

polyfilm

präsentiert nach

“ANONYME ROMANTIKER”



EIN FILM VON

JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS

Laufzeit 96 Minuten

Kinostart:: 15 APRIL 2016

Verleih:

*POLYFILM Verleih
Margaretenstraße 78
1050 Wien*

www.polyfilm.at

polyfilm@polyfilm.at

01 581 39 00 - 20

Pressebetreuung:

Sonja Celeghin

celeghin@polyfilm.at

0680 55 33 593

Gefördert von Creative Europe Media der Europäischen Union

Co-funded by the
European Union



Creative
Europe
MEDIA

SYNOPSIS

Paul-André is a shy and introverted 40-something. He's rich but alone, and is fed up with life, and decides that what he needs is a family. Violette is also in her 40s and full of life, but money troubles mean that she could lose her home and even her family. So Paul-André offers her a crazy deal - he rents her family in return for paying off her debts. He will finally be able to test out the true joy of family life...for better or worse!

INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS

THIS IS A RETURN TO COMEDY FOR YOU...

This is my tenth film and my second comedy. Comedy is how I am able to speak more directly about myself. ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS was a very autobiographical film, and that's also the case for FAMILY TO RENT, which could also be called "A ROMANTIC IN THE FAMILY"!

IS THE THEME OF FAMILY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Until now, I've dealt with this theme in a less direct manner, and often from a perspective of conflict and misunderstanding between children and their parents, such as in LES AVEUX DE L'INNOCENT, BAD COMPANY, and CALL ME ELISABETH. I've never tackled it as directly as I do here. Like Paul-André, the character played by Benoît Poelvoorde, I tended to think that a family is a group of people who yell at one another, which is a pretty negative view!

DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?

*My view of the subject evolved thanks to Murielle Magellan, my cowriter on the film. We met in 2008 when we adapted the novel *La joie de vivre* for TV. It was a monumental work about family neuroses, and... we fell in love! Since then, I've wanted to make a film on the subject - a chalk-and-cheese relationship between a middle-aged single guy prone to depression and obsessiveness, and a brave, positive-thinking mother, much like Murielle. In 2011, I had an idea for the opening premise - a rich old grouch who has never had a family meets a single mother with money problems. He offers to pay off her debts if she gives him an introduction to family life. Then Murielle and I started working up the script with our respective personalities - my pessimism and her optimism, and little*

details of experiences we'd had, like my stepson who used to do sports in the living room! I like to say that this film is the story of a man who faces up to the disorder in his life, but Murielle prefers to talk about the movement in his life...

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR KIND OF COMEDY?

It's a romantic fable. From BEAUTY AND THE BEAST to PRETTY WOMAN, I love those stories of men and women who find freedom through love. But more precisely, I wanted to make a romcom with children in it. Too often, children are peripheral or even totally absent from such comedies. At the age of 50 I discovered fatherhood through my stepson, and I wanted to film that. Paul-André discovers everything at the same time: love for a woman and affection for two children - that's a pretty intensive training session!

HOW DID YOU CONSTRUCT VIOLETTE'S FAMILY?

I wanted it to be a "blended" family, one with two children from two different fathers, the results of passionate love affairs with people who have now disappeared. A mixed-race boy and a teenage girl. The two young actors were amazing. It was funny to direct them because in the film, they embody reason for these two adults playing at living together.

YOU CHOSE A VERY STYLIZED FORM

For the past few films, I've been keen to stylize, to create a little world with its own special shape each time. For this one, I was very keen on making it playful, because this man and this woman are like kids, playing house. He takes the risk of leaving his "château" and she takes a gamble on this crazy contract. There is nothing natural about it, not one single street or car from real life. It's a fairytale in three houses: Paul-André's, Violette's, and Violette's mother's house. Not to mention the abandoned kiosk where Paul-André eventually declares his love for Violette, which is a classic fairytale location.

WHAT WERE YOUR REFERENCES IN TERMS OF THE ARTISTIC DIRECTION?

They were mainly from English-language movies, such as the house in Erin Brockovich. A single-story house with an inside space allowing one to film with depth, unlike those little French-style houses where you're always coming up against a wall! We spent a long time looking for the house, and eventually found it in the suburbs of Paris. We filmed the exteriors there, but the inside of Violette's house was a studio set, like in those old American comedies from the 1940s by Frank Capra or Gregory La Cava. To create wide shots inside, we had to shoot in the studio. I dreamed of being able to do that shot where Paul-André enters Violette's bedroom just as she comes in from the bathroom. Paul-André's mother reminded me of the mother of the man Tippi Hedren's character is pursuing in Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS*. That kind of woman is unable to be loving and affectionate - that's something I get. And the butler played by François Morel is a little like Batman's very own!

ONE THINKS OF MY MAN GODFREY BY LA CAVA, BUT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

I love that film. Yes, in La Cava's movie, it's a poor guy - well, one pretending to be poor at least - who is invited to join a rich family. Here, it's the opposite. These are comedies that inspire me almost subconsciously: there's also *FIFTH AVENUE GIRL*, again by La Cava, in which a rich man brings Ginger Rogers into his huge mansion to help rebuild his relationship with his family, and Capra's *YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU*, for the crazy family side of things.

THE COLORS ARE EVEN MORE DAZZLING THAN IN ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS.

That's an homage to Technicolor! And they fit with Violette and her world of bright colors into which this old man is plunged after his world of black and white. He takes a risk for the sake of happiness.

WHO IS VIOLETTE?

During the preparation phase, I showed Virginie Efira two films: ERIN BROCKOVICH and Fellini's NIGHTS OF CABIRIA with Giulietta Masina. Violette is that kind of heroine, a little over-the-top, tending towards vulgarity, but not too much so. I find that kind of female character very touching in terms of their excesses, and their childish side. Violette isn't so classy but we don't care.

WHY MAKE HER A VEGETABLE SCULPTOR?

To give her a talent. People all have a certain something that sets them apart. I attach a great deal of importance to actions, even those that seem very small. It's what they do that counts. It's also a way of exploring the theme of how families are organized, the roles that families force you to take on: in the picnic scene, she's the dutiful daughter that everybody teases a little. Her family views her as a bit of an idiot, and she automatically accepts this role. We've all been in that situation when someone in the family says something mean, and then saying, "I was just kidding!" There's something very passive-aggressive in that. But this "idiot" has an unusual, poetic talent. My film is not an elegy to family, but rather to the links that one chooses for oneself. I think it was Coluche who said, "The best family is the one you invent." Randomly, perhaps, but one which breaks the codes and is all about living.

THE FILM ALSO DEALS WITH INSECURITY...

Just because it's a stylized comedy, it doesn't mean that it doesn't deal with a social reality. Violette keeps having to deal with social humiliations. Because she's a pretty woman with no money, she feels that in order to have a job, she has to put out. She even thinks that Paul-André is going to propose to her straight away. She's amazed to discover that he apparently has no intention of sleeping with her.

DID YOU WRITE THE ROLE OF PAUL-ANDRÉ FOR BENOÎT POELVOORDE?

Yes, just for him. I enjoyed working with him on ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS so much. It's always lovely to work with an actor again. I feel close to Benoît. I wouldn't say he's my double, but I have a connection with him, he knows how to interpret me. The character of Paul-André resembles us both: a little maniacal, being 50 with no children of our own, with that double movement between fear and desire to be connected to others. Benoît gets all that across through comedy, through tenderness, and I admire him for that. It's hard to keep things light. Lightness isn't my natural tendency, but I'm working on it, in both my life and my films!

AND VIRGINIE EFIRA?

She was obvious for the part. I saw her in IT BOY. She's a wonderful actor who reminds me of American actresses of the golden years like Carole Lombard and Ginger Rogers - incredibly alive, full of vigor, and with no fear of playing a slightly vulgar character. And she's got that Belgian humor, like Benoît, which I love. She enjoys performing, interpreting, daring the burlesque.

IS THERE ONE MOMENT FROM THE SHOOT THAT STAYED IN YOUR MEMORY?

The scene where Violette tells her children how she was supposed to have met Paul-André, and her hand goes to her neck. The look on the children's faces, how disturbed she and Paul-André suddenly become - it was an absolute delight to watch the four of them perform that scene.

INTERVIEW WITH BENOÎT POELVOORDE

A SHORT PHONE INTERVIEW WITH BENOÎT
POELVOORDE

THIS IS YOUR SECOND FILM WITH JEAN-PIERRE
AMÉRIS.

I worked with him on ROMANTICS. He's a good guy. I read the script, I liked it, and voilà!

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE PLAYED A
CHARACTER WHO IS VERY MUCH LIKE AMÉRIS, AND
QUITE A LOT LIKE YOU, TOO...

I guess so. Paul-André is an anxious kind of person like he is. Like I am. To prevent himself getting stressed, he decided I could get stressed for him! But I'm not an actor that thinks a lot. I do what Jean-Pierre tells me to do. And that's good - he's a very punctilious director who directs you to the nearest inch.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR ACTING PARTNERS?

Virginie is wonderful. She's so much fun. We really enjoyed working together, and I was knocked out by the two children, by their patience and concentration on the shoot.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Did you meet the world champion of vegetable sculpting guy? He's incredible. And the best thing is that he found a girlfriend who loves sculpting vegetables, too! Life's good like that.

INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIE EFIRA

THIS IS YOUR FIRST OUTING INTO JEAN-PIERRE'S WORLD...

I saw ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS and C'EST LA VIE, and I had a great deal of respect for Jean-Pierre. When I found out that he wanted to work with me, I was delighted. I started reading the script and my feelings were confirmed by page 10. I loved it all, the role of Violette of course, but also the energy of the story in which Jean-Pierre gives space to intimacy with elegance and a light touch. I was so happy that I did a little dance around the coffee table in my living room!

WHAT DID YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE ABOUT THE SCRIPT?

This story about a guy who is stuck in his comfort zone, but who is actively seeking to turn that upside-down. Also the fact that it is a love story in reverse: normally, you meet someone, you fall in love, and then you move in with each other and enter each other's worlds. Here, it's the opposite! They start out with an arrangement, and that turns into love. Moreover, the film isn't a conventional ode to family life. Rather, it says that intimacy is constructed step by step, through little pleasures, and also conflicts and tough times. Having a family is a boon, but also a prison. Violette herself is stuck in a place that has been defined for her, and she's not going anywhere either. The gentle humiliation she undergoes from members of her own family was really interesting to portray.

WHAT APPEALED TO YOU INITIALLY ABOUT VIOLETTE'S CHARACTER?

That she was a little bit all over the place but with this lovely contradiction - she feels totally powerless but she stands tall. She's the kind of girl who doesn't give up, who holds her head up. She's this lovely little soldier, a little vulgar, but dignified. She is vulnerable, but she prefers not to dwell on that. She swallows down her complexes and keeps on going, her bra strap showing. I remember when I was a teenager - I wasn't exactly the height of elegance! I used to hang out with go-go dancers, I wore big boots and had a gold chain on my ankle. My "disguise" was pretty good! But, like Violette, I had a sense of humor about myself and that overload of femininity. Often, it's women who feel small that add a kilo of mascara...

HOW DID YOU GET UNDER THE SKIN OF YOUR CHARACTER?

I really liked how, during the preparation phase, Jean-Pierre gave me films to watch and songs to sing to help me get into Violette's character. I watched NIGHTS OF CABIRIA, which is a very highbrow reference, granted, but better highbrow than low! Jean-Pierre understood the musical tonality he wanted to give to the film. To my mind, Violette would have listened to hip-hop. I admire those women who keep a very strong link to their adolescence, with the fact that they're 35 or 40 as a second thought. I find that refusal to grow old very sweet, like that way of dressing slightly over the top, driven by a desperate desire to please. In the end, we agreed on an American musical reference, one that was more soul than hip-hop.

WHAT ABOUT HER COSTUME?

I was a very good student: I put together a file of photos of groupies from the 1970s, along with a few "skanks". I thought Violette would wear very sexualized clothes, but Jean-Pierre wasn't so sure. And then there was the Erin Brockovich look of course, with her mini-skirt and high heels with two children on her arm. Something sexy but cluttered - iconic, if you like. I was too coordinated though, too fashionable, and the costume designer stopped me, saying, "No, no, we need gold with red and black..." And she was right - the look really works in the film. Not good taste, but her own taste.

YOU ALSO DID SOME OTHER "PREPARATIONS"...

I took classes in vegetable sculpting, and there's not many people who get to say that! I worked with the world champion and the first thing he said to me was, "If you knew what I can do with a leek!" I admire that about Jean-Pierre - he believes in the importance of doing things, even tiny little unusual things, like making roses or lions out of watermelons.

WHAT KIND OF DIRECTOR IS JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS?

Passionate! And he knows how to communicate his passion for a team project like a film. With him, we felt very united during the shoot. And very precise, very painstaking! He visualizes his film down to the tiniest detail and his directing is perfectly choreographed. He has his vision of our bodies in the space, and he tells us which path to take. Then we follow the path dozens of times until we forget about it and it comes naturally. The camera is always there, but he makes you forget about it. In the picnic scene, there were 15 of us around the table. During one shoot, an actress at the other end of the table said she couldn't hear what I was saying and I should talk more loudly. Jean-Pierre told her, "If you can't hear her, do what you would do in real life, and say, 'Sorry?'" He likes looking for truth and that's great. There's no improvisation but life takes over.

WAS IT A PLUS, WORKING WITH BENOÎT POELVOORDE?

I've known him for a long time but we'd only worked together very briefly on a film by Anne Fontaine. We share a certain kind of "Belgianness" and a taste for going out, freedom, and drinking! A few years ago, we went to a lot of fun parties together. The kind with a lot of singing in crazy places! I've always set Benoît on a pedestal, both intellectually and just as a person. I like his way of being, his contradictions, his deep sadness, his crazy, chatty, cheerfulness, and the permeability he has between the man and the actor.

WHAT IS IT LIKE ACTING OPPOSITE HIM?

If there is one person who has absolutely no vanity, it's him. He'd never hog the blankets in bed. It wouldn't even enter his head. He acts with you, and he starts acting before the word "action" in order to get into the role, and take you there with him. There were scenes I'd thought about in advance in terms of the emotions I wanted to express, and then I'd find myself opposite Benoît and everything changed. He inspires emotions. He makes you want to laugh and cry at the same time. Every day, I thought how lucky I was being there with him and Jean-Pierre. And with those two young actors who played my children. I'm still in touch with the boy. The adjective "sunny" must have been invented for his face! At the end of the shoot, for the first time since I started acting, I thought, "Damn, I'm going to have to stop being Violette now."

CAST

BENOÎT POELVOORDE Paul-André
VIRGINIE EFIRA Violette

FRANÇOIS MOREL Léon

PHILIPPE REBBOT Rémi

PAULINE SERIEYS Lucie

CALIXTE BROISIN-DOUTAZ Auguste

With the participation of EDITH SCOB Madame Delalande

NANCY TATE Sandra

NATHALIE GESSIER Neighbor

TAIRA BOREE Gisèle

RÉMY ROUBAKHA Lucien

XAVIER MATHIEU Fabian

GWENDOLINE HAMON Fabian's wife

MATHILDE WAMBERGUE TV journalist

CREW

Director JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS

Screenplay and dialog MURIELLE MAGELLAN and JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS

Photography VIRGINIE SAINT-MARTIN (S.B.C.)

Sound PHILIPPE RICHARD

OLIVIER WALCZAK

EMMANUEL CROSET

<i>Set design</i>	<i>FRANCK SCHWARZ (A·D·C·)</i>
<i>Costumes</i>	<i>NATHALIE DU ROSCOËT</i>
<i>Casting</i>	<i>TATIANA VIALLE (A·R·D·A·)</i>
<i>Assistant director</i>	<i>THIERRY MAUVOISIN</i>
<i>Script consultant</i>	<i>DELPHINE RÉGNIER-CAVERO</i>
<i>Editing</i>	<i>ANNE SOURIAU</i>
<i>Production manager</i>	<i>BAUDOIN CAPET</i>
<i>Music supervisor</i>	<i>VALÉRIE LINDON</i>
<i>Set photography</i>	<i>THIERRY VALLETOUX</i>

*Including "SAVED" and "BATHED IN BLUE" by LILY KERSHAW
Extracts from her album "MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN" released by
CAPITOL/UNIVERSAL*