



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2024
OFFICIAL SELECTION

THREE FRIENDS

(TROIS AMIES)



MOBY DICK FILMS
PRESENTS



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CAMILLE COTTIN

SARA FORESTIER

INDIA HAIR

DAMIEN BONNARD

GRÉGOIRE LUDIG

with the participation of
VINCENT MACAIGNE

THREE FRIENDS

(TROIS AMIES)

a film by
EMMANUEL MOURET

INTERNATIONAL SALES

PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL
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FRANCE | 2024 | 117MIN | DCP | 5.1 | SCOPE | COLOR

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Joan is no longer in love with Victor, but it pains her to feel she is being dishonest with him. Alice, her best friend, reassures her: She herself doesn't feel passionate about her partner Eric and yet their relationship is smooth sailing. She has no idea he is having an affair with Rebecca, their mutual friend. When Joan finally decides to leave Victor and he disappears, the lives of the three friends and their relationships are turned upside down.



INTERVIEW WITH EMMANUEL MOURET

By Anne-Claire Cieutat

Three Friends is informed by a new sense of tragedy, but which is itself interspersed with a lighter, sweeter, gentler note somehow.

What I wanted to do with this one film was to build around a tragic character, Joan (India Hair), other situations and characters that offset the general mood and dominant viewpoints embodied by her two friends, Alice (Camille Cottin) and Rebecca (Sara Forestier). Joan's tragic dimension takes root in her own feelings and dilemmas, as well as in a conception of love tightly predicated on honesty, a virtue she holds above all else. No matter how fond she may be of Victor, with whom she lives, she realizes that, in her heart of hearts, she is no longer in love with him. By unveiling this truth to him, she brings about a split that itself leads to a tragedy, for Victor is to die in an accident, and Joan feels she is to blame for that.

But the film is no mere melodrama. Joan's narrative thread is indeed connected with the symmetrically reversed situation of Alice, for whom being in a couple is not about passion, which causes suffering, but rather about stability and security. All of which allows for a back-and-forth between opposing conceptions, but also between different tones. The third friend, Rebecca, who is insecure in both love and work, and is looking for more stability, offers yet another point of view, and an even more whimsical register.

I think *Three Friends* is a comedy drama, in the sense that tragedy and comedy are constantly interwoven, from beginning to end.

Your writing has a strong musicality to it. It brings together different storylines, and speaks to the changing emotional weather inside each character...

Cinema as a whole seems musical to me, in the sense that a film is like music resonating through time, playing upon a myriad of contrasts and repetitions that generate certain effects. Contrasts may come from all sides: from the cast, the sets, the atmospheres, the various paces, etc. Contrast may also be found in the characters' perceptions, the way they deal with society, with their desires, as well as their expectations, which may be frustrated or fulfilled. The different stories within the film echo each other, as though they were melodic lines generating counterpoints. These three friends differ not only in their ideas, but also in the way they feel about life. As a viewer, I like to be driven by different narrative hues, and shift from one to another. This is how thought is stimulated, by comparing stories to one another, by weighting them up as it were.

Can you tell us about the genesis of the three male characters around these three women?

Victor, Joan's companion, vanishes, only to reappear as a ghost. He is the story's narrator. Victor is to develop a deep tenderness for the living who are dear to him. The gentle tone you mentioned has a lot to do with this one character, and with the performance of Vincent Macaigne, who gives Victor a great deal of his good-naturedness. Once deceased, Victor rids himself of any type of acrimony and resentment. His death

makes him wonder a great deal, leading to confessions, and it sheds a new light on the story. In fact the character says it himself: it is as though by passing away he had completed a psychoanalysis, shedding his conflictual relationship with the world. This fantasy was a great boost during the writing process: I liked the idea that the one person ushering us into the story was already gone.

Thomas (Damien Bonnard) finds himself in a very cruel situation. By helping Joan to “get by” morally speaking, he falls in love with her and falls prey to that love. What I liked about this one character was the configuration of elements making him close to Joan: he too is a teacher, in fact he replaces Victor at the high-school where he used to teach, he lives in the apartment just above Joan’s, his own daughter gets on very well with Joan’s daughter, etc. Everything draws him close to Joan, and yet...

As for Eric (Grégoire Ludig), he has a crush on Rebecca, one of the best friends of his partner, Alice. I was very interested in this mirror effect, when each person in a couple is convinced that the other person is deeply in love, but actually everyone is just pretending!

Unlike in *Mademoiselle de Jonquières*, there is no thirst for vengeance among your characters. On the contrary, a certain magnanimity is revealed in some of them at crucial moments...

I like to confront my characters with moral dilemmas, but they are no heroes. They may be untrustworthy, selfish, whimsical, they may react awkwardly, but they are also capable

of thoughtfulness and scruples. How do others handle such situations? Maybe this is what we look for in film as well as written fiction. In narratives, we seek answers, models, ways to apprehend our own misgivings. Hence it is important for me to try and find a form of greatness in my characters, however minimal it may be, however grotesque they may also be at times. Characters who are both beautiful and slightly ridiculous, that is a combination I quite like! They are struggling with their own consciences, they might be a little bit, or altogether lost, make other people suffer, but all the while they have consideration for others and they try to make things right.

I like characters that err, start again and yet err anew. Think of Buster Keaton who falls, stands up, then falls again. Fall after fall, he moves on without looking back, without blaming anyone. I like characters who get lost in their dreams, in their obsession, who lose their way, but find another, then another one again, and so on. I have special fondness for characters who would like to be better than they are but do not really succeed. Not really, or maybe just at times.

Three Friends raises the question: how can you be honest with yourself without hurting people? There are times when this dilemma just cannot be solved, and this is precisely what torments Joan throughout the film. It is this kernel of intimacy that I am interested in. The absence of resentment where one might expect it always moves me. It is a deliberate choice of mine to devise characters who never turn against each other.

Friendship and love walk hand in hand in your film...

Friendship allows for interesting and delicate variations in situations: it entails moral and responsibility dilemmas, questions on how to provide advice, an exacerbated interest in other people's interests, and, sometimes, a resort to lying not to hurt others. In this film, never does the friendship tying these women together experience crisis, even though their love lives are in turmoil. Whilst the love stories upset them, the foundations of their friendship remain untouched.

Your story, co-written with Carmen Leroi, gives pride of place to the irrational. First, there is Victor's spectral presence, and, also, the porosity of Alice's dream, which influences reality...

Well, dreams are also narratives that do weigh on our emotions, and we found it interesting to play with that. It partakes of the adventure dimension inherent in the film.

I quite like the fantasy and the possibilities offered by such irrational or dreamlike incursions, all of which do not harm the film's profoundness, on the contrary. That a deceased ex-partner may return to speak to and console the woman who mourns his death is rationally impossible, but it is also beautiful.

How did you go about structuring your narrative, which begins with a time loop, then unfolds to give the impression of a never-ending story?

The story spans more than two years. The voice-over ushers us into the story at a specific moment in time, which we

leave to return to the past, before we get back to it again. The film unfolds by alternating condensed time frames and dilated ones, with radically different hues. It was both very complex and stimulating to write.

These interwoven narrative threads also required a great deal of attention to editing. With Martial Salomon, the film's editor, we had fun envisioning the film as a kind of mini-series with a single episode. I love stories and I wanted to make a film that would be "hyper-narrative." And at the same time, what I like about cinema, unlike series, is the tale-like dimension, with a starting point and an ending. My love of cinema stems from the fact that we enter a story, and when we leave the theatre, we can watch the film anew in our heads.

The music in *Three Friends* deftly blends the original themes composed by Benjamin Esdraffo with a vast array of classical compositions...

Music has been an important part of this project, for the film has so many different scenes and characters. Therefore there was a need for a vast array of themes. With Martial Salomon, we exchanged a great deal on our respective musical references. I have a special fondness for many classical composers, something you may have noticed in my previous films. On this one though, it was the first time I worked with Benjamin Esdraffo, who composed the scores to the key moments in the film. Meeting Benjamin was a wonderful experience. We conversed at length on who we get our inspirations from, navigating from

Shostakovich to Howard Shore, via Poulenc, Mozart, Beethoven or Bernard Hermann. Benjamin managed to create themes that are really consistent with the music that Martial and I had selected for the film. Working together has been a true delight.

Much like the characters in *Diary of a Fleeting Affair*, the characters in *Three Friends* go to the movies to enjoy the classics...

Everything you put into a film promotes what you love. So I like to show people going to the movies. I wanted my characters to only go and see films you would naturally think of as "classics." I am fond of this quote by Jean-Louis Comolli, who was my teacher at the Femis cinema school in Paris: "We often forget that the shows or films we watch are not solely about stories, fictions, characters and adventures, but that they also represent, whether we want it or not, models in terms of behavior, of how to relate to and to consider others." This type of thinking has been instrumental in the way I shape my characters and direct my films. Like Jean-Louis Comolli, I believe that making a film is also about promoting considerations that matter to us and that define the cinematographic practice above all else.



EMMANUEL MOURET

- 2024** **THREE FRIENDS (*Trois amies*)**
Venice Film Festival, Official Competition
- 2022** **DIARY OF A FLEETING AFFAIR**
(*Chronique d'une liaison passagère*)
Cannes Film Festival, Cannes Premiere
- 2020** **LOVE AFFAIR(S)**
(*Les choses qu'on dit, les choses qu'on fait*)
Cannes Film Festival, 2020 label
14 Cesar Awards Nominations (Best Supporting Actress Award Emilie Dequenne)
- 2018** **MADEMOISELLE DE JONCQUIÈRES**
Toronto International Film Festival, Platform
6 Cesar Awards Nominations
- 2015** **CAPRICE**
Cabourg Film Festival, Golden Swan for Best Film
- 2013** **LOVERS (*Une autre vie*)**
Locarno Film Festival, Official Competition
- 2011** **THE ART OF LOVE (*L'art d'aimer*)**
Locarno Film Festival,
Piazza Grande Official Selection
- 2009** **PLEASE, PLEASE ME (*Fais-moi plaisir !*)**
- 2007** **SHALL WE KISS (*Un baiser s'il vous plaît*)**
Venice Film Festival, Giornate degli autori
- 2006** **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**
(*Changement d'adresse*)
Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight
- 2004** **VÉNUS & FLEUR**
Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight
- 2000** **LAISSONS LUCIE FAIRE**
- 1999** **PROMÈNE-TOI DONC TOUT NU !**

CAST

ALICE	Camille COTTIN
REBECCA	Sara FORESTIER
JOAN	India HAIR
THOMAS	Damien BONNARD
ÉRIC	Grégoire LUDIG
VICTOR	Vincent MACAIGNE
STÉPHANE	Eric CARAVACA

CREW

Director
Screenplay
Image
Editing
Sets
Music
Sound
Costumes
1st assistant director
Casting
Production Manager
Production

EMMANUEL MOURET
EMMANUEL MOURET & CARMEN LEROI
LAURENT DESMET
MARTIAL SALOMON
DAVID FAIVRE
BENJAMIN ESDRAFFO
MAXIME GAVAUDAN, FRANÇOIS MÉREU & JEAN-PAUL HURIER
BÉNÉDICTE MOURET
JULIETTE MAILLARD
CONSTANCE DEMONTOY
KIM-LIÊN NGUYEN
FRÉDÉRIC NIEDERMAYER

Production
A coproduction

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ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA
AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES CINÉMA

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