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DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA  
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIAN  
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

# IN THE HOUSE

a film by **FRANÇOIS OZON**

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**BASTIEN UGHETTO**

Photos and presskit can be downloaded from:  
[www.inthehousemovie.com](http://www.inthehousemovie.com)

RUNNING TIME: 105 MINUTES IMAGE

1.85 - SOUND DOLBY SR/SRD

# SYNOPSIS



A boy of 16 wants to get in the house of one of his classmates to glean inspiration for his writing assignments. Impressed with this unusual and gifted student, his teacher rediscovers a taste for teaching, but the intrusion sparks a series of uncontrollable events.

# Interview with FRANÇOIS OZON

*IN THE HOUSE* was inspired by the Spanish play "The Boy in the Last Row" by Juan Mayorga...

I was particularly struck by the teacher-student relationship when I read the play. We root for both the teacher and the student. Both points of view are presented, by turns. Usually students learn from their teachers, but here, the learning goes both ways. And the back-and-forth between reality and writing lends itself to a playful reflection on storytelling and the imagination. These somewhat theoretical questions are really brought to life in the play. The Germain-Claude relationship represents the essential partnership in any creative endeavor: the editor and the writer, the producer and the director, even the reader and the writer or the audience and the director. When I read the play, I saw a chance to speak indirectly about my work, the cinema, inspiration and its sources, what it is to create, what it is to be an audience.

*How did you go about adapting the play for the screen?*

The play is a continuous stream of dialogue. There are no acts, no truly contained scenes. The locations are not specified or differentiated, we're everywhere at once: the classroom, the art gallery, the house, the park. My first job was thus to create a space-time structure, organize the story in terms of time and location.

Next I considered placing the action in England. I had immediately pictured the pupils in uniforms, a custom that no longer really exists in France. Germain sees his pupils as sheep - a herd of imbeciles made one by the uniform - and then one kid stands out, the boy in the last row. But placing the action within the context of the English school system implied more adaptation and a long casting process, so I got the idea for a pilot school conducting an experiment to bring back the uniform, which is a recurring debate in France.

I eliminated and simplified a lot of things. In the play, young Rapha was a very good philosophy student, as opposed to Claude, who is good in math. The kids' dialogue was too sophisticated for the reality I wanted to illustrate, too theatrical, too removed. And a lot of theories were developed in the play about the act of creation. I retained only what touched me personally and worked directly with the story.

The fundamental question was how to represent Claude's writing. The first installment is read in its entirety by Germain, alerting the audience to the existence





of the continuing narrative to come. Establishing the device quickly and clearly from the beginning allowed me to break free of it that much faster. The second installment is visualized and commented in voiceover by the narrator, Claude. As the film progresses, there is less and less voiceover. Dialogue and images take over, it's cinema.

*We're as fascinated by Germain's writing lessons as we are by Claude's writing. Evoking the process of fictionalizing does nothing to diminish the pleasure of watching it come to life on screen, nor does it prevent us from believing it.*

And yet what happens in the house is pretty unremarkable, rather trite. At one point I wondered whether I should add something more dramatic, steer the film toward thriller or mystery, make it more Hollywood. Then I realized the real challenge at hand was to make normality fascinating: the father's problems at work and obsession with China; the son's love of basketball and affection for Claude; the mother's boredom and dreams of interior decoration. The idea was to make these ordinary things extraordinary in the telling and the filming, so the tension would rise. The script was designed to encourage audience participation, to actively stimulate the imagination and get us involved in the story. There are missing pieces, and as the film progresses the difference between writing and reality is harder to discern. The editing was crucial in making the original device fade into the background, reinforcing the ellipses and playing with the confusion between reality and fiction.

*You even go so far as to physically introduce Germain into Claude's fiction.*

That's a reference to a common theatrical device that Bergman used to great effect in *WILD STRAWBERRIES* and Woody Allen also uses a lot. I didn't want any special effects, I wanted Germain's intrusions to be very concrete. There comes a point when Germain has to penetrate the fiction, become an active participant. When Claude kisses Esther, Germain steps out of the pantry because the desire is too intense for him. He's the one who told Claude to love his characters, and Claude simply took that advice and ran with it. Germain is constantly getting tripped up by his own discourse.

*When Claude asks Esther to run away with him at the end, we wonder if it's actually happening or if he's making it up.*

That's right, especially since in the next scene we see him waking up. He might have dreamt it. Esther herself says, "What happened between us never existed." Gradually reality and imagination blend to become one because to me, at the end of the day, it's all real. Even Rapha's suicide is real because Claude wanted it to happen. We have to surrender to the fiction and stop asking questions.

*The insistently recurrent music helps us surrender.*

Yes. I wanted rhythmic music that would hook the audience. The melody that often plays during the writing passages has a serial feel to it, making you want to know what Claude is going to write next. It permeates the whole film. As with *SWIMMING POOL*, I gave the script to Philippe Rombi before the shoot and he proposed music in advance, which in turn inspired me and helped me determine my directing choices.

*Though hardly naturalist, the film has a strong social subtext. Claude is a disadvantaged child.*

That wasn't very clear in the play. We knew his father was handicapped and he didn't have a mother, but those details weren't developed or used. So I needed to create a social context for Claude. We sense from the beginning he's not from the same social class as Rapha, but only at the end do we discover his modest suburban home, confirming his humble background. It was important to discover and visualize Claude's origins late in the film, in order to understand how his initially ironic quest to find a place in the perfect family gradually turned into a feeling of love based on a real lack thereof.

*Can we consider the film a self-portrait?*

No, but I do relate to the relationship Claude has with Germain. The teachers who meant the most to me were those with whom I experienced a genuine exchange, with whom I didn't feel completely subservient. I experienced this late in my education, when I already knew I wanted to be a filmmaker, with professors like Joseph Morder, Eric Rohmer and Jean Douchet. They nourished me, encouraged me and confirmed some of my instincts, sometimes in spite of themselves. My parents are also teachers. I've seen it all first-hand since childhood. I know what a drag it is to grade papers on the weekend, I know about pet students, tensions with administrators... I had a good handle on the subject. I knew how to approach the things teachers go through: the battles, the burn-out, the often ridiculous constraints of the education system they are subjected to (like the concept of the red pen being stressful to students).

*Another subtlety about the teacher-student relationship is that the student does not surpass the teacher. Claude likes Germain's book, and at the end they sit as "equals" on the bench.*

The play is different. It ends on the bench in the park across from Rapha's house, with Germain realizing Claude has entered his private life and met his wife. He slaps the boy, tells him he's gone too far and ends their relationship, protecting himself and staying with his wife. This ending didn't ring true to me. I felt everything needed to be totally shaken up in the film. Claude goes farther with his cruelty and there is a real interaction between he and Jeanne. Germain's private life is irreversibly altered by his relationship with Claude, everything is contaminated, as in Pasolini's TEOREMA.

*But unlike Pasolini's character, Claude is not a cold manipulator. He ends up getting personally involved.*

Claude believes he can infiltrate the family and destroy it from the inside but as it turns out, the family's love is stronger and Claude can't find his place, he is excluded. In many of my films I destroy the family, but here, the family unit possesses a centrifugal force which bonds them together and expulses outsiders. This family is self-sufficient. They have no need to make room for an outsider, which I find both beautiful and monstrous. Claude's dilemma is that he is both narrator and actor. He wants to find a place for himself in his story and, in so doing, he unexpectedly falls in love with Esther. Bit by bit his story gets away from him, he loses control, confuses his imaginary world with reality, becomes two people, becomes a character. By integrating the fiction, he sings his wings too. At the end Claude says, "My teacher had lost everything" but so has he, in a certain sense.

*A feeling of solitude and exclusion permeates the film.*

Claude experiences solitude and exclusion through his writing, but he finds comfort and support in Germain. That's why it was important to reunite them in the final scene, at the rest home. In a way, it's a happy ending. I wanted to end on the bond between these two solitary souls who need each other to create fiction. I visualized that last scene early on: the two of them on a bench, gazing at windows like movie screens. Like the heroine in UNDER THE SAND who runs after a stranger on the beach, Germain and Claude prefer fiction to reality. It's what makes them feel alive.

*Fabrice Luchini is particularly moving in that final scene on the bench. The time that has passed shows in his face.*

Yes, he has surrendered something, there is an abandon, the character's cracks are showing. He no longer has his glasses, we see the bags under his eyes, his fatigue, his age. The wonderful thing about Fabrice is that he is devoid of the vanity typical of actors when it comes to their physique, their image. And he's not afraid to look ridiculous. We wanted to work together again after POTICHE and he was an obvious choice for Germain. He got totally involved in the role, he had no limits. In certain sequences, he liked the character so much and identified so strongly that he would add lines - I couldn't get him to stop advising Claude about writing! He loves to work, he loves rehearsing, sometimes to the point of vertigo. It's a director's dream to have an actor so devoted, so ready to serve the role. I could tell the film mattered a lot to him, it gave him a chance to express his love for literature. In POTICHE his character was totally against type, a real jerk, but here he could be himself, or at least closer to himself. Perhaps subconsciously, this role of transmitter touched on his own nature as an actor, the reasons why he chose this profession, particularly the theater, his fervor to transmit the great works of literature.

*How did you choose Ernst Umhauer?*

Claude is sixteen in the film and I soon realized actors that age lack the maturity required to play the role, so I turned to older actors. I noticed Ernst during the casting process, we did some screen tests. I felt he resembled the character: he comes from a small town, he's not really part of the circle of Parisian actors. He's nice-looking, but his beauty is mysterious and can be troubling, disquieting. He was twenty-one at the time of the shoot but still looked like a teenager, which was perfect. He's extremely photogenic and also has a beautiful voice, which was very important because Claude's voice is omnipresent in the film.



Germain and Claude are a real pair, and Fabrice knew Ernst would have to be good, and credible, for the film to function. He was extremely generous and patient with him. We tried to shoot chronologically as much as possible so that Fabrice could discover Ernst at the same time Germain discovers Claude.

*And Emmanuelle Seigner?*

I really thought of my casting in terms of pairings, not just for Germain and Claude but also for the two women. I absolutely wanted them to be complementary: one blond, one brunette; one intellectual, one sensual; one masculine, one feminine...

As soon as I began developing the love story between Claude and Esther I thought of Emmanuelle. I'd started a project with her a few years back that unfortunately never got made, a story along the lines of SUMMER OF 42 about a woman who falls in love with a teenager. What I love about Emmanuelle is she never intellectualizes, she gets right into the meat of the character.

*Emmanuelle Seigner is perfect in the role and yet she is cast against type here.*

She is often cast as sexually aggressive women, whereas in IN THE HOUSE she is maternal, sweet and tender. We wanted her naive, devoid of irony, in no way perverse. Her character is indolent, she has desires, but she lets herself be carried along. We went for understatement in the costumes, hair and make-up, to create what Claude calls "the middle-class woman". But her beauty is gradually revealed as the film progresses, through Claude's gaze and the love he feels for her.

*And Kristin Scott Thomas?*

We'd been dancing around each other for a while. I think she had a lot of fun with the role. She's a very Anglo-Saxon actress. She can speak French with no accent, but I encouraged her to keep it. I like her little errors in French, they're charming. It was a breeze working with her, the same pleasure I had working with Charlotte Rampling. Indeed, they often have the same intonations. And the couple she forms with Fabrice works very well. We believe in their intellectual connection, they have chemistry, their little expressions of affection are very natural, reminding us of Woody Allen and Diane Keaton. I was so pleased because they got to know each other on the shoot and immediately enjoyed acting together. Like Fabrice, Kristin has done a lot of theater. They understood each other.

*And Denis Ménochet?*

I'd seen him in Tarantino's INGLORIOUS BASTERDS. I tried out some other actors, but as soon as I chose Emmanuelle I started thinking in terms of couples. I brought Denis and Emmanuelle together for a scene and they instantly got along, like Fabrice and Kristin. Denis is very much a Method actor. He got totally involved in basketball and Chinese culture and came to the set with a lot of research under his belt. I had to encourage him to forget it a little. He has something of Rapha Senior in him naturally, a strong, sensual presence that was perfect for the role.

*And Bastien Ughetto?*

I initially imagined the character of Rapha Junior as a fat and awkward kid, overprotected at home and relentlessly teased at school. But it's difficult to do fat kids without falling into easy caricature. I came across a headshot of Bastien, his face was both beautiful and strange. I met him and really liked his presence. I went to see him in a play and quickly arranged some tests with him and Ernst. They had a strong chemistry and he was very good, capable of candor, naïveté and a certain toughness. Like Ernst, he was twenty-one.

*Through Jeanne, you caricature the world of contemporary art.*

No, I'm just playing with the usual clichés people have about contemporary art. The avant-garde nature of the art Jeanne exposes serves as a counterpoint to the borderline reactionary classicism Germain champions. He places literature



above all other art forms and particularly disdains contemporary art, which he understands nothing about. I thought it was funny to end the film with him staring at that building with all the inhabitants in their little boxes. It looks quite like a typical contemporary art installation!

*Why didn't you take the title of the play, "The Boy in the Last Row"?*

I felt that title focused too much on one aspect of the story, the idea of the proverbial «student in the back row» who stands out, who is different, often brilliant, yet ill-adapted to social life. I wanted to broaden the scope because to me, all the characters are important and the house is really at the heart of the story, as is the case in many of my previous films. The title **IN THE HOUSE** thus came naturally.

## Filmography FRANÇOIS OZON

2012	<b>IN THE HOUSE</b>
2010	<b>POTICHE</b>
2010	<b>THE REFUGE</b>
2009	<b>RICKY</b>
2007	<b>ANGEL</b>
2006	<b>A CURTAIN RAISER</b> (short film)
2005	<b>TIME TO LEAVE</b>
2004	<b>5X2</b>
2003	<b>SWIMMING POOL</b>
2002	<b>8 WOMEN</b>
2001	<b>UNDER THE SAND</b>
2000	<b>WATER DROPS ON BURNING ROCKS</b>
1999	<b>CRIMINAL LOVERS</b>
1998	<b>SITCOM</b>
1997	<b>SEE THE SEA</b> (medium-length film)



# Interview with FABRICE LUCHINI

*Two years after POTICHE, you worked with François Ozon again...*

I didn't expect to do another film so quickly after *THE WOMEN ON THE 6TH FLOOR*. I'm no glutton for action, and the theater takes up a lot of my time. It just happened. I can be swayed by charm, I let my feelings guide me. If someone is courteous, elegant, funny, simpatico, talented and we like working together, I'm in.

Then there was the script. I don't know how to read scripts, I'm only mildly interested, if at all. My daughter usually decides for me. But in this case, something stood out. It would be unthinkable to turn down a script this rich, this suspenseful. Finally something new but not abstract, something that felt good, was ambitious but not psychological.

*Do you relate to the way Germain relates to literature?*

Let's just say it's within my realm, but the director is the one responsible for bringing the actor to the character, he took me there. He's the boss, I'm the tool. In the past few years I've discovered an extraordinary method: I'm totally obedient. It takes a lot less energy and the directors lead me to the note they want me to play. Cinema requires total availability, vacuity. You should arrive on set in a kind of somnolent state. I don't have the conceit of great actors who claim they can play any role. And the older I get, the less I have it.

My responsibility here was just to make it lively and funny even though the character is a bit depressed. Actors must be effective. Chekhov is admirable for the intellectual nuances, but I also like the clarity and efficiency of Feydeau's actors when they don't become prisoners of the exercise, mere machines.

*Germain is a man passing on his love of great writing, as you do when you read great works on stage.*

Yes, but in my case it's very different. My theater audience pays fifty euros a head to hear Baudelaire or La Fontaine, Céline or Flaubert! Germain is not waxing poetic, he can't be an "emotional athlete" as Juvet called theater actors. So neither could I, as Germain. In the theater, I frame the action, especially in my literary one-man shows. Cinema is less physical, you are working within the director's frame. François Ozon was careful to temper my literary advice



to Claude, it was very written. He was obsessed with preventing me from doing Fabrice Luchini!

*So you didn't add your "grain of salt" to Germain's discourse?!*

Not really. But that's a good sign, it means I appropriated what was written. I have no opinion on what Germain says, but obviously there are echoes within me. I suggested Flaubert's "A Simple Heart", it's a piece of writing I absolutely love. And Germain gets conked on the head by Céline's "Journey to the End of the Night", but that was François making a playful reference to me. What Germain says is not important, the pleasure of cinema is what counts, and Ozon is responsible for that. However there is one line that comes from me. When my wife in the film is talking about a contemporary artist, I was supposed to give a long-winded theoretical answer. But I thought of our French Elvis, Johnny Hallyday, and whittled it down to, "I'm not sure it'll sell." I love Johnny, he has flashes of brilliance. I'm a big fan of his sound bites.

*You're known for being funny, but you're also very moving here, especially in the last scene, on the bench.*

Yes, there is a lot of alternating between the two registers, it's a great role. An actor cannot come from a position of strength. He can be colorful, but he must be vulnerable to render the humanity. It's good I'm being offered roles like this, because if I'm always some sort of symptom that some people enjoy and others can't stand... Actually I've been getting roles like this for about a dozen years now. And people say, "Ah, so you can do emotion!" as though I were eternally a Rohmer character, the inveterate chatterbox, a man of mere words playing brilliant, sarcastic, cynical or mean roles.

*How did you work with Ernst Umhauer?*

It was very perilous on the part of Ozon to give a role of such importance to a young man who had so little film experience. He gave me one important indication: forget literature and imagine you're teaching a young actor in a drama class. And I thought of some other ideas, if I may wax philosophical for just a moment: the illumination of the other, Levinas... I'd considered that when I was doing *THE WOMEN ON THE 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR* too: What does it mean to come face to face with the other? When you start out as an actor you're extremely self-conscious, totally focused on yourself. It would be a lie to say that changes, it is the actor's curse! But luckily, miraculously, the presence of someone else, unless you're beyond reach, is a fertile resource for an actor. Your own part doesn't matter, the important thing is to turn your attention to your partner to



the point of being almost exclusively focused on him. I like such roles now, being a receptor for the other. Which is rather unexpected from a guy like me, who's been acting alone on stage for years. Alone with the authors and the audience. Can't complain, I've been in good company: La Fontaine and the genius of the written word.

*How would you describe the bond that develops between Germain and Claude?*

Psychology is killing us. Actors always yammering on about their characters! No. It's simpler than that. You've got a teacher and a young man. You've got the pleasure of cinema, delivering your lines, the strange situation the characters are in, the way my character sees this young man embodying the enigma of youth and talent... I don't analyze it, I don't care about the psychology of it.

And when I'm acting opposite Kristin Scott Thomas, all I have to do is adapt to the very different actress she is, with her considerable experience, her intense presence, her incredible physicality. It cannot be diminished, which is why, the moment we start a scene, as soon as she speaks to me and I respond, the dynamic is different than with Ernst. Delectable, no need to fabricate.

Knowing your role doesn't mean knowing your lines by heart. First and foremost, it's about knowing what place you occupy in the overall layout of the film, understanding the action and what cog you are in the wheel that makes the vehicle move forward. So rather than focusing on yourself and preventing the movement of the narration, you propel it forward.



*Which cog were you, in this film?*

I don't know how to define it intellectually. I can only define it hierarchically: camera, young man, creation... The lead role is François Ozon's camera, next comes Claude, a sort of twisted Rimbaud. Then in third position comes the teacher, who progressively loses his footing as he accompanies this young man. For the first scene where I meet Claude, I knew I had to make sure I wasn't playing the words. All I had to play was: How can this be? That's my job: whatever you do, don't play the words. In life I'm extremely analytical, I have an opinion about everything, but on the job I'm a complete moron.

*How is François Ozon's camera the leading role?*

Because it moves. It goes into the house, analyzes it, studies it with irony. It films psychology in Germain's wife, strangeness in the young man, the middle-class at Rapha's house and the imagination through Claude's writing. In the theater my job is to provoke images, give image to what authors wrote. In an Ozon film, he's the one who gives image to the writing, I'm not responsible for that. I've only been taking roles where I don't have to do anything these past few years!

*What was it like on the set?*

François is very pleasant to work with. He's a singular director, always on the go. He frames the shots himself, he's always busy, always behind the camera. It makes you want to be on top of your game, be part of the team, part of the crew. The atmosphere on set is exceptional, he creates an intensity. He's

clever, mischievous, enigmatic. He doesn't intellectualize anything, he's a man of action, not of analysis or conversation. He's not at all 18th century, he's a man of his time. He's very removed from my writers. He likes Virginia Woolf, I like Céline. Flaubert is all we have in common, but we get along famously.

*Germain is very different from Robert Pujol in POTICHE.*

Indeed! I was concerned I wouldn't be able to play Robert Pujol in Ozon's revisited farce. I really had the bad role, a horrible character, a thankless role! Pujol isn't mean, he's pathetic, spineless, mediocre. POTICHE was all about Catherine Deneuve but I didn't care. A year later, Ozon gave me a great role, human, broad. It's a real gift and I never expected it..

*What was your impression seeing the film?*

An impression of comfort. We get confused watching the film, but rather than feeling cold and abstruse it's completely comfortable. At a certain point you're floating, you don't know if you're in the writing or in reality and you don't care. It's not dreamlike, the way many of those rather annoying films where you don't understand a thing can be, those horrible Cocteau-wannabe films. And it's not psychological realism either. One word comes to mind: jubilatory.

# Filmography

## FABRICE LUCHINI

2011 **IN THE HOUSE** by François Ozon  
**ASTÉRIX ET OBÉLIX : GOD SAVE BRITANNIA** by Laurent Tirard

2010 **POTICHE** by François Ozon  
**THE WOMEN ON THE 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR** by Philippe Le Guay  
**MY FATHER'S GUEST** by Anne Le Ny

2008 **PARIS** by Cédric Klapisch  
**A DAY AT MUSEUM** by Jean-Michel Ribes  
**THE GIRL FROM MONACO** by Anne Fontaine

2007 **MOLIÈRE** by Laurent Tirard

2006 **JEAN-PHILIPPE** by Laurent Tuel

2005 **LA CLOCHE A SONNÉ** by Bruno Herbulot and Adeline Lecallier

2004 **INTIMATE STRANGERS** by Patrice Leconte

2003 **THE COST OF LIVING** by Philippe Le Guay

2001 **BARNIE'S MINOR ANNOYANCES** by Bruno Chiche

1999 **KEEP IT QUIET** by Benoît Jacquot  
**NOTHING ABOUT ROBERT** by Pascal Bonitzer

1998 **PAR CŒUR** by Benoît Jacquot

1997 **LE BOSSU** by Philippe de Broca  
**AN AIR SO PURE** by Yves Angelo



1996 **HOMMES, FEMMES, MODE D'EMPLOI** by Claude Lelouch  
**BEAUMARCHAIS, THE SCOUNDREL** by Edouard Molinaro

1995 **L'ANNÉE JULIETTE** by Philippe Le Guay

1994 **COLONEL CHABERT** by Yves Angelo

1993 **TOUT ÇA POUR ÇA** by Claude Lelouch  
**TOXIC AFFAIR** by Philomène Esposito  
**THE TREE, THE MAYOR AND THE MEDIATHEQUE**  
 by Éric Rohmer

1992 **LE RETOUR DE CASANOVA** by Edouard Niermans

**RIENS DU TOUT** by Cédric Klapisch

1990 **LA DISCRÈTE** by Christian Vincent  
**URANUS** by Claude Berri

1988 **LA COULEUR DU VENT** by Pierre Granier Deferre  
**THE LARK** by Pierre Zucca

1987 **FOUR ADVENTURES OF REINETTE AND MIRABELLE**  
 by Éric Rohmer  
**LES OREILLES ENTRE LES DENTS** by Patrick Schulmann

1986 **MAX MY LOVE** by Nagisa Oshima  
**CONSEIL DE FAMILLE** by Costa Gavras  
**HÔTEL DU PARADIS** by Jana Bokova

1985 **P.R.O.F.S.** by Patrick Schulmann  
**ROUGE GORGE** by Pierre Zucca

1984 **FULL MOON IN PARIS** by Éric Rohmer

1983 **ZIG ZAG STORY** by Patrick Schulmann

1982 **T'ES FOLLE OU QUOI** by Michel Gérard

1978 **PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS** by Éric Rohmer  
**VIOLETTE NOZIÈRE** by Claude Chabrol

1975 **NÉ** by Jacques Richard  
**VINCENT MIT L'ÂNE DANS LE PRÉ** by Pierre Zucca

1974 **CONTES IMMORAUX** by Walerian Borowczyk

1970 **CLAIRE'S KNEE** by Éric Rohmer

1969 **TOUT PEUT ARRIVER** by Philippe Labro

## Interview with KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

*What were your impressions when you read the script for IN THE HOUSE?*

I found it funny and light, yet not superficial. It poses questions, makes you think about the roles of teachers and students, about art, and about our obsession with reality shows. Particularly through the character I play, who is totally hooked on the story Claude is writing. Jeanne has a very voyeuristic attitude toward the Rapha family. Her attitude is very much a part of our time, we are all extremely curious about the lives of others, as evidenced from the popularity of tabloid magazines. Not something to be very proud of!

*For Jeanne, getting engrossed in the lives of others is a way of avoiding her own.*

Yes. Jeanne is incapable of seeing what's happening right under her nose, and the way her relationship is falling apart leaves her somewhat bitter. The film asks some big questions, but in simple, amusing ways. Directed by someone else this could have been a tragedy, but François has turned it into a funny, scathing story. I like his sense of humor.

*How would you describe Jeanne's and Germain's relationship?*

They have mutual admiration. They've found their comfort zone in sharing a love of reading and art. They are culturally compatible. Culture is kind of like the child they never had. The child question is only raised at the end of the film, as a result of Germain's relationship with Claude.

*What is Claude looking for in Germain?*

Help in accessing his imagination and honing his writing style so he can escape his sad reality, with a father condemned to a wheelchair and an absent mother. In escaping to a virtual world, Claude exploits a family. He's a bit of a monster!

*The family is also monstrous, and ultimately closes in on itself.*

Yes, that's a pet theme with Ozon! The family has a monstrous side but they're seen through a satirical lens, it's difficult to take them seriously. We keep a



certain distance because the family is being described by Claude. However there is more reality and accuracy in Jeanne's and Germain's relationship. Ozon filmed us up close, in a small apartment crammed with books, plunging the audience into a more intimate atmosphere.

*Jeanne is into contemporary art, Germain is into classic literature.*

Yes, but up until the arrival of Claude, that distinction didn't bother them, it wasn't a source of conflict. They each went about their business. Only when their relationship hits the skids does it become a problem. François films the contemporary art world with derision. The twins' reaction to the cloud paintings Jeanne shows them is very funny. They're afraid to say anything.

Jeanne is not a caricature of an art dealer, she questions the value of these works too. The way she tries to sell the paintings reveals her doubt - she's trying to convince herself as much as the buyer. And in the end, she finds herself turning to crafts more than art!

*What was it like meeting François Ozon?*

We'd met several times before. I found him interesting, sharp, provocative. He's got a glimmer in his eye, he talks a mile a minute, he's a workaholic, interested in everything, very cultured, aware of what's going on.

*And the shoot?*

I'd just finished a Pinter play in London, a very dark piece that ran for a number of months. I'd kind of forgotten what it was like to work in film! François has a rather unusual way of working. To start with, he frames the shots himself. I'd never seen that before. The other thing about this shoot was most of the film had already been shot by the time I arrived. My scenes were all that was left, they were waiting for me like the Messiah! It's not easy to insert yourself into an atmosphere that has already been established.

*How does François Ozon direct his actors?*

He knows how he wants you to move down to the last millimeter. His precision reminds me of Polanski. François is very pragmatic, and he's a stickler for how the lines should be delivered. In this type of French comedy, the speed and style of delivery must be very precise. The story is not based on the characters' psychology, it's anti-Method. It's all about the rhythm and listening to your partner.



*And meeting Fabrice Luchini?*

Fabrice Luchini had been shooting for several weeks when I arrived, he was totally immersed in his role, very comfortable with the crew and with François. I'm used to being the one in the strong position, with the other person more vulnerable. Here, the tables were turned! It was the first time Fabrice and I have worked together, and I hope it won't be the last. We complement each other on screen, we seem like we've worked together our entire lives! It was very easy to exchange ideas with him. Undoubtedly because we share the experience of the theater and the stage. I was also very impressed by Ernst Umhauer's performance. He plays beautifully opposite Fabrice in the film.



# Filmography

## KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

- 2011 **IN THE HOUSE** by François Ozon  
**BEL AMI** by Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod  
**SALMON FISHING IN THE YEMEN** by Lasse Hallström  
**CHERCHEZ HORTENSE** by Pascal Bonitzer
- 2010 **THE WOMAN IN THE FIFTH** by Pawel Pawlikowski  
**NOWHERE BOY** by Sam Taylor-Wood
- 2009 **IN YOUR HANDS** by Lola Doillon  
**LOVE CRIME** by Alain Corneau  
**SARAH'S KEY** by Gilles Paquet-Brenner
- 2008 **LEAVING** by Catherine Corsini  
**I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG** by Philippe Claudel
- 2007 **SEULS TWO** by Eric and Ramzy  
**LARGO WINCH** by Jérôme Salle



- 2005 **THE VALET** by Francis Veber  
**TELL NO ONE** by Guillaume Canet
- 2004 **MAN TO MAN** by Régis Wargnier
- 2003 **ADVENTURES OF ARSENE LUPIN** by Jean-Paul Salomé
- 2002 **PETITES COUPURES** by Pascal Bonitzer
- 1999 **RANDOM HEARTS** by Sydney Pollack
- 1998 **UP AT THE VILLA** by Philip Haas
- 1997 **THE HORSE WHISPERER** by Robert Redford
- 1996 **AMOUR ET CONFUSIONS** by Patrick Braoudé  
**SWEET REVENGE** by Malcolm Mowbray
- 1995 **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE** by Brian de Palma  
**THE ENGLISH PATIENT** by Anthony Minghella  
**RICHARD III** by Richard Longrairie
- 1994 **LE CONFESSIONAL** by Robert Lepage  
**ANGELS AND INSECTS** by Philip Haas  
**THE POMPADOUR OF LOVE** by D.J. Paul
- 1993 **FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL** by Mike Newell  
**AN UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER** by Lucian Pintilie
- 1991 **BITTER MOON** by Roman Polanski
- 1990 **AUX YEUX DU MONDE** by Eric Rochant
- 1989 **LE BAL DU GOUVERNEUR** by Marie-France Pisier  
**DR GRAESSLER** by R. Faenza
- 1988 **FORCE MAJEURE** by Pierre Jolivet  
**BILLE EN TETE** by Carlo Cotti
- 1987 **AGENT TROUBLE** by Jean-Pierre Mocky  
**LA MÉRIDienne** by Jean-François Amiguet  
**A HANDFUL OF DUST** by Charles Sturridge
- 1985 **UNDER THE CHERRY MOON** by Prince

# Interview with ERNST UMHAUER

*How did you feel when you read the script for IN THE HOUSE?*

I was struck by the similarities between Claude and myself. At his age, I wasn't "the boy in the last row", I was the boy in the second-to-last row! And like Claude, I was pretty good at writing but not much else. Of course Claude and I are also very different. We don't have the same background, we weren't born in the same place, we don't have the same aspirations. I would never go to people's house to ruin their lives! But it was unnerving, especially in my first major role, to find myself back in my teens and back in school, a place I'd been so anxious to leave.

*How would you define Claude?*

Claude is the boy in the last row who sees everything, hears everything, has a wild imagination and is ready to do whatever it takes to make his young writer's fantasies come to life. In order to write, he needs to make things happen in real life. Gradually this leads to comical situations. He confuses his writing with reality and turns everything in his path upside-down. He can be prickly and caustic because he hasn't been loved, and his lack of worldly knowledge gets him into trouble. He has no distance, it takes him a long time to realize his words are stinging and can do damage. He's smart, but not very conscious of his responsibility.

*Claude is an innocent but also a manipulator, both scary and touching. How do you approach such a character?*

I thought a lot about him in advance, but when it came time to play him, all my intellectualizing fell by the wayside and intuition took over. As an actor, my main job is to transcribe emotions. Claude is both Machiavellian and innocent. He does some shady stuff, but I think most of it comes from age-based awkwardness.

*How would you describe working with François Ozon?*

François figured me out pretty quickly and knew how to find the right words to get the right energy from me at the right time. We didn't talk about the character much, but we rehearsed, worked on the choreography of the scenes and somehow managed to get on the same page, sometimes simply through an exchange of glances. It's hard to put this job into words and I lack comparison with other directors. One thing



I can say is that the pace of the shoot was very fast, everything moved very quickly.

*Did you play differently according to whether Claude was in reality or in his writing?*

François wanted the writing scenes to be as concrete as the real scenes so everything would blend together - making dreams and imagination an integral part of real life. But Claude is undoubtedly a bit more cheeky and extraverted in the writing scenes. Knowing we were in the fiction part, I felt more creative and freer and didn't play exactly the same way.

*A lot of your acting was done in voiceover. Did you find the tone right away?*

François was right behind me, carefully listening to each sentence. If something was off, he'd say, "More sensual, more neutral..." I had a tendency to aim for irony, but François would warn me, "The text is ironic enough on its own, no need to add to it." It was an interesting exercise, trying to "play" the writing when the words were enough on their own. For example, "An odor caught my attention. The singular scent of a middle-class woman." Much is revealed about Claude with just this sentence.

We recorded a first version of the voiceover before the shoot so François could evaluate the timing of the scenes. We did it again after the shoot, to take into account technical problems and modifications in the text. The second time, being able to picture the shoot while I did it made it easier. While they were editing, I recorded a lot of the voiceovers at home in Cherbourg and sent them by email to François.



*Isn't it difficult to record yourself all alone that way, cut off from the atmosphere of the shoot?*

No, I'm used to it. My father taught me early on how to read out loud, how to turn a phrase, how to place my voice. I always wanted to be an actor. I loved reading out loud, I'd try to find the right tone of voice to make my friends laugh.

*What is Claude looking for in this "perfect" family?*

Things he doesn't have. A family life, a father-son bond (his own father being an alcoholic in a wheelchair), a mother's love. Actually, beyond the love of a mother, he discovers the love of a woman with Esther. Thanks to her, he begins to put this new emotion into words as he simultaneously seeks to understand what his life would have been like if he'd been born into this family. He also comes to realize he isn't so badly off after all, Rapha's family is pretty strange! The love between them is strong, but they have a ridiculous side and he makes fun of them.

*The house represents normality, in both the family and society. When it shuts itself off to Claude, it is as though a higher social class is also refusing him entry.*

Claude is clearly conscious of the social dimension in the beginning but very quickly that aspect fades into the background. What he sees most of all is love in this family. The only person he really remains close to is from a higher social class than the family: his teacher, Germain.

*The student-teacher relationship between Germain and Claude is very powerful.*

Germain and Claude are two free agents, two total opposites who come together to create a fictional story. Their relationship is somewhat fraught at the start. If they don't click right away, it's partly because Claude is seeking a family more than a mentor and father figure, like his teacher.

*Germain is a father figure for Claude but Claude is also running the show and teaching Germain a thing or two.*

Yes, we are all eternal students. At the end, when Germain is drugged up on meds and finds himself in a weaker position, Claude truly takes on the role of son. He comes to visit him, comforts him, offers his help. In a real father-son relationship, this type of give-and-take is quite common.

*What was it like meeting Fabrice Luchini?*

I'd seen him read Céline in the theater when I was sixteen, Claude's age. I'd always wanted to be an actor and seeing him on stage confirmed my desire. I thought, "I want to meet that guy!" without ever imagining I actually would.

*How did you approach your first big role opposite such an experienced, voluble actor as Fabrice?*

By listening to him! And wearing headphones between takes in order to concentrate! Fabrice is pretty much always on stage. It's impressive, you want to participate but you can see it just isn't possible. We didn't have much of a chance to talk before the shoot, but once on set we quickly saw eye to eye in our approach. It helps to start off with an actor like him. He puts so much energy into it, you feel you'd better put in as much and get as involved if you want to be on his level.

He and I mainly shot scenes at the high school, in echoing hallways, with lots of extras. The context was quite impersonal. Plus, he was playing my teacher, we needed to maintain a certain distance even though our characters do gradually develop a mutual trust. As a novice actor, I had pretty much the same relationship with Fabrice as Claude has with Germain.

*And with the other actors?*

With the others we shot in the studio, scenes that take place in the house. We had more time to talk, it was very friendly, we laughed a lot. Emmanuelle Seigner immediately took me under her wing. We hit it off right away. She has a singing career too and we talked more about music than cinema. In some ways, even physically, we resemble each other. Denis Ménochet was like a big brother to me. Bastien and I continued to have the same energy we'd had when we did our screen tests together.

*How has Claude changed by the end of the film?*

Reassured by Germain's attention, Claude has shed his dark side, his animosity, his fear of others. He's learned that his teacher is also a writer. It's something they share, but Germain wasn't as fortunate: he never had the kind of teacher he's been for Claude.



# Interview with EMMANUELLE SEIGNER

*How did you meet François Ozon?*

We met long before this film, in 2007, for a project with a female character in the vein of *UNDER THE SAND*. It was about a woman who falls in love with her son's friend, a character similar to Esther but in a more dramatic context. I love François' films. I very much wanted to work with him, and I was so disappointed when that film didn't get made.

*What were your impressions when you read the script for *IN THE HOUSE*?*

I liked it a lot. I found the role of Esther amusing. In the script she was difficult to pin down, mysterious, floaty. There was a lot to build on.

*Did you get involved in building the character yourself?*

I never build a character myself, I do what I'm told. I'm not an actor who researches her roles. I shouldn't say that but it's true. I let the director decide, I wait to see what he wants. In any case, even if you try to decide, the director edits the takes. He has the final cut. Might as well give him what he wants from the get-go! An actor is there to serve the director. Which is actually something I often dislike about this job! That's why I also sing. Singing allows me to be more at peace as an actress, so I can hand myself over.

*What did François Ozon expect from you?*

That I wear the dress he wanted, do my hair the way he wanted, say my lines... An actor's job is a lot easier than people think. When I was younger, I tried to be good. Now that I have more experience and self-confidence, I think the less you try to be good and show what you can do, the better you are.

*Esther is a role against type for you.*

Right, I'm really not Esther, she completely passive. It's fun to play someone



who really isn't you. Along with the shrew I played in Yvan Attal's **AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER**, Esther is one of the most fun roles I've played in my whole career.

*You're convincing as a middle-class housewife and yet you still manage to be sexy.*

That's very kind of you, but I didn't find myself the least bit sexy! By the end I improve a bit, but I got a shock when I saw the film, I didn't recognize myself. But that's ok. Controlling your image is contrary to our job as actors. We're not fashion models.

*How do you see Esther?*

Esther is a nice woman. She's endearing and a bit old-fashioned, like a housewife from the 50s or 60s. She's totally devoted to her family and her little house. She'd love to work as an interior decorator but she lacks ambition. She's a middle-class housewife the likes of which you hardly see anymore, since the women's liberation movement. Other than in certain American TV series like "Desperate Housewives".

*Is Esther happy or is she the world's most bored woman?*

A little of both. She's definitely bored, but she has a husband and a son, and at the end of the film we learn she's going to have another child. Many women who give up everything for their careers dream of having a family like Esther has. Ideally you have both, but not everyone is so lucky. If I had to choose between my career and my family, I would also choose my family.

*Do you understand why Claude is fascinated by Rapha's family and Esther in particular?*

Yes. Children don't want weird lives, they want to be like everyone else. They crave reassuring role models: a dad who goes to work and a mom at home baking cookies. This normality is what attracts Claude. Esther is sweet and reassuring. We can easily understand why Claude desires her. And she becomes less bland, more interesting, through his amorous gaze.

*What attracts Esther to Claude?*

Is she really attracted to Claude? Did that kiss in the kitchen actually happen? Could it be Claude made it up? Is François playing with our minds?!

*What was the shoot like?*

Very pleasurable. The way François works suits me perfectly. He works quickly, he's cheerful, talented, funny. He's not into suffering on set, which is a good thing because my masochistic side is seriously underdeveloped! I think life is too important, too short and sometimes too painful to seek out pain on the job. I have a pleasant job, might as well enjoy it. I approach acting tranquilly, without anxiety. Which is not to say I don't invest myself in what I do. I always try to be as sincere as possible.

*How did you like working with Denis Ménochet?*

He's a really nice guy. Like me, he sees acting as pleasure, so we enjoyed working together. As for Ernst Umhauer, despite his young age and limited experience, he knew exactly what he was doing. He's perfect in his role.





# Filmography

## EMMANUELLE SEIGNER

- 2011 **IN THE HOUSE** by François Ozon  
**THE MAN WHO LAUGHS** by Jean-Pierre Améris  
**A FEW HOURS OF SPRING** by Stéphane Brizé
- 2010 **CHANGE OF PLANS** by Danielle Thompson
- 2007 **LA VIE EN ROSE** by Olivier Dahan  
**THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY**  
by Julian Schnabel
- 2004 **BACKSTAGE** by Emmanuelle Bercot  
**...AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER**  
by Yvan Attal
- 1999 **THE NINTH GATE** by Roman Polanski  
**PLACE VENDÔME** by Nicole Garcia
- 1993 **BITTER MOON** by Roman Polanski
- 1988 **FRANTIC** by Roman Polanski
- 1984 **DÉTECTIVE** by Jean-Luc Godard



# Filmography

## DENIS MÉNOCHET

- 2011 **IN THE HOUSE** by François Ozon  
**JE ME SUIS FAIT TOUT PETIT** by Cécilia Rouaud  
**THE ADOPTED** by Mélanie Laurent  
**SPECIAL FORCES** by Stéphane Rybojad  
**LE SKYLAB** by Julie Delpy
- 2010 **LILY SOMETIMES** by Fabienne Berthaud  
**THE ROUND UP** by Roselyne Bosch  
**JOSEPH ET LA FILLE** by Xavier de Choudens  
**ROBIN HOOD** by Ridley Scott
- 2009 **INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS** by Quentin Tarantino  
**COCO BEFORE CHANEL** by Anne Fontaine  
**YOU WILL BE MINE** by Sophie Laloy
- 2008 **THE VERY VERY BIG COMPANY** by Pierre Jolivet  
**LOVE ME MORE** by Jean Becker
- 2007 **TRIVIAL** by Sophie Marceau  
**LA VIE EN ROSE** by Olivier Dahan  
**MY PLACE IN THE SUN** by Eric de Montalier  
**HANNIBAL RISING** by Peter Webber
- 2006 **THE PINK PANTHER** by Shawn Levy  
**AUTUMN** by Ra'up McGee
- 2005 **FOON** by Quiches  
**ORDINARY MAN** by Vincent Lannoo  
**LA MOUSTACHE** by Emmanuel Carrère



# CAST

Germain	FABRICE LUCHINI
Claude	ERNST UMHAUER
Jeanne	KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
Esther	EMMANUELLE SEIGNER
Rapha senior	DENIS MÉNOCHET
Rapha junior	BASTIEN UGHETTO
The principal	JEAN-FRANÇOIS BALMER
The twins	YOLANDE MOREAU
Anouk	CATHERINE DAVENIER



# CREW

Screenplay and Adaptation	FRANÇOIS OZON freely adapted from the play "The Boy in the Last Row" by Juan MAYORGA
Production	ERIC AND NICOLAS ALTMAYER
Director of Photography Sound Engineer	JÉRÔME ALMERAS A.F.C. BRIGITTE TAILLANDIER
Production Manager 1st Assistant Director Casting Directors	OURY MILSSTEIN HUBERT BARBIN SARAH TEPER & LEILA FOURNIER
Production Designer Costume Designer Head Make-up Artist Head Hairdresser	ARNAUD DE MOLERON PASCALINE CHAVANNE GILL ROBILLARD FRANCK-PASCAL ALQUINET
Editor Sound Editor Re-Recording Mixer	LAURE GARDETTE BENOÎT GARGONNE JEAN-PAUL HURIER
Original Music by Still Photographer	PHILIPPE ROMBI JEAN-CLAUDE MOIREAU
A coproduction	MANDARIN CINEMA FOZ FRANCE 2 CINEMA MARS FILMS CANAL+ CINE+ FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS LA BANQUE POSTALE IMAGE 5 COFIMAGE 23 PALATINE ETOILE 9
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