



PRESSEDossier

LE PETIT LIEUTENANT

**Ein Film von Xavier Beauvois
Frankreich 2005**

In Koproduktion mit Why Not Productions – Studio Canal – France 2 Cinéma
In Zusammenarbeit mit Canal+ und TPS Star
Mit Nathalie Baye, Jalil Lespert, Roschdy Zem, Antoine Chappey und
Xavier Beauvois

110 Min. Dolby Digital, 1:1.85, Farbe

**César 2006 für Nathalie Baye als beste Hauptdarstellerin
Prix Europa Cinema in Venedig**

Kurzsynopsis:

Frisch von der Polizeischule kommt Antoine, ein junger Lieutenant, nach Paris in das Morddezernat. Unter den Fittichen einer ex-alkoholkranken Polizistin – beeindruckend und packend gespielt von Nathalie Baye - lernt er den harten Polizeialltag der französischen Metropole kennen. Voller Enthusiasmus stürzt sich Antoine in sein neues Metier. Seine Chefin, Caroline Vaudieu, nähert sich dem jungen Antoine an, der gerade mal so alt ist wie ihr verstorbener Sohn wäre.

Exzellent gemacht, spannend und realistisch, zeigt der Film mit den hervorragenden schauspielerischen Leistungen von Nathalie Baye, Jalil Lespert und Roschdy Zem ein Gesellschaftsportrait, das weit über das klassische französische Genre des Polizeifilms hinausgeht.

„ Meisterlich, stark, gerecht und aufwühlend“ (Le Parisien)

VERLEIH

Vega Distribution AG Helenastrasse 3 CH – 8034 Zürich
Tel: 044-384 80 60 Fax: 044-384 80 69 distribution@vegafilm.com
Informationen über den Film abrufbar unter:
www.vegafilm.com

Synopsis :

Antoine hat eben seinen Abschluss an der Polizeischule gemacht und sich kurzfristig entschlossen, eine Stelle bei der Police Judicière von Paris anzunehmen. Die Kommissarin Vaudieu kehrt nach zweijähriger Abwesenheit nach dem Tod ihres Sohnes und dem Abrutschen in den Alkohol zur Truppe zurück und leitet Antoinés Einheit. Bald darauf werden Vaudieu, Antoine und drei weitere Beamte mit einem mysteriösen Mord an einem Obdachlosen konfrontiert.

Für seinen vierten Film hatte sich Xavier Beauvois selbst zwei Bedingungen gestellt: Zum einen wollte er dem Genre des Polizeifilms Genüge tun, zum anderen den Polizeialltag möglichst realistisch darstellen. So beschloss der junge Regisseur, einem Polizeihauptmann mehrere Monate lang bei seinem Alltag zu folgen. Dieser Umstand erlaubte ihm auch den Zugang zu spezifischen polizeilichen Ermittlungen, und *Le Petit Lieutenant* ist das Ergebnis dieser persönlichen Erfahrung. Diese wird durch das Hervorheben von Details und durch die genaue Charakterisierung der verschiedenen Gestalten (Polizeibeamte, Ärzte, Richter, Geahndete, Säufer, Penner, Obdachlose) ersichtlich. Doch Beauvois Blickwinkel reicht über den dokumentarischen Aspekt hinaus: Was ihn an der Seite der Polizisten beschäftigt, ist der zermürbende Alltag, der das psychische Gleichgewicht der Beamten stark ins Schwanken bringt. Gerade ihre vorrangige Aufgabe, den «öffentlichen Frieden» zu bewahren, der ihnen allen doch als Grundmotivation dient, zwingt sie gleichzeitig in die Knie.

Der äusserst realistische Zugang des Filmes bietet keinen Platz für makellose Heldenfiguren, sondern zeigt das alltägliche Leben von Polizisten in Paris. Ein frischer Film, der seine Protagonisten nicht in das für dieses Genre üblich Rampenlicht stellt, sondern sehr stark auf emotionale und zwischenmenschliche Vorgänge setzt.

Pressezitate:

"Hier geht es darum, bloß nichts zu beschönigen. Polizeiarbeit zeigt Beauvois krass naturalistisch, das heißt: Während heute in jedem modischen Fernsehkrimi aufgedrehte Gerichtsmediziner am Seziertisch stehen und lustig in menschlichen Eingeweiden wühlen, sieht man - und vor allem: hört man - hier, wie grässlich die Alltagsarbeit der Ermittler ist. Es ist kein Spaß, Brustbeinknochen zu knacken."

Der Spiegel

In „Le petit Lieutenant“ geht es um „eine Unaufgeregtheit der Erzählung, die dieses Genre in Frankreich schon immer ausgezeichnet hat, und eine Verletzlichkeit der Figuren, die geradezu anrührend ist.“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

Bedingt durch einen tragischen Zwischenfall verlagert der Film die Perspektive auf die Kommissarin. Beschützerin ihrer Mitarbeiter und doch selbst Leidtragende, die sie ist, gelingt Beauvois vor allem mit dieser Figur ein so stimmiges wie illusionsloses Bild für die Not in diesem Beruf: Wie Ordnung wahren, wo man doch selbst schon nahe am Fallen ist. „*Der Standard*“

CAST

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| CAROLINE VAUDIEU..... |NATHALIE BAYE |
| ANTOINE DEROUÈRE..... |JALIL LESPert |
| SOLO..... |ROSchDY ZEM |
| LOUIS MALLET..... |ANTOINE CHAPPEY |
| NICOLAS MORBÉ..... |XAVIER BEAUVOIS |
| CLERMONT..... |JACQUES PERRIN |
| PATRICK BELVAL..... |PATRICK CHAUVEL |
| PÈRE D'ANTOINE..... |JEAN LESPert |
| MÈRE D'ANTOINE..... |ANNICK LE GOFF |
| L'ANGLAIS..... |MYERS BRUCE |
| JULIE..... |BERANGER ALLAUX |
| LOGEUSE..... |MIREILLE FRANCHINO |
| ALEX..... |YANIS LESPert |

CREW

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| REGIE..... |XAVIER BEAUVOIS |
| DREHBUCH..... |XAVIER BEAUVOIS, GUILLAUME BRÉAUD, JEAN-ERIC TROUBAT |
| DREHBUCHASSISTENZ..... |CÉDRIC ANGER |
| BILD..... |CAROLINE CHAMPETIER |
| SCHNITT..... |MARTINE GIORDANO |
| TON..... |JEAN-JACQUES FERRAN, EMMANUEL AUGEARD, ERIC BONNARD |
| AUSSTATTUNG..... |ALAIN TCHILLINGUIRIAN |
| SCRIPT..... |AGATHE GRAU |
| SCRIPT ASSISTENZ..... |HUBERT BARBIN |
| CASTING..... |STÉPHANE TOUITOU |
| CASTING STATISTEN..... |ESTELLE CHAILLOUX |
| KOSTÜME..... |MARIELLE ROBAUT |
| MASKE..... |FRANCOISE ANDREJKA |
| COIFFEUSE..... |JANE MILON |
| TECHNISCHE BERATUNG..... |DAVID BARBAS |
| AUFNAHMELEITUNG..... |CLAIRE LANGMANN |
| PRODUKTIONSLEITUNG..... |ISABELLE TILLOU |
| PRODUKTIONAUSFÜHRUNG..... |MARTINE CASSINELLI |
| PRODUZENT..... |WHY NOT PROCUCTIONS |

FILMOGRAPHIEN**XAVIER BEAUVOIS****SCÉNARISTE ET RÉALISATEUR**

2005 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT

2002 LE DERNIER VOL DU CONCORDE (Documentaire)

2000 SELON MATTHIEU

1995 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS MOURIR (Prix Jean Vigo
Prix du Jury Festival de Cannes)

1992 NORD

ACTEUR

1998 LE VENT DE LA NUIT de Philippe Garrel

1997 DISPARUS de Gilles Bourdos

1996 LE JOUR ET LA NUIT de Bernard-Henri Lévy

1996 LES AMOUREUX de Catherine Corsini

1995 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS MOURIR de Xavier Beauvois

1995 PONETTE de Jacques Doillon

1993 AUX PETITS BONHEURS de Michel Deville

1992 NORD de Xavier Beauvois

1992 LE CIEL DE PARIS de Michel Bena

SCÉNARISTE

1998 LE VENT DE LA NUIT de Philippe Garrel

NATHALIE BAYE

FILMOGRAPHIE DEPUIS 1981

2005 36, RUE DES ACACIAS de Martial Fougeron
 2005 LA CALIFORNIE de Jacques Fieschi
 2005 MICHOU D'AUBER de Thomas Gilou
 2005 NE LE DIS À PERSONNE de Guillaume Canet
 2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT de Xavier Beauvois
 2004 L'UN RESTE, L'AUTRE PART de Claude Berri
 2003 UNE VIE À T'ATTENDRE de Thierry Klifa
 2002 LA FLEUR DU MAL de Claude Chabrol
 2002 LES SENTIMENTS de Noémie Lvovsky
 2002 ARRÊTE-MOI SI TU PEUX de Steven Spielberg
 2000 BARNIE ET SES PETITES CONTRARIÉTÉS de Bruno Chiche
 2000 ABSOLUMENT FABULEUX de Gabriel Aghion
 1999 UNE LIAISON PORNOGRAPHIQUE de Frédéric Fonteyne
 1999 Coupe Volpi de la Meilleure Interprétation Féminine
 au festival de Venise
 1999 ÇA IRA MIEUX DEMAIN de Jeanne Labrune
 1999 SELON MATTHIEU de Xavier Beauvois
 1998 VENUS BEAUTÉ (INSTITUT) de Tonie Marshall
 1997 SI JE T'AIME PRENDS GARDE À TOI de Jeanne Labrune
 1997 PAPARAZZI de Alain Berbérian
 1996 FOOD OF LOVE de Stephen Poliakoff
 1995 ENFANTS DE SALAUD de Tonie Marshall
 1994 LA MACHINE de François Dupeyron
 1992 AND THE BAND PLAYED ON de Roger Spottiswoode
 1991 LA VOIX de Pierre Granier-Deferre
 1991 MENSONGE de François Margolin
 1989 UN WEEK-END SUR DEUX de Nicole Garcia
 1989 L'AFFAIRE WALLRAFF de Bobby Roth
 1989 LA BAULE-LES-PINS de Diane Kurys
 1988 LE ROI BLESSÉ de Damiano Damiani
 1987 EN TOUTE INNOCENCE de Alain Jessua
 1987 DE GUERRE LASSE de Robert Enrico
 1985 LE NEUVE DE BEETHOVEN de Paul Morissey
 1985 LUNE DE MIEL de Patrick Jamain
 1984 RIVE DROITE, RIVE GAUCHE de Philippe Labro
 1984 DÉTECTIVE de Jean-Luc Godard
 1983 NOTRE HISTOIRE de Bertrand Blier
 1983 J'AI ÉPOUSÉ UNE OMBRE de Robin Davis
 (César 1983 de la Meilleure Actrice)
 1981 BEAU PÈRE de Bertrand Blier
 1981 UNE ÉTRANGE AFFAIRE de Pierre Granier-Deferre
 (César 1982 du Meilleur Second Rôle Féminin)
 1981 L'OMBRE ROUGE de Jean-Louis Comolli
 1981 LE RETOUR DE MARTIN GUERRE de Daniel Vigne
 1981 LA BALANCE de Bob Swaim

JALIL LESPERT

FILMOGRAPHIE

2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT de Xavier Beauvois
 2004 LE PROMENEUR DU CHAMPS DE MARS de Robert Guédiguian
 2004 VIRGIL de Mabrouk El Mechri
 2003 L'ENNEMI NATUREL de Pierre-Erwan Guillaume
 2003 PAS SUR LA BOUCHE de Alain Resnais
 2002 LES AMATEURS de Martin Valente
 2001 L'IDOLE de Samantha Lang
 2001 VIVRE ME TUE de Jean-Pierre Sinapi
 2000 BELLA CIAO de Stéphane Giusti
 2000 INCH'ALLAH DIMANCHE de Yamina Benguigui
 1999 SADE de Benoît Jacquot
 1999 RESSOURCES HUMAINES de Laurent Cantet
 (César du Meilleur Espoir Masculin)
 1998 NOS VIES HEUREUSES de Jacques Maillot
 1998 UN DÉRANGEMENT CONSIDÉRABLE de Bernard Stora
 1997 LE CENTRE DU MONDE de Djibril Glissant
 1995 JEUX DE PLAGES de Laurent Cantet

ROSCHDY ZEM

FILMOGRAPHIE

2005 LA CALIFORNIE de Jacques Fieschi
 2005 INDIGÈNES de Rachid Bouchareb
 2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT de Xavier Beauvois
 2004 CAMPING À LA FERME de Jean-Pierre Sinapi
 2004 36, QUAI DES ORFÈVRES de Olivier Marchal
 2004 VA, VIS ET DEVIENS de Radu Mihaileanu
 2003 ORDO de Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa
 2003 TENJA de Hassan Legzouli
 2002 FILLES UNIQUES de Pierre Jolivet
 2002 CHOUCHOU de Merzak Allouache
 2002 MONSIEUR N. de Antoine de Caunes
 2001 BLANCHE de Bernie Bonvoisin
 2001 LE RAID de Djamel Bensala
 2001 MA FEMME EST UNE ACTRICE de Yvan Attal
 2000 BETTY FISHER ET AUTRES HISTOIRES de Claude Miller
 2000 SANSARA de Siegfried
 2000 CHANGE MOI MA VIE de Liria Bégéja
 2000 LITTLE SENEGAL de Rachid Bouchareb
 1999 L'ORIGINE DU MONDE de Jérôme Enrico
 1999 SAUVE-MOI de Christian Vincent
 1999 LA PARENTHÈSE ENCHANTÉE de Michel Spinoza
 1999 MA PETITE ENTREPRISE de Pierre Jolivet
 1998 STAND BY de Roch Stephanik
 1998 VIVRE AU PARADIS de Bourlem Guerdjou

1997 LOUISE (TAKE 2) de Siegfried
1997 ALICE ET MARTIN de André Téchiné
1997 À VENDRE de Laetitia Masson
1997 CEUX QUI M'AIMENT PRENDRONT LE TRAIN
de Patrice Chéreau
1997 VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE de Eric Rochant
1996 DE L'AUTRE CÔTÉ DE LA MER de Dominique Cabrera
1996 LA DIVINE POURSUITE de Michel Deville
1996 FRED de Pierre Jolivet
1996 LE PLUS BEAU MÉTIER DU MONDE de Gérard Lauzier
1995 CLUBBED TO DEATH de Yolande Zaubermann
1995 LE COEUR FANTÔME de Philippe Garrel
1995 EN AVOIR (OU PAS) de Laetitia Masson
1995 MÉMOIRES D'UN JEUNE CON de Patrick Aurignac
1994 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS MOURIR de Xavier Beauvois
1991 J'EMBRASSE PAS de André Téchiné

ANTOINE CHAPPEY
FILMOGRAPHIE

2005 INDIGÈNES de Rachid Bouchareb
2005 LA MAISON DU BONHEUR de Dani Boon
2004 CACHE-CACHE de Yves Caumon
2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT de Xavier Beauvois
2003 LES JOURS OÙ JE N'EXISTE PAS de Jean-Charles Fitoussi
2003 5x2 de François Ozon
2003 JE SUIS UN ASSASSIN de Thomas Vincent
2003 À CE SOIR de Laure Duthilleul
2002 LA MERVEILLEUSE ODYSSEE DE L'IDIOT TOBOGGAN de
Vincent Ravalec
2002 L'ENFANT DU PAYS de René Ferret
2001 JE RENTRE À LA MAISON de Manoel de Oliveira
2000 SELON MATTHIEU de Xavier Beauvois
1999 LILA LILI de Marie Vermillard
1999 LE BLEU DES VILLES de Stéphane Brizé
1999 LA LETTRE de Manoel de Oliveira
1998 CANTIQUE DE LA RACAILLE de Vincent Ravalec
1997 POUR RIRE ! de Lucas Belvaux
1997 VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE de Eric Rochant
1996 LE ROCHER D'ACAPULCO de Laurent Tuel
1996 CHACUN CHERCHE SON CHAT de Cédric Klapisch
1996 CAMÉLÉONE de Benoît Cohen
1994 J'AI PAS SOMMEIL de Claire Denis
1994 LE PÉRIL JEUNE de Cédric Klapisch
1994 PERSONNE NE M'AIME de Marion Vernoux
1993 DE FORCE AVEC D'AUTRES de Simon Reggiani
1993 LA NAGE INDIENNE de Xavier Durringer
1993 LES GENS NORMAUX N'ONT RIEN D'EXCEPTIONNEL
de Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa
1992 RIENS DU TOUT de Cédric Klapisch
1989 MONA ET MOI de Patrick Grandperret

JACQUES PERRIN
FILMOGRAPHIE SEIT 1980

2004 L'ENFER de Danis Tanovic
2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT de Xavier Beauvois
2003 LES CHORISTES de Christophe Barratier
2002 LÀ-HAUT de Pierre Schoendoerffer
2000 LE PACTE DES LOUPS de Christophe Gans
2000 SCÈNES DE CRIME de Frédéric Schoendoerffer
1998 C'EST PAS MA FAUTE de Jacques Monnet
1993 LES HIRONDELLES NE MEURENT PAS À JERUSALEM
de Ridha Behi
1993 MONTPARNASSE-PONDICHÉRY de Yves Robert
1993 L'UNIVERS DE JACQUES DEMY de Agnès Varda
1992 LES DEMOISELLES ONT EU 25 ANS de Agnès Varda
1992 L'OMBRE de Claude Goretta
1992 LE LONG SILENCE de Margarethe Von Trotta
1991 LES EAUX DORMANTES de Jacques Tréfouel
1991 RIEN QUE DES MENSONGES de Paule Muret
1990 AU NOM DU PEUPLE SOUVERAIN de Luigi Magni
1990 LA CONTRE-ALLÉE de Isabel Sebastian
1989 SOLO de Sandro Bolchi
1989 VANILLE FRAISE de Gérard Oury
1989 LA FUITE AU PARADIS de Ettore Pasculli
1988 CINÉMA PARADISO de Giuseppe Tornatore
1985 PAROLE DE FLIC de José Pinheiro
1984 L'ANNÉE DES MÉDUSES de Christopher Frank
1984 PAROLES ET MUSIQUE de Elie Chouraqui
1984 LE JUGE de Philippe Lefebvre
1982 L'HONNEUR D'UN CAPITAINE de Pierre Schoendoerffer
1981 LES QUARANTIÈMES RUGISSANTS de Christian de Chalonge
1981 LE SANG DU FLAMBOYANT de François Migéat

INTERVIEW MIT XAVIER BEUVOIS

Why did you choose the subject of police for this film?

Firstly, I wanted to try my hand at a genre film like a thriller. And the subject of alcohol isn't an easy one to tackle, so if you can put a subject like that into a thriller, you can dilute it... At first, I was interested in gangsters. I talked to a few, but I thought they were too paranoid. Prison turns them into complicated people. Then the cops told me good gangsters don't really exist anymore. All that's left is a few armed robbers and Russian pimps. Most crime is white collar now, and the days of the old-fashioned gangster are over. Now, everyone snitches on everyone else. So I spent a lot of time with the police on a day-to-day level. I didn't expect that it would be such an interesting job, but I really liked it and found it inspiring. I knew nothing about it – it was a complete discovery.

Was there anything that surprised you about the cops?

The everyday side of those guys is very normal compared to artists and people from the cinema world that I know. Cops are pretty straightforward and simple people, and they don't have that cowboy thing you see in films. They're normal people who drop their kids off at school before picking up their guns and going to work. But they see some pretty foul stuff – they're like society's dustbins in a way. So they all have a certain sense of humor, without which they couldn't survive – like doctors or war reporters - and they've all got interesting stories to tell. When I was writing the script, I was telling my friends about the experiences I had when I started with the police. I had the status of a low-ranking officer so I was discovering things through the eyes of a novice. Then I wondered why not describe what I was seeing and I had the idea to make my hero a guy just out of the academy who starts a new job and discovers everything. Then we could discover with him.

Why is the representation of the police in your film so different to what one sees on TV and in films in general?

The majority of people from TV series have never set foot in a real police station so they make things up, and it's all nonsense. The other day, I was watching a series and the police were coming out of the station with their 'police' armbands on like zombies. But police armbands are what you put on when you arrest someone, so you don't get mistaken for a criminal, whereas on a day-to-day basis, you want to be in plain clothes so you don't get recognized. So how could they all be coming out of the police station with their armbands on? People get inspired by films they've seen, films that were inspired by books, which were inspired by films. Because everyone is inspired by each other but nobody actually goes back to the source, everything ends up confused.

It was a luxury for me to go there, to go out for drinks, to eat, discuss, and chat to cops on the phone. All that time I spent with them helped me to understand the job. But to do that, you have to become a cop right away, otherwise you can't go anywhere with them. The thing is to immediately start dressing and talking like a cop so everyone thinks you are one, and you can join in their day-to-day business. Then you can try to grasp what it feels like to be a cop, how to behave and how to live.

During the preparatory phase, do you record or take notes?

No. I don't take notes; I have it all in my head.

Even for the autopsy scene?

You watch – there's no need to take notes. Then for the shoot, I wanted a perfect fake cadaver but that costs \$50-75,000. I didn't have the money, so since I couldn't film it, I only had the sound to demonstrate the horror of the thing. Before doing the autopsy, we chilled out a little so the humor at the start of the scene is very realistic. Then I filmed the face of the cop for whom it's routine, then the lieutenant's face – the same that I had worn during my first real autopsy, and that's where the scene hangs. It's very quickly done, in five shots: the joke, the disgusting noise, the shot of Roschdy Zem, the shot of Jalil Lespert, the report and that's it.

It's not sure the scene would have been more violent if you'd had your 'real' cadaver, if you hadn't had to settle for doing it with just the noise.

I used a pig for it: the forensic scientist was cutting up a pig. If the camera had tilted down a little, you'd have seen pork. If I hadn't done any autopsies, how could I have directed that scene? At one moment, the actor playing the forensic expert took the lungs, and threw them over to weigh them. I knew that it's not done like that, and that the dead have to be respected: you put things down gently, not throw them around like meat – we're not at the butcher's now. I was able to say no, and that we would shoot it again, that he should put them down more gently. Simplicity in this business is first and foremost going to ask people who actually do the job how they do it. But often I use the real people. For example, the translator in the film is a real Russian translator for the police. Why get bogged down in trying to find an actor who speaks Russian? You just have to win their trust and then you're off. Or, I use people from the crew. I really like being able to do things for them, and from time to time I slip them a bit part. The problem with bit parts is that you can't make a character come to life alongside a known actor in the same scene - the audience will just look at the actor. But on the other hand, they would be able to believe in an unknown. It's a terrible prospect for actors – it takes work away from them.

But your film then ignores the narrative codes of the 'cop movie'.

Filmmakers have no codes – you do what you want. But I have respected the logic of what I've seen. That's why I chose a trifling crime – in reality, there are lots of insignificant crimes, crimes for \$300, that aren't at all glamorous like in other films.

There is a certain disenchantment running through the film...

I'm always keen that my films reflect the state of society at the time. Young people are disenchanted, they don't know who to vote for, people don't understand anything, there's war, terrorist attacks and misery. You can't really see what's left to be invented because we've got everything – TV in our pockets, on our cell phones and everyone travels. More and more young people are starting smoking and drinking earlier and earlier because they don't believe in anything. I want a film to reflect the society at the time. If it changes, in 50 years' time, the film will still bear witness to the way society was at that time. In DON'T FORGET YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, I insisted on putting the date in the titles. And AIDS is still around.

LE PETIT LIEUTENANT is very explicit regarding violent acts towards foreigners.

Racism isn't just far-right politicians like Le Pen or De Villiers, but everyday actions that have real violent implications for foreigners. I was asked if I wasn't concerned that I'd be considered racist because in the film, the bad guys are Russian and not French. This is mainly because out of 100 people in police custody, 95% are foreign, and that's the truth. These are the people most in need who get into most trouble. It's logical. How can

I be criticized for being racist when the film sets out to expose racism?

The only moments that aren't violent are very short ones dealing with love or friendship.

Or drinking. For me, the bar is a very important place. That's where you see all kinds of people, and it's an obligatory stopping-off point for a filmmaker. Many things happen in bars: you meet actors there, have meetings, get together after a funeral, and celebrate many moments in life. In the Middle Ages, people met in cathedrals, and did their business there, chatted people up and dealt with their problems. The early days of theatre took place in cathedrals. Now it's in the local bistro. The big difference is that you can drink.

Twice, the film follows Vaudieu's visits to Alcoholics Anonymous.

When you want to stop drinking like she does, the fact of not drinking becomes an obsession. But you can't film inside people's brains, you can't show their permanent obsessive thoughts, so twice, these scenes remind you of the problem of alcohol.

The way you deal with alcohol is cold, without being indulgent but without condemning either.

You can condemn a vice but not a sickness.

Does the idea that you will eventually have recourse to drugs to be able to cope with life refer to alcohol or other drugs?

All societies throughout history have needed a coping mechanism to deal with life. In the depths of the Amazon rain forest, guys cut down trees, make an alcohol with the pulp and let rip with that. Everywhere people smoke crazy stuff – man has always found a means. I've always said that in Asterix, you could replace the magic potion with alcohol and it would be very believable – except that Obelix wouldn't be allowed to touch it because his parents would have been alcoholics. When I was talking to the factory workers from TO MATTHIEU, I realized they all needed something: you can't just do the same thing all day long if you're not a little high. War is the same – men get stoned before they fight. It's the same in the police – after having done an autopsy on a mother and her three children killed by hammer blows, the first thing you do is go to the bar over the road and have three brandies. Otherwise, you couldn't do it.

Why is our society so hypocritical regarding necessary drugs?

Everyone knows that everyone takes drugs. Everywhere and in all sports, even boules. It's just that you can't show it, it has to remain discreet, and anyone who isn't discreet about it, upsets it all. An alcoholic is someone who drinks as much as you do but whom you don't like.

Why did you make the 'petit lieutenant', Antoine (Jalil Lespert), such a tender, kind and naïve character?

I always saw him as a nice guy – the name 'petit lieutenant' is affectionate, you have to be drawn to him, otherwise you won't care when he dies. There are many likeable cops and it's difficult to get that across. They're not at all great clichéd idiots with moustaches and uniforms.

Most of the secondary characters are pretty vivacious. But the petit lieutenant holds back a little more, and doesn't have any apparent harshness.

He's just out of school so he won't have adopted the same kind of behavior as his colleagues yet, nor can he just be himself: you're judged and watched, you have responsibilities, you have a gun and you've just come out of school. He's like me when I was doing a film directing internship – even if I was quite a colorful character, it was pretty badly looked upon by the production managers. No, you have to play it low-key. After a year or two, he'd begin to feel a little more at ease.

The petit lieutenant finds it hard to just live his daily life, in his relationship with his wife.

He doesn't want daily life. I became a filmmaker because of films, because I don't want to spend my life in an office and because unexpected things happen in my business. Like with the police, who go to work in the morning and don't know what will happen a second later. That's great fun, and you can't put a price on it – you never know what you'll be doing on any given day – four tons of marijuana, a hold-up or nothing at all.

There are quite a few common elements between cops and filmmakers. We have access to forbidden places, we can go anywhere, places others can't.

The paradox is that you are passionate about real life but you escape it through cinema.

Yes, one critic talked about legal delinquency: having the right to do forbidden things, to have lots of privileges, to queue-jump. You feel privileged... but not a superman. It's pure curiosity. The autopsy I put in the film for example – it's fascinating, I always dreamed of having the chance to see that for once – you can't go through life without knowing what you look like inside. Not everyone can do it and I did it.

Vaudieu's character was originally going to be a man. What did you gain by giving the role to Nathalie Baye?

It brought tenderness. You are more emotionally involved and everything is more fragile than if it had been a man. I can no longer imagine the last scene of the film with a man in it. And a woman who drinks is always more tragic than a man.

The film is constructed in two parts, beginning with one character and ending on another.

I call that Vaudieu's taking control of the film. I begin with a young guy, the petit lieutenant, and everyone thinks the film is a thriller about him. And at the end, you wonder if it isn't a film about alcoholism, on the scars it has left on a woman.

Did you think the film would also be a self-portrait made up from several characters when you began?

At first, it was subconscious, and then I realized and explored it in more depth. To do a self-portrait partially through a female character is something I don't know if I'd have been able to do a few years ago.

You're working with Nathalie Baye for the second consecutive time after TO MATTHIEU. What do you like about the actress and about the woman?

What I really like about her - and that's why it really works with me - is that she's very strong, powerful, intelligent and energetic but there's something really fragile about her. I'm also really strong but have some pretty weak characteristics. I needed someone for this character who I could totally trust, and to whom I wouldn't be obliged to explain everything I wanted and everything I was doing. It went so well on TO MATTHIEU that I knew she would trust me and totally let herself go, and she does it with an intelligence that goes beyond intellectual discussions. It's more than just having things in common or brains that function on the same wavelength. It's exactly what happened in the film with all the actors, with Roschdy Zem, Jalil Lespert, Jacques Perrin, and Antoine Chappay: there were hardly any discussions on how to direct the actors. I had the feeling they'd understood everything. It's nice to feel that you've got a whole set thinking the same thing as you. The only danger was that often, we were pretty close to bursting out laughing, it was just a question of who would start it off: Chappay makes you laugh without even doing anything, Nathalie Baye is the first one to go off, and Roschdy Zem and Patrick Chauvel are great laughs too. I was totally in harmony with these actors.

What did Jalil Lespert bring to the petit lieutenant's character?

He brought his uprightness, his profoundly honest side, and the fact that you love him right away. I let Jalil get on with it because I felt he was into it instantly. When we shot the scenes at the police academy, he got there, put on his uniform and asked a real cop how it happens. A few minutes after, he'd say, "Ok, I understand", then he became the petit lieutenant right there and then, in front of the camera - because I had already started shooting. I don't think I directed him much - he fished around a little and got it all on his own. Then I insisted he took his ID card, armband, gun and handcuffs home during shooting... We had a good laugh.

To play a cop is a child's fantasy. How did you reconcile that fun with the rigors of the film?

You can still have rigor while having fun, it's not a problem. You can really have a laugh on set and shoot the most rigorous, most realistic shots. I can't shoot in permanent role-play, you have to have a laugh and the team has to have some fun. We're making movies, not working in a bank, so there's no question of sulking. When people are doing their job well, they have the right to crack jokes; they can do

what they like. It has to be rock'n'roll. On many sets, you get the feeling they're all treading really gently and that makes me stressed – I don't dare crack a joke or speak louder than a whisper. You have the feeling you're in a normal job, whereas I don't feel like I do a normal job. When I'm filming several days on the same set, I get the feeling that a routine is being established and that's no good.

There is a lot of you in the character played by Jalil, yet you seem very different to one another.

I feel closer to Vaudieu's character. For example, when the police chief tells her it's been three years and you're getting nowhere," and she replies "no, things better now". That could be me talking to my producer.

Initially, you weren't going to act in the film but you ended up taking the only bad role, the bigoted cop.

Actors hate standing around doing nothing. And in the petit lieutenant's crime squad, there are six or seven of them so one has to accept doing some fun stuff, and then doing walk-ons for the rest of the time. And then there's the problem of the fact they have trouble being assholes, saying racist stuff. For example, the Skeletor character has to do a racist joke but the friend playing the part didn't want to. For it to be realistic, it needed a character like the one I play. Cops aren't all good, you have to be realistic about that, and they aren't all angels. It needed someone to represent that side of things. In the start, I didn't want to act but then I really did, for the pleasure of having fun with them. Shooting for me is my leisure, my passion. I wanted to get into the film. Because I'd played the role of a cop in reality for several months, it was unthinkable not to act it in my film. For an actor, acting means having fun. It's fun to play cops and robbers like when you were young. Except that here, it costs several million dollars and you have real police cars, sirens and machine guns, extras, you get to block the streets and shoot ammo. You can make a rigorous film and have fun like a child at the same time.

Is the scene where the petit lieutenant goes along the corridor to the drug squad improvised?

That is one of the rare shots for which I hadn't planned the editing a long time in advance. It's a sequence shot, as I wanted to show the length of the corridor because it's an initiation. It kind of symbolizes the petit lieutenant's dream – and there's only 30 more meters of corridor to go to reach it; it's like being born again. At the end, he'll be a real cop, he'll raise his glass and let go, there are drugs, drink, jokes, and he'll be one of the gang. In that scene, I only used real cops. I simply said to them: "you've done this lots of times, you often have little parties when you nab some dope. And often you welcome the kids just out of the academy. Well just do the same thing." And in two takes, it's in the can if you can explain it as simply as that.

Is all their dialogue improvised?

Yes, they made it all up. And I get that right away. I de-stress them; try to make them laugh so it's like time out for them. That's my way of directing, doing it without them realizing. You have to perform when the camera is rolling and definitely not get worked up about it beforehand. The proof is that it works: these guys had never acted in their lives but they made up the dialogue and it's good. I find it increasingly

easy to work in this way, except with theatre actors. With them I have a hard time. Like Alain Delon, I believe there are two kinds of actor, and I can't stand the theatre and theatre actors. They do too much, they're not the characters, they just play the characters. There's no common ground. I want people to be the characters; I don't want them to learn their lines before, but on the same morning, in make-up. It's a relaxed way and also a very well-thought out way of working.

You are continually juggling fiction and reality. Are there times when this doesn't work?

No, it always works. When you put a real Polish homeless person opposite Nathalie Baye, it works really well, but he doesn't understand anything that's happening to him - he sleeps outside and then suddenly, he's on a set. In this case I tried to relax him because he was trembling. He was afraid to perform and I asked him if he wanted a drink. Then I had to stress him out a little because he's supposed to be afraid in the film.

I did some tests before, and saw several possibles. Many could have been very good because these people act in life. When you are sad but you still tell jokes, when you lie, when you want to seduce someone, you are acting.

If you know how to do that in life, you're capable of reproducing it in front of a camera. But no theatre actor made up to play a homeless person could do it as if they'd spent 25 years in the street, begging and drinking.

Impossible to have those teeth and that look – it's too difficult. You can't imitate a life of suffering.

To get what I want, I always apply the logic of least effort. To riddle a car with bullet holes for example, what's the point in messing around with getting a special effects guy? That'd take half a day. I get a car and a real gun, stand next to the camera and get all the crew out of the way of any ricochets. Alone on set, I shoot the car. It's done in 15 seconds! It's an example – you have to find the most pragmatic and simple solution, always doing things is as naturally as possible.

Talking about minimum effort, if you want to film cops going to a baptism, film a real baptism. You ask the family if they don't mind, and often they're happy – there's Nathalie Baye and Roschdy Zem and you tell them their baptism's going to be shown on 200 screens. Then it's a real baptism and you film it in a reportage style, with your actors in it. Then you think you'd really like to film the police academy but that would need 650 extras with two costumes apiece... Why not ask the police to let me put my actor amongst real cops in a real ceremony? Do it all for real. And that's it, done.

The only things I couldn't get were the corridors of the courthouse, and going into the judge's office. Some asshole stuck a bomb in front of the Indonesian embassy, and the terrorism threat level went to red. Filming was forbidden. Now it's getting even better than documentary where the criminals' faces are blurred, the cops are blurred and often the houses too – you might as well make a radio program.

When you are put someone who has never been in movies like the guy who plays Kaminski face to face with Natalie Baye, do you know it's going to work?

No, because I'm not sure he'll come to the shoot. To find him and the others, I contacted a charity that offers shelter to homeless people. They sent us a few people and I did tests and asked them to come back, partly to see if they'd be on time. They were given cell phones so we could get in touch with them but you can't control these people. You don't know how it's going to go, it's a big gamble. You could film two days with a guy who, on the third day, goes AWOL. But I think it's worth the risk. And besides, you control the mood on set, the people have to enter my bubble, the only thing in it is me, it's my world. Everybody quickly understands the relaxed mood; you give them a little joint, have a little drink... It's a very instinctive atmosphere. Many people off-set thought I didn't do anything on this film; I had everything so under control.

It's like you are working with a family, often with the same people. Is that to put you at ease?

I've wanted to work with Roschdy Zem and Antoine Chappey again for a long time. It's also to protect me: not all technicians are very talented, so if you find some who are, you don't risk letting them go. You have to limit the risks and protect yourself totally. On this film, I was protected with the technicians, the actors and the script. After that, it's improvisation and there, you have to be a real gambler.

Your way of filming is anchored in the original principles of cinema, as if you have total confidence in it.

Cinema saved my life, so I have boundless confidence in it - I love this job. It's not even a job, it's my fix. When I think about my childhood, about where I came from, and about what I could have ended up doing there... It was unthinkable; someone had to get me out of there. When I was 18, I left home, and it was the cinema that said to me: "Come on, your life's going to be a bit more fun, you're going to travel," like a fairy godmother that came to get me.

You sought it too.

Yes, and I want to give as much as possible back, by making films with an even more important message, and even more rigor. It's also about respecting the viewer. If people make the effort to spend money, to take their kids to see your film, it mustn't be the same thing as on the TV, it has to be better.

I got into cinema fairly quickly. I started to go a lot on Wednesdays when I was boarding in Calais, and then my parents gave me a VCR. At the weekend, I'd watch four or five films. I devoured all the Jean-Paul Belmondos, thrillers, war films, everything available. And then I decided that's what I wanted to do. You see all those names on the credits, it's not just Delon but lots of people, so it can't be as inaccessible as all that. Then there was the impact of Claude Chabrol's *M LE MAUDIT*, explained by Jean Douchet at the Calais cine-club, when I realized that cinema wasn't just entertainment but such an intelligent, brilliant, complete and fascinating art form that encompasses so many things: comedy, theatre, architecture, dance, painting... I couldn't do anything else.

An art that didn't intimidate you?

No. You do your first film at 23 and you have no idea. In any case, how do you know if you're any good at a job if you don't do it? It's like if you wondered if you were a good driver without ever getting in a car – how do you know until you have your license? As for the weight of the history of film, that excited me. Each time I try to make a slightly more complicated film, to set the bar a little higher. It's like cars – you buy a better one each time if you can.

Your self-portrait through the characters of LE PETIT LIEUTENANT brings together Antoine's greedy naivety and Vaudieu's resigned wisdom.

I try to reconcile the two in life, trying to find a balance. Since I made DON'T FORGET YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, I've grown up. I've traveled a lot, and seen many cultures, I have children who have grown up too, and I've lived through painful things. That state of global understanding of the world, politics, the mafia and all the rest – is pleasant, pleasant yet scary at the same time.

How can you stay honest and faithful to your vision here, when most people have to select, to make concessions or kowtow to others?

It requires a little effort – you have to find the producer and the people who will trust you so you can do what you like. I found the producer, and now we've made three films together.

Is it your confidence that enabled you to make this film without a single note of music?

A film without music is quite rare – normally you have to use it. Before the shoot, I was asked what I was going to use for music and I said I didn't know and that I'd have to listen to the film, it has a soul, and I'd have to listen to the actors and technicians, but mostly to what the film says. Then I decided to gamble on not using any. When I flip out, when I walk down the street, I don't have a string quartet hanging around my ankles. Why is it when people flip out in a film, they have an orchestra following them?