

Les Films de Pierre and Maia Cinema  
present

# 18 YEARS OLD AND RISING

A film by Frédéric Louf

With

Pierre Niney from the Comédie Française Lou De Laâge Audrey Bastien  
Ali Marhyar and Michel Vuillermoz from the Comédie Française

Length: 1:32 - Format: 1.85 – Sound: Dolby SRD

Photos and press kit  
can be downloaded on  
[www.unifrance.org/film/32216/j-aime-regarder-les-filles](http://www.unifrance.org/film/32216/j-aime-regarder-les-filles)

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## Synopsis

The night before François Mitterrand is elected President of France, 18-year-old Primo and Gabrielle meet. She is part of the Parisian upper crust. He is a shopkeeper's son from the provinces. Entirely taken with Gabrielle and her girlfriends, Primo bluffs, reinventing himself with a new pedigree, relying on audacity, imagination and lies to make up for the lack of money in his pocket - until the truth catches up with him.

# INTERVIEW WITH FREDERIC LOUF

## **Is this youngster who moves to Paris from the provinces at the beginning of the 1980's you?**

80% of Parisians are people who come from the provinces to go to school or look for work. So many people can identify with him. Including me. This said, I'm not a florist's son. But like the character Primo, I was there for Mitterrand's election in 1981 and I knew the characters I'm describing. I put a lot of myself into each one of them. I mixed things up, twisted them, and then brought individual characters out of it all. What is, however, perfectly autobiographical, is that my math teacher actually did bet me a bottle of champagne that I wouldn't pass my French baccalaureate. I passed and he kept his word!

## **Why does the film take place at the time of François Mitterrand's election?**

I needed an important election to serve as a catalyst for Primo's sudden awareness; an election characterized by a veritable fervor from the majority of French citizens, clearly splitting society and leading to a real change. These types of elections have only occurred twice since I've been born: in 1981 and in 2007. The difference being that 2007 didn't give me anything to hope for. If he had been 18 in 2007, the time period would have made Primo an entirely different character; he probably would have been less appealing...

## **Was it a coincidence that the film was made in time for the thirtieth anniversary of Mitterrand's election?**

It's not a coincidence, but it wasn't a priority either. When you make your first film, you're never sure of finishing in time for a specific date: you work, you hang on, you overcome obstacles and it's ready when it's ready.

## **Have you measured what has changed in society over these past thirty years?**

Of course. Two things stood out to me in particular: the first is that a large section of the population – notably the working class – has disappeared from the landscape, to the extent that they no longer exist in the minds of French citizens. In 1980, blue collar workers were on the front page of newspapers because they were activists, and their space in the media was proportional to the space they occupied in society. The second is that at the time period it was clearly much easier than it is today as a student to find odd jobs to help make ends meet.

## **And spoiled little rich kids? Are they still around?**

Of course they're still around. But in 1981 most of them dreamed of taking over their father's business and making it bigger. Today, they dream of restructuring it and selling it off in shares!

## **Are they really all the same?**

That would be funny, and easy, but no! In fact, I tried to show that Delphine, who is a "Daddy's girl" and a spoiled little rich kid, is very different from the others; she thinks differently and doesn't have the same interests...

Gabrielle is also much more complex than the image of the blond preppy she gives at first: she has a complicated relationship with her milieu, embodied by her father to whom she lies because she is afraid of confronting him...I gave Paul a certain ambiguity, a certain nobility...In fact, he absolutely wants to separate Primo and Gabrielle, but he also wishes to do so as tactfully as possible. Not everybody would have taken this risk. I think that deep down Paul admires Primo, and he would like Primo to admire him as well. The only one who is really stereotypical is the blond guy (Mathieu Lourdel) who considers that drinking a really good bottle of wine "is just drinking a few minimum wages." But in fact this reflection belongs to one of Sarkozy's guests at his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday party. (see Canard Enchaîné 8 February 2008)

## **You've made a political film?**

No, I'm more a romantic than an activist. Above all, I've made a love story. And a film about adolescence. And more specifically: about immaturity and its drawbacks...In fact, I'm campaigning for immaturity!

## **Indeed, Primo's character is complex: immature, self-destructive, romantic...**

As Louis Jouvet said in reference to Hamlet: "This character is perfectly human because he is complex." But he is also very simple, because he is human, and we are all human. So, we understand what he's talking about.

## **At one moment his father says to him: "You have no idea who you are, and the worst part is, you don't give a damn."**

Primo is a young man who is looking for his place in society. As often during adolescence, one feels out of place everywhere, and especially in one's own family. This is why at first he doesn't attempt to have some objective distance in reference to Gabrielle and her milieu: for him it has to be better just because it's something different! And he isn't in fact in a hurry to be defined by one milieu or by another. He only wants one thing: to follow his own desire. And that is where his immaturity catches up with him, because what defines immaturity is precisely not understanding your own desires!

## **How did you and Pierre Niney work on the character?**

I can't remember who said: "I don't work with my actors: I choose them..."

## **And did it go well?**

Pierre is a fabulous actor: he understands very quickly and his suggestions are always well thought out, justified and appropriate. He encompasses both the qualities of the mind and emotion. Once he is invested in a role, he is so much in it, there is no longer the need to talk about it. He never steps out of character: his consistency stays intact during the entire shooting time. Further, he and his partners formed duos that were very much in synch: they pulled each other up to higher levels.

## **The reconstitution of 1981 works because of the scenery, but wasn't there also something else interiorized in the characters?**

Yes, of course, the characters are permeated with a feeling of 1981, a sort of naivety and precocity in their relationships that no longer exists today. And although I haven't taken a survey of today's teenage bedrooms, I believe that sexuality isn't approached in 2010 in the same manner it was approached in 1981.

## **Why?**

Because in 1981, if you were a virgin, you could talk about sex as much as you wanted, but you didn't see any. Or you had to pay for a ticket to a special cinema, and it was terribly embarrassing! Therefore, when you finally slept with your girlfriend (on average the same age as today), you didn't have the same images in your head...

Again, imagination...

## **Why did you choose for the French title: J'AIME REGARDER LES FILLES ? (I like watching girls a hit song from 1981)**

Because it was the summer hit that year (1981 by Patric Coutin, who sang and wrote the song) and it's still a hit today...of course I know that it seems like I'm thumbing my nose at my main character, who is anything but a flirt. He's a romantic; he falls in love with every girl he meets. But I always thought that "J'aime regarder les filles" was in fact a song about a guy who is waiting to find his true love - the one and only - with an immense fervor, it's almost painful. Also, I think the song has a second hidden meaning, below the surface and I like that.

# **THE CHARACTERS**

## **Primo as seen by Pierre Niney**

Primo is a character filled with contradictions and that is what interested me. He's poor, but he has positive fantasies about the rich; he likes Malik's depth, but he allows himself to be attracted to Gabrielle's superficiality; he's not happy, or comfortable with himself, but he is capable of moments of brilliance...and he's near-sighted but he won't wear his glasses! I also very much like his physical side. He's a daredevil. I like his agility, abruptness and masochism, through which he seems to want and try to compensate for his self-consciousness. His relationship to books interests me as well. Books seem to open many windows and doors for him. It's surely a drafty place, but sometimes there is also a bit of Musset that drifts into his head ...

## **Gabrielle as seen by Lou de Laâge**

On the surface, she's the cliché of the bourgeoisie. She takes without giving in return, because she is the center of her own little world. But I wasn't interested in making her just wealthy and stupid. It's more complex: she's attracted to Primo because he makes her feel things she has never felt before; he brings her excitement and a whiff of something different that fascinates her. But when he crosses the limits of propriety and decorum acceptable in her milieu, she doesn't have the courage to stay with him. And she hates herself for it. She dreams of having a second chance, but in order to do so she must be willing to not walk down the beaten path, and to confront her father, her friends, as well as what the whole tight-knit group might say.

## **Delphine as seen by Audrey Bastien**

Delphine is Romance with a capital "R." She could be Joan of Arc: she heard voices that told her Primo is her soul mate and so she'll do whatever it takes... Obviously, the role was written by a man, so I think she is a bit idealized! Otherwise, she is physically present in the milieu associated with her family's wealth, but her mind is elsewhere. So, she observes these rich kids and enjoys provoking them. Like Paul, she quickly unmaskes Primo, and she is also impressed by his nerve. To me it was important to be able to embody this mix of fragility and strength – her pushy side – all the while keeping her decency and her poetry.

## **Malik as seen by Ali Marhyar**

My character is less carried away by a dream world than Primo. It should be said that he was less protected. He's a child of first generation immigrants who came to France after the end of the Algerian war. His father spent his life on an assembly line and he made him aware of social battles. Contrary to Primo he knows what he is expecting from the 1981 election, and being committed politically is important to him. Furthermore, he assumes the responsibility of living without money, and he knows where his place is. He lives in the present, in reality, whether it be sharing his political convictions with Primo or telling him that he is making a mistake. In real life, Pierre and I are friends, and that gave us a wide range to draw upon in order to play the friendship and understanding in this duo, in times when they are close, but also when they are fighting.

# **BIOGRAPHIES**

## **FREDERIC LOUF**

Born in Picardie in 1962, Frédéric Louf became a movie critic for *Matin de Paris* in 1986, after having studied business and law.

In 1992, after a period in Brussels where he had a number of different jobs, he started writing for television, in particular for AB, Carrère, Protécréa, Buena Vista, Tilt, France Animation, Millimages. In 2000 he directed his first film short, JUST LITTLE BIRDS. It was presented at the Cannes Film Festival 2001 in the official selection, before being shown in 25 other film festivals around the world and winning three prizes in the USA in 2002.

In 2003, Didier Brunner (LES ARMATEURS) entrusted him with the writing, then the direction of 26 episodes of GIFT, a 3D animated series for France 2 television (26x13), with characters created by Rébis Loisel.

In 2006, he started writing his first feature length screenplay, 18 Years and Rising, which he directed in summer 2010.

## **PIERRE NINEY from the Comédie Française**

Pierre Niney started in theater very young . He took classes with the Pandora company directed by Brigitte Jaques-Wajeman and François Regnault, then he was admitted into the Cours Florent Classe Libre in 2007 and finally in the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts (where he studied in particular with Nada Strancar). In 2010 he was hired by the Comédie-Française as a salaried actor, becoming the troupe's youngest actor.

In film, he has been directed on two occasions by Robert Guédiguian, in ARMY OF CRIME, and recently in SNOW OF KILIMANJARO (both films selected for the Cannes Film Festival). He was directed by Gilles Marchand in BLACK HEAVEN, by Lisa Azuelos for LOL, Nicolas Steil in DRAFT DODGERS and Jean-Pierre Améris in ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS alongside Benoît Poelvoorde and Isabelle Carré.

He has at the same time been in several films made for television (by Josée Dayan, Marc Angelo, Vincent Monnet...) and film shorts (with Nicolas Klotz, Julien Lacheray...) He was chosen for the "Young Talent Adami" award in 2007, then named for best supporting role at the 2010 Jean Carmet Festival for BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand and Dominik Moll (official selection Cannes Film Festival).

Recently, he played the leading role in Frédéric Louf's film 18 YEARS and RISING.

In the theater, he played under the direction of Vladimir Pankov in Moscow (Theater Meyerhold and Theatre des Nations), then with Julie Brochen in *Juste la fin du monde* by Jean-Luc Lagarce. He had the leading role in Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota's two last creations: *Wanted Petula* and *Bouli Année Zero* at the Theatre de la Ville in Paris.

He has also notably worked with Lucie Berelowitzsch, in *Hommage to Pina Bausch* at the Vanves theater and with Charlotte Bucharles in *Agatha*, by Marguerite Duras. At the Comédie-Française, he recently played in *The Threepenny Opera*, *Un fil à la patte* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Next season, he will be playing Mario in *The Game of Love and Chance* directed by Galin Stoev.

He also writes and will direct a play *Si pres de Ceuta* that will be seen at the Vanves Theatre in 2012

## CAST

Primo	Pierre Niney <small>de la Comédie Française</small>
Delphine	Audrey Bastien
Gabrielle	Lou de Laâge
Malik	Ali Marhyar
Paul	Victor Bessiere
Pierre Bramsi	Michel Vuillermoz <small>Sociétaire de la Comédie Française</small>
Françoise Bramsi	Catherine Chevalier
Delphine's father	Hervé Pierre <small>Sociétaire de la Comédie Française</small>
Nino Bramsi	Johan Libéreau
Olivier	Mathieu Lourdel
Math teacher	Thomas Chabrol

## CREW

<b>A film by</b>	Frédéric Louf
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Frédéric Louf
<b>in collaboration with</b>	Régis Jaulin
<b>Producers</b>	Gilles Sandoz - Hugues Charbonneau Marie-Ange Luciani

<b>Cinematographer</b>	Samuel Collardey
<b>Editor</b>	Françoise Tourmen
<b>Sound</b>	Philippe Welsh - Fanny Martin - Christophe Vingtrinier
<b>Original Music</b>	Bo Van der Werf - Jozef Dumoulin

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