

LOUIS GARREL

CAMILLE COTTIN

PIERRE LOTTIN

juste une illusion

EEN FILM VAN
ERIC TOLEDANO & OLIVIER NAKACHE



cinéart

PERSMAP

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Synopsis

JUSTE UNE ILLUSION is een hartverwarmende komedie waarin nostalgie en een verliefde tiener de jaren 80 weer tot leven brengen. Regisseurs Nakache en Toledano keren terug met een feelgoodfilm die, zoals ook in INTOUCHABLES en HORS NORMES, sociale problemen niet uit de weg gaat, maar vooral laat zien hoe hilarisch het dagelijks leven kan zijn.

Het is 1985, The Cure en Imagination strijden in de hitparade, Kohl en Mitterand op het wereldtoneel. De bijna dertienjarige Vincent groeit op in een voorstad van Parijs, waar niet alleen de wereldeconomie, maar ook zijn gezin in een crisis verkeert. Vader Yves (Louis Garrel) is zijn baan kwijtgeraakt maar durft dat niet te vertellen. Moeder Sandrine (Camille Cottin) verlangt na jaren als secretaresse naar een baan met meer uitdaging. De spanningen monden geregeld uit in felle ruzies. Terwijl Vincent zijn plek probeert te vinden binnen een gezin dat uit elkaar groeit, beleeft hij zijn eerste grote verliefdheid en zet hij zijn eerste stappen richting volwassenheid.

Nakache en Toledano brengen een filmische ode aan de muziek, mode en radiospelletjes van de jaren 80, maar bovenal een persoonlijk verhaal dat van alle tijden is. Een puber die zichzelf moet ontdekken, en ouders die elkaar moeten herontdekken.





Directors: Éric Toledano & Olivier Nakache

INTERVIEW WITH ÉRIC TOLEDANO & OLIVIER NAKACHE

JUSTE UNE ILLUSION is one of your most personal films. What was the starting point for this new project?

Éric Toledano: We wanted to tell the story of that transition out of childhood, that in-between age we all go through at some point. It's a time of transformation, a seismic shift in the way you see the world, and we were drawn to the idea of turning that into both a realistic story and a comedy. As we started looking back at the different layers of our own adolescence, we realised how deeply those years still lived within us. The desire to bring all of that together is what sparked the project.

Olivier Nakache: These teenage years come back to you in a strange way once you reach your fifties. Maybe because you realise how many decisive moments are concentrated in that period, when you live completely in the present. And maybe also because, once you have teenagers of your own, you start looking back at your own life through them! In any case, we spent a long time thinking about why we wanted to tackle this subject. It led us in several directions at once: cultural, philosophical and deeply personal. And then there were the images, the family photographs.

Éric Toledano: If we chose to explore that period, it was because Olivier and I both felt ready to reveal more of ourselves in this film than we had in the past.

So, the film is clearly inspired by your own youth. How do you write childhood memories when there are two of you?

Olivier Nakache: The approach was the same as when we wrote NOS JOURS HEUREUX. We start by telling each other stories. Then we note down that first collection of shared anecdotes. Even as we are recounting them, scenes begin to take shape; reality becomes fiction. If what we've written holds up over time, we keep going, refine it and push it further.

Éric Toledano: What we hope is that each viewer will find something that speaks to them, their own time, their own experience, their own story. Maybe it's a song by Téléphone, Imagination or The Cure. Maybe it's a conversation between an older brother and his mother. Or just a tiny detail in the background: something on the radio, a colour, the wallpaper. Memories from adolescence tend to stay with us more vividly than those from almost any other time in life. We can move through space, but not through time. And yet, some details seem to resist time altogether. JUSTE UNE ILLUSION is also a film of sensations. We have not shown it very much yet, but several people have already told us how strongly it moved them, because at a certain moment it touched on something very personal for them.

The strength of this family lies in the way it is shaped as much by arguments as by warmth and tenderness. How did you approach this?

Olivier Nakache: Through personal memories, of course. The parents in the film, played by Camille Cottin and Louis Garrel, are inspired by Éric's parents, mine and others as well. We were also influenced by certain films, especially Italian comedies, where we recognised something of the Mediterranean spirit we knew from our own relatives. For us, Louis Garrel is a mixture of Vittorio Gassman and Marcello Mastroianni. He has that same elegance. And he speaks Italian fluently.

Éric Toledano: Camille easily calls to mind actresses such as Stefania Sandrelli and Monica Vitti. Through this family, we also wanted to tell the story of the 1980s, that period caught between the Trente Glorieuses and the early 1990s, between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War. Within this family, there is an unemployed father and a mother whose professional rise reflects the feminist awakening of the time. In that respect, Camille Cottin is very emblematic. As for the two children, they embody the worlds of New Wave and Funk in the middle of the "AIDS era". Vincent, the film's central character, experiences this period through the eyes of a child who senses that his final days of innocence are numbered. With his brother, things can sometimes be violent; they fight, and three minutes later they're close again, as though nothing had happened. That's typical of siblings and of that age when everything feels intense, even if nothing is ever truly serious.



How did you imagine this teenager, Vincent? He was born in 1972. Olivier, you were born in 1973, and Éric, in 1971. Is Vincent somewhere between the two of you?

Éric Toledano: He really reflects the spirit of the film; everything sits in the middle. I was 13 in 1984, and Olivier was 13 in 1986. So, we settled on 1985.

Olivier Nakache: Even though everything we talk about is deeply personal, it's important to remember that we weren't making a documentary, but a film, and one we wanted to feel as universal as possible. Vincent is a teenager who, like all of us, is about to experience a series of firsts. The first time he falls in love. The first time he realises it won't be that simple. The first time he understands that his parents are not always heroes. But also, the first time he discovers that he has a voice of his own and that it carries.

Éric Toledano: Adolescence is the age when you become painfully aware of how others see you. It's your first real encounter with the outside world, that awkward age. Françoise Dolto once compared it to a lobster moulting: the old shell is gone, the new one hasn't formed yet and, in between, you're exposed to all kinds of dangers. Adolescence is an age of great vulnerability. Before that, you live in a sheltered world, where questions of identity rarely come into play. Then suddenly, you become afraid of what other people think. It's a shock. I think that's what everyone shares at that age: the fear of not being good enough, not living up to what is expected of you. Olivier and I met when we were very young, and in a way, we've never stopped playing together, like two children. In that sense, we were somewhat protected from the adult world. Jean-Pierre Bacri once pointed out how extraordinary it was that, at his age, people still asked him to come and play.



In the film, you touch on rising unemployment, the digital transition, and transport strikes. Did you have to do a lot of research to recreate the social reality of the 1980s?

Olivier Nakache: Our method remains the same from one film to the next: we investigate the subject thoroughly. For this film, we couldn't simply go back to the 1980s, so we worked with a documentary researcher to reconnect with the period.

Starting from our own memories, we immersed ourselves in archive footage organised by theme. We watched a great many news reports from the time, documentaries, variety shows, game shows, listened to podcasts, read magazines and immersed ourselves in the period. The idea was not to cram everything into the film, but to absorb the period's specific sociology so that we wouldn't rely solely on memory. We wanted to be accurate in every respect.

Éric Toledano: That's also why cinema has played such an important role in shaping us, and therefore in the film itself. And then there's the music. All those hits are like catapults, time machines that take you right back. The soundtrack of our teenage years is made up of our favourite records, the TV shows that millions of viewers watched every evening, modern-day gatherings and shared moments. In school playgrounds, everyone was talking about the same things.

The film has an unambiguous title and an open ending. You have always made films about togetherness and positive values. Here, it feels as though you're also questioning whether all of that still has meaning. Would you say there's a form of nostalgia in this film?

Éric Toledano: Not really. Olivier and I always said that, with this film, we wanted to take a step back to see more clearly what lies ahead. If the film carries a sense of nostalgia in it, it's that of the hope of changing the world, a kind of "nostalgia for the future". What we are probably trying to say is that we are still that slightly lost child, standing in the middle of this theatre called life, never entirely sure what we are doing there. The irony is that adolescence may be the only time when we think we've grasped the absurdity of existence, but that's precisely where the illusion lies.



Olivier Nakache: We're also paying tribute to the greatest illusion of all: cinema. For us, it continues to be magical. Entering a cinema, cutting yourself off from the outside world almost religiously, sitting in the dark surrounded by people you don't know, and experiencing all these adventures together!

This is a period film: we travel back in time. Being in the realm of illusion, in fiction, is a way of escaping from reality. During filming, we were surrounded by 1980s cars, Michel Drucker and copies of *Télé 7 Jours* on every set. It felt miraculous.

If there's one of our films that needs to be seen in a cinema, it's this one.

While the film belongs to the tradition of popular, mainstream cinema, it's also a period film and a film about our time, one that does not shy away from social issues. For example, SOS Racisme is a very strong symbol of the 1980s and of your film.

Éric Toledano: Even though it's set more than 40 years ago, the film is very much about the present. That choice is an implicit criticism of the notion of withdrawing, of the "every man for himself" mentality, even of being "against the others". We live in a society that constantly emphasises differences. So once again, we come back to Billy Wilder's words, which still ring true: "When things are going wrong, make a comedy!"

Olivier Nakache: *SOS Racisme* was one of the defining forces of those years, a real emblem, a wave of hope for our generation, almost an embodiment of the aspirations of the era, a response to our own private lives, because the questions Vincent asks himself in the film are the very questions we were asking ourselves. First of all, who are we?

Éric Toledano: Once again, we don't believe things were better in the past. The chaos and threats were already there: economic crisis, wars, terrorism, the nuclear threat, and AIDS. Every era has its own fears. What we do miss, though, is a certain sense of unity that shaped our adolescence, our way of looking at each other.

Would you say your cinema is driven by the desire to bring people together?

Olivier Nakache: *JUSTE UNE ILLUSION* is completely in line with our love of cinema. It's always our way of seeing things that is expressed through our films: *NOS JOURS HEUREUX*, *INTOUCHABLES*, *SAMBA*, *LE SENS DE LA FÊTE* and so on. They are all stories about people who, in theory, have no reason to get along with each other. *JUSTE UNE ILLUSION* follows this theme, this continuity.

We find out quite late in the film that the family is Jewish when the rabbi appears at the door. Their Jewish identity is not the film's central theme, yet it is an integral part of its meaning.

Éric Toledano: If we had been Italian or Pakistani, we would naturally have included elements or events linked to those cultures. In a Jewish family, the Bar Mitzvah at age 13 is a rite of passage into adulthood. There are images there that feel very cinematic to us. When you see a 13-year-old boy in a suit, he looks as though he's pretending to be an adult. He's no longer a child, but not yet a man. He's caught between the two. It's the age that, as we said earlier, moves us deeply. We'd already tried to explore it in a different register in *Thérapie*, with the character of Robin, played by Aliocha Delmotte.

Can you tell us about the casting of Simon Boubilil as Vincent?

Éric Toledano: With the casting sessions and audition tapes, we saw no fewer than 2,000 young actors. What we were looking for was precisely that in-between age. When you film Simon in his pyjamas, lying in bed and asking his brother whether their parents are going to split up, he is still a child. But when you film him in his trendy jacket, from another angle, you begin to see the man he will become. That is exactly the moment we wanted to capture. It's that brief, almost fleeting instant, that spark, that lasts only a short time. Once again, somewhere between the "no longer" and the "not yet". Simon had both sides in him, which is rare.

Olivier Nakache: Between filming and post-synchronisation, he'd already changed. Some of the boys who appear in the film with him had their voices break in just a few months and suddenly sounded like Barry White!

We had to capture that exact moment. Simon arrived like a little miracle.

What fascinates us is metamorphosis. At that stage of adolescence, you're not fully acting. Simon is acting in the film, of course, but he is also a little bit of himself. Even opposite Jeanne, who plays Anne-Karine, you can feel that she's slightly more mature. But, now and then, when she smiles, you still catch a glimpse of the child.



How did you bring together this cast with Louis Garrel, Camille Cottin and Pierre Lottin?

Olivier Nakache: Our friendship with Louis began at the Toronto Festival in 2017. We were there to present *LE SENS DE LA FÊTE*, and he had come with *LE REDOUTABLE*, the film by Michel Hazanavicius, who is a friend. We immediately sensed his comic potential.

Éric Toledano: We had dinner together. We got along well and had a good laugh. Later, he sent us his scripts, in particular *L'INNOCENT*, so that we could discuss them.

Olivier Nakache: Our method is to meet the actors before we begin writing. It gives us energy. We need that to get started. We told him a few stories, and everything took off from there.

Éric Toledano: With Camille, we invited her to a screening of *UNE ANNÉE DIFFICILE* in Lille. She came from Brussels, where she was filming, and we spent the evening together. We connected immediately; her energy really inspired us.

Olivier Nakache: We didn't even have anything for her to read. We simply said, "Listen, we're writing the film with you in mind". We really wanted to see those two actors together on screen.

Éric Toledano: Pierre Lottin had been on our radar for a while, like he had been for many people. Then we saw him in *GRÂCE À DIEU*, *LA NUIT DU 12* and *EN FANFARE*, although by then we had already offered him the part. Those performances only confirmed his immense talent; he has a rare kind of authenticity and a natural presence.

Olivier Nakache: What we love most is the mix. We couldn't resist the pleasure of seeing Pierre, Camille and Louis acting together.



Éric Toledano: We'd also like to mention Alexis Rosenstiehl, who plays Arnaud, the older brother with extraordinary charisma. We believe, and hope, that he has a very bright future ahead of him in French cinema.

Olivier Nakache: He has that special something you simply can't learn. I still remember watching his audition tape in our office. In a split second, with just one gesture, we knew we had to meet him as soon as possible.

What were you hoping to get from Louis in terms of comedy?

Éric Toledano: Louis also has a remarkable quality: he loves to transform himself, to play with his appearance, through costumes. He's deeply involved in developing a character and is never afraid to look ridiculous. He commits completely. We asked him to let go entirely. At times, we pushed him into situations of extreme comedy, where his character is overwhelmed, almost under attack. He has many flaws; he's jealous, slightly paranoid, and a bit overbearing, but that doesn't stop him from being very moving. We had to push things far enough to come close to Italian-style comedy. Very quickly, we realised that, for him as for us, comedy is serious business. It demands a great deal of humility: you search, you experiment, and every so often, you manage to make people laugh. With Camille, the chemistry was immediate.

Olivier Nakache: Camille is like a clock, a metronome. She has the script in her bones. Her comic timing is flawless. She has that rare ability to move effortlessly between drama and comedy. We've often told stories centred on male characters, but film after film, we've tried to move closer to a more feminine perspective, and Camille helped us do that. Éric, Louis, Camille and I had enormous fun together, pushing each other further, constantly coming up with new ideas. We were speaking the same language and aiming for the same thing. They followed us on every point.

Éric Toledano: One of our favourite scenes is the one where Camille dances alone in the living room. When she really let go, there was so much emotion on set. We shot it in a single take.

Olivier Nakache: In that scene, we drew inspiration from Claude Lelouch, who likes to unsettle his actors to capture something truthful. Camille didn't know when Louis was going to come in. So, when he appears in the living room, she genuinely sees him at that exact moment!

Claude Lelouch also plays an important role in JUSTE UNE ILLUSION, if only through UN HOMME ET UNE FEMME, which runs through the film like a thread.

Olivier Nakache: Éric and I also met partly because of some of his films. They're almost foundational for us. He occupies a unique place in French cinema and has managed to preserve remarkable freedom throughout his entire career. We've watched and rewatched his films countless times, from L'Aventure, c'est l'Aventure to La Bonne Année, not to mention, of course, Un Homme et une Femme.

Éric Toledano: When he read the script, he said, “I’m happy for you to use UN HOMME ET UNE FEMME, but I want to shoot a little bit of your film”. So, he came and filmed a shot of Vincent walking behind his friends in the street after being told off by his parents. We’re very proud to say that Claude Lelouch starred in our film!

Olivier Nakache: We also end the film with music by François de Roubaix, and that is no coincidence either. He’s a composer who has accompanied us for as long as we can remember, almost unconsciously. That piece carries within it other films, other eras. It’s music that has travelled through time, endlessly sampled, reinterpreted, and replayed. And it reflects what the film itself is: a dialogue between the present and the past.

Éric Toledano: In a way, it’s also a nod to Claude and to the idea that cinema contains other cinemas. Films live inside one another, respond to one another and continue to resonate decades later. François de Roubaix is precisely that. I once read an article in which he said that his music “contained within it our childhood memories”. His music lets us make one last leap through time, and reminds us that cinema may be the most beautiful time machine of all. And to end the film that way, with Vincent heading off towards adult life, what better choice than the track “Dernier Domicile Connu”?



INTERVIEW WITH CAMILLE COTTIN & LOUIS GARREL

How did Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano approach you about *JUSTE UNE ILLUSION*?

Camille Cottin: They invited me to a screening of their film, *UNE ANNÉE DIFFICILE*, in Lille, and that was where they told me they had a project in mind for me. They wanted to know whether I wanted to work with them, but I didn't have a script, and they hadn't mentioned that Louis was already involved. I knew absolutely nothing, but I was a big fan of their work, and every actor who has worked with them says it's a wonderful experience. So, I said yes immediately!

Louis Garrel: We met in Toronto. We spent an evening together at a restaurant and talked for a long time. We'd crossed paths before, and I sensed that we liked each other. About a year and a half before shooting began, we had lunch together, and they told me they were writing a film about their adolescence in the 1980s. They wanted me to read it, so they sent me an initial draft. It wasn't anything like the film it is today; it was something completely different. I love being part of a project where everything can be changed when you want. Game shows were initially a central theme of the story because the unemployed character kept trying to compete in them to win money. Eventually, all of that disappeared. They worked a lot, we organized readings, improvised scenes and met several times. From the outset, they told me they wanted Camille to play the mother, but they didn't yet know what place the parents would occupy in the story. They were still trying to find the right family balance in which all four characters would be at the centre.



Did you like their films?

Louis: I really loved what they did with Vincent Cassel in HORS NORME. He's absolutely amazing in it. I also really like LE SENS DE LA FÊTE. I love their films in general, but HORS NORME really moved me. The most interesting thing about Éric and Olivier is that they genuinely care about people. It isn't a pose. They have a real curiosity about others and real empathy.

At that stage, were your characters what they are today?

Louis: When Camille arrived, she brought a tremendous amount to her character.

Camille: The starting point was very promising: a secretary trying to climb the career ladder while her husband is unemployed, and her children are starting to get into trouble. There's a sort of guilt, but also determination. I felt there was a great deal to work with. Olivier and Éric are very open to suggestions. They had obviously put a great deal of themselves into the film, and when I wanted to draw inspiration from my own mother or my family, they agreed immediately. My mother always romanticised leaving Algeria, although she did fully assume her decision. I knew that it had been a painful experience for her, and that when arriving in France, the pieds-noirs community often felt ostracised. I liked that we could speak about that. It was good to include it because the film's story is also about integration, especially in this housing estate where people from many different backgrounds live together.

Louis, your character feels deep shame about being unemployed. Is that linked to his role as head of the family, in what was still a very patriarchal society?

Louis: What I found especially moving in the film is that there's no rivalry between him and his wife, even though he's unemployed and she's up for a promotion. On the contrary, he's very happy for her. I wouldn't have enjoyed playing a scene in which he showed his pride. It's very beautiful when he says, "That's fantastic - you got the job!", even though he has lost his and feels completely diminished. For Éric and Olivier, a family protects itself. They both come from close-knit families. My parents are divorced. People who separate often do a lot of damage to each other. That doesn't mean people who stay together don't do the same, but you can feel there was solidarity between them. That was very moving.

The film also overturns certain clichés, especially those about parent-child relationships: the eldest son is gentle with his mother. There's a very beautiful scene where Alexis Rosenstiehl takes you in his arms.

Camille: Yes, there's a turning point; he's grown up. He no longer sees his mother as a mother, but as a woman with her own fragilities. It's very unsettling. Éric and Olivier let us improvise in that scene. When Alexis says to me, "You're not ready", I like the idea that this woman, who is the family's anchor, could crack.

Alexis is a wonderful actor, and very unlike his character. He plays someone rather hard, slightly arrogant, whereas in real life, he's incredibly kind, very gentle, very simple.

Without being nostalgic, the film does evoke a certain kindness in the way people live together. What do you think of the title, JUSTE UNE ILLUSION?

Louis: I like the title very much. Their starting point was to look at the family through a child's eyes. The film is a memory of what their parents' lives were like: middle-class suburban life and how they all helped each other through it. That's what makes the ending so moving. The child suddenly realises how lucky he is, how much love and affection he has around him. Was what I lived "just an illusion"? We always romanticise our memories. But the film tries to reconnect with a sense of protection, tenderness and warmth.

Is it something special to work with directors who are telling such personal stories?

Louis: It's a pleasure, because you know they're reconstructing their own memories. I was playing a sort of mixture of Éric's father and Olivier's father. It was the same for Camille. You feel more secure because if you start heading in the wrong direction, they pick up on it immediately.

Camille: It's moving to know that you're part of such a personal project. There was a scene that was cut in which I came home and touched the television to check whether the children had been watching it instead of doing their homework. That's something Éric's mother used to do.



Did recreating the 1980s, especially its social context, help you immerse yourselves in the film?

Camille: I was very young at the time, but Harlem Désir and Place de la Concorde are powerful memories for me. I remember things on TV, Coluche... I think Éric and Olivier really wanted to say to their children: this was our world, our dreams, our environment, our setting. This is how we became the adults we are today.

You both have great comic timing. Is that something you work on?

Louis: It comes from the pairing we form. Camille and I had already acted together in *MON LÉGIONNAIRE*, which was completely different since we played a soldier and a soldier's wife. Éric and Olivier were looking for something very different from what Rachel Lang wanted in that film. But already in *MON LÉGIONNAIRE*, you could sense that Camille and I worked well together. I used to call her my Claude Gensac! When a pairing works, it's very pleasant.

Did Éric and Olivier tell you they were trying to make their own "Italian comedy"?

Louis: When people think of 1960s Italian cinema, they think of tragicomedy. *JUSTE UNE ILLUSION* isn't tragicomic, but Italian actors and directors of the time pushed the burlesque to extremes. The first time I saw the finished film, there were shots of me pulling the most ridiculous faces. I asked them whether they were really sure they wanted to keep the take, and they said, "Of course we're keeping them, are you mad?" With Éric and Olivier, we could go very far. Out of 28 takes, no two were ever alike. Sometimes we overdid it, then pulled it back. They were looking for a range of tones and intensities because they weren't sure whether they would be used to achieve the film's final balance. I imagine that's often how comedy works: after a while, you reach saturation. That's also one of the film's strengths: moving constantly between scenes that are very realistic and touching, and another scene that is burlesque, almost farcical.

Camille: I loved the relationship between our characters. They constantly contradict each other, and yet they're extremely united. It's a comedy built on situation and repetition, which I really liked.

Louis: I would have happily done more scenes where we shout at each other. I love it because Camille has a very high-pitched voice, and so do I. It's like two violins fighting.

Camille: What's funny is that they yell at each other, but they still hear each other. They understand each other. That dynamic wasn't really there in the script. We all had great fun discovering it on set. At one point, Éric and Olivier told us to speak over each other. That made them laugh a lot.

Éric and Olivier talk about their enthusiasm for having you act opposite Pierre Lottin to create this unique pairing. Did it feel like two very different worlds colliding?

Camille: Pierre is a world unto himself. It isn't an act. He's very deep.

Louis: They probably thought there would be an amusing contrast between Pierre and me. Pierre is a wildly inventive improviser. We did one or two read-throughs together; he immediately took hold of the scene and turned it into something very... Pierre Lottin. In Éric and Olivier's writing, there is a structure, and it has to be respected. They do have an idea of what their scene is. Sometimes it was a bit tricky, not because Pierre and I are such different actors, but because the scenes they write are sometimes hard to play, and you can lose your way if you improvise too much. Some scenes were not all that easy.

Camille: Their cinema is very precise. They already have the edit in mind when they write, particularly in how a line should be delivered. They wanted it said exactly as they imagined it. For example, at one point, Louis cuts me off because I've said something stupid, and I have to say, "Tu me fais chier". Éric had a very precise idea of how I should say it, like a note in a musical score. And he was absolutely right.

They say that neither of you is ever afraid of looking ridiculous in comedy.

Louis: You must never be afraid of looking ridiculous, because out of an hour of ridiculousness, there is always one brilliant minute, and that minute only exists because you took the risk. Camille is a great partner. It isn't only the directors who let you try things and take risks. It's also the person opposite you, who is closer to you than the directors sitting behind the monitor. With Camille, I wasn't afraid of looking ridiculous. I even think she found it rather attractive, didn't you?

Camille: I very quickly realised that I had to look at Louis all the time! More seriously, he looked fantastic. It was as though he was wearing a mask. As soon as there's a mask or a form of disguise, I find it removes inhibitions, and you let go of much more.

Louis: I was the one who voted for your costumes, Camille. That was what was so great. I could take an active part in some choices. "This outfit will look amazing on Camille. She's beautiful. She's incredibly elegant". They really liked the haircut they gave you. You were a bit nervous about it at first, weren't you?

Camille: About being blonde? Yes. I doubted it throughout the entire shoot. In the film, I think the haircut looks great. I feel like Claire Chazal.

INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE LOTTIN

How did Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache approach you?

It's always great when you feel a director is approaching you because they really want to work with you, and that's exactly what I felt with Éric and Olivier: a real desire to work with me. When you watch their films, you're always struck by the precision of the performances. They're consistently precise and full of ideas. That can only happen when they're very well directed. Now I know it's a gift to be directed by Éric and Olivier. When they talked to me about JUSTE UNE ILLUSION, they described a personal story that is rather... humorous about families, let's say. A bit like CRAZY by Jean-Marc Vallée, but funnier. In any case, I'd always wanted to work with them.

They have many films to their names and a very distinctive style of comedy. Does that help you know exactly what you're getting into?

Absolutely. As soon as you hear their names, you think of Benjamin Lavernhe or Jean-Pierre Bacri in LE SENS DE LA FÊTE, or the comic efficiency of NOS JOURS HEUREUX. It can't just be a series of lucky incidents. On screen, you can sense the collaboration. You can tell they love the actors and love playing with them. And that's because they have kept their childish spirit. When I worked with them, I rediscovered that feeling you have as a kid, playing in the garden or in your bedroom with your friends in the 1990s. During a shoot with them, you have fun.

How had they imagined your character, Mr Berger?

To begin with, they based it on how I speak, which I should point out, changes a lot. I can speak much more slowly if needed, but, indeed, I always appear to be in a hurry. They started from their own idea of the character, but we built him together, especially with the costume and make-up team, with whom we found the right clothes and the right wig. It really was a joint effort that brought Mr Berger to life. I also drew inspiration from an old activity leader I had at UCPA holiday camps in the 1990s, called Pierrot. He was a sort of Francis Cabrel who sang Russian songs phonetically. Of course, Mr Berger is also largely inspired by the caretakers Éric and Olivier knew when they were young. That's what makes the film both personal and accurate.

How did you work together?

At first, I let myself be completely directed, using that as a launching pad. We glided together. Éric and Olivier are very open to their actors' suggestions, but they're also very precise. Of course, you can change things during the shoot, but I never improvise completely. I rely heavily on the text when making suggestions. I may change all the words, but the ideas remain the same. I never do anything that disturbs my partners. I adapt to them, and they adapt to me. The key thing is rhythm. In any case, when Éric and Olivier choose an actor, he doesn't need to "find his place"; he already has it. That's why they're so good at casting. The writing is almost already tailored to the performer, who feels completely at home.

Was your comic timing the same with Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache as elsewhere?

No. Strangely, with them I was less comic than I sometimes am. I tried to find a balance between something slightly caricatural and something quite touching. That idea stayed with me throughout the shoot.

You form an unexpected comic duo with Louis Garrel.

And yet I understand his film culture, and he understands mine perfectly. Louis and I aren't that far apart. It's the roles we're given that create that impression. I was quickly offered roles of quiet, fragile, slightly shady men, so I continued doing that. But I have no doubt Louis could play in my register, and I in his. Louis comes from a very "Bertolucci-style" image of cinema; he worked with Christophe Honoré... But for the past four or five years, I've seen him play with absurdity - in the best sense - and he's remarkable at it. On *JUSTE UNE ILLUSION*, I was very impressed by his comic talent. He's a powerhouse of an actor. But everyone in that film had enormous talent: Camille, Alexis and Simon. I was amazed.



The film is set in the 1980s, when the belief in community was very strong. Did you feel that?

Yes. When you hear older people talk, they sometimes say, “Things were better before”. In terms of “social relations”, I think they were. People used to say hello to each other in the street because they weren’t afraid of one another. If people are more wary now, it’s because of very deliberate political choices that have very negative effects - for example, in the 2000s, cutting community policing, or removing support that enabled children to go on holiday. That kind of thing creates a sense of injustice. Some politicians have driven French people to become isolated and keep their distance. People understand each other much less than they used to. It’s important to show that.

Do you feel Mr Berger has a social function in the film?

For me, he represents a kind of “uncle” figure from that time. Some were big brothers involved in combat sports; others were former punks, probably fans of Bérurier Noir. I always write background notes for my characters, even if I keep them to myself on set. I know where Mr Berger comes from. He’s a former legionnaire. In his youth, he must have been a fun guy, always laughing. But I imagine that, since he didn’t see many prospects for himself, he stayed in the army after his military service. Then he left the Foreign Legion and became a caretaker.

Did you research the social context of the period, or was the character enough?

The film is first and foremost a comedy, and I didn’t want to be influenced by things that would be “politically playable”. I’ve tried that before, and it doesn’t work. You end up playing some social or political detail that matters to you, and you’re the only one with that idea, the only one who understands it.

What I find more interesting is understanding and embodying the social spectrum. That’s what’s wonderful about art. When you absorb something - a sociological atmosphere, an era - it comes out by itself in the performance, like blue notes in music, carrying the feeling of a time.

INTERVIEW WITH SIMON BOUBLIL

Your character is based on Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache's childhood. Did they talk to you a lot about their experiences, beyond what was in the script?

The script was very detailed, so I was able to imagine the character quite quickly when I read it. Éric and Olivier also explained a lot about how they saw Vincent. They told me plenty of stories to help me understand who he was. I remember when Olivier told me what had really happened with the famous video cassette and the chess game! He explained how he had felt about it at the time, and that helped me a lot, because I tried to imagine myself in their place when playing the scenes.

What do you have in common with the character?

When we shot the film, I was the same age as Vincent, so it was quite easy to relate to some things. He's rather shy and a bit introverted, which isn't really my case, but we still have things in common. I also have an older brother, even if he's much older than I am. So I understood the relationship between the brothers in the film: you argue about silly things, but deep down you care a lot about each other. Even though Vincent is a teenager in the 1980s and I'm a teenager in the 2020s, I think we always ask ourselves the same questions at that age. We just don't have the same references. He listens to the music of his time; I listen to today's. But the difficulties and doubts of adolescence are pretty much the same. He was dealing with the issues of his time, and I'm doing the same for mine.

How do you work on your lines? Are there a lot of rehearsals?

We did two big rehearsals in which we went through the whole script with Alexis Rosenstiehl, Camille Cottin, Louis Garrel, Éric, and Olivier. That really helped me understand the story and the scenes. Before each scene, I rehearsed in the make-up room with Johanne, who coached me throughout the film. On set, they almost always let us play the scene once without filming, just to get into it. And Éric and Olivier like to do many takes, because they say a film is built a great deal in the editing room, and they need options. Even when they really like a take, they still do more. What I really liked was that they often let me try things. I could play the scene the way I understood it, but also test the way they imagined it. It was very interesting to work like that.

It's your first major role in cinema. Did you feel any pressure before shooting or on set?

It didn't scare me. Once they told me I had the part, I was really impatient for the shoot to start. On set, everyone is very busy and focused, which is really impressive, but the team made me feel comfortable very quickly, and I had no problem adapting. I can't wait for the film to come out. I've seen it, and I loved it.

Alexis Rosenstiehl plays your older brother. What was your relationship like with him?

It happened very naturally. Maybe because I rehearsed a lot with him, he's really kind, always enthusiastic when he sees the crew. We supported each other quite a lot, because we shared many scenes. Éric and Olivier often played music on set because they like working to music. And Alexis and I would talk about music too, even if we don't have the same tastes... This usually makes for good conversations.

Do you like working to music?

I remember a scene where I'm in the back of a car, looking through the windscreen, with nothing to say. It sounds simple, but it isn't, especially with the camera very close. Having music playing during the take really helped me with the look and the acting.

What was it like acting opposite Camille Cottin and Louis Garrel?

It was very impressive. I hadn't seen many of Louis's films, but I found him extremely precise and intense. I'd seen more of Camille's work because she's an actress I love, and I think she's very strong. I'm a big fan of *Dix Pour Cent*, I loved *TONI EN FAMILLE*, and recently I saw *NI CHÂÎNES NI MAÎTRES*, which was very impressive. I was really happy when I found out she would be my mother in the film. For my first scene with Louis and Camille, I felt a bit of pressure, even though we had rehearsed. It was a scene in the shopping centre. It isn't very long, but something important happens between Vincent and his father. It wasn't easy to play for me, because I had to show a lot without overdoing it. It seems like an easy dialogue, but I was really intimidated.



Do you have a favourite scene?

In the dinner scene with Alexis, Camille, and Louis, I see Jeanne Lamartine, who plays Anne-Karine, appear to me as if in a dream. There was a big camera set-up for that scene. I love the technical side of cinema; I find it fascinating. I really enjoyed watching the cinematographer Augustin Barbaroux work. He brings his own touch and contributes to the style, and with Éric and Olivier, they made a great trio.

Did Éric and Olivier talk to you about what the 1980s meant to them? What they wanted to say about this period.

Yes, a lot. I think they wanted to describe that period, but they also wanted to show what it means to be a teenager in general - the first stupid mistakes, the first experiences. That's what we see when my character hangs out with his friends all the time, asking himself lots of questions. I also loved filming in the video shop, seeing all the costumes and the sets. I didn't live through the 1980s, so it was amazing to feel like I was there during the shoot. What I remember most, though, is the family, which is a bit chaotic, and the relationship between Vincent and Anne-Karine. I love the way they gradually get closer, and how Vincent finally manages to make her laugh and win her over, even though he starts at a disadvantage.

What kind of films do you like?

I like all kinds. I especially love going to the cinema. Recently, I really enjoyed LE COMTE DE MONTE-CRISTO, L'AMOUR OUF and EN FANFARE, which was amazing. And it was a pleasure to see Pierre Lottin on set!

For one shot, you were directed by Claude Lelouch. How was that?

I was really happy to meet him, especially because I know how important he is in Éric and Olivier's careers. I love L'AVENTURE C'EST L'AVENTURE! My grandfather's sister was the editor on that film. She died very young, just before it was released. So, it meant a lot to me to be directed by him.

Cast

Yves
Sandrine
Berger
Vincent
Arnaud
Anne-Karine

Louis Garrel
Camille Cottin
Pierre Lottin
Simon Boubil
Alexis Rosenstiehl
Jeanne Lamartine



Crew

Directors	Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache
Writers	Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache
Executive Producer	Hervé Ruet
Production Managers	Bruno Morin
Cinematographer	Augustin Barbaroux
Editor	Dorian Rigal-Ansous
1st Assistant Director	Quentin Janssen
Script	Christelle Meaux
Casting	Esla Pharaon, Marie-France Michel
Production Designer	Jean Rabasse

Post-Production Supervisor	Ana Antunes
Sound	Pascal Armant, Loïc Prian, Jean-Paul Hurier
Original Music	Gogo Penguin
Music Supervisor	Josette Music Club, Elise Luguern
Producer	Nicolas Duval Adassovsky

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