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PRESENTS



MADemoiselle Chambon

A film by Stéphane Brizé

César Award Winner – Best Adapted Screenplay

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SYNOPSIS

An elegant, moving tale of an unexpected romance between a married man (Vincent Lindon) and his son's homeroom teacher (Sandrine Kiberlain, Lindon's former wife) — and their attempt to keep their desires from turning into a full-blown affair. A modern-day *Brief Encounter*, crafted with enormous grace and subtlety by acclaimed French director Stéphane Brizé.

CREDITS

Jean – Vincent Lindon
Véronique Chambon – Sandrine Kiberlain
Anne-Marie – Aure Atika
Jean's father – Jean-Marc Thibault
Jérémy – Arthur Le Houérou

Cinematographer – Antoine Héberlé
Editor – Anne Klotz
Original Music – Ange Ghinozzi
Assistant Producer – Amélie Melkonian
Co-Producer – Jean-Louis Livi
Produced by Milena Poylo & Gilles Sacuto
Written by Stéphane Brizé & Florence Vignon
Based on the novel by Eric Holder
Directed by Stéphane Brizé

Running time: 101 minutes
Aspect ratio: 2.35 : 1

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STÉPHANÉ BRIZÉ (WRITER/DIRECTOR) FEATURE FILMOGRAPHY

Entre adultes (2006)
Je ne suis pas là pour être aimé (2005)
Le bleu des villes (1999)
L'oeil qui traîne (1996)
Bleu dommage (1993)

VINCENT LINDON (JEAN) SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Welcome (2009) – César Award nomination
Those Who Remain (2005) – César Award nomination
La moustache (2005)
Only Girls (2003)
Friday Night (2002)
My Little Business (1999) – César Award nomination
La crise (1992) – César Award nomination
Betty Blue (1986)

SANDRINE KIBERLAIN (VÉRONIQUE CHAMBON) SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Only Girls (2003)
Alias Betty (2001)
À vendre (1998) – César Award nomination
Seventh Heaven (1997) – César Award nomination
A Self-Made Hero (1996) – César Award nomination
En avoir (ou pas) (1995) – César Award winner
Les patriotes (1994) – César Award nomination

AURE ATIKA (ANNE-MARIE) SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Ill Wind (2007)
OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies (2006)
The Beat That My Heart Skipped (2005)
3 Dancing Slaves (2004)

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INTERVIEW WITH STÉPHANÉ BRIZÉ

How did this story come to you?

Florence Vignon, my co-writer, [showed me] Eric Holder's book about ten years ago. I read it and loved it, but I would've been incapable of adapting it at the time — [I needed more] experience to [really] understand what the main character was going through

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

It's not the plot that [compelled] me — it's more the way Holder translated the emotions of these modest people. I sent the script to him when we finished it, [and] he wrote us a very beautiful letter in return, [saying] "it's less an adaptation than an extension, an enrichment."

Didn't you want to work with the author?

No. To me, the novel was 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 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 also reinvented at least the last third of the story.

You often state that your characterizations [have an element of] psychoanalysis. Is this still the case?

Yes indeed. It's very important to me to know how many brothers or sisters [the characters] have, what their relationship [is like] towards their parents, etc — even if all of this stays completely implicit in the film. These are point of references for me and Florence 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.

Every time a story is built in my mind, it builds itself around awareness and a choice to make. But *Mademoiselle Chambon* is a little different from my previous films, where an obvious sadness [was always present in the] characters. 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 that doesn't seem to weigh on him — [it isn't until] the lucky encounter [that he experiences] all of his certainties [waver].

To me, filming Jean's everyday life was very difficult compared to my other films. For the first time, I had to film happy people — or, 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 [create something] very "spectacular." But filming something harmonious between two people — without boring the audience and falling into sappiness — this worried me

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a lot. I had to stop being afraid of things that go too well.

Why did you choose to shoot in scope?

We [did] some tests with a smaller format...[and] I felt frustrated. I constantly wanted to push back the borders of the frame. So at one point I tried the scope format — and as soon as I saw the first images, I felt comfortable. The characters naturally found their own space in the frame, and a very simple story [took on] an “epic” dimension.

Do you feel like you took some risks?

Extremely fragile emotions can only [be captured] by taking risks. I like knowing in which direction [I’m going, but] not exactly how. To me, the moments of truth can only appear in those moments of uncertainties — [especially when there are so many scenes in which] the stakes don’t lie in what the characters explicitly say, but in between the lines.

Why Vincent Lindon?

Because he moves me profoundly. Vincent has this incredible quality — everything he shows us [speaks to] our strengths, our weaknesses, our fears and certainties; in short, our humanity. This man is made of power and of 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 became a bricklayer. And because he is very skilful, it didn’t take him three months of training 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 powerful our relationship would become.

By [giving] Sandrine Kiberlain the part of the teacher, weren’t you afraid of being [accused of] manipulation?

I have no doubt some people will see [it as] manipulation. However, I don’t see [what is manipulative about asking] a separated couple to play a couple in love. As soon as I knew Vincent was going to be in the film, I tried to [think of] an actress who would be interesting for the part and [who would] form a powerful couple with Vincent — and I [immediately] thought of Sandrine. She’s one of the most talented French actresses and she has a [sense of] mystery [about her] that makes her absolutely overwhelming. I needed that mystery for the character. Of course, I talked [this over] with Vincent before contacting Sandrine. He told me: “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.” So I had the script sent to her, and — fortunately for me — she accepted. They probably talked about it together, but that concerns only them.

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What is the film trying to say?

I don't mean to send messages — I'm [trying] to tell stories to move the audience. Jean is a man who isn't very comfortable with words or expressing his feelings. It's interesting and moving to [watch him] react to the emotions that overwhelm him and the dilemma that faces him. I'm not here to judge — [my job is] to observe, in the most accurate way, the torments [of this] exceptional situation.

Does 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 — the 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 [jumped] into a big pool without knowing how to swim.

Did Sandrine Kiberlain learn how to play the violin?

It was crucial for the role — her movement had to be precise and perfectly in sync, so that we would believe that the music really comes out from her instrument. And she accomplished an incredible [amount of] work, [practicing daily for] five months.

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 from Véronique 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 a piece by Franz von Vecsey (aka Ferenc von Vecsey), a Hungarian composer from the beginning of the century, for the scene in the apartment. For the birthday scene, [I chose] Edward Elgar, an English composer from the 19th - 20th century. The two pieces are full of melancholy and grace, and Ayako Tanaka [played them] 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 — that was one of the major difficulties [of the film]. Take into account the feeling of love without every falling into sentimentalism. I had to be unafraid of the emotion, without ever forcing it — [letting it] come in its own pace, without rushing anything.

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Did you have any references?

It was 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 [as she] decides whether to leave or stay is completely heartbreaking. It was my tear-drop reference.

You have a very faithful relationship with your producers. Did their interventions play a big part throughout the making of the film?

They are absolutely necessary. I need real producers by my side, people that have a point of view. From the first lines of the script to the final mix, they support me by questioning me, trusting me, and sometimes by reassuring me. We've been working together for twelve years, and what moves me intimately 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.