

TABO TABO FILMS PRESENTS

EMMANUELLE DEVOS

**What is the price
to pay to become**

NUMBER ONE

SUZANNE CLÉMENT
RICHARD BERRY
SAMI FREY
BENJAMIN BIOLAY
FRANCINE BERGÉ
ANNE AZOULAY
JOHN LYNCH

A FILM BY
TONIE MARSHALL

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With

**Suzanne Clément, Richard Berry, Sami Frey, Benjamin Biolay,
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 **France**

SYNOPSIS

Through hard work, Emmanuelle Blachey, a brilliant and voluntary engineer, has earned top position at the executive committee of Trident, the French leading energy company. Married for 20 years to a caring man, mother of 2 children, Emmanuelle's success seems almost perfect. One day, a powerful and influential women network offers to help her become president of a CAC 40 company. But to be at the top, you must risk it all! In a men's world, obstacles pile up in Emmanuelle's professional and personal life.





INTERVIEW WITH TONIE MARSHALL

| How did you become interested in depicting the career and life story of Emmanuelle Blachey, the first woman to finally become head of a CAC 40 company?

Three or four years ago, I had the idea for a series, *Le Club*, about a network of influential women. The series would examine the difficulties encountered by women in gaining leading positions in politics, industry, the media, and so on.

I proposed the project to a number of channels. Only Arte showed any interest, but they were about to show

Borgen, on a fairly similar topic. I continued thinking about the subject and told myself that there was material for a film there if I reduced the number of characters and focused on a sole seat of power.

Disregarding politics, which rests on compromise and negotiation, I preferred the more rigid nature of industry.

| How did you become acquainted with the world of business?

Raphaëlle Bacqué, who collaborated on the screenplay, and whom I consulted regularly during writing in order to ensure the story's credibility, helped me with my research and enabled me to meet women occupying high positions in major companies such as Anne Lauvergeon, Laurence Parisot, Claire Pedini, Pascale Sourisse, and so on.

They related numerous anecdotes that included those minor humiliations suffered every day in this essentially male environment. Their testimony gave me a great

deal of material for my heroine's life story. Towards the end, I would take Emmanuelle Devos along with me so that she could absorb the gestures of these women, their manner of dressing and speaking.

One of them said to me, «*Don't hesitate to have the men speak crudely!*». It wasn't so easy, and I tried to take care to avoid caricature, even though, most of the time I gathered all the observations that I integrated into my film right from the mouths of real people.





| Nevertheless, you show up the system and its prevailing sexism...

Yes, I tried to convey as well as possible this type of natural order, this «benevolent misogyny», which I would describe as «belonging to DNA», organized, and always prevailing, since it is more than cultural; it is subconscious, and ultimately enshrined in the system. I wanted to show this apartheid.

I recall one lunch appointment with a top executive of a major firm, very charming, until he realized the subject of my film. All of a sudden, he began shouting, «*Women in positions of power; we'd like to have them but there aren't any! THERE AREN'T ANY!*» His disproportionate reaction served well to demonstrate that this issue had touched a nerve with him, and it perhaps also reflected a degree of guilt.

It's true that major companies have difficulties in recruiting women to top positions. Not because there aren't any, but because women don't allow themselves to apply for such positions, and they're not encouraged to do so. Or indeed, some resign because they imagine (or they know) that, having gained a position coveted by men, their life is going to be hell. And all the while, the men are climbing and climbing, even the more mediocre ones!

That said, Number One aims to be a positive film, and the opposite of a victim movie. A victim-based discourse often makes me uneasy. I know that «doubt» is a feeling shared by almost all women, but even under attack or wounded, we must try to move forward, and always believe things can change.

| The film opens at the Deauville Women's Forum.

It was the first time I'd been to a demonstration of this type with so many women together, and my recollection is one of very high spirits from the moment everyone got off the train. Beginning and ending the film at the Women's Forum gave the story both a temporal and a symbolic framework.

How did you come to collaborate with your co-writer, Marion Dousot?

I'm thrilled to have worked with Marion, all the more so since we are not from the same generation. As for myself, I come from a happy generation. When I was 20, I had the certainty that I would not be prohibited from doing anything. Girls had already done so much, and the road was wide open. Yet alas, since then, the space open to women has, bizarrely, become narrower, and now we are in a

phase of full regression. When I met young feminists of Marion's age, I sensed a divide between us. These 30-year-old women are wound up like springs, and they are right to be so! True, there is more parity, but women are undergoing an upsurge in a kind of prudery, along with the sexual aggression that any form of frustration entails. Morality and religion, whatever they are, are never favourable to women.

From where do you derive the theory expressed in your film that men have three driving forces: power, sex and money. And that men, in general, only possess two out of the three?!

It's something we read or heard during our research, and I think it's very true! In this scene, the underling humiliates the boss. Even amongst themselves, men are merely in power relationships.

There is a cliché suggesting that women who gain positions of power are worse than men... Emmanuelle Blachey and your film espouse a quite different thesis...

Of course, some women can behave very badly, and pursue schemes aimed at domination and power. But if women occupied decision-making positions in significant numbers, if they didn't need to fight so much in order to exist, I think that there would be fewer «killers». In Number One, I sought to defend the idea that if 40%–50% of company bosses were women, the style of governance would change. We would move to a capitalism of dialogue, where enterprise, fighting and

winning would no longer be synonymous with trench warfare. Women are skilled at dialogue, often a more flexible dialogue than that of men. And discussion is the very essence of enterprise, the desire to enter into associations and establish partnerships. Indeed ultimately, of being useful. Life has no sense otherwise. The film features bosses, but the subject concerns everyone, since it envisages changes which would impact upon the whole of society.

It's thanks to Olympus, a network of influential women, that Emmanuelle Blachey gains her position. Does such a type of club really exist?

There exist women's networks, but none that have any power, as one of the executives I met told me. If a woman wants to succeed at this top level, she has to be supported by network of men... So I invented the actual power of this club, and I hope I have foretold its future existence...

What's more, we witness a meeting inside the Olympus Club. It was necessary to portray it, to show a point in time when these women are meeting and discussing. I auditioned female actors for this scene, but nothing felt authentic. I then asked a very good feminist friend

of mine, Sophie Bramly, to introduce me to some real active feminists, whom I filmed using two cameras over an afternoon, where they were discussing topics accessible to the general public... In one of the edited versions, this scene was longer and probably a little too documentary in nature. But when, at the end of the screening, one agent said to me: «The movie is good, but your Tupperware party, you don't need it!», I said to myself: «Holy Cow! We have a long way to go...»

How did you approach presenting this world of bosses? |

It was important to set the scene of the CAC 40, to show the offices, this world apart which is the Parisian business district, with its tower blocks housing powerful companies. I asked my director of photography, Julien Roux, to watch the film Margin Call very closely. This

film by J.C. Chandor is very heavy on dialogue and refers to very complicated financial strategies, but even though much of the content eludes us, we are never bored, since we never lose interest in these characters who falter and then recover...





| What about the scenes on the wind-power platform?

I love everything industrial, and I find wind farms at sea particularly photogenic. However, it was not easy to film them. Fortunately, a fantastic company, Deme, based in Anvers, sent us a reply: «*We're going to help you because we like the theme of the film.*» The company's boss plays himself in the movie. The fact that Emmanuelle is stuck on this platform

enables her to spend time with her Chinese partners and enables a lighter rapport to develop between them. I also liked the fact that she found herself having to share the cabin allocated to the girls working on the platform who, on their own level, suffer the same type of abuse and harassment as she does...

The confidences revealed by these girls are illuminating... |

One day when he came back from a factory visit, my partner related to me that a foreman had told him, referring to a women's workshop: «*And now we're going to visit the pussy farm.*» This aggressive phrase

– which I have never forgotten – I wanted to put this in the movie. As for «*I'm going to put my cock in your mouth,*» I think many of us have received this type of phone call...

The professional ascent and personal life story of Emmanuelle are intimately linked...

The day when Emmanuelle attends the Women's Forum in Deauville, the rescue services pull the body of a drowned female from the water. This event serves to provoke in her the recollection of an inner pain which will lead her to raise questions in her own mind about the difficulties which, in some way or other, killed her mother.

At the outset, Emmanuelle feels some reticence towards the Olympus network but, little by little, she finds her own way towards feminism. When, in her final speech, she explains that her mother never found her place in society, Emmanuelle integrates her into the championing of a wider feminist cause. At this point, her relationship with her mother goes beyond childhood trauma.

Where did the idea originate that her mother's death was caused by drowning? |

Because losing a loved one to the sea is profoundly traumatizing. I have personally experienced this through the death by drowning of Fanette, sister of painter François Arnal, with whom my mother lived at the time. Her body was never found. Even for me, who was not her daughter, this accident was one of great violence. For years, when I took a swim in the sea, I was convinced that Fanette was there, floating just

beneath the surface, with her big black hair. When someone has drowned without their body ever being found, this gives plenty of scope for ambiguity: accident or suicide? Unlike her father, Emmanuelle believes her mother to have committed suicide... This type of event inevitably comes back at you like a boomerang, never leaving you as you go on through life.

The father's illness is followed by burial - not his own, but that of Adrienne... Is this a way of affirming that the message at the heart of the film is what passes from woman to woman?

Yes, this was important, even though I didn't reflect it so consciously. Véra's speech at the funeral was in existence from the outset in a far more formal manifestation. We then

oriented this speech towards more personal notions: «*I heard she was a tramp...*» Crude language, this is where it fitted...

The two moments where we see Emmanuelle with her daughter are moments of exceptional intimacy. |

For the scene where Emmanuelle is at the bedside of her sleeping daughter, I took my inspiration from something related to me by Caroline Champetier. When she came home from a shoot very late one evening, and her daughter was already asleep, no matter, she told her about her day. Just like babies who hear while still inside their mother's belly, I'm sure that something is transmitted through these words, connecting Emmanuelle with her daughter.

As for the scene on the road to school, the inspiration for this was drawn from a tirade by Cyrano by slam artist Oxmo Puccino; I thought it was superb, and it provides them with a moment of intimacy. Between Emmanuelle and her daughter, I didn't want their daily routine to be too realistic. Inevitably, these mothers with heavy responsibilities are not exactly the norm, but they inspire in a different way, by sharing moments. And then there's the high spirits, above all, the high spirits!



Emmanuelle's father, an intellectual and former university academic, has a very critical attitude towards the world of business in which his daughter works.

The anti-boss discourse is fairly prevalent in France... I wanted this small critical French voice to exist in the film via this philosophy professor, for whom Carlos Ghosn is a man of «little faith». It was important to have this counterpoint, this view on a very violent world. At the same time as being reserved and distant, Sami Frey has great poise. The dialogue between Emmanuelle and her father is confrontational but, at each riposte, I hope one can

sense that they truly love one another. They have found themselves alone together after the death of the mother, and their connection is a powerful one. Something happened between Emmanuelle Devos and Sami Frey when we went to see him. I don't know exactly what, but they had a certain way of looking at each other... And when we left his place, Emmanuelle said to me, «*That's it, I know how to play the character.*»

After *Tontaine et Tonton*, this is your second time working with Emmanuelle Devos.

I called my character Emmanuelle before thinking of her; I couldn't tell you why... Emmanuelle is someone I like very much, with whom I feel very free, in a relationship which is both sincere and work-focused. For this role, we worked a great deal on her deportment, her gait, her clothing and her shoes. She

had to capture a way of sitting, a way of holding her body and speaking which belonged to the role of a company director. It was also necessary for her to learn Chinese! Li Song, who plays the interpreter in the film, coached her for months; it's a difficult language!

| Was it important to you that she knew how to speak Chinese?

Yes, it echoes the Chinese tales which her mother used to tell her. For me, Emmanuelle's mother was a brilliant, erudite woman, so why not a sinologist? In any event, she transmitted a little of this culture to her daughter, and this helps considerably in her professional life.

In the scene in the restaurant with the Chinese partners, a command of the language reduces male colleagues to silence. They act as if they are gagged while Emmanuelle discusses outside with the Chinese,

smoking her cigarette and drinking. I enjoyed filming that!

Then, in the car, her superior attempts to belittle her success: «*Nice seduction operation,*» he says to her; «*No it isn't; work, camouflage...*» she replies. Despite her attempts to put things straight, he places his hand on her knee in a very natural manner during their exchange... Not a gesture of sexual aggression, but of proprietorial familiarity which, no doubt here too, reflects a subconscious desire to «constrict» her.

Relations between Emmanuelle and her husband are solid, | but complex. |

All the women in high positions whom I have met relate that they could not have a private life and children if they did not have a true life partner who understands them and knows how to take over certain tasks... They all express praise for the person who shares their life.

Emmanuelle's husband is a lawyer whose business fluctuates, whereas she, by contrast, is at an exponential moment in her career. This is very complicated for a couple to manage.



Why did you choose John Lynch to play Emmanuelle's husband?

I was looking for a British actor who could speak a little French and who had a solid physique. I saw John Lynch in *The Fall*, an excellent series in which the principal character is a very free female cop. I found

he had an element of humanity and virility – an Irish aspect! – which leaves no doubt as to the fact that Emmanuelle and he have a true loving relationship and sexuality.

What about the duo of Richard Berry and Benjamin Biolay?

For Beaumel, I had in my mind a short, dark-haired, swaggering, nervous type like Nicolas Sarkozy or Henri Proglio, whom I was always told was extremely kind and attentive, and always having a kind word for everyone, never arrogant.

Richard immediately had a sympathetic relationship with this character. This was just right for the film since nevertheless, I wanted this type of person to be likeable

to a degree, neither all-black, not all-white.

As for Benjamin Biolay, I felt he made a good counterpoint to Richard Berry. As a couple they are remarkable; one can easily imagine them weaving their political and professional web together, having a relationship of conquest with women, setting off on a spree together...

And what about Francine Bergé in the role of Adrienne?

Adrienne represents the generation of women such as Françoise Giroud, Simone Veil, or in a less political vein, Gisèle Halimi, Monique Wittig – the pioneers, the independent women... At the point in time when I was looking for a credible actress for the role, Brigitte Moidon, my casting director, suggested Francine, who was then playing Liliane Bettencourt in the theatre. Her relatively sinewy physique was perfect for embodying this influential woman.

As for the character of Véra, I swear that initially, I had thought of an older actress who would have evoked power to a greater extent, but I said to myself that it was more appropriate to make the character younger in order to evoke the feminism of today. There will be a baton change between Adrienne and Véra. I like the trio that Francine forms with Suzanne Clément and Anne Azoulay, who have an aspect of the «tough woman» about them - ambitious, very physical, and who are in extraordinary shape, with firm physiques...

You never descend into cynicism... Even at the end when Emmanuelle does «business» with Ronsin, who is ultimately not just a nasty piece of work...

Yes, he is simply pragmatic. And when he says to her, «*I will be yours 100% for two years*», it's true; he's sincere.

At a certain moment, Emmanuelle is obliged to play the game just a little. These appointments are also relationships of influence and power. In this sense, my film is not entirely utopian!



You have one thing in common with Emmanuelle Blachey: you were the first woman – and to this day, you are the only woman – to be awarded the César Award for Best Director.

Sure, but in my view, cinema is a special case. I've never heard it said that a movie was not being shown because it was made by woman. I remember Daniel Toscan du Plantier saying that two movements had predominated in French cinema: the Nouvelle Vague and the arrival en masse of women in French cinema at the end of the 1980s. I cannot deny that is true... It's happening too on the technical side, with female

directors of photography, grips, etc. France is the country where there are more female directors. The more there are, the better it will be, even though, nevertheless, I don't agree with the label «women's film». If you're a filmmaker, it little matters whether you're a man or a woman... What matters above all is sensitivity, and diversity.

The film ends with an official speech by Emmanuel on the floor of the Women's Forum which becomes an inner voiceover... Always this entanglement between what is public and what is intimate...

I wanted there to be ambiguity; is it a real speech, a speech she gave, or that she's going to give? What is she doing on this beach? And then I wanted the film to end with a song. Initially, I had the idea of having Oxmo Puccino singing *Woman* by John Lennon a cappella, since at the end I wanted a man to pay homage to the women. But then I found a sublime version of another song entitled *Woman*,

the song by Neneh Cherry, interpreted by an English woman, Alex Hepburn. But I was lamenting not having a man at the end when, very generously, Benjamin said, «*I'm going to call Oxmo and we'll do the song for you*». Et voilà, these two very handsome «machos» wrote and sang *La Femme*, which I consider to be fantastic and upbeat, and which closes the film just as I wished...

TONIE MARSHALL, DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER

CINEMA

- 2017 ***Number One***
- 2014 ***Sex, Love & Therapy***
- 2007 ***Off and Running***
- 2002 ***France boutique***
- 2001 ***Nearest to Heaven***
- 1999 ***Vénus Beauté (Institute)***
- 1995 ***Bastard Brood***
- 1993 ***Something Fishy***
- 1989 ***Pentimento***

TELEVISION

- 2012 ***Que le manège commence !*** (Documentary)
Broadcast by France 2
- 2009 ***X Femmes 2 – EP Le Beau Sexe***
Broadcast by Canal+
- 2004 ***Les falbalas de Jean-Paul Gaultier*** (Documentary)
Broadcast by France 5
- 1999 ***Tontaine et Tonton***
Broadcast by ARTE



CAST

EMMANUELLE DEVOS *Emmanuelle Blachey*
SUZANNE CLEMENT *Véra Jacob*
RICHARD BERRY *Jean Beaumel*
SAMI FREY *Henri Blachey*
BENJAMIN BIOLAY *Marc Ronsin*
FRANCINE BERGÉ *Adrienne Postel-Devaux*
ANNE AZOULAY *Claire Dormoy*
JOHN LYNCH *Gary Adams*
BERNARD VERLEY *Jean Archambault*
JÉRÔME DESCHAMPS *PDG THEORES*

CREW

DIRECTOR *Tonie Marshall*
SCREENPLAY, ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUE *Tonie Marshall and Marion Dousot*
in collaboration with Raphaëlle Bacqué
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION *Angeline Massoni*
CINEMATOGRAPHY *Julien Roux*
SOUND *Jean-Jacques Ferran, Ingrid Ralet, Valérie Ledocte and Luc Thomas*
SETS *Anna Falguères*
COSTUMES *Elisabeth Tavernier*
EDITING *Marie-Pierre Frappier*
ORIGINAL MUSIC *Mike Kourtzer and Fabien Kourtzer*
PRODUCED BY *Tonie Marshall and Véronique Zerdoun*
CO-PRODUCED *Jacques-Henri Bronckart and Olivier Bronckart*
Philippe Logie
A FRANCO-BELGIAN CO-PRODUCTION *Tabo Tabo Films - Versus production - France 3*
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