

A Cinema Guild release



2016 / 141 minutes / 1.85:1 / DCP / Dolby Digital 5.1
In French with English subtitles

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Press Materials:

http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/4days_press.htm

SYNOPSIS

On a seemingly ordinary night in Paris, Pierre takes one last look his lover Paul's sleeping body, then takes off into the early morning light. Where he's headed, neither of them know. Pierre's only guide is his Grindr app, which leads him on a series of encounters with an indelible cast of characters across the French countryside. Paul sets out after him, using his own phone to track Pierre's movements in a strange and wonderful game of Grindr cat-and-mouse.

Jérôme Reybaud's assured feature debut is "an erotic road movie like no other" (Film Society of Lincoln Center) and an "ode to cruising writ large" (*Slant*). It's a tale imbued with sensuality, humor and surprising tenderness. Sumptuously shot by Sabine Lancelin (Rohmer's *Boyfriends and Girlfriends*, Oliveira's *The Strange Case of Angelica*) and featuring a supporting cast of familiar faces from French cinema, *4 Days in France* offers a sophisticated take on gay romance in the 21st century.

CAST & CREW

Pascal Cervo Pierre Thomas
Arthur Igual Paul
Fabienne Babe Diane Querqueville
Natalie Richard the bookseller
Lætitia Dosch the thief
Liliane Montevecchi Judith Joubert
Jean-Christoph Bouet the man in Savoie
Marie France Marie Pilatre de Rozier
Bertrand Nadler the salesman
Dorothée Blanck lady with the trolley
Mathieu Chevé Matthieu Roy
Florence Giorgetti the resident
Olivier Galinou Didier
Emilien Tessier the man of the center of France

Director: Jérôme Reybaud
Producer: Elisabeth Perez
Screenplay: Jérôme Reybaud
Cinematography: Sabine Lancelin
Sound: Sébastien Eugène
Editing: Martial Salomon
Music: Léonard Lasry
Casting & Costumes: Didier Dahon

Production Designer: Isabelle Voisin
Production Manager: Christophe Grandière
Assistant Director: Maxime L'anthoën
Location Manager: Aurélie Delvenne

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In coproduction with Film Factory and TSF
With the participation Centre National du cinéma et de l'image animée
With the support of Ciclic - Région Centre-Val de Loire en partenariat avec le CNC
In association with Cineventure
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INTERVIEW WITH JÉRÔME REYBAUD

What was the starting point for your film, the characters or the landscapes?

In Cannes, there are two hills that overlook the city: the Californie to the east and, to the west, the Croix des Gardes, a gay meeting and hook-up spot. It is made up of mimosa and pine woods, with narrow trails overlooking the Bay of Cannes, the sea and the mountains. Frequenting such a place at a young age creates a vital and lasting association: sex, chance, availability and the mysterious presence of the world through the contemplation of landscapes and walking. That was the starting point for the film. This was followed by a second element: the couple, not viewed frontally but at a distance or as distanced. Last of all came the encounters, some of them fairly early on, such as the blonde woman played by Fabienne Babe, others much later, such as the thief, but ultimately all similar to the landscapes in their solitude and singularity.

Do you accept the "gay movie" label?

There are exactly 4 minutes and 40 seconds of "gay movie" in the film and that is the encounter between Pierre and Matthieu Roy, called "The Young Gay" in the screenplay: the evocation and transmission of rituals, of compulsory gay figures between a young homosexual from provincial France and a much older Parisian. Apart from that, there are men who fuck, desire or love each other but there's nothing "gay" about that. Even Grindr, which could be shown as a gay phenomenon with its habits, failings, etc., is used by the characters only as a localization device, a simple sexual GPS. The label "gay movie" does not bother me and I understand people using it to classify *4 Days in France* more easily, but I don't think that it corresponds to the film.

Politeness, respect of one's given word, gallantry (opening the door for a woman, carrying her bags)...

Does your film defend values?

My film does not defend anything or any particular values, even if they are ones in which I believe personally, such as politeness, good manners, etc. It shows characters who respect them, at least partially, and so it shows behavior that is increasingly rare in modern life, especially in the movies where, for a thousand reasons, "bad manners" are almost always shown and even glamorized. But showing is not defending, it's simply saying: "Look, this exists, or it still exists a little." I feel that, beyond the question of good manners, the social class of the main characters is what might disturb audiences: showing cultured bourgeois characters in a movie who pay attention to their language, manners and clothes, without mocking or denouncing them requires, say, an explanation in 2016.

Is your film melancholy? The image you present of society is occasionally very sad.

If you're referring to the ugliness of the outskirts of Paris or Clermont-Ferrand, the horror of industrial bakery chains and their ridiculous names ("Happy Dough"), yes indeed. But this journey across France shows above all that at each turn you can come across a wonderful and disturbing crazy old woman (the lady with the shopping cart), a stunningly beautiful face (Matthieu), a moving retirement home singer, green and purple valleys, powdery and virgin snow, cold springs and pristine chateaus... Despite the standardization of cities, clothing, ways of speaking and thinking, despite the spread of concrete over the country, these things and these people still exist, more or less buried or hidden in the folds of provincial France. You just need to open your eyes.

How should we interpret the solitude that marks every character in your film?

Henri Thomas used to say that the best friends were those that we never saw and that we wrote to from time to time. What you call loneliness is in fact the only way of creating a genuine connection between people: the distance, and at first the geographical remoteness, is what allows the characters in *4 Days in France* to feel connected to each other, if only through the common territory that they dwell in, France. This is the meaning of what I called the "returns" in the script: Pierre meets a character that we see again later in a moment of daily solitude, taking out the bins or masturbating, and these brief reappearances do indeed express the basic solitude of the characters, but they also show their connections with each other. Pierre's journey and Paul's quest create a constellation of characters that refers as much to their intrinsic loneliness as to everything that connects them (the country, the map, the land, the roads, the air) and that can create tenderness, empathy, or even love.

Would you claim to belong to a family or a line of descent, that of Paul Vecchiali for example?

If we are not talking about a fantasy family or any particular aesthetic influence, but, specifically, of the people to whom I turned to make my first films (shorts and documentaries) and who actually opened their doors to me, there's Dorothee Blanck, Haydee Caillot, Jean-Claude Guiguet, Fabienne Babe, Marie-Claude Treillhou, Paul Vecchiali and Jean-Christophe Bouvet. One could talk about people on the margin or the margin of the margin, but I would say, on the contrary, that this small group of actors, independent producers and filmmakers, is precisely my centre, my normality and my starting point.

At many moments in your film, there are funny scenes and amusing lines that form a stark contrast with what one might initially expect of the film.

This a temporary suspension, a "side step." It's like a switch: it must be flipped from time to time, first to avoid dying of boredom, then not choke on one's own sense of seriousness, and finally to allow in everything that humor proves to be an excellent vector for: the unexpected, the bizarre, the improbable.

Is Pierre a character or a pure gaze? Do you have the impression that you urged Pascal Cervo to seem absent fairly often to convey that?

Oh, I don't think Pascal Cervo needs to be pushed very far to go over to the absent side...since he has a very rare quality of presence/absence: he is never fully present, never entirely absent either, never fully warm, never completely cold either. I'm not saying that he is not able, as an actor, to be completely this or that, but he has a special ability not to be completely this or that. His face is the same: it is hard for him to settle on a specific emotional point, it moves all the time, it alters, it is like a landscape that changes with every cloud, with every tiny variation in the light. Pascal Cervo does not stabilize: that is why he is Pierre, and was from the beginning of writing the script, in other words a person who chose to jump into the current and let himself float along, transmitting the landscapes that he crosses with his eyes. No other actor than Pascal Cervo could have managed to hold together the two parts of your alternative proposal: thanks to him, Pierre is both a character and a gaze.

What part does sexuality play in the film? A philosophy of life, as in *Teorema*, a moral lesson, an existential experience?

In Pasolini's film, sex is above all, in my opinion, a means of subversion and mystical revelation. In *4 Days in France*, I would say that sex is primarily a means of getting to know the world, like books. Sex allows Pierre to travel the country, getting to know its roads, landscapes, regions, dialects, accents, faces,

geography, history and society, with an occasional ejaculation in the grass as a premium. Moreover, sex, because it is practiced with strangers and in anonymous settings, provides access to a fairly rare degree of presence in (and of) the world: it then becomes a poetic and existential experience. Offering oneself, giving oneself in vain and in complete faith to the first person that comes along means creating a bond of brotherhood that mixes animality and spirituality.

Do you see Pierre as a likeable character? Do you accept that there is some form of coldness in him?

Once a kind of general sympathy or benevolence from the director in relation to his characters is established, in other words if it is sure that the director does not despise or denigrate them, everything is possible and even a certain coldness, or an unpleasant side. In *4 Days in France* the actress aunt, the lady on the road or the butcher may seem surly or unbearable at times, while Pierre may seem indifferent, but I believe that this dialectic distance for the viewer in relation to the characters is the condition of a much deeper relationship with them and, ultimately, allows us to feel more sympathy for characters that we start to like despite, and then for, their "failings". We must free ourselves of the tyranny of cool to access genuine sympathy, that of the etymology of the word.

What sensitive journey is drawn by the landscapes? For example, did you wish to get across a movement of ascension, destitution or isolation?

I did not draw anything at all, that's the way France is! If you leave Paris and head for the sea, you start with a flat landscape, then comes the ascent that you mention with the crossing of the Alps, before heading back down again to the sea. France's particular topography is in itself a sensitive journey for me. Of course, I used and partly shaped this raw material, for example by placing the Savoy episode, with its fertile, rich and laughing landscapes before the episode in the poor and barren Queyras...but then again, when you arrive from Paris, Savoy comes before the Queyras. In other words, if I had shot *4 Days* in Belgium, we would not have had this "ascent"... and Pierre's path would have been completely different.

Did you choose your actors for their voices? Their phrasing? Their diction?

Apart from a couple of exceptions, I did not choose the actors to fit the role, but instead wrote the role and dialogue for the actors and nonprofessionals whose voices, phrasing and diction had indeed touched me and struck me to the extent that their aural presence in *4 Days in France* seemed vital for the general polyphony of the film: before I began writing, I knew the film had to contain both the red rock of the Esterel and the grass of the Glandon Pass, Nathalie Richard's vocal inflexions, Fabienne Babe's timbre, Bouvet's diction, Marie France's harmony, Dorothee Blanck's whisper, Raymonde Bel's accent. And, with those voices in my ears, I imagined the characters and wrote their dialogue. The wonderful thing is that first they all accepted and, second, the way they spoke their lines during the takes always exceeded my expectations: it was exactly what I had imagined, and for a good reason, but they took it even further, or higher.

How did you approach the technical and aesthetic problems of filming in a car?

The basic, intangible, principle is that each road is the true road. If the character drives between Sully-sur-Loire and Bourges, even at night, then the actor must be filmed driving on that actual road. It was not easy getting this accepted because cinema is used to ignoring geographical context for reasons of cost, technical efficiency or indifference to the setting, possibly because of its inordinate faith in its ability to mimic, reconstitute or replace anything. Yet, on the one hand, I believe in the spirit of a place, its irreplaceable

nature, its deep-seated truth, and, on the other, the whole film rests precisely on the geography. So cheating with the landscapes and roads was out of the question. That also excluded the use of a camera car that ultimately treats the passenger compartment—along with the passing scenery—as a set and not as an experience.

Interview conducted by Florence Chapiro.

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Jérôme Reybaud was born in 1970 in Cannes. At a very early age he began shooting with a Super 8 camera in his bedroom. After finishing his thesis on the poet Philippe Jaccottet, he returned to cinema directing two short films—*Aires 06* (2006) and *Trois dames pour Jean-Claude Guiguet* (2008)—and a documentary on the director Paul Vecchiali, *Qui êtes-vous Paul Vecchiali?* (2012) for French television. *4 Days in France* is his first feature film.

FESTIVALS

Venice International Film Critics Week, 2016

New Directors/New Films, 2017

Frameline, 2017

Outfest, 2017