

Zacharie
CHASSERIAUD

Nicolas
BOUCHAUD

Jules
PELISSIER

Solène
RIGOT

LA BELLE VIE



GIORNATE
DEGLI AUTORI
VENICE DAYS

a film by
JEAN DENIZOT

Sylvain and Pierre have been running from the law ever since a custody battle with their mother pushed their father Yves into hiding ten years ago. But now that they're older, the two brothers are road-weary and eager to take advantage of the perks of young adulthood. When the authorities discover their whereabouts, they are forced to move yet again and Pierre, the elder, disappears.

Synopsis

Alone with his father on an island in the Loire River, Sylvain meets Gilda: his first girl, his first crush, and the first stop on his way to “the good life” – his own.





Comments from Jean Denizot



ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

La Belle Vie is loosely based on the Fortin case, involving a man who kidnapped his two children and raised them in hiding in the French countryside for over ten years. In my film, dramatic and light-hearted, even sensual, by turns, with life on the run the new normal, one's identity a mask one wears, and freedom a distant hope, a sixteen-year-old boy decides to find his own way. That way will lead from the Pyrenees to the Loire Valley, from one family to another, and turn him into the man he never dreamed he could become.

A GOOD FATHER

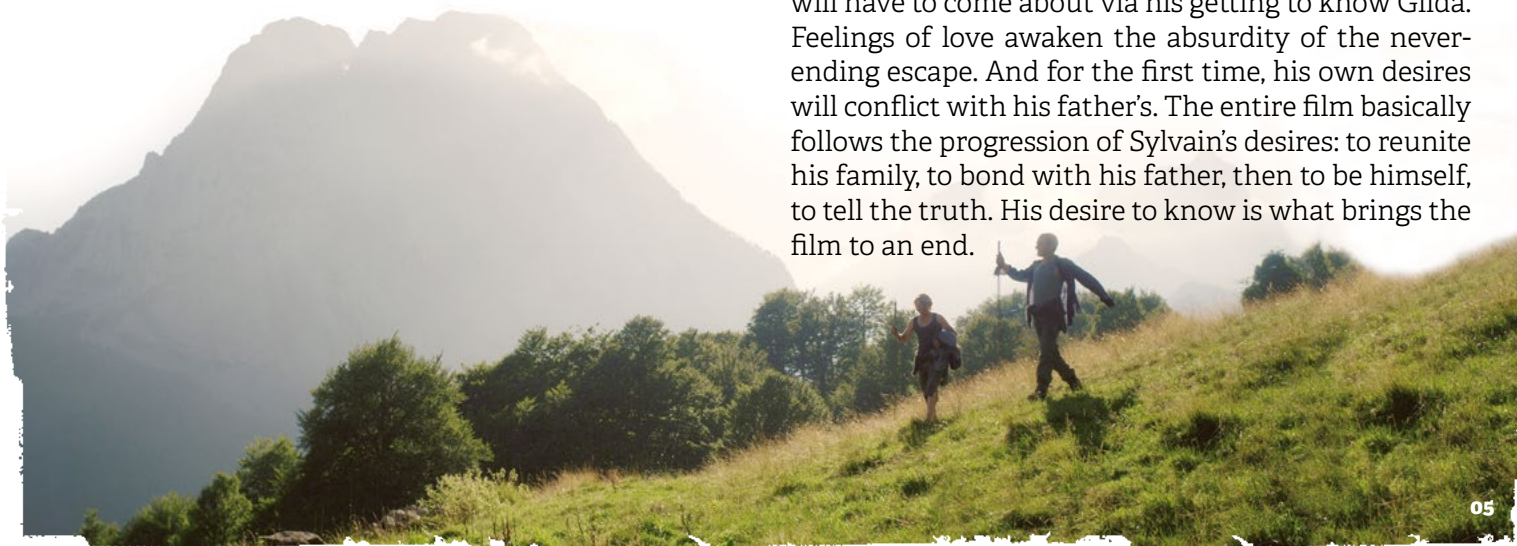
I was intrigued by that news item because I never imagined that a family with young children could criss-cross the whole country by hiding, disappearing for years, like individual criminals often do. Above all, I remember being surprised to hear on the radio that those boys seemed completely content. They didn't seem to have missed out on anything. Like everyone else, I immediately had the feeling that the man had been a good father, despite having kidnapped his children. The court's mild verdict reinforced this belief. Of course, such cases can be emotionally complex. That's what I wanted to explore in my film.

THE LAST ESCAPE

I distanced myself quickly from the hard facts of that news item to tell another story. I dismissed all the details of the Xavier Fortin's escape with his sons. I never sought to contact them out of respect for the pain that they lived through. I could never have written a sincere screenplay with a guilty conscience. In any case, my story really starts where theirs ended. The Fortin father was arrested in the Pyrenees region in January 2009. His boys had already grown up and were working. In **La Belle Vie** I imagined one last escape which allowed me to see clearly some issues from the adolescents' point of view : Why should Pierre and Sylvain continue to follow their father? Of course, he was everything to them, but he also deprived them of a more regular family life, of a steady social and personal life.

THE EMANCIPATION OF SYLVAIN

In **La Belle Vie**, the older brother Pierre takes off and disappears without a word. But Sylvain's emancipation is slower because it's more difficult. If he leaves, the whole big escape ends, and with it, the sense of everything that his father has fought to maintain for some 10 years. Sylvain's emancipation will have to come about via his getting to know Gilda. Feelings of love awaken the absurdity of the never-ending escape. And for the first time, his own desires will conflict with his father's. The entire film basically follows the progression of Sylvain's desires: to reunite his family, to bond with his father, then to be himself, to tell the truth. His desire to know is what brings the film to an end.



A RETURN TO THE WILD

When we think about stories of boys and rivers, boats, adventures and secrets, Mark Twain immediately comes to mind. That writer was one of the inspirations for *La Belle Vie*. In Twain's works, civilized and savage worlds exist side by side. Like in many Westerns, this is a sign of a country in construction, in full transformation, exposed to a natural order, wild and immutable. Being on the run, hiding out, all this is a return to the natural order of the wild. But when the story tightens, father and son find themselves trapped in their own freedom (on the boat when the father falls sick). That's more Hemingway. I remembered his hero Nick Adams, especially an episode when Nick comes back to the hunting lodge, soaked from the rain and freezing, and his father gives him a dry and warm shirt. Nick has to wear the shirt so that he doesn't catch cold, but he can't stand the smell of it, his father's smell.

UNTOUCHED AND WILD

I wanted majestic and wild landscapes to help tell this escape story. At the same time, they needed to be accessible to a film crew. I found the right locations in the Pyrenees region (south of the city of Pau)

and along the Loire River, at the foot of Sancerre, right in the middle of the river, between its source et its mouth. At this point, the river is magnificent, untouched and wild. Since many of my references for the film were essentially American, my goal was to make the Pyrenees our Rocky Mountains, the Loire our Mississippi, carrying its flow of tales. This story is very American at heart. Escapes in wide open spaces have inspired directors like Sidney Lumet, Terrence Malik, even Raoul Walsh. Like they did in American films, I wanted to change the French landscape into a fictitious, mythical, place.

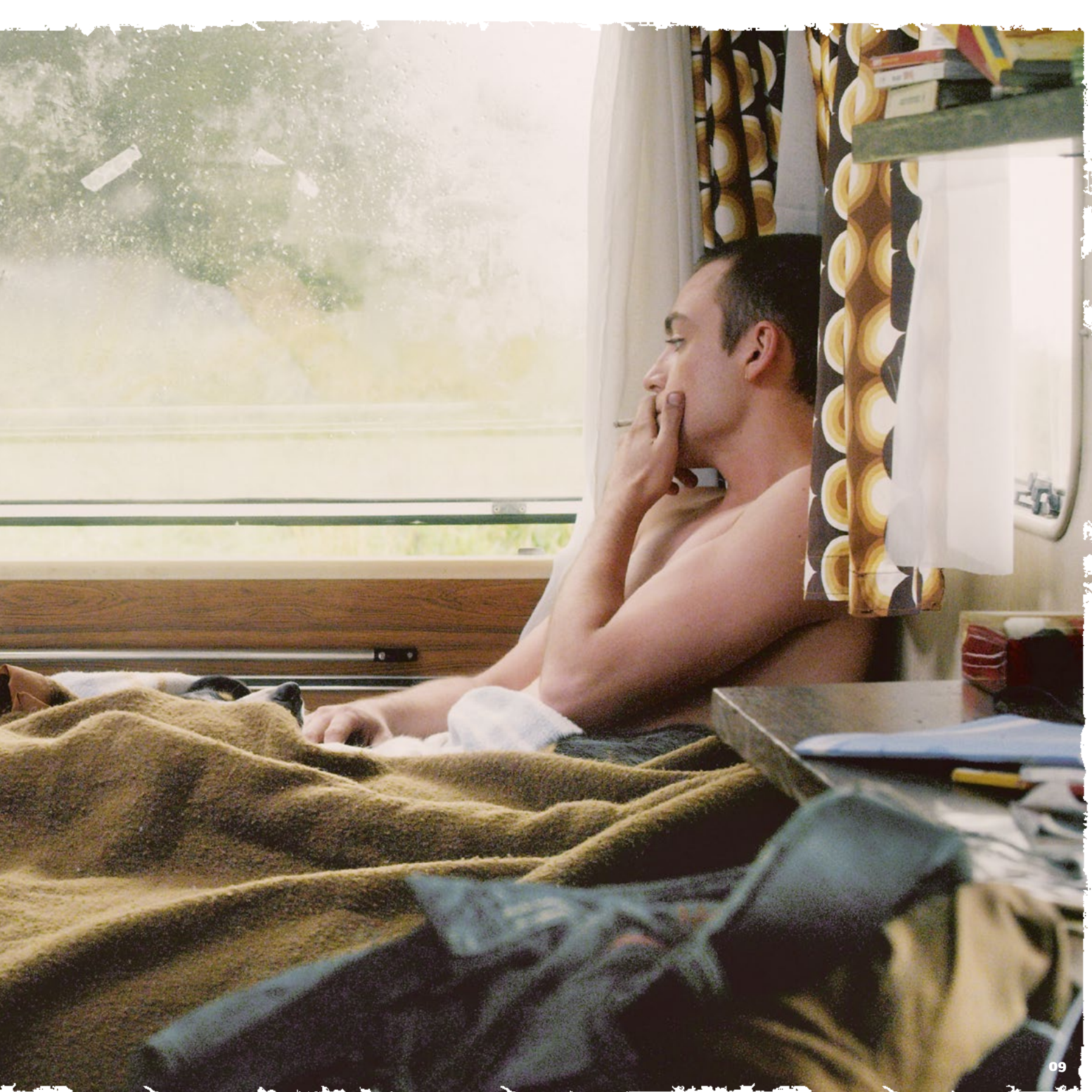
THE SCENERY IS AN ACTUAL CHARACTER

I'm a country boy. I grew up in Sancerre, in the middle of hillside vineyards, at the foot of the Loire. Amazing surroundings. I think that majestic landscapes can transform us, change us for the better. A bit like the arts, but to a lesser extent. When I start writing a screenplay, I need to know quickly where the action is taking place because the scenery is an actual character. Later in production, location scouting is very important to me. I personally take part in this. I think that the sets, the location, should say as much as the characters or music.











SPIRIT OF YOUTH AND ADVENTURE

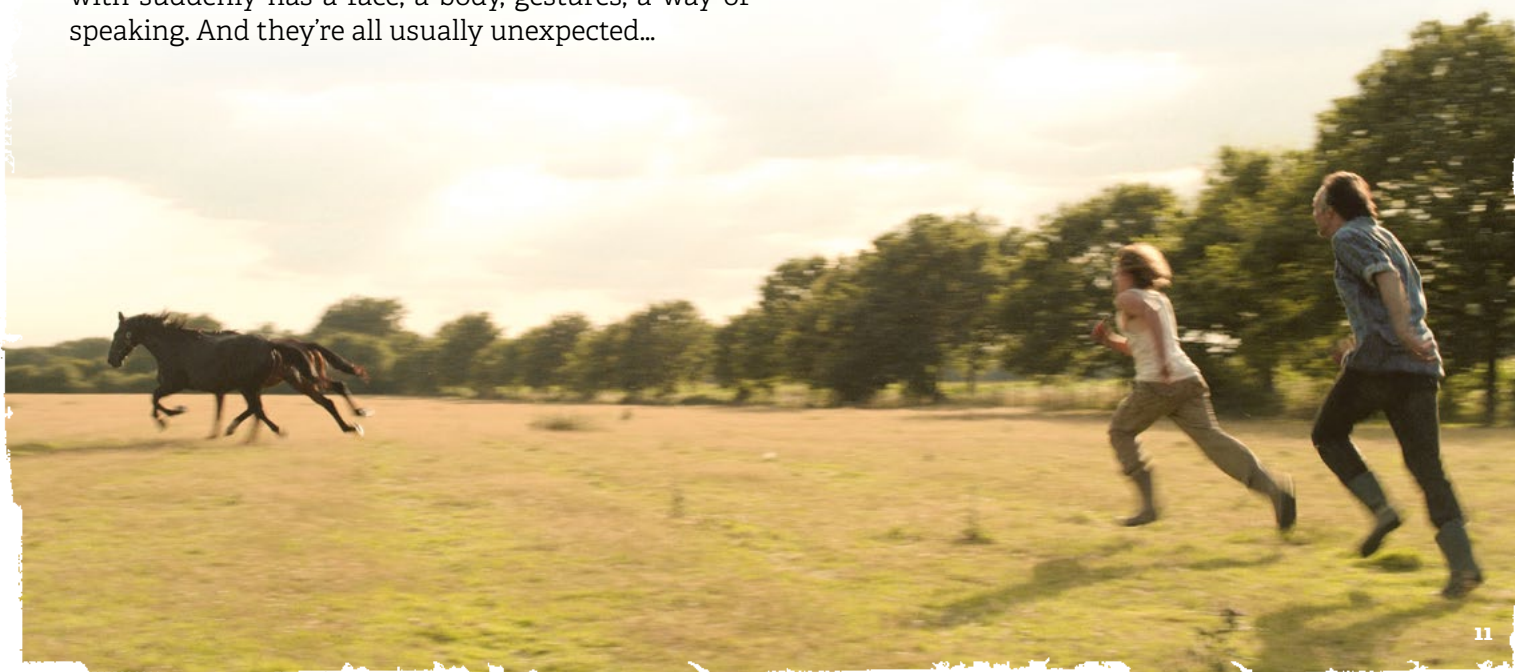
The soundtrack is evidence of my attempt to blend my inspirations from two cultures : American and European. Two of my favorite directors are Jean Renoir and John Ford. I think that they share the same entertaining spirit.

Both made films that were political and joyful, demanding and generous, ambitious in the richness of themes and modest in form. To bring life to this musical blend, Luc Meilland (composer of the film's original music) thought of Rosemary Standley (singer from the group Moriarty). She is Franco-American and she sings in English. I loved the idea of reaching out to Moriarty (named after the hero of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*). It's a call to the missing brother and the vagabond father. It's about a spirit of youth and adventure. That's what I advocate in this film.

THE YOUNG CAST

Casting main roles is always a delicate process. The character that you invented and passed so much time with suddenly has a face, a body, gestures, a way of speaking. And they're all usually unexpected...

I saw Zacharie Chasseriaud in *The Giants (Les Geants*, dir. Bouli Lanners), but at first I thought he might be too young to play Sylvain. But Zacharie was not what I expected. I was surprised by his maturity and his presence. I could not have asked for a better actor to play Sylvain. Actor Jules Pelissier is charming and very intelligent. The same situation as with Zacharie, I wasn't sure about Jules for the role of Pierre until I met him. We didn't do tests of the two actors together, but I knew that those two would be my fictional brothers. Casting Gilda was tough because there are so many talented young actresses in France. Solène Rigot has a very young face but a very deep voice. She has a tomboyish side which doesn't take anything away from her being a pretty girl. In the film, she is as much an energetic and responsible young woman as she is a teenager full of doubts. This delicate balance corresponded to what I saw in Zacharie. They were a perfect match.





Jean Denizot is a screenwriter, director, and teacher. After his two short films ***Mouche*** (2006), and ***Je me souviens*** (2008), he directed his first long feature film, ***The good life*** in 2013. Member of the editorial board of the art journal *Tête-à-tête*, he teaches staging in Paris 8 University.



Jean Denizot



FILMOGRAPHY

Je me souviens

Fiction, 13 min, 2009, 35 mm. Written and directed by Jean Denizot. Produced by Martine Vidalenc. With Didier Bezace and Annabelle Hettmann.

Festival and awards :

- Cap d'Agde Film Festival « Les Hérault du cinéma » (2009)
- Aye Aye Film Festival in Nancy, Lorraine (2009)
- Jean Carmet Festival in Moulins-sur-Allier
- Sarlat Film Festival (2009), « Coup de cœur » Award

Mouche

Fiction, 26 min, 2007, 35 mm. Directed by Jean Denizot, written by Catherine Paillé and Jean Denizot. Produced by Charlotte Vincent. With Mylène Saint-Sauveur

Festival and awards :

- « Défi Jeunes » prize winner (2006)
- Official selection - FIFCA Moncton, Canada (2007)
- International Short Film Festival Cologne, Germany (2007)
- Montreal World Film Festival, Canada (2007)
- Amsterdam (2007)
- Ebensee, Austria (2007)
- Vendôme Film Festival (2007)
- Dieppe International Film Festival (2007)

Cast & Crew

CAST CREW

Sylvain – *Zacharie Chasseriaud*
Yves – *Nicolas Bouchaud*
Pierre – *Jules Pelissier*
Gilda – *Solène Rigot*
François – *Jean-Philippe Ecoffey*
Eliana – *Maya Sansa*

Director – *Jean Denizot*
Producer – *Mathieu Bompont*
Writer – *Jean Denizot & Frédérique Moreau*
Composer – *Luc Meilland*
Director Of Photography – *Elin Kirschfink*
Editor – *Aurélien Manya*
Sound – *Marie-Clothilde Chéry,
Jocelyn Robert, Méliissa Petitjean*
Executive Producer – *Claire Trinquet*
Line Producer – *Laziz Belkaï*

A Mezzanine Films production in coproduction with Love Streams agnès b., M141, Arane Gulliver, Dublin Films, Shellac, Sedna Films, La Vie est Belle Films Associés, in association with Indéfilms, with the support of Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Région Aquitaine, CICLIC – Région Centre, Département des Pyrénées-Atlantiques and the PROCIREP

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Screening format : DCP
Length : 1h33
Sound: Dolby 5.1
Aspect Ratio: 1.85







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