

Fabrice Goldstein & Antoine Rein  
present

# THE SUMMER OF ALL MY PARENTS

[JUILLET AOÛT]

A film by **Diastème**

2016 - France – 97 min - Scope

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## **SYNOPSIS**

After attempting to set a mailbox on fire, Pimpette, 14, and her elder sister, Joséphine, spend their summer holidays shuttling between their secretly pregnant mom and bachelor father.

But when Joséphine gets involved with the wrong crowd, little Pimpette turns out to be more responsible than the grown-ups who spend their time educating her.

# DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

## INTERVIEW DIASTÈME

### **You've followed up French Blood [French title: A French man] with a French family?**

It's a story I started writing a few years ago that I had left in a drawer and felt like picking up again for the pleasure of making a comedy, a film genre I enjoy, but one that isn't always handled well. I contacted my friend, the screenwriter Camille Pouzol to ask her to rewrite the screenplay with me and also to benefit from her feminine perspective. I wanted to evoke the teenage years, from the time when kids enter adolescence to the time of their emerging adulthood. And I wanted to work with teenagers: I had never worked with them in film, but in my first stage play, *La Nuit du thermomètre* [The night of the thermometer], the characters – played on stage by adults – were 12 years old. I wanted to speak about family as well. And more generally, after *French Blood*, to focus on romantic relationships, capture tenderness between characters, to work on something that is sweet and gentle, surround myself with characters I truly love.

### **Were the two girls the starting point for the writing process?**

The basic structure has always been the same: two sisters, during the two months of summer vacation, from the South of France to Brittany. We cut a couple of scenes in the final edit, a first for me, it hadn't been necessary for my first two films: my co-writer and I had wondered if the audience would be moved deeply enough, if they were given enough information to be touched, so we decided to write additional scenes to consolidate the audience's relationship with the characters. But we slowly realized that we didn't necessarily need them. Especially if we wanted to maintain a comic rhythm: we wanted to stay with little Laura's energy; we get attached to her from the opening credits and follow her throughout the film with a hand-held camera. In fact, almost the entire movie is shot with a hand-held camera. Nothing prevents a comedy from being elegant and tightly paced, all the more so when it's not a film with gags, or one in a permanent quest for comic effects.

### **Did you come up with Laura's character first?**

I named her after my niece. She's like the kids around me I've observed over the years: I love their freedom and how nutty they can be at that age. She's 14, but physically she's not very grown-up for her age. What seems trivial to us is a major drama for her: she doesn't have her period yet and she's going to be sent to boarding school if she has to stay back a grade. This had to be treated with the seriousness the character experiencing these problems deserved. And the same holds true for the other characters: over the course of a

summer, they are going to face problems that aren't particularly dramatic, but are essential problems to them, keeping them constantly preoccupied.

I also wanted to speak about their parents, to tell the story of the relationship between divorced parents. What Josephine says to her mother is something that I also find incredible: you spend fifteen years with someone, have two children together, and from one day to the next you never see each other again – it's both crazy and completely standard for today's world!

In this story I'm in almost every character – the mother, the girls, and then this publisher who I know so well: we've all known people like that who we thought were well established in life and then suddenly find themselves on the brink of disaster.

**The Summer of All My Parents is a coming of age story for Joséphine and Laura, but to some extent, all the characters in the film find themselves at a pivotal moment in their lives. In today's world, there isn't a specific time period for a coming of age story.**

That's right, and that's why I find the adults as interesting as the teenagers. The intent was to treat all the characters with the same depth and complexity. I've seen a number of coming of age films, like Peppermint Soda or even The Party. But I was even more deeply moved by Ron Howard's Parenthood, an ensemble film. My years as a theater actor had a profound effect on me, so I liked the idea of a theater troupe. And even before that, I had lived with groups. I had been in rock bands, and as a little boy I was in a choir and we traveled quite a bit. I then created newspapers with a bunch of people with whom I am still friends. The joy of making The Summer of All My Parents was also linked to the pleasure of being in a troupe.

In fact, my adults often behave like big children, but that is something that delights me about them. I think it's fantastic that people in their fifties wear sneakers and go out drinking. When I was fifteen, people in their fifties were already old men in trench coats who worked in banks! In The Summer of All My Parents, the character played by Thierry Godard acts like a schoolboy in love. That's exactly what I sometimes see around me and I find it so sweet and touching. Besides people always seem to be better at judging other people's lives than their own!

**Laura is a remarkably free-spirited character in the film; she is uninhibited and says whatever is on her mind.**

In fact, I believe she is at the cusp of this period of uninhibited freedom associated with her age. Soon she will realize that she has to fit into the mold, squeeze herself into adulthood,

possibly to find a different kind of freedom within the framework of adulthood, but she will eventually realize that carrying on like this is no longer possible. Between the ages of twelve and fourteen, teens can understand everything and feel free to say anything; before that, our understanding is limited and then afterwards we keep things to ourselves.

We had a lot of fun with her dialogue: we had her saying things that kids today would not necessarily say. We didn't want a caricature of teenage language and culture; we wanted her to express herself in her own words, without any "LOLs" or other contemporary expressions.

**When did you find the storyline of the jewel heist that links the two periods?**

Very early on. Even if I love the idea of a family saga, we also wanted to construct an adventure tale and I quite like this story of the stolen necklace that is eventually found when everyone was least expecting it. The discovery breathes fresh life into the narrative. Then there is the issue of the younger sister, but also of the older: Joséphine meets one of those guys who live on boats – you see a lot of them in the South – fabulously attractive but there is something suspicious about them. She was obviously wrong to help them and be complicit in their wrongdoings.

These "bad guys" are right out of young adult fiction. And I love these three crackpot characters too. They were more threatening in an earlier version of the screenplay, but it didn't work as well. I wanted the audience to become attached to them. The change in style that occurs about halfway through the movie – the shift from the South of France to Brittany – is an absolute pleasure for a filmmaker. We made a film with two significantly different atmospheres. The scenery in Brittany was stunning, but it was a nightmare for these girls who end up there and find themselves wading through the mud in tennis shoes

**What did you ask of the actors in particular?**

We started with a week-long rehearsal period, following the order of the screenplay, with all the actors, allowing time to try different things. Rehearsal is very important to me, although according to the actors it is not commonly done in cinema. It allows you to save time and provides an opportunity to ask most of the questions in the early stages. It also allows me to give the actors information about their characters; it's always important that they know a little more than the audience about their characters. We rehearse lines, and can get a feeling for what sounds right and what sounds off. We can also adjust the blocking. On the movie set we don't have the luxury of time.

I know that the bond between Luna Lou and Alma Jodorowsky was forged during this period: this rehearsal time was essential to making their relationship as sisters credible. It also was a moment for the whole cast to eat drink and spend time together. Very often actors in a film don't know each other and it can take up to week for them to start to feel a connection. And then what do you do with all the scenes that were shot before that point? Pascale Arbillot and Thierry Godard know each other in real life and even though they play only one scene together, their acting is fostered by their friendship. Rehearsal also allowed Patrick Chesnais, who is a real jester, to test the girls, to have fun and make wisecracks. These are vibrant moments, full of life, and it is precisely for this reason that I make movies, to create life. I also wanted it to work physically: these people touch each other, kiss each other a lot. Even if they aren't always able to express it verbally, they really love each other. It's the kind of family we all strive for.

### **Where did you find young Luna Lou who plays Laura?**

The casting process was the most difficult part of this movie, which above all depends upon the actors. Michaël Laguens, the casting director I always work with, and I decided that we wouldn't do an open call for the film because there was too much dialogue. In the end it was very simple: there were twenty-five kids, and Luna was in the first half of the list. He showed me her screen tests and I saw an adorable looking little girl, knee high to a grasshopper, with Simone Signoret's voice. I met with her very quickly. She had already done small parts for television. We worked a little together, in fact, on scenes from the *The Night of the Thermometer*, to test her memory.

I have never seen so much talent in an actor! Sometimes on the shoot, Pascale stopped acting just to watch her. As I felt it needed to be a highly rhythmic film with fast cuts, the scene where she learns her mother is pregnant was filmed from several different angles using a number of shot types. She had a great deal of text in that scene and in 50 takes she never made a single mistake. And with the same energy every time! She was exactly the character I had written.

### **And Alma Jodorowsky?**

What's funny about this is that I had worked in the theater with her mother, Valérie Crouzet, an actress that I adore. After having met Alma, I was just afraid that she was too pretty; the girl I had written about in my story didn't have such spectacular looks. But my apprehension was quickly swept away by what Alma exudes in humanity, lightheartedness, and unaffected beauty. She has something very gentle about her, but she is also very strong and intense, a force of nature.

### **And the adults?**

Neither Pascale Arbillot nor Thierry Godard have been well-served by cinema. For different reasons: theater for Pascale and television for Thierry. Pascale Arbillot is an exceptional stage actress, but it seems that in the filmmaking milieu, people are always cautious about actors coming from the theater – maybe because they still think they are going to over act or speak too loudly! When I meet an actor, the fact that he or she comes from theater is a positive thing in my mind. Pascale has everything: beauty, strength, an endearing quiriness, and a formidable feeling for comedy and drama. Her character may not have the punchlines, but she's the one who holds everything together: she is the mother; the link between the other characters goes through her.

Thierry Godard has an atypical career that appeals to me: he started out as a cabinetmaker, went into theater later, and then was snatched up by television, thanks to the success of *A French Village* and *Spiral* in particular. He says he “looks like a centurion,” which isn't far from the mark. I like what he exudes; he's just about the nicest guy in the world. He perfectly interprets this fellow who must have had a small problem with alcohol, then redeemed himself, and moved to Brittany. I didn't have to explain much to Thierry: he owns a small place in Sweden, and he goes there to fish as soon as he has the opportunity.

### **The character played by Patrick Chesnais is somewhere between silent-film burlesque and Italian comedy...**

He's a publisher who can never think of the word he is looking for. So he makes big gestures to describe the missing words. Patrick comes from theater, he doesn't improvise. He is rigorous, but always creative: he isn't afraid to propose something comic. We gave ourselves the luxury of trying it out in order to mix things up, even overdoing it. Then in the end we decided what we would keep. The most amusing situation was when he had the young girl constantly underfoot: what an odd couple! He could be her grandfather, but at the same time they are incessantly trying to annoy one another. He ends up having to welcome his girlfriend's children, but can't find the user's manual that comes with them!

### **And how did the rest of the group come together?**

For Romain, I wanted someone who had a spectacular body so that the spectator would immediately understand Joséphine's attraction. I met Jérémie Laheurte, who I had seen in *Blue is the Warmest Color*, and he is indeed a tremendously good-looking and endearing 20 year-old kid! I spotted Ali Marhyar, who plays Chérif, in Pierre Niney's series, *Casting(s)*, which he co-writes with him: he makes me laugh, but he also has a guileless perspective. It

was perfect for the scenes when Laura flirts with him, which could have been a little embarrassing: he looks like he's only 12 years old even if his hairline is starting to recede, but we understand why this kid has a crush on him. Lou Chauvain had just finished acting school, I think she has a great career ahead of her: she is very free-spirited has a vast acting range and sound technique. I've known girls like the character she is playing, who called themselves Moon, had red hair, and walked in the streets barefoot! And then it was unthinkable for me to make a movie without Jeanne Rosa or Frédéric Andrau, who have been part of my theater troupe from the beginning.

**Where did you get the idea to use songs to illustrate the movie?**

It had come to me as soon as we started writing the screenplay. I wanted to have something like a Greek chorus running through the film. The songs had to be in French, but without echoing a specific character's point of view. It happens that one of my friends is Alex Beaupain, perhaps the best songwriter today, and I also know Frédéric Lo very well. He's an incredible composer. I asked them to write very simple, "low-fi" songs, for guitar or piano with a singer, recorded without any special effects. They started composing based on the images from the rough cut of the film: I had given them examples by placing American songs in the cut as indications of rhythm and tone. We had planned on four songs for four places in the movie, but during the editing process we realized that we had room for a fifth song.

We decided it would be better if Alex didn't sing them, firstly because these folk-style songs are not at all his style, which is more French pop. He wouldn't have necessarily felt comfortable. The other French singer that I am very fond of is Jérémie Kisling from Switzerland. In fact, one of his songs is in French Blood. He agreed to be a simple singer for the movie's songs. What a great pleasure it all was: I had the impression of making a film and producing an album at the same time!

**In your estimation, what effect do the songs have on the movie?**

They bring a poetic dimension, an overarching vision of what has just occurred. They allow the audience to gain some distance, to suggest the feelings that are at play, as everyone has experienced these emotions. I like the idea of sharing: what you are seeing on the screen is in fact everybody's story. We've all been through it. Music is something we share, and songs can be a memento of a time period even, a great way of bringing people together.

# DIASTÈME

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2016 – THE SUMMER OF ALL MY PARENTS, writer-director

2015 – FRENCH BLOOD [UN FRANÇAIS], writer-director

2015 - LES CHÂTEAUX DE SABLE by Olivier Jahan, writer

2008 – SUNNY SPELLS [LE BRUIT DES GENS AUTOUR] writer-director

2008 - COLUCHE, L'HISTOIRE D'UN MEC by Antoine de Caunes, writer

2002 – CLOSE TO LEO [TOUT CONTRE LÉO] by Christophe Honoré, writer

## THEATER DIRECTOR

2013 - *Fille/Mère*, by Diastème, Théâtre du Chêne noir

2012 - *Une scène*, by Diastème, Ciné 13 Théâtre

2009 - *L'Amour de l'art*, by Diastème, Théâtre du Chêne noir

2008 - *Les Justes*, by Albert Camus, Théâtre du Chêne noir

2006 - *La Tour de Pise*, by Diastème, Théâtre La Luna, Manufacture des Abbesses

2004 - *107 ans*, by Diastème, Théâtre La Luna, Pépinière-Opéra

2001 - *La Nuit du thermomètre*, CDN de Nice, Théâtre Marigny

## NOVELS

*Bien le silence partout*, Flammarion, 2010

*107 ans*, Éditions de l'Olivier – Points Seuil, 2004

*In Paradisum*, Éditions de l'Olivier, 1999

*Les Papas et les Mamans*, Éditions de l'Olivier – Points Seuil, 1997

## CAST

Laura  
Anne  
Joséphine  
Michel  
Gwen  
Romain  
Moon  
Chérif  
Jenny  
Marithé  
Franck  
Cédric  
Pierre  
Louise  
Gilles

Luna Lou  
Pascale Arbillot  
Alma Jodorowsky  
Patrick Chesnais  
Délia Espinat Dief  
Jéréemie Laheurte  
Lou Chauvain  
Ali Marhyar  
Ludivine de Chastenet  
Blandine Pélissier  
Thierry Godard  
Arthur Choynet  
Edern Cario  
Stéphane Caillar  
Frédéric Andrau

## CREW

Director  
Screenwriters  
Director of Photography  
Original Music  
Sound  
1st Assistant Director  
Editor  
Casting Director  
Production Manager  
Script Supervisor  
Location Manager  
Production Designer  
Costume Designer  
Make-up Artist  
Hair Designer  
Associate Producers

Diastème  
Diastème, Camille Pouzol  
Pierre Milon, AFC  
Frédéric Lo  
Jean-Marie Blondel, Thomas Lefèvre, Thierry Delor  
Laure Montréal, A.F.A.R.  
Mathilde Van de Moortel  
Michaël Laguens  
Marianne Germain  
Louison Pochat  
Vincent Piant AFR  
Samuel Deshors ADC  
Frédéric Cambier  
Tina Rovere  
Rémy Pilot  
Antoine GANDAUBERT, Nadia KHAMLICHI,  
Gilles WATERKEYN, Martin METZ

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With the participation of D8

In association with Banque Postale Image 9 - A plus Image 6

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International Sales Films Distribution