about Graff's extravagant spending and double life, it causes an uproar, tarnishing Graff's public image. His business colleagues, fearing for their own reputations, cannot justify paying the ransom under the circumstances.

There will be several attempts to deliver the ransom: the first two fail because the family does not have the full amount to satisfy the kidnappers' demands. The next two fail due to police intervention. Throughout all of this, Graff is detained for a total of two months. Finally, the kidnappers decide to release Graff on the condition that he pays the ransom himself, as they know it will be the only way that they will ever see the money.

Upon release, Graff finds that his world as he knew it collapsed in his absence. His family has fallen apart, and he is informed by his business partner that he is now a liability to the group, and that he will be demoted from his position of chairman.

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His reputation ruined, both with his family and his business group, Graff is now completely alone – even as he awaits the call from the kidnappers, demanding that he deliver his own ransom.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

One morning, the rich and powerful industrialist Stanislas Graff is kidnapped outside his home by a commando group.

For Graff, it is the beginning of an ordeal lasting several weeks. He is humiliated, has one of his fingers amputated, and is denied his humanity – but somehow, manages to resist giving in to his captors. He accepts everything without complaints or resistance, and defends himself against his captors' cruelty with a strength and dignity.

Completely cut off from the rest of the world, and only aware of what the kidnappers tell him, Stanislas cannot understand why his friends and family are taking their time to pay the demanded ransom.

Outside, his world breaks down as the details of his double life emerge. All of his most intimate secrets – including a mistress and gambling debts – are revealed to his family, the police, and the public. Everyone discovers a man far different than the one they had imagined.

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CAST

Stanislas Graff – Yvan Attal
Francoise Graff – Anne Consigny
Andre Peyrac – Andre Marcon
Marjorie – Francoise Fabian
Walser – Akex Descas
Commissioner Paoli – Michel Voita
Le Marseillais – Gerard Meylan
Bertaux – Maxime Lefrancois
Jean-Jacques Garnier – Christophe Kourotchkin
Veronique – Sarah Messens
Martine – Julia Kaye
Massart – Patrick Descamps
Captain Verne – Bertrand Constant
Commander Chenut – Marc Rioufol
Lieutenant Grazziani – Richard Sammut
Madame Keller – Tania Torrens
Le Chatelain – Elef Zack
Judge – Vincent Nemeth
Minister – Jean-Baptiste Malartre
Prefect of Police – Nicolas Pignon
Mahoux – Olivier Darimont
Fostier – Pierre Rochefort
Montrouveau – Olivier Ythier
La Chassagne – Philippe Toussaint
Maid – Circe Lethem
Graff's Mistress – Swan Scalabre

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CREDITS

Written and Directed by
Lucas Belvaux

Produced by
Patrick Sobelman, Diana Elbaum and Sebastian Delloy

Director of Photography – Pierre Milon

Art Director - Frédérique Belvaux

Sound Engineer – Heni Morelle and Ricardo Castro

Director's assistant – Brieuc Vanderswalm

Script assistant – Leenda Mamosa

Casting – Brigitte Moidon and Gersa Diddens

Costume designer – Nathalie Raoul

Make-up artist – Silvia Carissoli

Hairdresser – Antonella Prestigiacomo

Production manager – Marie-Frédérique Lauriot- dit-Prévost

French studio manager – Laetitia Cangioni

Belgium studio manager – Philippe Groff

Film editor – Danielle Anezin

Music editor – Bernadette Thiboud

Mixing – Luc Thomas

Musical director – Riccardo del Fra

Coach of Yvan Attal – Maxime Lefrançois

Illustrator – Angelo Di Marco

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A Conversation with Lucas Belvaux

What made you write this adaptation of the Baron Empain's story?

I never know exactly why I decide to start a project. Each time, it is a single idea, among others, that emerges. The desire to make a film must be strong enough to justify spending one or two years of my life.

A few years ago, I watched a TV report in which Baron Empain told of his experience, and it was extremely disturbing. It inspired me to make a film about this story. It is a timeless story.

What did you know about this case before writing the script?

I knew what Edouard Empain had said about it, and what I had read in the press. Actually, it is the story about a man who has everything, for whom everything appears to be going well, but then realizes that he is not what he thought he was, and may lose everything overnight.

The other exciting part of this case is that it is never-ending. Even after his captors release him, the nightmare continues. The way Baron Empain was talking about it was really impressive.

Why have you chosen to transpose the adaption of this case, which took place in 1978, to 2009?

Because I didn't want to make a historical reconstruction. First, for financial reasons: directing a movie which takes place in 1978 means directing a period piece, with all the costs that it entails. Now, I don't think that filming this story in the time of the case would have made it more interesting dramatically. But in turn, setting it in the present allowed me to focus on the subject, which is what interested me (what would it be like to experience an event like that?), and the period setting would actually have lifted a screen between the viewer and the subject.

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Secondly, this allowed me to free up people who have lived this story. By telling this story today – changing names and some facts – I was able to situate it in fiction. It is no longer the story of Baron Empain, but the story of President Graff. Even though I know that everyone will see the connection; I know that I have a responsibility to Empain and his family.

The retelling always involves lies, even if this word is a bit strong. Even if you are very close to the truth, it will be always be one-sided. There was nobody to transcribe what was said in the hideouts, or in the intimacy of the family, or in the office's ministry. So, to give the character imaginary dialogue while they're supposed to represent actual people (who are, for the most part, still living) would have been a problem to me.

Do you think that by transposing the movie to the present, you also made it more political?

I wrote this film with actual considerations, but concerning the story itself, it doesn't change anything: The Ministry of Interior is still the same, and also the relationship between politics and power, power and business, power and media ... If you're watching and listening well, there are very few political allusions in the movie, nor heavy attacks against power. The political point of view is a part of the subject, it's one of the aspects of this history, but it is implicit. In general, I'm interested in characters that can guide me, whatever the subject may be. But from the moment they're part of the world or society, there is inevitably a political dimension.

What reasons did you have for casting Yvan Attal, since he is physically the opposite of the actual person who inspired his character?

The fact that Yvan Attal is physically far from the Baron Empain interested me. However, the main reason I chose him was my desire to work with him. Yvan plays a singular character, a very isolated person, and Yvan is himself marked by a melancholic sense of loneliness. He can be a man of power - he has a strong presence, a natural authority and control, even without acting - and at the same time, there is always in him a kind of fragility.

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Yvan brings a lot to a role like this. The physical work he did in the film is extremely hard to deliver. It was really, really hard for him, but despite that, we never felt it – neither the crew or myself. He took this physical hardship upon himself. His work is so dense that we never question his credibility; the pain is really there, on screen and tangible. He was really involved and that is amazing.

Have you met the Baron Empain?

I didn't try to meet him before in order to keep my ability to freely adapt his story. If we had met, I would have had him read the script – otherwise it would have been meaningless. He would have given me an opinion, would have shared things about the veracity of some elements, and I would have had to take these comments into account.

I was aware in making the film that I was telling the story of someone and that I couldn't say just write anything, but at the same time, I did not want to make a logical reconstruction or a historical truth, but only to work on a character. It is not "the story of Baron Empain", but "inspired by" the story of Baron Empain. But now I really want to show him the film and to know what he thinks about it.

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A conversation with Yvan Attal

Why did you decide to accept this role?

The desire to work with Lucas Belvaux, whose work I love. I wanted to say "yes" even before reading the script, because often it is the directors who interest me. Reading the script confirmed this desire. The role also encouraged me, because it presented a challenge to overcome. Finally, I was very touched by this story.

What did you know about the case of the Baron Empain, which inspired "Rapt", before reading the script?

I didn't know anything precisely. I was 13 in 1978. I remember the breaking news announcing the kidnapping, but not what had actually happened to him. I knew the spectacular aspect of this story - a man who is kidnapped for money, who is sequestered for two months and whose finger is cut off. We can imagine, of course, all the pain of this hostage. Obviously, when he is set free, he expects to receive love and comfort, but after everything his professional colleagues and family have learned about him, they ask him to explain. This is an aspect I didn't know about, but it is what makes it unique, exceptional, and exciting.

After reading the script, were there some aspects that particularly interested you more than others?

Two things in the script of *Rapt* interested me particularly. First, the fact that we can live for years next to someone without completely knowing them. It means sharing the life of someone, loving him, having children with him, and yet, ignoring a part of him, and this is the case in the film; this secret part is really a double life. My character needs to live more lives simultaneously.

The other aspect of the scenario that really interested me is how Lucas has treated the media's responsibility for the fate of my character in such a relevant way. How the press and television take hold of the existence of a man and his secrets, then expose and deliver them to his family at the same time as the rest of the world, and finally participate in the destruction of his life.

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How did you imagine your character?

With this character, I was operating a bit in clichés. He is someone who is sure about himself; he's naturally arrogant and was born into a family with money. He is in a position that allows him to have power and to abuse it, but at the same time, he has his double life, which is not in contradiction with what he is. He is the same person in his other life, whether in his bachelor pad, with another woman, or at his table games. And despite all these secrets, I think he is still a dignified person. He does not crumble. He is a man who carries a certain force, and even a moral sense. He's still a human being, afraid during his detention. He faces events, but he does not crack before his captors. He is able to talk to them. He exists, continuing to be himself and to fight. He knows he is still able to direct his group. The only thing that is really touching him is his family. He has a responsibility. That's what touched me in the film, more than the detention, which is physically an interesting aspect for an actor, but less shocking that when he's returned to his family. If there had not been this last part, I probably would not have made the film. It would have been too anecdotal and factual.

Did you live in a very different mindset during the shooting of the "captivity" compared to the shooting of the "release"?

It was pretty obvious that it must be a strong contrast between the two parts, and the directing is involved. I talked a lot with Lucas about the detention. The sequences of captivity punctuated the film. There are not really a lot of sequences, but they should be very strong, and without pathos. We wanted to be sure not to go toward the sensational and sordid gimmickry. Obviously, through research, we discovered a lot of details on what goes on in the terrible captivity of hostages such as Baron Empain. All these details, though not explicitly shown, are present in the movie because Lucas and I knew them during the shooting. This gave the opportunity to be more closely in the state of mind of the captive and to better determine his gestures at the time. But it was never a question of whether to illustrate the detention in the first degree by reproducing every detail that one could read or hear. I should, however, keep those details in my mind. And then, finally, it is not the detention itself that most interested us, but rather, what it provoked.

How did you prepare physically this role?

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I lost almost 45 pounds for the detention sequences. The diet was necessary; it was impossible to cheat, particularly because there was a scene where you see me shirtless while I wash myself. This diet put me in a particular state of mind, since I lost all that weight in two months. Despite being followed medically, I realized that in my everyday life I no longer had energy. In this kind of diet, you cross thresholds of exhaustion. I was often very tired, at times my head was spinning. I saw myself becoming more and more thin. Of course that put me in a rhythm that I was not necessarily aware of. I weighed 117 pounds - the last time this happened to me I must have been 14 years old.

During this type of diet, you isolate yourself. You count each calorie, you no longer go out, you eat alone because you are not allowed to have cravings for food that others are having. I don't cook, but I started to prepare my meals and do my shopping myself. I became very picky, a bit boring, and I would get angry for any reason - but really, because I was not eating enough. I was in need of sugar, and physical and mental energy. I remember having secured some business appointments during this period and it was unbearable when people were talking to me without getting straight to the point. I hope it comes across and serves the film, because this preparation really put me in a unique condition.

What are the consequences of this diet for you?

I do not know. I became very coquettish, and I loved how I looked at 117 pounds; I thought I looked great. The anorexic sensations are as dangerous as they are attractive, and it's exhilarating to lose weight like that, to wake up every morning with an empty stomach, and to look in the mirror. It's a very strange pleasure. Of course, I've gained weight since then. Gradually, we come back to real life.

Now that the film is finished, how has it affected you?

What really affected me was the detention, as silly as it sounds. It's also very intimidating. That means we are far, far away from imagining the feelings of a guy who is kidnapped and humiliated. When we were shooting in Belgium, I was forced to eat alone because the diet, without the team. In the evenings, I returned to my hotel room and would then get something to eat. It never happened to me before. I usually have dinner or a drink with everybody.

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There it was not possible. I arrived exhausted, I came home, I cooked an ounce of rice, steamed zucchini and went to bed. All this puts you in a unique state. You do not see anyone, and then every day you return to the shooting. You're in a cellar. You put chains around your neck, after a while it is psychologically uncomfortable and exhausting. Sometimes, when the prop men came to chain me up, I had the palpable sense of what such ordeal would be like. Suddenly, all documents and documentaries that I could see about these people who had been locked up came back to me strangely. It affected me having to shoot these scenes every day. It was humbling to think about Empain and all those who had had this type of experience. It made me think a lot.

Have you met the Baron Empain?

No, but I'm curious to know how he would receive the film. I am very afraid of what he is going to think because obviously this movie is not his reality or his objective truth. These are not places where he was detained, nor are they the manners or the voices of his captors. And I don't speak about me of course ... Maybe he can hang onto such details. So I am very afraid of his reaction, but I'd be deeply touched to talk to him. Since I have absolutely no real experience with what he experienced, having tried to approach his experiences makes me want to ask him a lot of questions. And I am touched by him, so yes I would be happy and it would be important for me to meet him even if, ultimately, there is the discomfort of knowing that you played a character inspired directly by the life of another being. But I do not know if he wants to talk about it again. This is also why I'd like to meet, to know who he has really become.

Is there an aspect of your character that you did not had time to explore, or that you had to leave out?

No. But the reconstruction of this character, how he must start from scratch, which corresponds to the very end of the film, would also obviously be exciting to interpret. Although there will probably never be *Rapt 2*, to me it's a character I would like to continue playing.