

Soda Pictures
Presents

HOTEL HARABATI

A film by Brice Cauvin



Hélène Fillières Laurent Lucas Anouk Aimé

Release Date: October 26th 2007

Cert: TBC

Opening Venues: TBC

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Synopsis

While waiting to catch a train from Paris to Venice, French couple Philippe and Marion pick up a bag left behind by a polite, vaguely Middle Eastern man. Inside, they find neatly bound bundles of foreign currency; on the tag, it reads 'Hotel Harabati.' At the last moment, they decide not to go to Venice (though they tell their families and friends they did); but when Marion collects her film from the developer's, the reel is inexplicably filled with shots of canals, vaporetti, crowded piazzas ... and suddenly, terrifyingly, their whole world seems to have turned upside-down.

As reality blurs, the couple start to grow apart. Marion leaves Paris with the children and Philippe takes refuge with a young man that he meets. Until eventually he is compelled to try and find Hotel Harabati...



Director's Statement

I am a born melancholic. There is a photo of me as a child that was taken at a family get-together where I am standing apart from my cousins. My eyes are open wide and I am staring over at them.

Today, I don't see any of these cousins anymore. My field has expanded beyond them.

I always get a kick out of watching others. What really interests me is what makes people laugh—which is not always obvious. As does contradiction, doubt and bad faith. Likewise, the juxtaposition of body language and what is actually said. The way we speak, the looks, the body say as much about what's going on words themselves. All this is why I studied Linguistics... and wanted to become a filmmaker!

On reading my screenplay, nuances in the story were not always obvious. But when I directed my actors, I tried to make sure that they came across in some way.

I realised that there is always a betrayal in the rational explanation of things. Sometimes things seem to make sense, but often they just don't. What I like in a written piece is that each spectator can choose his or her position. The truth can be found in the sum of the explanations. This is why I do not like a linear narrative structure. I don't like to use the cause and effect; instead, I prefer to leave interpretation up to the audience while giving them a scenario and background, and a little explanation. I've always thought the truth has to be somehow ambiguous.

The truth is also mysterious. Thus I wrote this story in an enigmatic way. Mystery gives meaning to life and makes it full of surprises. But explaining the truth and the mystery of life cannot be defined easily! That's why I am fascinated by the minutiae: snippets of life, temporal ellipses and a real passion for directing actors....

Biography - Brice CAUVIN

Brice CAUVIN studied Literature and Linguistics. His dissertation «a study on the language of cinema» got him into script writing. He became particularly interested in directing and worked as an Assistant Director to such Directors as Romain Goupil, Nicole Garcia, Maurice Pialat, Pierre Salvadori, Philippe Harel over 14 years, while making his own short films and featurettes. His *Faux Bourdon* was nominated for a Cesar Award and won a number of international film festival awards. He has also been teaching Directing at the FEMIS film school for the past 5 years. *HOTEL HARABATI* is his first feature film. The screenplay won the Gan Foundation prize and funding from the CNC.

Filmography - Brice CAUVIN

Faux-bourdon 1990 13'
Haute-Fidélité 1999 40'
Irène 2001 12'
Il en manque un 2002 30'

Cast Biographies

Laurent Lucas

Laurent Lucas came to prominence in Dominik Moll's 1999 film '*Harry, he's here to Help*' which was an international success. Since then he's been seen in a variety of edgy material including '*Who Killed Bambi?*' (Gilles Marchand, 2002) and '*In My Skin*' (Marina De Van 2002) as well as in last year's arthouse hit '*Lemming*'. (Dominik Moll)

Hélène Fillieres

Hélène Fillieres has appeared in many independent films in France over the last eight years including two directed by her sister, Sophie Fillieres. In 2006 she directed her first short film, *Mademoiselle Y*.

Anouk Aimé

Anouk Aimé is a French movie legend who acted in many films in the 50's and 60's but her international successes were with '*Lol'a*' in 1961 directed by Jacques Demy and Claude Lelouch's '*A Man and a Woman*' from 1966. She was married to Albert Finney.

Interview with Brice Cauvin

1) Hotel Harabati is about one couple in particular ...

To me, a couple doesn't really exist. I feel that we are always trying to define the indefinable. A troubled couple is not necessarily one that is falling apart. I wanted to show that love and relationships are built around difficult and fragile moments. Tension between Philippe and Marion fuel this story, and adds a dimension to their personalities.

2) The movie begins with a lie, which is seemingly insignificant...

It's more than a lie, it's a game. Marion and Philippe don't really want to go to Venice because they somehow feel obliged to go. At the same time, their feelings about the trip are rather immature: Venice may be full of clichés but it is also a wonderful place. It's because they've never been there that they can only think of the clichés. Thus they have to find their own Venice – this is what they do throughout the film.

3) Beforehand, they will have to overcome many obstacles, which is revealed in their way of speaking...

I wrote the dialogue so that it could have multiple meanings and be interpreted in many ways. At times the actors seemed to express the exact opposite of what they were saying. Hélène and Laurent, who play Marion and Philippe, were often surprised by what I meant by my words. For example, Marion suggests that they take the bag back but Philippe says that it is too late. It's not that he didn't agree with her, it's more that he wanted to test her fidelity to him. Then in the next scene, he suggests that they take the bag back. The truth in what they are saying can be found within these contradictory thoughts.

4) Where did the idea that paranoia is both a general and political feeling, notably in light of terrorist threat, come from?

Paranoia is a form of expressing anxiety. We start with a little white lie, which then turns into a nightmare. Because of the threat of terrorist attack, Philippe and Marion feel a sense of global alarm. Their little lie ricochets off their own anxieties and becomes all encompassing. They become so over-whelmed that they keep all their feelings inside, to the point where they think they are part of a greater terrorist plot. Sometimes we appropriate stories that we hear. In reality, the real fear is between them, as a couple and parents of two children.

5) You like wide frames...

Because close-ups tend to impose a point-of-view on the audience, I prefer to give a wider frame that allows them to choose their own position. This allows the audience greater interaction with the film and more personal interpretation.

6) The audience can feel that you love shooting locations...

i like to show a place in a wide shot because people have to look at it and search elements that helps to identify the character. But sometimes also I like to shoot a place in a very abstract way, like I did with les Galeries Lafayette. The department store is out of focus but the colour enable you to understand where you are and also that it is Christmas time.

7) How did you design Philippe and Marion's apartment?

Their apartment is neither functional nor appropriate for their family life. They refuse to adhere to convention even though a more family-friendly place would make their lives easier. They don't want this, just as they did not want to go to Venice. This is also the reason why they have nothing hanging on the walls, as if they were living there only temporarily... but it's been 10 years! The film's Art Director was afraid that all the rooms would end up looking the same. I was inspired by the paintings of Djamel Tatah, that are morose and somehow unsentimental – much like I am. I like the fact that none of his works have titles. I would like to have had no title for this film...

8) But your film does have a title ...

I had no choice. I ended up with the title because it was long associated with the project and... it doesn't really correlate to the film.

9) How was the writing process on this film?

I wanted to start with a concrete idea and turn it into a more abstract story... I wrote on my own, but I also consulted a few people along the way: Jerome Beaujour and I bounced some opinions back and forth. He helped me develop some of the more abstract themes in the film. Pierre Schoeller helped me develop the daily life of the characters and the more accessible themes in the film.

10) According to you, what is the meaning of the photos of Venice that Marion found in the envelope?

Any explanation is possible! The pictures are a symptom, do they exist or not? A mistake at the photo developing shop, a mystical event, a political conspiracy... At the Berlin Film Festival, everyone had their own idea and was convinced that it was the right explanation.

11) Your scenes can be very misleading: the biblical photographs, Marion and Philippe's visions... But they do more than mislead the audience, they also show the truth and reveal emotions, as shown in the scene when Philippe cries while watching a soap opera on which Marion has done the dubbing.

I like to play around with clichés, as do my characters. For the soap opera scene, I wanted the audience to be able to laugh and cry with Philippe. When we see Marion at work dubbing the show at the beginning of the film, it seems funny. When Philippe watches the show, it becomes sad. Thus, emotional reaction is subject to its context. Much like a sentimental love song! It almost seems like my characters' personalities are inherent and contribute to their realisation that they need each other. In the end,

Philippe accepts that he misses Marion – even though this seems a cliché to him. Accepting Venice is hardly a stretch then...

12) Marion's love of her children is sometimes overwhelming. It's almost like she is a wolf...

Yes, we wonder if she is the mother or an older sister at times... Marion's maternal love is the starting point of the film. Philippe is only present because she needed someone to father her children. I built the father figure much like a mother... so that they almost become one...there is a kind of a twinning of them as a couple.

13) Love is a worthy thing... beautiful pictures are too. The end of the movie could be a kind of epiphany, particularly the image of the family on the boat. But it is not. Maybe it's because of everything they've been through together...

Yes, I wanted the end of the movie to be as powerful as if they'd been to Venice, but there is one problem: the family is more reassured than happy. I also made a little in-joke by putting Philippe in a striped shirt like a gondolier. Venice is not in Italy, as sung by Reggiani ...

14) Do the images of Syria at the end of the movie really represent "Venice without tourism"?

I wanted to find a sublime place that is as beautiful as Venice, but where people work. That's why there are all the images of fishermen. And there is also the feeling that Philippe and Marion are no longer tourists

15) Why doesn't Philippe run to Marion as soon as he sees her on the hill with the children?

Philippe is perplexed when he sees Marion's flat belly. Before going to her, he must show her that he knew she was expecting a baby. This is how he can show her that he has accepted his role as father to their children.

16) You bring out a new side to Laurent Lucas

Laurent usually plays scary characters but in my film he is the one who is scared! He has such a romantic nature that I really wanted to show. Laurent loves to create his own character but he is also like a sponge in that he personifies everything you ask of him for the screen. It's great for someone like me who expects their actors to express contradictory emotions within the same scene. It was very stimulating to work with him.

17) And of Hélène Fillières too...

It was a pleasure to discover her inner talent with her. Hélène's candid nature is as seductive as her beauty. She turned her character into a more complex one than I had imagined – she is strong and gentle and never led astray by her husband.

18) Julie Gayet is not typecast at all...

We always think of Julie as a vision of perfection. I've known her for a long time and I wanted to shake this image up, so that audiences ask themselves if she wasn't really hiding something beneath her character's caring disposition.

19) And what about Anouk Aimé?

I wanted her without glasses and wearing trainers! I adored Anouk Aimé in Jacques Demy's LOLA and I found that her character of Nelly was not far off from Lola. So, when she accepted the role, I was happily surprised.

20) What can you tell me about the music in the film?

Philippe Miller composed the original soundtrack. I wanted a unique sound that was both beautiful and strange, that makes it difficult to know which cue sheet to read from.

21) Why did you decide to have Marion work in dubbing?

I didn't want her to have a typical office job, but I wanted her have a job where she could define and find herself.

Details

TECHNICAL DETAILS

35mm
Format 1.85
DolbySR Stereo
Shot in Paris and in Syria in Nov 2004-Jan 2005

CREW

Director	Brice CAUVIN
Producer	Marc IRMER
Screenplay	Brice CAUVIN Jérôme BEAUJOUR Pierre SCHOLLER
Cinematography	Marc TEVANIAN
Editor	Agathe CAUVIN
Sound	Pierre TUCAT, Loic PRIAN, Benjamin VIAU
Music	Philippe MILLER
Production Design	Philippe VAN HERWINEN

CAST

MARION	HÉLÈNE FILLIÈRES
PHILIPPE	LAURENT LUCAS
NELLY	ANOUK AIMÉ
SIMON	ANTHONY ROTH COSTANZO
SOPHIE	JULIE GAYET
MADAME FARGEON	SABINE HAUDEPIN
FRANÇOIS	HUSKY KIHAL
CATHÉRINE	CHARLOTTE CLAMENS