



Wes Craven directs a romantic comedy? A funny Mime? Barbet Schroeder sells Asian Hair Products to a kickboxing beautician? Only in PARIS J'TAIME. First released at last year's Cannes Film Festival, 17 World Class directors descended on Paris each to shoot a short about the different districts. The result is a kaleidoscope of tales that hinge on various definitions of "Love". It's a fascinating film. Recently, I discussed it with several colleagues and not one of us agreed on which short is the best. Truly, there is something for everyone.

In Part One of a three part series we sit down with Richard LaGravensese to discuss his segment PIGALLE.

LaGravensese (Academy Award nominated writer, THE FISHER KING, FREEDOM WRITERS) in only his second stint at a narrative director, tells a story of a middle-aged couple attempting to spice up their love life.

Up next: Horror Master Wes Craven and Film legend Gena Rowlands.

What do these three have in common? None of them could say "no" to three weeks in Paris.

What was your inspiration behind this?

HOW CAN I SAY □ NO □ TO THREE WEEKS IN PARIS? PARTIE UNE

Written by Dave Hoiward

I was given Pigalle , I was assigned the area. I didn't know much about it. I go to Europe every year with my family so I managed to go to Paris to walk the streets to see what it was like. I realized it was the area where all the sex clubs are. But I saw something interesting. I was standing on the avenue with last moment with Franny and Bob, that beautiful cobblestone street. It was the area where Renoir lived and there were these gas lights and these wonderful townhouses. It was so beautiful and romantic.

All you had to do was turn and there was all the neon and women in the doorways saying "Come In! Come In! And I thought this was interesting, it was romance AND sex right here on the Avenue right on the corner.

That idea, that dichotomy stuck me visually. It was interesting. So I walked into one of these places to do "research."

And I got to a table and said "Do you speak English?" And they told me I had to pay. In order to pay, he had to know what I wanted. And he said "Soft or Hard?" and I didn't know what he meant. So purely on instinct I said... "You can't go wrong with hard!"

And he took me to the right instead of to the left . The left would have been, I realized later, would have been the video booths. And the right would have been something else. I assume that's where we were going. He put me in a room and he closed the door in this baroque ratted chair. There was velvet on the walls there was a window and an anteroom and I thought "My God, what am I doing?" I waited and the sweats piling up on my neck.

And this woman enters with one tooth.

I'm kidding, she had "a" tooth missing.

She was clearly not one of the novices. She had clearly been around a while. I was really

nervous. “Look,” I said, “I will pay you but I just want to ask you questions.”

She said “Okay”

So I sat there and asked her questions about her job and during the course of the conversation she told me that she has also been paid to watch a couple make love. And that gave me the idea. That where it came from.

How did you crew up? □

I did it from here. We did all the casting and set choices and location scouting and picking my cinematographer was done from the states from the internet. Originally I was given Gena Rowlands and Ben Gazzarra and I came up with this idea and I wrote this script. I was given a middle aged couple or someone older so I came up with this story. Gena wrote her own which came out really lovely. I think she thought it wasn't for her. So we went after other actors and actresses. Luckily we got Fanny (Ardant) and Bob (Hoskins), who were, for me, the perfect chemistry. This sort of idea of romantic love and priapic

the more deviant love, the other side of sexuality

and how men and women view them differently.

Especially after twenty years of being with each other.

How did you find filming in France? □

I loved it. I had the best time, because I had only been to Paris as a tourist. I had always felt a distance; A loneliness in me. When I went there I couldn't connect. Being there for three weeks and waking up everyday for work. I loved that. I felt like I was in the fabric of the place and the feeling was wonderful. I fell in love with the city for the first time.

Did you find working in the short format to be more freeing? "

It's liberating. It's always liberating working with restrictions. Boundaries liberate you. You can't second guess. You have to make quick choices. I remember I was finishing and Alfonso (Cuaron) was starting and we were having dinner and he said "Isn't it great? Doing movies this fast? We should always do them like this!"

I said "I know it's GREAT. Because of all the waiting around and development. It's just in and out and see what comes out. That was great.

How did you get involved?

I just got a call from my agent Emmanuel. They sent me a proposal. Are you kidding? We shoot in Paris for three weeks. You write a five minute movie. How bad could it be?

I mean it's five minutes long. All I am doing is exercising my muscles a little bit more. And I am learning a bit more about it. My goal now, I'm not at the level of the other directors that are involved with this. They have much more experience than I do. This was such a grand opportunity for me to play. And to learn more what I am doing. I've been a screenwriter for many years, but I have just started to direct. So I am a novice..

You have two features now starring Hillary Swank. Do find her to be a muse?

We've just become very close friends. I love the old movies, I think of William Wyler and Bette Davis. There is a language between us we just know each other so well. When know when the performance is right. We have so much fun and trust with each other,

I'm excited for people to see P.S. because no one has seen her like this before; how beautiful, funny and goofy she can be. She's just really wonderful.

Coming from a screenwriters background, how stringent are you as director in terms of your script?

I'm very open, I love collaboration. I don't like to be too locked in to things. Some things I know work. Jerry (Gerard Butler) and I had a wonderful time coming up with stuff and bantering back and forth. There is a sequence between the two actors that took a lot of staging . It's a thirteen minute scene of the undressing and arguing in their apartment. And it was so much fun, let's do this, let's try that. That's what I love about shooting working with the actors.

All these world class directors descend on to Paris. Were you all there at the same time?

□

No. When I first went to go see Pigalle, Tom Tykwer was directing the Natalie Portman piece. This was in August of 2004. It had already been shot. In January 2005, the Coen Brother's shot theirs. Then July 2005 I shot mine, then they set up the production office and they just shot one after another.

I didn't meet the other directors until Cannes.

It's been over 15 years since you wrote THE FISHER KING. Do you have any reflections on it?

I'm just grateful for it.

Oddly enough, I was just talking about it last night till late in the evening with someone...um, a therapist actually (laughs). We decided that I had actually wrote my own biography, I seem to be living that story right now. Having coming back to

the castle with the right question. I burned myself initially. I am blessed to be a part of that and very luck to have had Terry (Gilliam) in my life.

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