

Document Citation

Title	La vie de famille
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Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1985 Mar 06
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Frey, Sami
Film Subjects	La vie de famille (Family life), Doillon, Jacques, 1985

La Vie de Famille

(Family Life)
(FRENCH-COLOR)

Paris, Feb. 23.

A Fox/Hachette release of a TFI/Flach film coproduction. Produced by Charles Hubert and Jean-François Lepetit. Directed by Jacques Doillon. Stars Sami Frey. Screenplay: Doillon, Jean-François Goyet; camera: Michel Carre; editor, Nicole Dedieu; sound, Michel Guiffan; production manager, Jacques Pol. Reviewed at the Marignan-Concours theater, Paris, Feb. 22, 1985. Running time: 98 MINS.

Samuel Sami Frey
Elle Mara Goyet
Mara Juliet Berto
Juliette Juliette Binoche
Aïna Aïna Wallé

Good news from Jacques Doillon. After the shrill psychodramatics of his last few films — notably "La Pirate" which provided the obligatory scandal at last year's Cannes Film Festival — he now returns to the quieter, more subtle manner of his earlier work.

"La Vie de Famille" is a poignant, well-observed drama of an estranged father and daughter seeking surreptitiously to renew contact during a brief trip on the road. He (Sami Frey) lives with his second wife (Juliet Berto) and her teen daughter, but spends weekends with his 10-year old daughter from a previous marriage. This routine creates tension within Frey's new household, where his relationship with his stepdaughter is fraught with sexual ambiguity.

Story follows the incidents of one particular weekend — opening with a sequence of domestic hysteria. Once Frey has left to pick up his

daughter, the film finds a more discursive, restrained tone and, barring several scenes, sticks to it.

Equipped with a video camera, father and daughter decide to make their way from the South of France into Spain, elaborating a film she has partially scripted. Through the home movie and other games and exchanges, a shift in their relationship takes place, climaxing in a long sequence in a Madrid hotel, where Frey, unable to speak directly, confesses his fears and inadequacies alone in front of the camera.

Film's discreet emotion owes much to Sami Frey, a fine actor whose seductive, soft-spoken manner can convey violence and affection without melodramatics. The girl is played beautifully by Mara Goyet, daughter of Doillon's co-scripter, Jean-François Goyet, a film editor. All have helped the director make one of his most mature and affecting films.

Pic, handsomely produced, was made for the TF-1 network but shot in 35m and released in theatrical situations before its homescreen airing. — *Len*