

LE REDOUTABLE

Een film van Michel Hazanavicius

Parijs 1967. Jean-Luc Godard (o.a. À BOUT DE SOUFFLE, LE MÉPRIS), de belangrijkste cineast van zijn generatie, werkt aan zijn film LA CHINOISE met de veel jongere actrice Anne Wiazemsky. Ze zijn verliefd en gelukkig. Met de studentenprotesten op straat lijkt de revolutie dichterbij dan ooit. Godard transformeert van gevierd filmmaker tot activistische maoïst. Even onbegrepen als onbegrijpelijk. Langzamerhand vervreemd hij van Anne en zijn publiek.

Met LE REDOUTABLE brengt regisseur Michel Hazanavicius (THE ARTIST) een ode aan Jean-Luc Godard en de nouvelle vague. Acteur Louis Garrel (MON ROI, SAINT LAURENT) geeft op fenomenale wijze gestalte aan de ontredding van Godard. Actrice Stacy Martin (NYMPHOMANIAC 1 & 2) maakt van Anne zijn muze en klankbord, maar uiteindelijk spreekt ook zij zijn taal niet meer. LE REDOUTABLE werd geselecteerd voor de officiële competitie van het Cannes filmfestival.



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Meer over de film: <http://www.cineart.nl/films/redoutable>

Download persmaterialen: <http://www.cineart.nl/pers/redoutable>

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MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS - director

Michel Hazanavicius was born and raised in Paris, France. His Jewish family is originally from Lithuania, but relocated to France in the 1920s. Hazanavicius attended art school, and moved on to work as a director for commercials and television projects. In 1999, he wrote and directed his first feature film MES AMIS (1999), which featured his brother Serge Hazanavicius. His next feature film, spy parody, OSS 117: LE CAIRE, NID D'ESPIONS (2006) was a success at the French box office, and warranted a sequel, OSS 117: RIO NE RÉPOND PLUS (2009), which was also a hit. Hazanavicius came to the attention of international audiences with the release of an almost wordless film, THE ARTIST (2011), which starred his wife, Bérénice Bejo and OSS 117 star Jean Dujardin.

THE ARTIST was a critical and popular hit, garnering many major nominations and awards. The film earned Hazanavicius the Oscar for Best Director in 2012.

Filmography

2017	LE REDOUTABLE
2014	THE SEARCH
2012	LES INFIDÈLES
2011	THE ARTIST
2009	OSS 117: RIO NE REPOND PLUS
2006	OSS 117: LE CAIRE, NID D'ESPIONS
1999	MES AMIS
1997	ECHEC AU CAPITAL (Short)
1993	LA CLASSE AMERICAINE (TV Movie)
1992	CA DÉTOURNE (TV Movie)
1992	DERRICK CONTRE SUPERMAN (TV Short)



INTERVIEW WITH MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS

Why this title, Redoubtable?

I've never been very good at choosing titles... I'm a great admirer of Godard, whose choice of titles is always brilliant. I'd even go as far as to venture that he picks the title first, then the film to go with it. The titles of the films he made in the sixties are all the better since each one resembles a possible self-portrait of the man he might have been: VIVRE SA VIE, CONTEMPT, LE PETIT SOLDAT, BANDE À PART, BREATHLESS...

The first title I had was *The Great Man*, but it had a caustic overtone that I didn't like. It could easily have been misinterpreted. On the other hand, I liked the "Belmondoesque" side of Redoubtable; it's also reminiscent of MARGINAL, INCORRIGIBLE, MAGNIFIQUE (THE MAN FROM ACAPULCO)... I also like the fact that the word can have a negative or positive connotation: to say that someone is redoubtable can be a compliment just as much as a reproach. Finally, I like the idea of using the gimmick "And so goes life inside the Redoubtable," even to end the film with it. It gives a little ironic touch that pleases me.

How did you come across *Un an après**?

*One Year Later by Anne Wiazemsky Completely by chance.

I had to take a train and had forgotten the book I was reading at the time. I looked for one at the station. I found *Un an après* and immediately saw a film.

Anne Wiazemsky wrote two books about her love story with JeanLuc Godard. *Une Année Studieuse* talks about the beginning of their relationship, the way this charming yet awkward guy takes his first steps in a great Gaullist family – Anne being François Mauriac's granddaughter – until the reception of LA CHINOISE at the Avignon Festival in 1967. *Un an après* talks about May 1968, the crisis Godard went through, his radicalization, the disintegration of their marriage, up until their breakup. I was very touched by their story: I found it original, moving, sexy and simply beautiful.

LE REDOUTABLE has a few elements from *Une Année Studieuse*, but comes in the main from *Un an après*. When I contacted her by phone, Anne Wiazemsky had already turned down several offers. She had no desire for her book to become a film. I remember that just before we hung up, I told her it was a real shame and all the more so as I'd found the book so funny. She reacted immediately and said she too thought it was funny but no one had ever said so. And that's how it all started.

At first sight, it's quite surprising to see you devote a film to Jean-Luc Godard.

I can imagine, but I don't consider this film so unexpected or even atypical. Of course, Godard is a particularly complex subject. But one of the things that interested me, and helped me to believe that this film was possible, was that Godard, while being a great artist with a difficult reputation – I'm talking about his films, but also about him, as a character – can all the same easily be seen as a pop culture icon. He's one of the key figures of the sixties, as much as Andy Warhol, Muhammad Ali, Elvis or John Lennon. He belongs to the popular imagination; through him we can approach subjects and themes common to us all. Love, creation, politics, pride, jealousy, etc... He has also never been bland, never tried to be "nice". This makes him a complex and human character, which allows a great narrative freedom. I'm not condemned to eulogize him, since this isn't the response he himself tries to elicit. But mostly, and we tend to forget this, his films – and also he himself – could be extremely funny at that time. He knew how to charm and was very witty.

It's striking to see how certain remarks made to Godard after the release of LA CHINOISE – beginning with the wish expressed by many that he would return to “funny films” of the kind he made with Belmondo – could be applied to you, who are asked endlessly when you are going to make a third OSS 117. The critical and public failure of LA CHINOISE is not without its echo in the reaction to your previous film, THE SEARCH. I imagine this must have crossed your mind...

Yes, it's true. As a rule I always try to work on different levels in my films, allowing different levels of interpretation. On the surface, LE REDOUTABLE might resemble what I've done in the past, an upending of a filmography, not unlike THE ARTIST or even OSS 117, but with a pop touch. I love working this way. And on a deeper level, I slipped in a few personal elements, because there was room.

Besides, and this is essential, it is their love story that attracted me first of all. It isn't only a story of sex or desire. The destruction of the Godard/ Wiazemsky couple arises from a man's profoundly sincere quest – deeply rooted in its era – for political and artistic truth, combined with a sort of masochistic and self-destructive pathology. In his search for ideals and the love of revolution, this man will destroy everything around him: his idols, his background, his work, his friends, but also his relationship, even his name, and will end up destroying himself. And Anne will be the witness of his downward spiral, she will love him as much as she can but will not be able to follow and will be powerless against his self-destructive drive.

Deep down, one cannot blame him. Nor her. But they drift apart in spite of themselves, they can only break up. I found this very beautiful.

To that one can add an original representation of May '68. The events of May '68 hasn't been depicted often in French cinema. I wanted to give it a breath of fresh air, a shot of colour, spirit, joy. It was important because for me these images show respect, in the first degree, for the spirit of May '68. If the film is at times irreverent, even if it mocks Godard a bit, I didn't want to treat May '68 badly. I could see a risk of accusations of anachronism, or a danger of misplaced irony towards a whole era. To respect that energy, directing the crowds, this youth, these faces, the slogans, seemed to me to be the biggest mark of respect I could show. It is also an opportunity to place a literal, fixed point around which the character of Godard can shift, leaving room for comedy.

Except for the beginning and the end of the film, you don't show Godard working on set. Why?

Firstly, because it's not a film “about Godard”, it's a love story. The point was not to make a thesis on Godard, or even a biopic. And there's something else. A director isn't a pole vaulter. There isn't a moment when everything suddenly crystalizes and culminates in some amazing feat. There is no performance. It's a long, hard slog... And if I'd filmed Godard at work, I would have had to surround him with actors with some resemblance with the originals: Jean-Pierre Léaud, Raoul Coutard, Jeanne Moreau, François Truffaut... I didn't want that.

The first scene, on the set of LA CHINOISE, allows me to make the audience accept that Louis Garrel is Godard. That's all. I don't ask for more. From this point of view, LE REDOUTABLE starts a bit like THE ARTIST: I lay out the rules of the game. First, the image of Godard, with Wiazemsky's voiceover. Then the image of Anne, with Godard's voiceover. And it's only on the third go, at the restaurant, that they are both reunited, as their voices and bodies are reunited. The complete embodiment of Godard takes place after we have seen him, after Anne has spoken about him and after we have heard his voice. Then, after three or four minutes of film, the audience knows that it is a love story that is going to be told, with real characters, but that the form will be freer than in a classic film.

What kind of relationship do you have with the cinema of Godard?

When I was young, I loved BREATHLESS, its incredible energy, its mythical slogans, Belmondo's brilliant presence... then, I loved the films of the Anna Karina period. Such charm! On the other hand, with Godard, it isn't such and such film that matters. None are perfect, contrary to what you can say about Billy Wilder, Ernst Lubitsch or Stanley Kubrick. Rather it's his trajectory one should follow. And this trajectory is unique, constantly evolving, constantly being redefined.

Godard had a charmed first decade: the sixties. Of course, I watched or re-watched all his films of that period. They breathe freedom, and remain absolutely and delightfully audacious and modern. I was struck by one thing as I watched them again: while he refuses the realism one finds in Truffaut, Chabrol or the others, his films leave today an impression of unsurpassable reality. As for the films of the seventies, while I understand the intellectual approach, I have to admit I find them difficult to watch. I see them more as pebbles placed along a road, successive stages along a long reflection that endures to this day.

One could say that Godard at that time turned his back on a certain type of cinema. As a spectator this is a problem for me, but as a director, I can feel only respect for his choice and for his integrity. You also have to remember that France at the time was so fossilized that any revolt, even the strangest, was understandable.

In my view, there is a realm where Godard is still relevant today, and it is the image. When he veers away from it, I find him less good. I don't consider him, for example, a great political thinker.

There is the filmmaker, and there is the man. Both are so intertwined that Godard has often regretted that his media image and his name are more familiar to the public than his films.

Yes, and this is something that interested me greatly. Godard isn't a "nice" man; he has never tried to be. How to direct a film about a destructive and paradoxical character? I could have smoothed out all the bumps and made an entirely positive figure out of him, erected a statue of him, but that would have felt like a betrayal. In his journey, notably during that era, Godard could be harsh, uncompromising, and this had to be shown. He was very violent; he behaved badly in public with numerous people... That said, I had no desire to criticize him or make an *a posteriori* judgment against him. Even his Maoism. That's why, early on, I remember making a mental note about giving him, quite literally, the last word. Which is what I did. But in truth, that was one of the challenges of the film, finding the right balance... between the destructive aspect of the character and the empathy I wanted us to have for him. And also between the love story and the comedy; between the formal aspect, the upending of and respect for the characters, and finally between themes that might at first appear slightly elitist, and my desire to make a popular movie.



When did these questions arise? Mainly during the shoot? Or during the writing?

During the writing. After a time, I told myself I had to put the real Godard aside. I had to take some distance from Anne Wiazemsky's book, but also from biographies, documents, etc... I had to accept a reinvented Godard, admittedly inspired by the truth, but one who had to be my Godard, in any case the Godard of the film. A creation. And to have this creation serve a wider film. It is by the way not the Godard character but the love story that gives the film its dimension. It's what structures the film. And it's what allows us to feel empathy for Godard. Anne manifestly loves Jean-Luc, she looks at him with admiration and love. This is very important in a film, that a character who is not *a priori* lovable, should be loved by another character. It can really break down reservations.

In concrete terms, the film really started to take shape when I stopped thinking like Godard, when he became Jean-Luc for me. A character pretty much like any other. I know this will seem almost blasphemous to some, but it's what actually happened.

The empathy you mention is of course linked to your choice of Louis Garrel to play Godard.

Of course. First because of his quality as an actor, Louis was able to bring a whole range of nuances to make the character human. But on a deeper level, he carries something in him that makes him credible in this kind of world, with its particular issues, its language. Beyond Godard, it's clear to see that he understands what he is saying. He has both an elite aspect, very sharp, and a huge comic potential that perfectly suits the kind of popular cinema I like to make. He's an extremely talented and hardworking actor, and I would say he is someone you love to love. He's also handsome, which is an asset when playing someone who is supposed to have a real charisma, which is the case with Godard.

You and Louis Garrel don't see Godard in the same way. Where does the film place itself, in conjunction of your two different points of view?

We split the work, in a certain way. Louis thought of seducing the spectators who love Godard, and I those who don't, or who – and there are a lot more of them – don't think anything in particular about him. Louis guaranteed a great respect for the real Jean-Luc Godard, where I tended to twist things a bit more to improve my fictional Jean-Luc Godard. To exaggerate, I'd say that he leant towards reverence and I towards irreverence. But as much as I monopolized Godard, Louis did the same. And my Godard became his. The final result is a cross between the real Godard, Anne Wiazemsky's vision of him, Louis' incarnation and mine.

Before I cast Louis, I knew he was a good Godard impersonator, but that's not why I picked him. In fact I told him that it wasn't at all what I was looking for. For his part, he was ready to drop the impersonation and attempt a Godard closer to himself. Without any particular intonation, or desire to physically resemble him. But the role was written with Godard's phrasing, and during our readings, as soon as Louis imitated him, it all became hilarious immediately. I was a fan. We resisted for a while, but quickly it became very obvious. Then, the idea was to keep it to a minimum, to allow the audience to believe in the character, but without trying to duplicate a perfect photo in each sequence. On the contrary, it was necessary to give the actor maximum freedom of interpretation in each situation, and to avoid locking him in. To allow him to go from the private to the public figure, from the comic to the tragic, from love to politics, etc... This is how we tried to let the human filter through the interpretation, to approach the much-vaunted Jean-Luc. To not be obsessed with Godard.

To get there took hours of discussion, and I mean hours and hours! I don't think I have ever talked with an actor as much as I did with Louis.

How did you choose Stacy Martin for Anne?

Bérénice Béjo acted with her in CHILDHOOD of a Leader by Brady Corbet. They were shooting in Bulgaria and I went to see Bérénice for a few days, that's how I met Stacy. When I started to look for a young actress, Bérénice reminded me about her, I called her and she came to do some tests, and that was that. It became obvious. Stacy looks like a young woman of the sixties. She was born in Paris, but lives in London and spent some of her childhood abroad, she has a very slight accent, and there's something timeless when she speaks that I really like.

Stacy was remarkable. In the first part of the film, she mostly listens and looks: her presence is essential, but of course, these are not the most exciting parts in the world to play.

But there's a tragic beauty to her face, something slightly distant, that allows the spectator to tell themselves all sorts of stories... to superimpose a wealth of feelings and nuances. She has the face of a silent actress, a bit like Garbo. The scenes of observation, of listening, became very simple for me. I knew that the character would exist, even without too much dialogue. The film tells the story of her emancipation, and of the erosion of her love for her husband, and so Stacy and I established a progressive loss of her smile. She smiles a lot at the beginning, then less and less, and ends up not smiling at all, until she frees herself from him. The return of her smile indicates her liberation.

To be drawn into their love story, I needed the audience to fall in love with her from the start. To achieve this I tried to treat her like a pop object, and film her as such. And for the first time I confronted a couple, the representation of love and sexuality. It is through her that the film opens to life, sensuality and love. It is her character that tells the story, and it is because she loves Godard, despite all his flaws, that we accept him. She is the fixed point of the film.

You mentioned that Anne Wiazemsky's book made you laugh. How did you transform Jean-Luc Godard into a comic character?

Godard has always been funny: he trips on the carpet, breaks his glasses, mumbles... He's a bit of a Buster Keaton. But beyond this, the more a man is respected, the easier it is to shift him off track and make him funny. Years ago I walked past Professor (Albert) Jacquard in the street. He was with his wife and he asked if she remembered where they had bought their pork chops last time. That filled me with joy, and each time I think about it, knowing that Professor Jacquard could care so much about pork chops delights me. Louis summed it up very well with a quote from Lubitsch: "At least twice a day the most dignified human being is ridiculous." I tried to keep this distance from the character, a irony entirely without malice, during the whole process.

The difficulty was also that LE REDOUTABLE is not only a comedy, but also a drama. This combination of two genres is new for you...

When I gave the script to be read, the reactions were extremely: some thought the love story was magnificent, others were struck by the evocation of May '68, others thought the whole thing was very funny... The great challenge of the film was balance, in particular, tonal balance. I looked for it during the writing, I tried to keep it while shooting, then later in the editing room, but you don't know if you have succeeded or not until the very end, when you see the completed film, and then when you screen it.

If there is a reference here, it's less Godard than Italian comedy: Dino Risi, Ettore Scola and the rest. Italian comedy is without equal when it comes to the combination of genres. You just have to think of a film like WE ALL LOVED EACH OTHER SO MUCH, and in particular the last scene in the parking lot. These films combine empathy and detachment, which for me is a constant source of inspiration. Even if, in this case, I have proceeded a little differently: the detachment is very present at the

beginning, then diminishes until it disappears in the hotel bedroom scene. At this stage, it is for me a matter of simply looking at the characters. Only the music introduces a little discrepancy, a little step back.

Talking about comedy, the scene of the argument in the car, when they are returning from Cannes, is a real tour de force.

I love this scene. Six characters crammed together for a sequence-shot that necessitated one and a half days of work. The most complicated thing was to calibrate the timing: the management of time and silence between each line. We had to leave the silences, and also leave time for the silences to respond to other silences. To let the tension settle, grow, explode, wind down, start again... All this has to be extremely precise and requires a lot of time, a lot of work, especially when you have to tune all the actors to the same movement. Of course, it would have been easier to cut, I could have reconstructed everything *a posteriori*. But I wanted the scene to be a sequence-shot. I worked on the editing live, with the actors. That's another great advantage of working with actors of this calibre. You can really go into detail, work on what lies behind the performance as well as the timing, it's a real pleasure. Louis, Stacy, Bérénice, Gregory Gadebois, Micha Lescot, Marc Fraize, everyone stuck in this little cell, that's a lot of talent per square meter! What a joy!

Generally speaking I had a lot of pleasure working with the actors. Perhaps because I wanted to do more sequence-shots in this film than in my previous ones, perhaps because I also wanted to do more close-ups, and perhaps also because of the genre, but I feel I have done something different on this film. As if I relied less on the editing, but demanded more on set. I really enjoyed it.

Bérénice for example, who plays Michèle Rosier, even though she only has a few scenes, brings to the film a modernity and an energy that gives it balance. She plays the woman Anne would like to be, and towards which she is leaning. She is self-sufficient, independent, beautiful, and not overawed by Godard. She stands up to him. I loved watching Bérénice play that, I love her energy in the film; to me it's as if she was saving humanity. I have known for a long time that she is a fantastic actress, but I still love working with her and watching her do things I haven't seen before. It's a joy. The character of Banban, her husband, is more unassuming, their couple being a mirror of Anne and Jean-Luc. Micha Lescot brought his nonchalance, his elegant aloofness to the role and did it to perfection. Gadebois plays Michel Cournot. Very different from the real Michel Cournot, who was a charming and brilliant seducer; he portrays a guy betrayed by his friend whom he nonetheless still admires. I don't know how the real Cournot reacted when the Cannes Festival was cancelled in '68, but I thought it was very funny to see it from the perspective of pride. Gadebois is such a magnificent actor, who gives depth to any line of dialogue, making it funny without ever any sniggering. He plays broad yet at the same time it's highly nuanced. Truly impressive.



And there are some actors we haven't seen much yet. Felix Kysyl, who plays Gorain. He's very young but really good. He brings out Jean-Pierre Gorain's seriousness, his sometimes-austere radical side, but in such a way that he is never 'above' the character, never judging him. And he also has an uneasy relationship to Godard. He is fascinated by him just as much as he fascinates him. There is also a love story, even if more cerebral. Felix played that to perfection. Arthur Orcier, who plays Jean-Henri Roger, captures the hot-headedness of the youth of the time, he has a Parisian cockiness, a bit of a thug, not at all an intellectual. There's also Marc Fraize, a very funny actor, who plays Emile. He portrays someone completely outside the world of the other characters, and the simplicity and sincerity of his acting creates a spark that ignites a fire with the leads. He only has one scene in the film, but the precision of his acting brought so much. I could go on and on about the actors, I love them all.

One of the film's principles is that it often – not always – operates as a pastiche. Many scenes revisit moments from Godard's cinema.

Yes. More than pastiche or revisiting, I prefer to speak about variations or diversions. But it's not a board game or a test for film buffs. It's a way of talking about Godard by recapturing and diverting his motifs. This is where the film is a tribute, in its very material. In its playing with the language of the cinema of that era. But also, and this is at least as important, this constant detachment creates space for comedy, allowing me to lighten the storytelling, to relate painful moments in a comic fashion. The film goes back and forth all the time between the narrative of the story itself, respect for the characters, and detachment, be it visual and cinematographic, or straightforward comedy.

You shot on film, as with your other movies.

Yes. The question was more which format. I could have filmed in Cinemascope, as Godard did for CONTEMPT or PIERROT LE FOU. But I wanted to give an important place to the street demonstrations, and these are associated with the televisual imagination, with a 1:33 image. So I opted for a compromise by choosing 1:85. This might not be the most Godardian format, but you have to consider the fact that there's a sizable difference between us: I reconstitute May '68, something he would never have done.

As far as the image goes, the idea was to walk in the Godardian world, without ever feeling like its prisoner. When it came to lighting, Guillaume Schiffman and I opted to get our inspiration from films of the mid-sixties like CONTEMPT or PIERROT LE FOU or TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER... The idea was to adapt them as best we could to tell the story or accompany the film's situation. For example, there are several types of backlighting in the film, but they are there to serve the story. The difficulty lay in creating a coherence with crowd scenes shot in the street, reconstituted sets, very 'graphic' images of apartment, and seaside scenes in natural settings. The collage side of the film probably helps a lot; Guillaume Schiffman's talent does the rest.

For the set design as well, with Christian Marti, the idea was the same, to be at the service of situation and story. Even if the use of primary colours, red, blue and yellow is probably more constant and more pronounced. The recreation of an era is always a lot of work for the set designers, and even if I am starting to have some experience, in this case it was heavy... in particular, the streets of Paris, where we shot the demonstrations, and that we had to recreate as they were at the time. I'll take this opportunity to raise my hat to the great work of Falap Aubry, in charge of special effects, seldom identified in my films but crucial to the making of the images.

For the costumes, of course, Sabrina Riccardi, worked extraordinarily hard; the base was also to work on primary colours. But to bring them out, particularly for street scenes, we decided to play with a variety of beiges, greys and blues, a little like in the OSS films. This allowed us to compose the image

by moving the extras only, adding a touch of blue at the bottom, or yellow to the right, etc... There is also a whole level of play with the costumes of the main characters, allowing them to evolve visually as they evolve emotionally. At the beginning of the film, for example, Godard is well dressed in a suit and tie, then progressively, his attire deteriorates. Anne starts with a look reminiscent of Claude Jade in *Stolen Kisses*, very conventional, then gradually catches up her with her times, finishing as a less childish, more at ease woman. By the end she will also start wearing red, the colour reserved for Bérénice at the beginning, as if she was at last finding her independence. These are fascinating games to play but require incredibly good heads of department, and once again I was very lucky to have them.

Towards the end, the argument in the hotel room scene is accompanied by a new voice over. Who is talking? What is the text?

The text about the infinite character of the domestic scene is by Roland Barthes; it's an extract from *A LOVERS' DISCOURSE: FRAGMENTS*. The voice is Michel Subor, the lead in *Le Petit Soldat*. There are at least two other winks like this one. We see Jean-Pierre Mocky being insulted by Godard in the restaurant. There's always been a kinship between Mocky and Godard. And Romain Goupil, who was his assistant, appears as a policeman.

What's new in this film in relation to your work?

It's hard to say... I hope I've found a new balance between aesthetics and respect for characters. It seems to me that in *THE ARTIST*, form took over, and in *THE SEARCH*, it disappeared, at least in the sense that I imposed a head-on relationship with the story on the audience. Here I've tried to play with several genres, to be free, to blend pure comedy with more complex elements.

Are you expecting some kind of reaction from Jean-Luc Godard?

Before the shoot, I sent him a letter. No reply. Then he made it known that he wanted to read the screenplay. I sent it to him. No answer. I suggested he'd see the film. He had someone reply he didn't want to see it. That said, it's not impossible that at some point he will come out with one of the slogans at which he excels. Words that will cover me in shame, and that will make even my loved ones ashamed for me. We'll see. At the same time, I'm delighted about this film, and if I had to choose, I'd rather have a film by me about Godard than a film by Godard about me.



CAST

Jean-Luc Godard	LOUIS GARREL
Anne Wiazemsky	STACY MARTIN
Rosier	BÉRÉNICE BEJO
Bambam	MICHA LESCOT
Cournot	GREGORY GADEBOIS
Jean-Pierre Gorin	FELIX KYSYL

INTERVIEW WITH LOUIS GARREL

Your admiration for Jean-Luc Godard's cinema is well known. Bearing that in mind, how did you welcome Michel Hazanavicius' proposition to play him on screen?

Taking this part was far from a foregone conclusion. For any actor, the role of Godard would be very intimidating. Godard has played and continues to play a central role in my work.

Think of a Christian, for whom the figure of Christ is a profound inspiration... How could he play Christ on screen without having the painful feeling he is descending into blasphemy? It's a little like that for me. My first reaction was: as his admirer, I can't play Godard.

Then Michel and I talked a lot while he was writing. He explained that this wasn't a film about Godard. He talked to me about *Un an après*, Anne Wiazemsky's book, whose point of view is the central theme. LE REDOUTABLE is less a biopic than the story of a filmmaker caught at a specific turning point of his life that converges with a historical turning point. The period in question is short but dense. It begins with the filming of LA CHINOISE and goes up until the beginnings of the Dziga Vertov Group. And for all the rest, it's before and after May '68.

It is also a love story. So I started to see it more clearly. Later when I read the script, I was captivated from the first page. It was like a sophisticated collage. And I was attracted by the subject, it was enthralling. I learned many things about the Dziga Vertov Group and the complicity between Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin... But what surprised me most was the way it was presented. Godard moves away from film, cuts himself from his network of contacts, throws himself into activism... And at the same time he's racing in that direction, his relationship with Anne goes to pieces. All this is in the book, but Michel's screenplay reminded me of an Ettore Scola comedy! Even though the narrative content is dramatic, the situations are all shown in an amazing comic light. Politics in particular never ceases to produce burlesque comedy.

Did you find this the right approach?

Yes. Less in keeping with what 1968 could have been than with what you hear from those who were there... Even if these experiences are composed of a combination of joy and drama, even tragedy, it's often the absurd, even the comical, that is also highlighted in the story. A result of hindsight, I'd say... While he didn't live the events of 1968, Michel talks about them in the same way as those who knew the barricades, meaning that he emphasizes the joyous and vital side of the revolution.

This is the third time I've acted in a film about May '68. Bernardo Bertolucci's approach in THE DREAMERS (2003) is phantasmagorical. My father's REGULAR LOVERS (2005) is poetic. I didn't want to repeat myself. But Michel's point of view is different again: he uses the codes of dramatic farce or Italian-style comedy; his point of view is both critical and tender... After all, Godard himself, in replying to a question about May '68 and cinema, said it was a subject for Jerry Lewis.

Aren't comedy and politics contradictory?

Probably. But you can't separate Godard from his taste for paradox and provocation, for deconstruction and yes, for the comic. Provocation is an integral part of his way of being and working. Godard is incapable of getting involved with anything – a television set, at an assembly, even a novel – without deconstructing and reconstructing. I heard Gorin say that he has only ever made first films. Dissatisfaction and perpetual motion have made him the inventor of modernity, the Picasso of cinema.

The film is above all a love story - how was working with Stacy Martin?

I knew Stacy from Lars Von Trier's NYMPHOMANIAC, and was impressed with her performance. Even more so after I met her, since she is very different from her character in the film. I don't know how she coped during the shooting of our film, but in each scene she managed to impose an authoritative tenderness that, in the face of all opposition, makes her love the character I played. In the end, she embodies a very intelligent woman, lover and friend. And with an immensely graceful beauty.

What do you think of this movement that in 1968 made Godard leave the bright lights of cinema for the shadows of activism?

In 1968 Godard decides to leave the place where he is absolute master to go into politics. I feel that for Michel, this shift is dangerous: he doesn't believe that artistic practice can coexist with such militant activism. I agree in part: this shift perhaps appeared to lead him to a dead end. But with hindsight, one can also say that it's from that place that Godard reinvented himself. And I can only admire his journey. I think it's very powerful... All the more so in Godard's case because it leads him to explore the limits of cinema. It is characteristic of his approach since the beginning: to redefine cinema through its limits, without respite. He continues today with films like GOODBYE TO LANGUAGE (2014).

Did you look at documents to prepare for the part? Films? TV interviews with Godard?

All the time; I always have, even when I'm not playing him. In interviews he can be inhibiting. The way he appreciates films at unexpected moments. I think his apparent severity is a sign of a deep and constant need for the other. He needs to break up. But not rupture. He needs to determine himself in relation to the other: to deconstruct, cut and edit all relationships... he tells us that when he was a boy scout his nickname was bickering sparrow! He is someone who needs arguments, discussions, confrontation... the presence of the other, but a true other, meaning someone who resists him. I believe all these aspects are in the film.

You've always had a reputation as one of his finest impersonators – and there are many. Was this your starting point for portraying him?

Yes and no. Michel and I wondered which Godard we wanted to show. Because there are many. We mostly know his media image. The risk was to reproduce this image during intimate moments, which would be misplaced. We also know Godard the actor, in his own films: I'm thinking of FIRST NAME: CARMEN (1983) where he plays himself as a madman of sorts, or KEEP YOUR RIGHT UP (1987) in which he's very funny. These elements had to be there. But they weren't the only ones.

How did you prepare, physically?

Did I need a wig? I thought any sort of fakeness had to be avoided... but I didn't really know what had to be done. Michel convinced me in the end, by showing me a sketch of how he saw Godard, the glasses, the tuft of hair, etc... And from that everything became clear. And the idea of the comic book convinced me. A comic book tone.

We tried to find a modulation between the image in the media and a more intimate image, to play on different registers... For me this modulation is essential in approaching the character.

I often told Michel that I absolutely wanted to avoid hurting those who love Godard. And he used to reply that he didn't want to frighten those who hate him. The film is a balance between these two desires and two fears. That's Michel's inclusive side. He conceives of a film that can be seen by a very wide audience. He loves the idea of addressing the whole world. I tend to see things differently. I'm very happy of the meeting of our two different approaches.

The film could give the impression that it was partly improvised...

That's the effect we wanted to achieve. But we managed it by doing the reverse. The car scene illustrates this perfectly. They are coming back from Cannes. There are six of them crammed in the car going back to Paris. That's already quite funny in itself. It becomes hilarious when you know the context. Godard had driven south to block the festival. Although a supporter of the struggle, his friend Michel Cournot would have still liked his film *LES GAULOISES BLEUES* to be screened. From this, a terrible argument explodes. Michel filmed it as sequence-shot, in a way that we were all in the frame constantly. And we are even more crammed especially as everyone is involved: Renoir, Hawks, the whole story of Cinema that Godard says he is done with... The scene seems improvised while in fact it was planned down to the last millimetre. It took us two days to be able to give Michel what he wanted. A large part of the material was unusable because of our hysterical laughter. There were long silences during which it was really difficult to refrain from laughing, it was so funny. There are directors who are really inside the action and who love the work of the actors. Michel is one of them.

What is the vision of Godard that finally emerges from the film?

The image of a man who wanted, at a decisive political moment, to turn cinema into an art that makes you think, at the risk of getting on the wrong side of people who loved him for other reasons. Michel's view of the era isn't nostalgic, nor is he crushed by the figure of Godard. It is a curious and tender look. And that's how I'd like the audience to see the film.



INTERVIEW WITH STACY MARTIN

How did you become involved in Michel Hazanavicius' project?

I went through a very official casting procedure, then Michel called and asked me to do a test with Louis (Garrel), probably to check how things worked between us. Michel called me after that to tell me he wanted to work with me. We saw each other and talked a lot, he told me that his intention wasn't to make a biopic but a comedy about Godard, and he gave me Anne Wiazemsky's books, in which she tells their story.

What did you know about Anne Wiazemsky?

I knew Anne through her films. Several years ago, I saw AU HASARD BALHAZAR at an independent cinema in London, and it moved me deeply. The story is both simple and profound. Anne is extremely beautiful in it: pure and sensual at the same time. It left its mark on me.

And Godard?

I'd seen his films, at least two from that period. I watched UNE FEMME MARIÉE again and was completely captivated, I really think it's one of his best. I re-watched others again and a lot of Truffaut films too.

Really? Why Truffaut?

For the era, the way people talk, the way they move, the way they behave. To help me find a texture, a tone. Godard's films are completely re-written in the editing, which makes it difficult to get direct inspiration without falling into caricature. I needed something more natural, more every day and Truffaut's films were very useful for this.

Have you met Anne Wiazemsky?

No... not yet! I really have to meet her now. Especially since I know she saw the film and liked it. I hope she will be at Cannes. I was hesitant before the shoot, I wondered or not I should meet her. But I was so taken by her book, and Michel's adaptation of it, that I wanted to discover something by myself. And on top of that, I'm a big fan of her work and was a bit afraid of meeting her! (laughs). Deep down I was concerned that it would influence me too much, that by having such a direct reference, I'd lose some artistic curiosity. There was so much information in the book and the screenplay; I wanted to find something else, something of my own. Especially since she doesn't have so much dialogue. So much is said through her eyes, her way of being, of listening... That's the risk we took with Michel, and very quickly, after a week or two of shooting, we knew that it was working...

Now that you've played Anne's character, how would you define it?

(laughs) To me, Ann was from a very young age witness to a quite incredible world, a defining chapter of French cinema. But she was also a becoming a woman, profoundly questioning the love of her life as well as her work, her own artistic aspirations, the life she intended to live....

What do you find the most touching about her?

The way she looks at their story and at everything that happened. It isn't so easy to revisit in writing a relationship that was sometimes difficult. She is always very tender when it comes to Godard. Even when she talks in a negative way, and this touches me deeply as it shows the love they had for each other. It's difficult sometimes to look with tenderness at someone you have loved, who has changed a lot and became someone else. It's as if love had changed but somehow survived... Her writing shows a combination of gentleness, intimacy and lucidity that Michel has managed to recreate wonderfully, through his direction of the cast but just as much through his narrative ability. We are truly with this couple, completely caught up in their story; it's funny at the beginning and grows more moving as time passes before becoming melancholy – it's also the story of the end of a love affair...

What really moves me is Anne's evolution. From the time of her meeting with Godard, also without doubt because of him, she changed, grew, studied, and discovered more of herself. It is also set in an era of turmoil, everything is changing, culturally but also for women, and this obviously resonates in her. Furthermore, in relation to Godard himself – as she says at the end: "He didn't die that day, but something in him died forever" – she had also fallen in love with an artist who became another. When the artist becomes another artist, does he become another person? The beauty of this film is that it also raises all these questions.

What is, in your opinion, Louis Garrel's greatest asset for portraying Godard?

He has so many it's hard to choose only one! (laughs). Given the cult around Godard in France, it was a huge challenge, but that didn't scare him. At the same time, Louis is very humble and worked very, very hard. The greatest thing he achieved is that he didn't turn him into a caricature. He is a man. With all the surprises this implies. We went much further than a simple biopic. It really is an interpretation of Godard, in the true sense of the word. It was really hard, but he got it right. He makes him humble, and it really becomes a love story between a man and a woman. It isn't the case that we forget Godard and Wiazemsky, but we are with them, we become attached to them as human beings and not only as "icons", and I find this very beautiful...

What was it like acting opposite Louis Garrel?

I loved watching him work, and I loved working with him. He's awesome! (laughs) And he's very, very funny. He is extremely inventive, attentive as well, and he's always looking for a joke, a way to make people laugh... Really attentive.

How would you define Michel Hazanavicius as a director?

Michel has the same kind of freedom children have when they draw before... before they're told how to do it! They have beautiful creative freedom. They have such fun discovering things; they're always searching. Michel's a bit like that, very free, almost childlike, yet extremely precise when it comes to framing, to the image, the colours, and the performances. It was the first time I worked like this, where each texture, each composition mattered, like in painting. I remember one very long and difficult scene where we were really struggling, nothing was working. Suddenly, in the middle of the scene, Michel cuts, says nothing, walks past us, adjusts the curtain behind us: the frame wasn't straight and was destabilising the whole image! Just like that he managed to relieve the pressure, he reminded us that we were in a film, we were also elements of that image, and we felt freer as a result... Working with him has certainly given me a new kind of liberty.

Did he talk much about the character or the era, while shooting?

We had many discussions beforehand, did quite a lot of reading, we met many times, we discussed cinema, we did tests and a lot of costume research. So much so that once we started shooting everything quickly fell into place and we didn't need to talk about the characters much...

Was there a scene you particularly were anxious about? All the demonstration scenes. Because of the crowd, the number of people involved. It was one of the first times I'd been on a set without so many extras... there were running scenes, a few quite violent scenes, and others with a lot of real dialogue. I was anxious about this combination of genres.

What was the biggest challenge for you?

To stay on track, the film's track as well as the track of Anne's book. It could have very easily fallen into caricature or mockery, which wasn't Michel's intention at all. We moved forward with care...

Off the top of your head, any favourite scenes?

All the restaurant scenes. They have beautiful energy, which wasn't particularly obvious. Each character has a different dynamic, and I find that they truly represent what we shot, even though

they weren't the easiest to act. The scene where they are naked while discussing the problem of nudity in films also makes me laugh a lot!

If you could keep only one image, one moment from this adventure, what would it be?

I think the scene in the car, when they're coming back from Cannes.

Why?

Because it was hard to shoot. It was a one shot scene... and it was very hard not to laugh! I didn't really have much dialogue, I was a bit of an observer, and it was incredible to watch such a furious debate take place in such a tiny car. It was also very hot and we were all crammed together. We had to do at least thirty takes. It was during the very early days of the shoot; instead of giving us a big talk beforehand, Michel played us part of the score from THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN on set! Right away, a team spirit emerged. We all immediately felt that we were part of – not a family, since there isn't such a creative spirit in a family! – but a troupe. It was warm and creatively very stimulating.



GODARD'S CIRCLE

BERENICE BEJO - Michèle Rosier (1930 – 2017)

The daughter of Hélène Lazareff, journalist, stylist and filmmaker Michèle Rosier was one of the inventors of modern prêt-à-porter. She directed some half dozen feature films, including *GEORGE WHO?* (1973) and *MALRAUX, TU M'ÉTONNES* (2001). In 2016, she was the subject of a French Cinémathèque retrospective.

MICHA LESCO - Jean-Pierre Bamberger (? – 2014)

Nicknamed "Bambam", he was the best friend of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, and the partner of Michèle Rosier. A former Resistance fighter, he pursued multiple activities without limiting himself to any one in particular: a co-founder of the newspaper *Libération*, he worked with Agnès B., as well as producing and acting in a number of films...

GREGORY GADEBOIS - Michel Cournot (1922 – 2007)

Book and cinema critic for *Le Nouvel Observateur*, later theatre critic for *Le Monde*, his reviews were as eagerly awaited as they were feared. He wrote and directed *LES GAULOISES BLEUES* (1968), and was the author of several books, including *Au cinéma* (Leo Scheer, 2003).

FELIX KYSYL - Jean-Pierre Gorin (1943)

A founder member of Le Monde des Livres, before forming the Dziga Vertov Group with Jean-Luc Godard, since 1975 Jean-Pierre Gorin has lived in the US, where he pursues his career as an important if far from prolific director (POTO & CABENGO in 1978, ROUTINE PLEASURES in 1986...) A close friend of critic and painter Manny Farber, he taught film at San Diego University.

ARTHUR ORCIER - Jean-Henri Roger (1949 – 2012)

One of the “spiritual advisors” of French cinema, Jean-Henri Roger was a founding member of the Dziga Vertov Group, before joining the collective Cinélutte. He taught film at the University of Vincennes (Paris VIII), and co-directed two films with Juliet Berto (NEIGE in 1981 and CAP CANAILLE in 1983). The films LULU (2001) and CODE 68 (2005) followed. He appeared as an actor in Godard’s In PRAISE OF LOVE (2001).

CREW

Directed By	MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS
Screenplay	MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS
Based on The Novel	<i>Un An Après</i> BY ANNE WIAZEMSKY
D.p.	GUILLAUME SCHIFFMAN
Sound	JEAN MINONDO
Editor	ANNE-SOPHIE BION
1st Ass. Director	JOSEPH RAPP
1st Ass. Editor	CAMILLE DELPRAT
Continuity	ISABEL RIBIS
Production Designer	CHRISTIAN MARTI
Location Manager	FRANÇOIS PULLIAT
Art Director	CHRISTIAN MARTI
Lead Casting	STÉPHANE TOUITOU
Extras Casting	LAURENT SOULET
Costume Designer	SABRINA RICCARDI
Make-Up	MATHILDE JOSSET
Hair	MARGO BLACHE
Key Sculptor	ARNAUD BEAUTE
Vfx Supervisor	PHILIPPE «FALAP» AUBRY
Dailies Colorist	MIGUEL BEJO
Post-Production	SUPERVISOR FRANK METTRE
Executive Producer	DANIEL DELUME
Produced By	MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS FLORENCE GASTAUD RIAD SATTOUF
Assistant Producer	JULIEN BECTARTE