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The End

Guillaume Nicloux

Producer Sylvie Pialat, Cyril Colbeau-Justin, Jean-Baptiste Dupont, Benoît Quainon. **Production companies** Les Films du Worso (Paris, France), LGM Cinéma (Paris, France). **Written and directed by** Guillaume Nicloux. **Director of photography** Christophe Offenstein. **Editor** Guy Lecorne. **Music** Eric Demarsan. **Sound** Olivier Dô-Huu. **Costumes** Anaïs Romand.

With Gérard Depardieu, Swann Arlaud, Audrey Bonnet, Didier Abot, Xavier Beauvois.

DCP, colour. 85 min. French.

Premiere 14 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

World sales Gaumont

Gérard Depardieu sits alone at his dining table, talking to the dog. They then set out hunting together. But the nearby forest, where the dog disappears and the hunter gets lost shortly afterwards, turns into a mysterious place full of strange creatures.

At first, we pay attention to Depardieu's sizable physique, which gradually becomes part of this curious narrative. He lets us partake in his efforts as he clumsily tries to find an escape route through the trees and the ferns. He comes across like a forlorn mountain when lying in front of a campfire at night. His gun and his phone both disappear and, without these vestiges of civilisation, the more animal side of his countenance becomes increasingly palpable. At the same time, the mighty actor triggers other associations. His green hunting outfit is reminiscent of a military camouflage suit. And what are big desert scorpions doing in a French forest? Screams heard in the distance hint at atrocities. Suddenly a naked woman stands before Depardieu. Her tears quench his thirst. By this juncture, the film has long since taken on the tone of a fairy-tale. These will not be the only stories the dark forest holds.

Anke Leweke

„When I look at Gérard, I see a child and an ogre“

You directed *The End* less than a year after *Valley of Love*.

Guillaume Nicloux: Gérard Depardieu and I very much wanted to work together again. One morning I called him and said: 'Let's make a movie with you getting lost in a forest.' And Sylvie Pialat made the project possible in a burst of enthusiasm much like for *The Kidnapping of Michel Houellebecq*. Everything moved very fast. Sometimes it's nice not having to explain the film you want to make, the characters and their psychological motivations... to let everything just come naturally, with no reflection, and eliminating the verbal excess that contaminates action. Filming Gérard Depardieu is mind-boggling. You might think we didn't have much time to make a film, but that wasn't the case at all. On the contrary, for me it was more than enough. When I look at him, I see a child and an ogre. And I recognise both of them as parts of the marvellous and horrible fairy tales that fed my childhood. There is also something of the Stations of the Cross in him, painful and explosive, but always radiant, in a joyful sacrifice that exalts excess and intensity. This film shows a fantasised part of all that he represents.

This film was written in a very particular way.

Valley of Love marked a turning point in my way of envisaging cinema. I went through a kind of emotional liberation while I was writing it. That incited me to find a more radical form of perception. I felt a need to let my unconscious speak more directly. That is what I have been trying to share for ten years now with my students at La Fémis: stimulating the imagination and its imagery by abandoning traditional narrative motors that can at times neutralise mystery and the unknown. When I very recently looked back on my filmography, what struck me was how persistently my films are dominated, clandestinely but regularly, by a search for identity and disappearances. *The End* was therefore a result of that double movement. I woke up one morning thinking that I was dead. I was aware of my death, so it was only a dream. So I woke up a second time. I collected my memories and wrote the story of this man lost in a forest, in a film about reunions and fears, abandonment and rebirth.

Without knowing precisely what story you were going to tell?

Yes and no, because I remained very faithful to my dream. The film deals with an issue that is necessarily intimate, but obscure. I wanted to let the story come to life, without creating any additional filters, such as reason and rationality. Some films raise questions without providing any answers, or as Jean-Luc Godard has said, there are films that you watch and others that watch you. I think that *The End* belongs to the second category. But I would be very happy for it to be simply categorised as a horror film. Mental horror.

*Music plays an important part in *The End*, but in an unusual way ...*

The music, composed by Eric Demarsan, is a kind of abstract and minimalist score, quite different from the original soundtracks that most often heighten the action. It is much like the atmospheric compositions close to the universe of Morton Feldman: not meant to heighten an emotion, but to throw it out of whack. To that end, music and image need to work together to produce a third level of perception.

Why the title?

The title is a reference for cinema lovers. 'The End' is, and has been ever since its origins, the final title of every film. And in a dream world, the ending of each and every film makes us immortal. But the two words also designate the end of a cycle of projection and diffusion, and the disappearance of a certain kind of magic. It is not a pessimistic or backward-looking way of seeing things, but you have to admit that the instrument that captures reality has changed: it has been deconsecrated, as we definitively enter another era of film, the time of the 'digitograph'. And everything needs to be reinvented.

Interview: Aurélien Ferenczi, February 2016



Guillaume Nicloux was born in Melun, France in 1966. He worked as a director and actor in Parisian theatre. He made his first short film *L'Orage* in 1987 and his feature debut *La Piste aux étoiles* in 1988. In 1990 he made his second feature *Les Enfants volants* which screened at the Berlinale Forum in 1991. He has lectured for ten years at the Parisian film school La Fémis and also works as writer.

Films

1987: *L'Orage*. 1988: *La Piste aux étoiles*. 1990: *Les Enfants volants/The Flying Children* (85 min., Berlinale Forum 1991). 1992: *La Vie crevée/Punctured Life* (90 min.). 1994: *Faut pas rire du bonheur/Happiness Is No Joke* (85 min.). 1998: *Le Poulpe/The Octopus* (100 min.). 2000: *Échange standard* (10 min.). 2001: *Une affaire privée/A Private Affair* (107 min.). 2003: *Cette femme-là/Hanging Offense* (100 min.). 2005: *Le Concile de pierre/The Stone Council* (103 min.). 2007: *La Clef/The Key* (115 min.). 2009: *La Reine des connes/Suite noire* (60 min.). 2010: *Holiday* (90 min.). 2011: *L'Affaire Gordji* (90 min.). 2012: *La Religieuse/The Nun* (114 min., Berlinale Competition 2012). 2014: *L'Enlèvement de Michel Houellebecq/The Kidnapping of Michel Houellebecq* (92 min., Berlinale Forum 2014). 2015: *Valley of Love* (91 min.). 2016: *The End*.