

## 2004 FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL

Film d'ouverture/Opening film :  
**Bon Voyage**  
de/ by Jean-Paul Rappeneau

France- 2003- *Comedy/Drama* - 114 min –*French with subtitles*

*Bon Voyage*, directed by the hugely talented Jean-Paul Rappeneau, begins in the posh Hotel Splendide in Bordeaux, Paris. It is the start of World War II, and the fate of the free world hangs in balance, as cabinet members, journalists, physicists, and spies of all persuasions gather in order to escape the Nazi occupation of Paris. High society socialites hobnob with jailbirds. Murderous intrigues, scientific secrets and love affairs flourish; elaborate personal schemes and political plots escalate, intersect and fly off in all directions, as a young writer must choose between a beautiful diva and an impassioned student, between politicians and hoodlums, between carefree youth and adulthood.

A sophisticated farce in high style, *Bon Voyage* was France's selection for the 2004 Academy Awards and stars an extraordinary star-studded cast: Isabelle Adjani (as the actress), Gérard Depardieu (as the politician), Virginie Ledoyen (as the student), Grégori Derangère (as the writer), Yvan Attal (as the hoodlum), and Peter Coyote (as the journalist).

*Bon Voyage* recently received 11 Cesar nominations for 2004, including Best Film, Screenplay, Director, New Actor and Cinematography. In other words, "La crème de la crème"! An opening film not to be missed!

**Le Coût de la vie/ The Cost of Living de/ by Philippe Le Guay**

France – 2003 -. *Comedy* - 108 min.-  
*French with English subtitles*

Set in the provincial city of Lyons, *The Cost of Living* ponders the bourgeois but universally interesting subject of money. Why do some of us spend wildly, whilst others hold on to it as if it's a vital part of their being?

The action centres on a collection of characters at a restaurant. Coway (Vincent Lindon) is the endearing restaurateur whose lavishness eventually throws his happy-go-lucky life off balance. Brett (Fabrice Luchini) is a committed miser, abandoning relationships when they get too expensive. Helena (Geraldine Pailhas) is the chic prostitute who makes it her mission to reform him. There's also a pair of young lovers who work as waiters, and a wealthy businessman, Nicolas de Blamont (Claude Rich) who slowly discovers delights other than money.

Phillipe Le Guay's previous film was the dark psychological drama *Night Shift*, but the shift to more light-hearted subject matter is adroitly handled. The scenario is ripe with a range of surprisingly comic possibilities – and the link between the characters' attitudes to money, and their happiness is never labored. The surely timed and well-observed performances of the ensemble cast ensure the humour remains fresh and relevant.

*The Cost of Living* is, ultimately, a lively and perceptive comedy, packed full of bittersweet truths and laughter.

**Les Triplettes de Belleville / The Triplets of Belleville de/ by Sylvain Chomet**

France, Belgium, Canada - 2003-  
*Animation, comedy*- 80 min - *French with subtitles*

*The Triplets of Belleville* is an intensely beautiful, utterly unique feature of astounding originality and charm. Utterly enchanting and droll, the film has been an international festival hit and celebrated by critics worldwide as one of the best of 2003. French-Canadian writer-director Sylvain Chomet has created an intoxicating world of selfishness, cruelty, corruption and futility that will sweep you up in its dark comic vision – and leave you with a goofy grin on your face.

*The Triplets of Belleville* begins with Champion, a lonely little boy who has been adopted by his grandmother Madame Souza. Champion is never happier than when he is on a bicycle. Madame Souza puts him through a rigorous training process and years go by before Champion becomes worthy of his name and enters the world-famous cycling race, the Tour de France. But when two mysterious men in black kidnap Champion, Madame Souza and her faithful dog Bruno set out to rescue him. Their search takes them over the ocean to where they encounter the renowned "Triplets of Belleville".

*The Triplets Of Belleville* premieres in Australia at the French Film Festival fresh from a record breaking season in the US and France. It was chosen to screen in the Official Selection at last year's Cannes Film Festival, and has been awarded, among many other prizes, Best Animated Feature Film at the 2003 New York Film Critics Circle, and recently received 2004 Academy Award nominations for Best Animated Feature (up against *Finding Nemo!*) and Best Original Song.

Do not miss *The Triplets of Belleville!*

**Tais toi! / Ruby & Quentin de/ by Francis Veber**

France – 2003 - *Comedy* - 85 min.- *French with English subtitles*

Few French screenwriters have been as internationally popular as Francis Veber, and few write farcical comedy as well. Veber, who is both a playwright and director, has enjoyed international popularity ever since the Oscar-winning success of *La Cage Aux Folles* and his recent offerings *The Dinner Game* and *The Closet* have firmly positioned him in a league of his own.

In his latest film *Tais-toi!*, also known by its alternative and more polite English title, *Ruby and Quentin*, Veber returns to his popular farcical style of the '70s, employing an unsurprising but enduringly funny comedy technique - the odd couple.

Ruby, played by a superbly grim and silent Jean Reno, is a brooding loner of a criminal with one thing on his mind - revenge. Quentin, on the other hand, has nothing on his mind. In a gloriously ridiculous performance, Gerard Depardieu, is the garrulous and gentle giant Quentin, who drives everyone mad with his incessant and mindless chatter.

The two end up sharing a cell, which seems to suit them both. Ruby never says a word and Quentin is convinced that since Ruby hasn't tried to kill him he must be his best friend.

*Tais-toi!* is pure vaudevillian fun, characterized by charming, warm and upbeat humour and wonderful performances from Reno and Depardieu, who continues to surprise with his versatility.

**Sansa**  
**de/ by Siegfried**

France – 2003 – 115mins -  
Cinematographic Essay – French with  
English subtitles

Sansa (Roschody Zem), a street artist and hustler, is undertaking hedonistic travels between Paris and Russia, quenching his thirst for wine, women, song and movement. His smooth tongue talks his way in and out of situations with a good dose of urban panache.

The character of Sansa is the film's captivating centre amid the visual dizzying, ever-changing topography of sights, sounds and people. His acquaintance with a variety of locales is often brief, but in several places he encounters Click (Ivry Gitlis), a pre-eminent violonist and conductor, who becomes a friend. Together, they share their passion for beauty, "bon mot" and travels. Zem exudes a marvelous confidence that allows his character to radiate vitality.

In Sansa, artist/writer/producer/director Siegfried presents a vibrant and visual essay on the subject of national identity and the need to transcend barriers. Siegfried's heralded first-feature Louise (take 2) depicted a young woman's experiences as she wandered through Paris metro. Sansa's vision is bigger: taking in Eastern and Western Europe, Egypt, Africa and Japan. The film is pulsating with boundless energy and captures the vibrations and dynamism of the many countries, as Sansa, the charismatic iconoclast, scours the crowds he encounters with his artist's eye.

Shot in grainy digital, guerilla style, Sansa has a witty and colourful aesthetic – and an exhaustive sense of joie de vivre. The serendipitous

cinematography is both gorgeous and sophisticated and the electro-jazzy French touch soundtrack- a collaboration between the director and Gitlis- builds the ambiance around the stunning images, creating a hypnotic and super modern film. The film has been presented at several high profile recent festivals: Director's Fortnight at Cannes 2003, Toronto Film Festival 2003 and Tokyo Film Festival 2003, and is a completely unique and memorable cinematic experience.

**La Prophétie des Grenouilles / Raining Cats and Frogs**  
**de / by Jacques-Rémy Girerd**

France – 2003 - Animation - 90 mins-  
French with English subtitles

*La Prophétie des Grenouilles / Raining Cats and Frogs* is a delightful tale for all audiences. Directed by Jacques Rémy Girerd, the film is the first totally French produced animated feature since *Le Roi et L'oiseau (The King and Mr. Bird)* in 1980.

Tom, and his adoptive parents, Ferdinand and Juliette, are spending the summer holidays with Lili – a girl of Tom's age. Lili's parents run a family zoo (a kind of small amusement park which can be found along French country roads) and have gone to Africa in search of crocodiles! Ferdinand and Juliette have offered to look after the kids and the zoo. Everything is going really well until the day some frogs warn the children that there's going to be a flood! When thunderclaps are hurt, the resourceful Ferdinand decides to shelter the household in a barn, which he's able to transform into an ark so as to accommodate the animals from the zoo as well.

*La Prophétie des Grenouilles* is an exploration of the co-existence of humans and animals, herbivores and

carnivores alike. It was co-scripted by Antoine Lanciaux, Iouri Tcherenkov and Girerd. Linear. The anthropomorphic behavior of the animals offers considerable comic potential: a couple of elephants, immobilised by the lack of space, carry on like a pair of cranky elderly pensioners, whilst other animals philosophize and embark on endless discussions as only the French can do. To give voice to his characters, Girerd has called upon some major names including as Annie Girardot, Michel Galabru, Anouk Grimberg and Michel Piccoli.

With its clear allusions to the problems of global warming and its cheerful animal saga, *La Prophétie des Grenouilles* is steeped in humanistic values and carries a beautiful and important message – and joyously became a surprise box office champion at the French box office in late 2003. A true delight!

**Depuis qu'Otar est Parti / Since Otar Left**  
**de/ by Julie Bertucelli**

France, Belgium- 2003- Drama - 102 min  
- French with subtitles

Otar, a medical student from the former Soviet republic of Georgia, has fled the bleak, crumbling city of Tbilisi in which he grew up to live in Paris. Left behind are his doting mother Eka (Esther Gorintin) who believes he can do no wrong, his sister Marina (Nino Khomassouridze) and Marina's indomitable daughter, Ada (Dinara Droukarova), who live together in such close quarters that Marina and Ada must share a bed.

Suddenly, an unexpected, shocking message is received – Otar has been killed. But Marina and Ada, rather than shattering Eka's last remnant of happiness, decide to put on a charade. Imitating Otar's handwriting, Ada writes letters that paint an increasingly rosy

picture of his life in Paris.

Unfortunately, far from placating Eka, the bogus letters arouse an even deeper hunger for contact with her son. Eka becomes resolute in her conviction that she must see Otar again before she dies. Marina and Ada, are, naturally, aghast...

*Since Otar Left* is a touching and complex study of women from three generations co-existing uneasily under the same roof; few will be unmoved by this universally applicable tale of love and loss. The film is based on a true story recounted to director Julie Bertucelli by a friend. After having directed a number of successful documentaries, her intensely beautiful first feature is suffused with indelible humanist values and emotions – the film blew away the grand jury of the Critics' Week section of Cannes in 2003 and was awarded the prize for Best Film. It is one of the most subtly resonant French films in years, and sustains a delicate balance of pathos, humor and a clear-headed realism.

**Nathalie...**  
**de/ by Anne Fontaine**

France - 2003- Drama - 100 min - French  
with subtitles

Anne Fontaine has assembled three of the greatest actors in contemporary French cinema - Emmanuelle Béart, Fanny Ardant and Gérard Depardieu - for this masterful tale of erotic obsession and betrayal.

Bernard (Depardieu) and Catherine (Ardent) are a happily married, professional, middle-aged couple. They are financially stable, have a group of supportive friends, and each feels secure in life. When Bernard misses his surprise birthday party because he is delayed in Frankfurt, his wife is disappointed, but thinks no more of the incident. How could he know she had planned something so special? But when she listens to messages on his cellphone shortly afterward, she discovers he is having

an affair behind her back. Coolly, quietly and methodically, she plots her revenge.

Catherine decides to hire a prostitute to seduce her husband: and after awkwardly poking her head into an elegant nightclub, she meets the sultry Nathalie (Beart). As long as she's paid, Nathalie is unconcerned about what she is asked to do. Catherine tells Nathalie how to find her husband – and the plot unwinds.

This is the beginning of a dreamy, mesmerizing and titillating tale in which the relationship between the two women, rather than that of the man and call-girl, becomes central. As Catherine regularly arranges to meet Nathalie to find out how her plan is proceeding, she is drawn into a world that startles and surprises her. This story is told with compassion and sympathy for all three characters, spiced with a series of encounters that unfold in the most unexpected ways. It is enough to say that this trio of great talent rises superbly to Fontaine's sure-handed direction, never releasing us from the mysteries and seduction of love.

**Les Egarés / Strayed**  
**de/ by André Téchiné**

France- 2003- *Drama* - 95 min  
–French with subtitles

*Strayed* is the long-awaited new drama from the acclaimed director André Téchiné, who shares scripting duties with his long time collaborator, Gilles Taurand. Their impressive resume includes the much-loved *Les Roseaux Sauvages (The Wild Reeds)*, *Hotel des Ameriques*, *Les Voleurs (The Thieves)* and *Alice et Martin*. Their latest drama premiered in Official Competition at the 2003

Cannes International Film Festival to great acclaim.

June 1940. German troops are advancing on Paris. Odile (Emmanuelle Beart), a widowed teacher, succumbs to the widespread panic and, with her two children, joins the exodus from the city. Her son Philippe is on the cusp of adolescence, and little Cathy knows only that they are going south. After fifty kilometres, a German plane attacks, decimating the helpless refugees; Odile and her children lose everything. Suddenly a youth appears from nowhere, and leads them away from the carnage. His name is Yvan (impressive newcomer Gaspard Ulliel), he's seventeen years old – and they decide to trust him. Yvan finds an abandoned house and breaks in. Here, with no radios or clocks, they are cut off from the outside world, and, struggling to survive, the four characters will come slowly to know each other and move inexorably beyond their limits.

Avoiding clichés and the typical themes normally associated with the World War II period, Téchiné doesn't follow a predictable path and instead takes us into unknown territory. Exquisitely shot by DP Agnes Godard, Téchiné's masterful drama is a visually ravishing and emotionally compelling story of discovery and loss, a luminous portrait of an impossible love, and features performances of extraordinary intensity from Béart and Ulliel.

**Le Papillon / The Butterfly**  
**De/ by Philippe Muyl**

France- 2003- *Dramatic comedy* - 85 min  
– French with subtitles

Julien (played by the beloved Michel Serrault) is an elderly entomologist living alone in his spacious apartment, with only his cat and extensive butterfly collection for company. Eight-year-old Elsa (Claire Bouanich) lives next door with her single working mother, Isabelle (Nade Dieu), who has little time for her. One day, when Julien sets out to the country in search of an elusive butterfly whose life span is only a few days, Elsa hides out in his car. By the time the flustered Julien realizes that he has a stowaway, he's too far away to turn around and so reluctantly agrees to let her tag along.

*The Butterfly* is a delicate, visually translucent film; Nicolas Herdt's gorgeous, languid tracking shots of the two explorers trekking through hillside meadows and woods with misty snow-capped mountains looming in the background capture the wonder of nature as experienced through the eyes of a child. The atmosphere is intense, and utterly intoxicating.

Director Philippe Muyl adroitly avoids the usual clichés in his execution of this tale, striking the right balance between humour and observational bite, and giving *The Butterfly* an undeniable appeal. Thanks to its smart and frequently funny screenplay, and standout performances from the two leads (Serrault in a typically expert performance, opposite the scene-stealing Bouanich), the relationship that develops between this incongruous pair is genuinely moving, giving the film real impact.

**La Petite Lili**  
**de/ by Claude Miller**

France – 2003 - *Dramatic Comedy* – 104 mn  
–French with English subtitles

*Five years after adapting Emmanuel Carrère's novel The Class Trip, for which he received the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes in 1998, celebrated director Claude Miller presents La Petite Lili, a contemporary version of Anton Chekhov's classic play The Seagull with the gorgeous Ludivine Sagnier (Swimming Pool, 8 Femmes) playing the beguiling wannabe starlet, Lili.*

Famous actress Mado (Nicola Garcia) is on vacation at the family beach-house, accompanied by her son Julien (Robinson Stevenin), brother Simon (Jean-Pierre Marielle) and lover Brice (Bernard Giraudeau), a well-known director. Julien is a young and aspiring filmmaker who is madly in love with the sexy local sprite Lili, who steals away from her father to spend time with Julien and his circle (particularly Brice). Five years later, the ambitious Lili has become a famous young actress living in Paris. She learns by chance that Julien is making a first film about their summer together in Brittany.

Transposing the action from 19th century Russia to an idyllic lakeside setting in Southern Brittany, Nina to Lili and Madame Treplev into the actress Mado, Miller has expertly created a stunning reflection of the movie business and the shared ties of life.

Miller has assembled a fantastic ensemble cast, whom he directs with a master hand - they bring to the film an aptness for character, sly wit and truth. *La Petite Lili* premiered in Official Competition at Cannes in 2003.

**Janis et John/ Janis and John de/ by Samuel Benchetrit**

France- 2003- *Comedy* - 105 min  
–*French with subtitles*

A bold, vibrant, riotously funny comedy, *Janis et John* has a lively, stylishly rendered sensibility, marking a confident screen debut by co-scripiter/ director Samuel Benchetrit.

Things are looking bad for Pablo Sterni (Sergi Lopez), insurance company employee, respectable father and husband, and small-time embezzler. For months he's been conning his client Mr. Cannon (Jean-Louis Trintignant), 'handling' a non-existent policy on Cannon's virtually undriven Aston Martin and pocketing the payments. Now the car has been wrecked, and Pablo owes 100,000 Euros. He's got two weeks to come up with the cash. If he fails, he'll lose everything.

Pushed to the limits, Pablo finds a desperate solution: the fortune recently left to his cousin Léon (Christophe Lambert), tragic 70's-casualty and obsessive fan of John Lennon and Janis Joplin. If only Pablo can convince Léon that his idols have returned from the dead and need money - his money - to record a new song that will bring about world peace...

Pablo recruits Walter (François Cluzet), a neurotic failed actor, and his own wife, Brigitte (the late Marie Trintignant, in one of her final screen performances), to play Joplin and Lennon. But before Pablo can profit from the situation, he begins to lose control of his 'creations'...

This genuinely funny and exquisitely cast ode to rock'n'roll, drugs, larceny, loneliness and love evokes the

suburban kitsch visuals of *American Beauty* and the surreal universe of *Being John Malkovich* – *Janis et John* is a genuine crowd-pleaser.

**Le Cœur Des Hommes / French Men de/ by Marc Esposito**

France- 2003 –*Comedy* - 100 min  
–*French with subtitles*

*French Men* is an inventory of life's many situations and dilemmas. As its title in French suggests, the film's ambition is to capture no less than the elusive thing of which a man's spirit is made, across an impressive span of emotions, revealed through glimpses of life. Director Marc Esposito's impressive debut feature concerns the lives of four friends, typical middle-aged Parisians, over a few short months. Their connivance is satisfying and often jubilant, with a multi-layered narrative that echoes Agnes Jaoui's delightful *The Taste of Others*.

Alex, Antoine, Jeff and Manu have been friends for 25 years, since playing for the same football team in the Paris suburbs. They see each other regularly, talking, arguing and laughing together. From humble origins, they have achieved success in their respective fields. Alex and Jeff have founded a small stable of popular sports magazines. Antoine is a gym teacher in a top-ranking Parisian high school. Manu runs one of the most frequented butcher's shops in town.

One spring, they are struck by a series of major events which bring them even closer together. Confronted by situations out of their control, they share personal secrets, listen, support, fight and question themselves and each other.

*This bittersweet romantic comedy is carried by the tremendous group of actors involved, especially the quartet of friends played by Gérard Darmon, Jean-*

*Pierre Darroussin, Marc Lavoine and Bernard Campan.*

**Corps à corps / Body to body de/ by François Hanss et Arthur-Emmanuel Pierre**

France- 2003- *Thriller* - 101 min – *French with subtitles*

*Corps à corps* is a dark and moody thriller, the first full-length feature from writer-directors Arthur-Emmanuel Pierre and François Hanss. It has all the classic hallmarks of suspense - evidence is unearthed stage by stage and tension is palpable, as characters start to feel unhinged, trapped, confused. The directors are playful and brave – and the tension generated is certain to play with your nerves!

Laura (the talented Emmanuelle Seigner - *Bitter Moon* and *Place Vendome*), a stripper in a seedy club of Marseilles, is short of hopes and dreams. On a whim, she decides to change her life and pursue Marco (Philippe Torreton), a devoted fan she has met at the club, who she hardly knows but who loves her deeply. He's rich and lives in a chateau, she is beautiful – it's just like a fairytale. Soon after leaving the club, Laura has a serious car accident, and loses her hearing. Her recovery is slow, but she soon returns to the chateau. But all is not what it seems with Marco – she begins to discover some very macabre secrets...he was once a surgeon specialising in organ transplant... and just what is going on in the back shed?

Torreton provides Marco with a depth of emotion, deeply in love with Laura but tortured to a point of mania by the fact that he might lose her. Emmanuelle Seigner's incredible performance is a model of ambiguity and humanity, in this powerful thriller in the great tradition of *Les Diaboliques*.

**Après vous / After you de/ by Pierre Salvadori**

France – 2003 - *Comedy* - 85 mn.- *French with English subtitles*

Smart, tart and winningly funny, *Après Vous* is a richly observed character-based dramatic comedy from writer/director Pierre Salvadori (*Les Apprentis*). A recent critical and box office smash hit in France, *Après Vous* boasts an expertly constructed script and an hilarious odd couple in Daniel Auteuil and comic phenomenon José Garcia.

Antoine (Daniel Auteuil) works in a bar in Paris. One evening on his way home from work, he intervenes when a man, Louis, (José Garcia) tries to commit suicide. He feels strangely guilty about having saved his life and constantly tries to help him and make things better. But no matter what Antoine does, he can't get Louis's mind off of Blanche (Sandrine Kiberlain), the woman of his dreams, his sole obsession, the reason why he wanted to die... Antoine decides to look for her, but doesn't let Louis know. However things don't happen the way he planned. Blanche isn't alone, and what's more, she's beautiful...

The film, which Salvadori co-authored from an original story idea by fellow writer-director Danielle Dubroux, is a wonderful comedy about friendship, love and betrayal. Auteuil again shows his skill at character comedy with the same quiet aplomb and timing he brings to his more serious roles, and Garcia confirms himself as an explosive comedy talent and inveterate scene-stealer.

**Les Invasions Barbares / The Barbarian Invasions**  
**de/ by Denis Arcand**

Canada / France - 2003 - 99 mins-  
*Dramatic Comedy – French with subtitles*

Celebrated Montréal writer-director Denys Arcand's 1986 film *Le Déclin de l'empire Américain (The Decline of the American Empire)* brought together a circle of verbally virtuoso intellectuals whose liberal ideals languished while they sought refuge from ennui in voracious sexual activity. It was one of the most successful foreign films of its period, preceding the director's international smash hit *Jesus of Montreal*.

Seventeen years later, his award-winning new film *The Barbarian Invasions* reunites the characters of *Le Déclin*, though prior knowledge of the characters is not necessary to appreciate the new tale. It powerfully and emotionally explores the relationship between the generations; above all, it is the story of estranged family members grappling to make sense of each other, and a genuine festival highlight.

Here, we find the sharp, salacious Rémy (Rémy Girard) facing mortality. Distressed, his ex-wife Louise (Dorothee Berryman) sends for their successful financier son Sébastien (Stéphane Rousseau). Father and son barely tolerate each other, but Sébastien grudgingly responds to the call of the mother who raised him alone. He organises his father's hospital stay and summons his old friends to his bedside. They arrive, bristling with wisdom and witticisms about love, family and death. And with them comes Nathalie (Marie-Josée Croze), daughter of one of Rémy's friends, who has her own demons.

*The Barbarian Invasions*, Arcand's second film in French since 1989, is an exemplary work concerning itself with universal themes of love, faith, family and death. Its intelligence, wit, cynicism and hope bristles in every scene. Arcand's vibrant script allows his captivating ensemble countless opportunities to shine.

The director shifts effortlessly between comedy and pathos as he wrestles with the faltering dreams of individuals and nations. *The Barbarian Invasions* was the winner of the prizes for Best Actress (Croze) and Script at the 2003 Cannes International Film Festival, and at press time received 2004 Academy Award nominations for Best Foreign Language Film and Best Original Screenplay.

**Le Mystere De La Chambre Jaune / The Mystery of the Yellow Room**  
**de/ by Bruno Podalydes**

France- 2003- Comedy thriller - 118 min -  
*French with subtitles*

*Who* tried to kill the beautiful Mathilde (Sabine Azéma) at the Château du Glandier?  
*What* was the assassin's motive? And *how* did they escape?

Wry, sophisticated and lucid, this is a captivating comedy-thriller that exploits and subverts the clichés of the whodunnit. With a sparkling cast and razor-sharp mis-en-scene, director Bruno Podalydes spins a dazzling, consummately stylish web of mystery and murder, reminiscent of *8 Femmes* and Robert Altman's *Gosford Park*.

A young reporter Joseph Rouletabille (Denis Podalydès), accompanied by his friend and photographer Sainclair (Jean-Noël Brouté), is on his way to the Château to solve the mystery of the yellow room. But there, the famous inspector Frédéric Larsan (Pierre Arditi) already suspects Robert Darzac, Mathilde's fiancé...

*The Mystery of the Yellow Room* is based on beloved source material written by Gaston Leroux (of *Phantom of the Opera* fame) and is a classic "locked room" mystery in which the investigators must figure out how a woman was attacked if there was no way in or out of her room at the time of the incident! An enormous box office success in France, work has already started on the sequel, *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* – with Podalydes in the director's chair.

**Nos Enfants Chéris/ Our Precious Children**

**de/ by Benoit Cohen**

France - 2003 –Comedy - 85 mn –French  
*with English subtitles*

*Nos Enfants Chéris/Our Precious Children* is Benoit Cohen's wholly entertaining comedy-drama about a group of 'thirty-somethings' who are thrown-in together one summer.

Roughly five years after they broke up, Martin (Mathieu Demy) and Constance (Romane Bohringer) unexpectedly meet in a supermarket; both are now married and literally have infants strapped to their chests. After they discover their families will be spending their summers in close proximity, the fiery, outgoing Constance suggests they should all get together. Without further notice, she arrives at Martin's summerhouse with her husband Arnaud (Mathias Mlekuz) and their two daughters – much to the consternation of Martin's wife, Ariane (Laurence Côte). Despite the abrupt arrival (it's almost a home invasion) and the subsequent appearance of three more of their mutual friends (plus one more toddler!), an uneasy and tempestuous order is attained as the seven adults and four children settle into a holiday routine.

At certain points, this sojourn seems idyllic – the odd group dines al fresco, splits up into smaller groups to go to the market or play badminton and shares

parenting chores. However, as the days pass, tempers grow short and a dense matrix of sexual desires and marital shortcomings threatens to send Martin and Constance chasing after the passion of their earlier relationship.

With his third feature, Benoit Cohen has created a dynamic and incisive comedy, exploring with tenderness the smaller things in life. Cohen visualizes complex relationships in ingenious ways. The film scrutinizes motives without being judgmental and is sexy without oversimplifying the issue of extramarital affairs.

**Vivre Me Tue / Life Kills Me**  
**de/ by Jean-Pierre Sinapi**

France – 2003 - Drama – 85mn – French  
*with English subtitles*

Paul and Daniel Smaïl are brothers, born in France of Moroccan descent; their grandfather was killed serving in the French army, and their father is a quiet and law-abiding "model immigrant". Despite this, Paul and Daniel carry their dual culture as a burden. Paul is intelligent and highly educated, but is full of repressed anger; he spends his time reading, dreaming and boxing. His younger brother Daniel, rebellious yet fragile, loves only two things: Paul, and bodybuilding – which he pursues relentlessly.

From internationally acclaimed director Pierre Sinapi (*Nationale 7/Uneasy Riders*), *Life Kills Me* is a strongly natural and moving portrayal of the 'next generation' of migrants – French-born and yet aware and ultimately shaped by their ethnicities – seeking to fit into the society they grew up in, despite always being somewhat removed from it.

Featuring blistering performances from Sami Bouajila (*Funny Felix, Artemisia*), Jaïl Lespert and Sylvie Testud (*Blessures Assassines*) *Life Kills Me* is a coruscating, uncompromising and affecting story of two brothers, of differences lived out through anger, and of the possibility of salvation.