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# IFC Films

PRESENTS

## A Girl Cut in Two

A Film by CLAUDE CHABROL

### FILM FESTIVALS

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2007  
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## **SYNOPSIS**

François Berléand stars as a jaded novelist and a too happily married "ladies man" whose latest conquest is TV weathergirl Gabrielle Deneige (Ludivine Sagnier). At once naïve and unstoppable, Gabrielle doesn't need to be convinced to enter into a sordid May-September relationship with a celebrated member of the intelligentsia. However, tugging at her other arm with the pull of the entire haute bourgeoisie is young Paul (Benoît Magimel), the cute but dangerously schizophrenic scion of a Lyon pharmaceutical magnate. What's a girl to do? Appropriately, the story takes as its starting point a famous Gilded Age crime of passion, the murder of Madison Square Garden architect and notorious womanizer Stanford White.

## **INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CLAUDE CHABROL**

**The film's starting point is a famous crime of passion: the murder of the architect who designed Madison Square Garden...**

Yes, the story of Stanford White, a celebrated architect in Manhattan at the end of the nineteenth century and also a notorious womanizer who was murdered at the height of his fame in 1906 by the husband of his current mistress, a former Broadway chorus girl Evelyn Nesbitt.

**Have there been previous literary or filmed adaptations of the story?**

E.L. Doctorow refers to it in his novel RAGTIME, as does Milos Forman in his film adaptation of the book. Richard Fleischer's THE GIRL IN THE RED VELVET SWING from 1955 recounts the facts most faithfully.

**This is the first time you've collaborated on a script with Cécile Maistre, your faithful first assistant.**

Right away, I thought she would be perfect to get a grip on this story. She wrote a formidably well-constructed script which I barely had to change. It's very unusual for things to happen like that with a co-writer.

**What interested Cécile Maistre and you in this story?**

We wanted to follow the reality of this small event closely, to emphasize, a bit like entomologists, the great revelation it makes about human nature! So it seemed to us essential to transpose the entire affair, without worrying at all about the setting, the period or the psychology of the real life characters. I'd even go so far as to say that this news story is more easily imaginable – and therefore transposable – today than during the era in which it happened.

**The film opens with an aria from Turandot and a credit sequence suffused with blood-red light...**

I wanted to set the audience off on the wrong track: right away we are plunged into the very romantic world of Puccini, and then we leave it just as suddenly as the music on the car radio is switched off. Visually, it's expressed by the abrupt transition from the blood-red to reality – a reality stripped of all romanticism. We're plunged immediately into an opulent-looking world, a world of pretence. At a stroke, we move from the excess of feelings evoked by the opera to the flashy world of Saint-Denis' (François Berléand) luxurious home. It's a Trompe-l'oeil world, and one in which the prevailing atmosphere of sexuality reveals a clue to the audience about the events which are going to follow...

**This Trompe l'oeil world leads us very naturally to the world of television.**

Absolutely! I showed the backstage world of the television world as it is, with the bluescreen on which images are overlaid, and the presenter gesticulating in a void.

What interested me, is that this is a world of trickery and illusion that absolutely reflects the world of appearances and pretences in which these characters move.

**Each character is perceived by the others as if through a distorted lens...**

Entirely so. Moreover, they see themselves through a distorted lens, as most of the time they are terribly self-indulgent. This is even truer in the case of Benoît Magimel's character, who's crazier than the others: he's genuinely schizophrenic, torn between innocence and guilt. Did he kill his brother in the bath when he was a child? We will never know...

**In the film we encounter one of your preferred themes: class warfare.**

We are dealing with two social classes confronting each other stealthily: 'old money', as represented by the characters of Caroline Sihol and Benoît Magimel, and the falsely powerful – TV and publishing folk who possess nothing more than temporal power.

**Where does Gabrielle Deneige – played by Ludivine Sagnier – stand in relation to this?**

She is still intact, but she's tempted to split apart. Thus she fully embodies the "girl cut in two" of the title. Gabrielle is a young woman innocent in her very gullibility. I adore the scene where she turns up at Saint-Denis' study with a feather in her bottom: he asks her if she doesn't feel humiliated, and she replies that she doesn't even feel ridiculous! It's a fantastic proof of self-sacrifice, which is precisely what those around her cannot stand.

**Can we describe Berléand's character as an 'opportunist of pleasure'?**

He takes pleasure wherever he can, but he's not a fundamentally unlikeable character all the same. I think he's entirely right to question whether our society is heading towards puritanism or decadence.

**You pile up "secret places", like Saint-Denis' pied-à-terre and the very private club to which the writer takes Gabrielle.**

They reflect my desire to explore the theme of perversion without ever showing it. This is an entirely chaste film whose characters are nonetheless haunted by the most perverse ideas. I was helped greatly by the character of Mathilda May who emanates a strange sensuality: seeing her, we ask ourselves straight away into what world we have ventured.

**Eduardo Serra is once again your cinematographer...**

We've developed a real complicity over the years, he knows right away what I like and what I don't like. His expertise is such that the hidden meanings of elements in the décor appear without his needing to emphasize them.

**The rhythm is very distinctive. Can you speak a little about the editing?**

The film is called A GIRL CUT IN TWO, so I wanted the idea of rupture to be present at all times. Very often, scenes end before their natural conclusion, or, on the other hand, go on longer than you would expect. However, there's no wish to fire the imagination.

**And the framing?**

When characters are running from themselves, I shoot them in profile, to emphasize that they are revealing only a small facet of the truth. In any case, there were some lines the actors could not deliver straight to camera!

**How did you approach the casting?**

François Berléand and I discovered a real complicity when we worked together on A COMEDY OF POWER. He's a man I love to have on my set. As I know, he's a real ladies man, I wanted to show this aspect of his character.

I've wanted to work with Ludivine Sagnier for several years now, but finally decided to cast her as Gabrielle after seeing her performance as Tinkerbell in PETER PAN!

I had already directed Benoît Magimel in LA FLEUR DU MALAND LA DEMOISELLE D'HONNEUR, where he played two very different characters. For A GIRL CUT IN TWO, he took great risks in venturing deep into (his character's) schizophrenia. Besides, what's tremendous about Benoît is his capacity to play characters from every social class.

**What were the constraints imposed on Matthieu Chabrol when he was composing the score?**

Above all I didn't want any lyrical or romantic outbursts during the film, (I wanted) the exact opposite of the aria at the beginning. Thus he had to start with serial, atonal rhythms that establish a rather cold atmosphere. In fact I hoped to appeal to the viewer's head rather than his heart. It's music that stops itself from letting go and which plays on a certain brutality. I am particularly happy with the four final blows, which seem to finish, then start again, and so on.

**Without, in anyway giving away the ending, one can say that magic intervenes in the film on a very unexpected fashion...**

The idea is that magic is another trick, coming on top of the tricks of the television and publishing worlds... In a world of illusions and effects, salvation can only appear as another trick. The title, which itself makes reference to magic, could be allegorical, although in fact it isn't at all...

## BIOGRAPHIES

### CLAUDE CHABROL (Director)

Claude Chabrol is one of France's most distinguished and prolific filmmakers. His more than fifty films boast collaborations with a wealth of stars including Isabelle Huppert, Gérard Depardieu, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Emmanuelle Béart and now with A GIRL CUT IN TWO, Ludivine Sagnier. Chabrol's debut film, 1958's LE BEAU SERGE, is an early touchstone of the French New Wave and the director is considered a master of suspense, often referred to as the "French Hitchcock."

2007 LA FILLE COUPÉE EN DEUX  
2006 L'IVRESSE DU POUVOIR  
2004 LA DEMOISELLE D'HONNEUR  
2002 LE FLEUR DU MAL  
2000 MERCI POUR LA CHOCOLAT (Prix Louis-Delluc)  
1997 RIEN NE VA PLUS  
1995 LA CÉRÉMONIE  
1994 L'ENFER  
1993 L'CEIL DE VICHY  
1992 BETTY  
1991 MADAME BOVARY  
1990 JOURS TRANQUILLES À CLICHY  
DOCTEUR M  
1989 UNE AFFAIRE DE FEMMES  
1988 LE CRI DU HIBOU (from a novel by Patricia Highsmith)  
1987 MASQUES  
1986 INSPECTOR LAVARDIN  
1985 POULET AU VINAIGRE  
1984 LE SANG DES AUTRES  
1982 LES FANTÔMES DU CHAPELIER  
1980 LE CHEVAL D'ORGUEIL  
1978 LES LIENS DE SANG  
VIOLETTE NOZIÈRE  
1977 ALICE OU LA DERNIÈRE FUGUE  
1976 LES MAGICIENS  
FOLIES BOURGEOISES  
1975 UNE PARTIE DE PLAISIR  
LES INNOCENTS AUX MAIN SALES  
1974 NADA  
1973 LES NOCES ROUGES  
1972 DOCTEUR POPAUL  
1971 LA DÉCADE PRODIGIEUSE (based on *Ten Days Wonder* by Ellery Queen)  
1970 LE BOUCHER  
LA RUPTURE  
1969 LA FEMME INFIDÈLE  
QUE LA BÊTE MEURE  
1968 LES BICHES

1967 LE SCANDALE  
 LA ROUTE DE CORINTHE  
 1966 LA LIGNE DE DÉMARCATION  
 1965 MARIE-CHANTAL CONTRE DOCTEUR KHA  
 LE TIGRE SE PARFUME À LA DYNAMITE  
 1964 LE TIGRE AIME LA CHAIR FRAICHE  
 1963 OPHELIA  
 BLUEBEARD  
 1962 L'ŒIL DU MALIN  
 1961 LES GODELUREAUX  
 1960 LES BONNES FEMMES  
 1959 LES COUSINS  
 À DOUBLE TOUR  
 1958 LE BEAU SERGE (Prix Jean Vigo)

### **LUDIVINE SAGNIER (Gabrielle Deneige)**

Since Ludivine Sagnier's screen debut at the age of 10, she has appeared in more than thirty films including MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS, MOLIERE and PARIS, JE T'AIME. Perhaps best known in this country for her collaborations with director François Ozon, 8 WOMEN and SWIMMING POOL, Sagnier earned rave reviews for her ferocious, magnetic performance in the latter. Earlier this year, she starred (and sang) in Christophe Honoré's LOVE SONGS. A GIRL CUT IN TWO marks her first collaboration with celebrated filmmaker Claude Chabrol.

2007 L'ENNEMI PUBLIC N°1 – L'INSTINCT DE MORT, directed by Jean-François Richet  
 LOVE SONGS (LES CHANSONS D'AMOUR), directed by Christophe Honoré  
 LA FILLE COUPÉE EN DEUX, directed by Claude Chabrol  
 2006 UN SECRET, directed by Laurent Tirard  
 2005 PARIS, JE T'AIME, directed by Alfonso Cuarón  
 LA CALIFORNIE, directed by Jacques Fieschi  
 UNE AVENTURE, directed by Xavier Giannoli  
 2003 PETER PAN, directed by P.J. Hogan  
 LA PETITE LILI, directed by Claude Miller  
 Official Selection Cannes 2003  
 SWIMMING POOL, directed by François Ozon  
 Official Selection, Cannes 2003  
 2001 PETITES COUPURES, directed by Pascal Bonitzer  
 HUIT FEMMES, directed by François Ozon  
 Silver Bear for Best Artistic Contribution – Berlin Film Festival  
 2000 MA FEMME EST UNE ACTRICE, directed by Yvan Attal  
 JEU D'ENFANTS, directed by Laurent Tuel  
 TOOTHACHE, directed by Ian Simpson  
 1999 BON PLAN, directed by Jérôme Lévy  
 GOUTTES D'EAU SUR PIERRES BRÛLANTES, directed by François Ozon  
 1998 REMBRANDT, directed by Charles Matton  
 LES ENFANTS DU SIÈCLE, directed by Diane Kurys

Short Films

1996 ACIDE ANIMÉ, directed by Guillaume Bréaud  
Lutin as Best Actress (Nuit de Lutins)

Awards

Winner of the Prix Romy Schneider in 2003

**BENOÎT MAGIMEL (Paul Gaudens)**

Benoît Magimel's professional career started early and by age 17 he was making regular appearances on various French television dramas, and at 21 he appeared in Mathieu Kassovitz's influential LA HAINE. In 2001, Magimel earned widespread praise for his starring role opposite Isabelle Huppert in Michael Haneke's THE PIANO TEACHER. The performance earned him the Best Actor award at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival. Magimel and Claude Chabrol have developed a close working relationship – A GIRL CUT IN TWO is the iconic filmmaker's fourth film featuring Magimel in a lead performance.

- 2007 TRUANDS, directed by Frédéric Schoendoerffer  
L'ENNEMI INTIME, directed by Florent Emilio Siri  
LA FILLE COUPÉE EN DEUX, directed by Claude Chabrol  
24 MESURES, directed by Jalil Lespert
- 2006 SELON CHARLIE, directed by Nicole Garcia  
FAIR PLAY, directed by Lionel Bailliu
- 2005 TROUBLE, directed by Harry Cleven  
LES CHEVALIERS DU CIEL, directed by Gérard Pirès
- 2004 LES RIVIÈRES POURPRES II: LES ANGES DE L'APOCALYPSE, directed by Olivier Dahan  
LA DEMOISELLE D'HONNEUR, directed by Claude Chabrol
- 2003 ERRANCE, directed by Damien Odoul  
EFFROYABLES JARDINS, directed by Jean Becker  
LA FLEUR DU MAL, directed by Claude Chabrol
- 2002 NID DE GUÊPES (THE NEST), directed by Florent Emilio Siri
- 2001 LISA, directed by Pierre Grimlat  
LA PIANISTE (THE PIANO TEACHER), directed by Michael Haneke (Best actor award at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival)
- 2000 SLE ROI DANSE, directed by Gérard Corbiau  
SELON MATTHIEU, directed by Xavier Beauvois
- 1999 ELLE ET LUI AU 14E ÉTAGE, directed by Sophie Blondy  
LE SAUT DE L'ANGE, directed by Camille Guichard  
CHILDREN OF THE CENTURY, directed by Diane Kurys
- 1998 DÉJÀ MORT, directed by Olivier Dahan  
WARNING, directed by Nicolas Klein  
UNE MINUTE DE SILENCE, directed by Florent Emilio Siri
- 1997 PAPA, directed by Laurent Merlin
- 1996 LES VOLEURS, directed by André Téchiné  
QUINZE SANS BILLETS, directed by Samuel Tasinaje
- 1995 LA FILLE SEULE, directed by Benoît Jacquot  
LA HAINE, directed by Mathieu Kassovitz
- 1994 L'INCRUSTE, directed by Emilie Deleuze

- 1993 LE CAHIER VOLÉ, directed by Christine Lipinska
- 1992 LES ANNÉES CAMPAGNE, directed by Philippe Leriche
- TOUTES PEINES CONFONDUES, directed by Michel Deville
- 1989 PAPA EST PARTI, MAMAN AUSSI, directed by Christine Lipinska
- 1988 LA VIE EST UN LONG FLEUVE TRANQUILLE, directed by Étienne Chatiliez

### **FRANÇOIS BERLÉAND (Charles Saint-Denis)**

Most familiar to mainstream American audiences for his comic turns in the TRANSPORTER films, François Berléand has been an in-demand star of French film and television for nearly two decades. He has earned three César nominations, winning in 2000 for his supporting role in MA PETITE ENTERPRISE. Among his most recognizable performances are his starring role in THE CHORUS, nominated for Best Foreign Film in 2004, and a memorable turn in Catherine Breillat's provocative ROMANCE (1999).

- 2008 TRANSPORTER 3, directed by Olivier Megaton
- 2007 FILLE COUPÉE EN DEUX, La, directed by Claude Chabrol
- 2006 L'IVRESSE DU POUVOIR, directed by Claude Chabrol
- AURORE, directed by Nils Tavernier
- PUR-WEEKEND, directed by Olivier Doran
- NE LE DIS À PERSONNE, directed by Guillaume Canet
- PASSAGER DE L'ÉTÉ, LE, directed by Florence Moncorgé-Gabin
- 2005 TRANSPORTER 2, directed by Louis Leterrier
- EDY, directed by Stéphane Guérin-Tillié
- QUARTIER V.I.P., directed by Laurent Firode
- 2004 TU VAS RIRE, MAIS JE TE QUITTE, directed by Philippe Harel
- ÉROS THÉRAPIE, directed by Danièle Dubroux
- LES SŒURS FÂCHÉES, directed by Alexandra Leclère
- LE GRAND RÔLE, directed by Steve Suissa
- 2003 EN TERRITOIRE INDIEN, directed by Lionel Epp
- LES AMATEURS, directed by Martin Valente
- UNE VIE À T'ATTENDRE, directed by Thierry Klifa
- THE CHORUS, directed by Christophe Barratier
- LE CONVOYEUR, directed by Nicolas Boukhrief
- POUR LE PLAISIR, directed by Dominique Deruddere
- NARCO, directed by Tristan Aurouet and Gilles Lellouch
- ADORABLES CRÉATURES, directed by Dolorès Payas
- 2002 LE FRÈRE DU GUERRIER, directed by Pierre Jolivet
- MON IDOLE, directed by Guillaume Canet
- FILLES UNIQUES, directed by Pierre Jolivet
- UNE EMPLOYÉE MODÈLE, directed by Jacques Otmezguine
- 10 PETITS BLÈMES, directed by Sarah Lévy
- ACCOTEMENTS DÉSTABILISÉS, directed by Tiéri Barié
- 2001 HS HORS SERVICE, directed by Jean-Paul Lilienfeld
- COMMENT J'AI TUÉ MON PÈRE, directed by Anne Fontaine
- LES ÂMES CÂLINES, directed by Thomas Bardinet
- VIVANTE, directed by Sandrine Ray

FÉROCE, directed by Gilles de Maistre  
 L'ADVERSAIRE, directed by Nicole Garcia  
 THE TRANSPORTER, directed by Corey Yuen and Louis Leterrier  
 2000 PROMENONS-NOUS DANS LES BOIS, directed by Lionel Delplanque  
 STARDOM, directed by Denys Arcand  
 LE PRINCE DU PACIFIQUE, directed by Alain Corneau  
 CYRANO, directed by Vincent Lindon  
 LA FILLE DE SON PÈRE, directed by Jacques Deschamps  
 1999 LA DÉBANDADE, directed by Claude Berri  
 MA PETITE ENTREPRISE, directed by Pierre Jolivet  
 L'HOMME DE MA VIE, directed by Stephane Kurc  
 UNE POUR TOUTES, directed by Claude Lelouch  
 SIX-PACK, directed by Alain Berbérien  
 ROMANCE, directed by Catherine Breillat  
 1998 INNOCENT, directed by Costa Natsis  
 LE SOURIRE DU CLOWN, directed by Eric Besnard  
 PLACE VENDÔME, directed by Nicole Garcia  
 DORMEZ, JE LE VEUX!, directed by Irene Jouannet  
 L'ÉCOLE DE LA CHAIR, directed by Benoît Jacquot  
 EN PLEIN CŒUR, directed by Pierre Jolivet  
 LE PLUS BEAU PAYS DU MONDE, directed by Marcel Bluwal  
 1997 THE BET, directed by Didier Bourdon and Bernard Campan  
 LE SEPTIÈME CIEL, directed by Benoît Jacquot  
 LA MORT DU CHINOIS, directed by Jean-Louis Benoît  
 1996 CAPITAIN CONAN, directed by Bertrand Tavernier  
 TOUT LE MONDE DESCEND, directed by Laurent Bacher  
 FRED, directed by Pierre Jolivet  
 1995 FUGUEUSES, directed by Nadine Trintignant  
 L'APPÂT, directed by Bertrand Tavernier  
 UN HÉROS TRÈS DISCRET, directed by Jacques Audiard  
 ULTIMA HORA, directed by Laurence Maynard  
 1993 LE JOUEUR DE VIOLON, directed by Charlie Van Damme  
 1992 HONOR ROLL, directed by Charles Némès  
 1991 SANS RIRE, directed by Mathieu Amalric  
 1990 GÉNIAL, MES PARENTS DIVORCENT, directed by Patrick Braoudé  
 1989 MILOU EN MAI, directed by Louis Malle  
 1988 L'OTAGE DE L'EUROPE, directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz  
 1987 UN PÈRE ET PASSE, directed by Sebastien Grall  
 AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS, directed by Louis Malle  
 1986 POKER, directed by Catherine Corsini  
 LA FEMME SECRÈTE, directed by Sebastien Grall  
 LES MOIS D'AVRIL SONT MEURTRIERS, directed by Laurent Heynemann  
 LE COMPLEXE DU KANGOUROU, directed by Pierre Jolivet  
 ON A VOLÉ CHARLIE SPENCER!, directed by Francis Huster  
 1984 MARCHE À L'OMBRE, directed by Michel Blanc  
 1981 LES HOMMES PRÉFÈRENT LES GROSSES, directed by Jean-Marie Poiré  
 1978 MARTIN ET LEA, directed by Alain Cavalier

## CAST

Ludivine Sagnier.....GABRIELLE DENEIGE  
Benoit Magimel .....PAUL GAUDENS  
Francois Berleand .....CHARLES SAINT-DENIS  
Mathilda May.....CAPUCINE JAMET  
Caroline Silhol.....GENEVIEVE GAUDENS  
Marie Bunel.....MARIE DENEIGE  
Valeria Cavalli.....DONA SAINT-DENIS  
Etienne Chicot.....DENIS DENEIGE  
Thomas Chabrol.....MAITRE LORBACH  
Jean-Marie Winling.....GERARD BRIANCON  
Didier Benureau.....PHILLIPPE LE RIOU  
Special guest appearance.....EDOUARD BAER

## CREW

A Claude Chabrol film

SCREENPLAY.....CECILE MAISTRE AND CLAUDE CHABROL  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY.....EDOUARDO SERRA  
CAMERA.....MICHEL THIRIET  
SOUND.....ERIC DEVULDER  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND CASTING.....CECILE MAISTRE  
ART DIRECTOR.....FRANCOISE BENOIT-FRESCO  
WARDROBE.....MIC CHEMINAL  
CONTINUITY.....AURORE CHABROL  
EDITOR.....MONIQUE FARDOULIS  
MIX.....THIERRY LEBON  
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LINE PRODUCER.....FRANCOISE GALFRE  
ORIGINAL MUSIC.....MATTHIEU CHABROL  
ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY.....LAURENT PETITGIRARD  
PRODUCER.....PATRICK GODEAU

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