



presents

GEMMA BOVERY

A film by
Anne Fontaine

Based on the graphic novel 'Gemma Boverly' by
Posy Simmonds

99 min., France. 2014

In French and English with English subtitles

Press Materials:

<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/gemmaboverly-press>

Official Site:

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SYNOPSIS

In this vibrant seriocomic re-imagining of Flaubert's literary classic *Madame Bovary*, life imitates art in uncanny ways when earthy British beauty Gemma Boverly (Gemma Arterton) and her furniture restorer husband Charles (Jason Flemyng) move to a charming ramshackle old farmhouse in the very same Norman village where the novel was written a century earlier. Their welcoming neighbor, local baker and Flaubert expert Martin Joubert (Fabrice Luchini) becomes entranced with Gemma and sets out to be her guide and mentor to her new surroundings. It doesn't take long before he is drawing parallels between the literary and real life woman, while he insinuates himself into her life.

As reality sets in on the fantasy of rural French domesticity, the Boverlys' marriage begins to fray and Gemma finds herself at loose ends. She soon catches the eye of a handsome young playboy and when her magnetic ex suddenly reappears, she finds herself at a crossroads and seems to be fulfilling Joubert's worst fears that her destiny is linked to that of Flaubert's doomed heroine. Director Anne Fontaine's (COCO BEFORE CHANEL) clever adaptation of Posy Simmonds' graphic novel *Gemma Boverly* is at once a cheeky literary mash-up, a sensuous romance, a witty feminist commentary and a heady celebration of French provincial life.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Life imitates art in uncanny ways when Gemma Boverly (Gemma Arterton) and her husband Charles (Jason Flemyng) move to a charming old farmhouse in the very same Norman village where Flaubert's classic novel *Madame Bovary* was written a century earlier. Local baker and Flaubert expert Martin Joubert (Fabrice Luchini) becomes entranced with Gemma; it doesn't take long before he is drawing parallels between the literary and real life women. Gemma catches the eye of a handsome local playboy, and when her magnetic ex suddenly reappears, she seems to be fulfilling Joubert's worst fears that her destiny is linked to that of Flaubert's doomed heroine. Director Anne Fontaine's clever adaptation is at once a cheeky literary mash-up, a sensuous romance, a witty feminist commentary and a heady celebration of French provincial life.

LOGLINE

In this cheeky literary mash-up of Flaubert's classic novel *Madame Bovary*, life imitates art in uncanny ways when earthy British beauty Gemma Boverly and her husband move to the Norman village where the novel was written a century earlier.

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE FONTAINE

How did you discover Posy Simmonds's graphic novel *Gemma Boverly*?

I knew Posy Simmonds through (her graphic novel) *Tamara Drewe* and immediately felt a connection to her *Gemma Boverly*: the word play on this twisted, female literary archetype seemed promising and fun. When I read the novel, the characters intrigued and touched me; I felt their comedic potential and human depth and was seduced by the author's tone, which was somewhere between dark comedy and great irony. I was also aware of the improbability of the meeting between a baker and this modern young Englishwoman who ends up lightening his life, while he had been convinced he had his libido under control and believed himself to effectively be in sexual retirement! Here he is, getting all worked up about the link between a fictional character – Emma Bovary – and the real Gemma Boverly. This fetish side seemed extremely attractive for a future scene in the film. I tried to stay faithful to the novel, while still taking liberties. In the novel, Martin, the narrator, is rather indirectly involved in the story, whereas in the film he is given a bigger presence and greater freedom.

You co-wrote the script with Pascal Bonitzer and Posy Simmonds.

What struck me in Posy Simmonds's style of writing is the need to keep a keen sense of comedy, because there's a side of "French Woody Allen" in this depressed baker whose imagination and uniqueness come from a funny place. Meeting Pascal, I told myself that his sense of humor was mixed with despair, and when he is in character, for me, these two identities cannot be separated. The character of Martin is living vicariously through a love that's forming for a girl with incredible sensuality – who doesn't look at him as a desirable man, but as a neighbor and local baker. I thought that the tone and the spirit were essential to express the humor of this discrepancy. As soon as we started writing, Pascal and I had quickly developed a common empathy for the subject, and then Posy joined the team for the English dialogue. It was an invaluable collaboration because sometimes we "betrayed" her writing, and when we spoke to her about it she had the flexibility to welcome our suggestions. It was interesting therefore to have her reactions to situations that we had invented and which were certainly inspired by the original story, but which didn't necessarily stick to the comics. For example, we understood that for the film, the narration had to be more immediate and more direct than the graphic novel, which is, by nature, more literary.

How did the characters develop?

We were hoping that the baker's story would be in the foreground, and the whole plot would unfold through his eyes – unlike the book, which is told from multiple points of view and could have caused confusion in the film. *Gemma Boverly* remains fairly true to the original character as a cross between a contemporary Madame Bovary and a modern-day fickle English girl who doesn't know how to express her feelings nor realize the effect she has on men, even just by looking at them. In the novel, she sometimes comes across as unfriendly, which we changed to make her sweet and generous. Of

course she manipulates men, but almost unconsciously, making her less calculating and more like Madame Bovary, who expects something from love. In the book, Charlie is almost a neutral character, without any charisma, but I wanted to make him more charming. As for Patrick, from the compulsive seducer that he is in the novel, we chose to make him a stranger, murkier, more poisonous character, allowing for a more ambiguous outcome to the story.

The baker is taken for a deus ex machina, who enjoys pulling the strings...

Yes, because he is a storyteller, halfway between a director and a writer, who works with real life. At the market, in front of his bakery, he confides in the audience that he's like a "a director who has just called action!" He sees the young chateau owner, that he had himself introduced to Gemma, coming to meet him; then he imagines their conversation aloud, and his "creatures" repeat his own lines, as if he were the author of their lives. Of course, this troubles him. Deep down he knows he is too involved in their intimacy and his imaginings.

Which doesn't prevent him from suffering, on the contrary even.

Watching the house across the street through the window, or at the market, he analyzes the relationship between the local chateau owner and Gemma. He realizes that his introduction has created a relationship that brings him suffering. Although he has clearly experienced his own great love in the past, it is also clear that his life has become mundane since he took over the bakery. Gemma's arrival shakes things up for him. It's quite immediate and gradually he fetishizes their relationship, due to this young woman's powerfully evocative name. His passion is twofold: she represents a parallel world of what could be and displaces him by being so irresistible. When he says that ten years of sexual peace have been eliminated at once by a mere "insignificant gesture," he reveals his hypersensitivity. And as happens so often, unrequited love hurts and is difficult to face up to.

However much a "director" Martin is, he cannot avoid the unavoidable...

There's a permanent irony in the way Gemma is, unwittingly, following in the footsteps of Emma Bovary... it says a lot about fate and the cruelty of it. And despite everything, the reality of the situation escapes the all-knowing Martin, which makes him all the more human. When he states that "life imitates art" he has no other choice than to let things happen without having control over them. The links between fantasy, fate and reality fascinate me and create a surprise effect that distances this film from a classic romantic comedy.

You could be led to believe that the character of Martin has been custom-made for Fabrice Luchini...

And yet an English woman invented him! But when I read the graphic novel, I immediately imagined him as Fabrice Luchini, not just as an actor but as a being that

has Flaubert in his blood, deep within him. Given that I knew him well, and that I have so often talked to him about Madame Bovary as a real person, I had the feeling that this role had been waiting for only him. I therefore wrote the script, telling myself that there was a quite strong possibility that he would like the character, and that he would be touched by, like me, this literary obsessive, leading a peaceful life as a baker until this fantasy meeting transforms his own reality. It was great to have an actor like Fabrice Luchini, as he has the understanding of the fantasy and of the gap, but also pleasure and love of words, which corresponds to the same subject of the film. I was so lucky to have such an actor, as only Fabrice could pass off this obsession for Madame Bovary as something utterly natural. The process of living in the body of this man – and his madness as well – materializes as soon as he utters the words, in his unique way, “Gemma Bovary.” It was especially more important that it be about a character that observes other peoples’ lives through a window and that places him in the position of a voyeur who invents stories. As I found that the character was close to a director, there was a very strong hidden link between us.

Which is rarely seen in cinema, in this light.

I wanted to make him beautiful; I was keen to show off his piercing green eyes - as if he’s playing a character that seems to have a rather vague sexual life, I found it interesting to give him some physical charm. The fact that he’s more mature now really suits him: there’s intensity and a seriousness that has been etched on his face.

How do you direct him?

I always experiment with him, always in a playful way. We look for different tones, we go too much in one direction, we try again and again, and then we backtrack to where we started. You have to find the exact tone by asking how far can we take it? I never block him in by placing him in a constricting frame; we film nine or ten takes and then I tell him “now, forget what I told you, do whatever you want”. But what counts above all is the absolute confidence that we share.

Did you think of Gemma Arterton after watching *Tamara Drewe*?

I had seen Gemma in *Tamara Drewe*, and in a way I had told myself that because she had already played a character written by Posy Simmonds, this role wouldn’t interest her. So I met with some English actresses with one objective in mind; they had to be sexy when speaking French. But none of those I’d met with had aroused anything in me. Eventually I met Gemma Arterton, and as soon as she opened the door and read me a little extract in French that she had written, I knew that I was dealing with an atomic bomb; she gives off an energy that means you cannot help but love her. She has a warm and generous beauty, and doesn’t distance herself from you, so much so that her doubts and hesitations are attributable to her youth and her coolness and not her acting. I didn’t even need her to do a test; she came to France and spent three months really immersed in the local culture before working on the character. To avoid her coming across as too rigid when speaking French – which can be a risk when actors

have to learn a foreign language – I asked her to move constantly and to be in the action. To finish, she turned up extremely prepared on set, telling me that the character was close to her.

And for the other roles?

For the couple of Fabrice and Gemma, I chose actors who would gravitate around them. The secondary characters introduce the idea of these English people who consider France as a green haven, and the French peoples' often-suspicious impression of the English. Even if it's not the overriding theme of the film, this enriches the primary difference. I was very happy to trust Elsa Zylberstein in the role of a woman with strange phobias and unusual notions about taste and food. We wrote much of her dialogue together, and I was surprised by her ability to be funny without being ridiculous. She does really well personifying Posy Simmonds' spirit, whose characters are sometimes at the limit of outrageousness, while still remaining endearing.

Isabelle Candelier, who I had loved in Bruno Podalydes' films, has a thankless role in appearance, but very funny and effective; she plays someone who is a bit stiff, her feet firmly on the ground, both exasperated and indulgent, faced with a husband locked in his own interior world, and they complement each other. The family is completed by Kacey Mottet-Klein, who was great in *Gainsbourg* and Ursula Meier's films *Home* and *Sister*, and whose uniqueness is surprising. For Hervé, the young lord from a weak family embodying a kind of sex toy, I chose Niels Schneider after discovering him in the films of Xavier Dolan, where I noticed that he had the face of a cherub; between the statue that is broken and himself, there is a kind of connivance in his fragility. Edith Scob, who plays his mother, and whom I have always loved, gives a strange, comic dimension to the film, almost supernatural. And Pascale Arbillot made friends with us just to come give the final wink. For the English characters, I had picked out Mel Raido, who plays Patrick, from a British television series: I loved his strange, poisonous side, which creates a certain tension. And I chose Jason Flemyng, who I had seen in many films, because he personifies kindness and generosity and seems like a good man. It was especially more emotional as he's a man who is wronged by everyone. I didn't, however, know Pip Torrens, whose conservative middle-class characterization put a smile on Fabrice Luchini's face throughout filming.

The film exudes an extraordinary sensuality.

I thought that eroticism should be found in the scenery and sounds of Normandy, but also in Martin's profession: as he says himself, to knead dough brings about a great calm in him – it's his "yoga". When he teaches Gemma how to use the kneading machine, when she's pressed up against him, there is a very strong form of eroticism that emanates from his breath, his movements. I really loved the idea of this artisan baker contrasted with his extreme creativity. Bread has allowed Martin to reconcile with something from nature after having had a brilliant, intellectual career. As the two characters do not have a direct sexual relationship, we have to perceive the sensuality elsewhere.

The lighting is warm and comforting. How did you work with the director of photography, Christophe Beaucarne?

This is the third film that I've made with him, alongside *Coco before Chanel* and *Perfect Mothers*. So it's a very important collaboration for me. We had talked of having this warm and enveloping light, without it being too boring and formal. We wanted natural, enhancing lighting so it's truthful, but that it's reinterpreted, in relation to the emotion of each scene. So we chose to film at the time of year when the Normandy countryside is at its most beautiful. It was especially important to give a sunny side to the film since the subject matter is quite dark.

You film with a large frame size...

We filmed in Scope, but the camera is often projected, which gives an impression of fluidity and sensuality, without needing any big camera movements. In reality, I thought of the film through Luchini's eyes; even when he's not in frame, we still have the feeling that there's someone permanently in the background. And that's what produces, I think, a certain mystery and a certain tension. Besides, I wanted the camera to shift smoothly between Martin's dreamlike visions - such as the hallucination in the cathedral or the ballroom scene in another time - and reality. So it means that we're always in his head.

This is the second time that you've worked with Bruno Coulais, after *My Worst Nightmare*.

I thought it would be interesting to alternate an English melody, just for Gemma, and another piece of music for the film itself. Bruno and I were looking for a pure, graceful, feminine voice and it was the female singer of the band Moriarty who seduced us. Bruno composed the music in advance to find a particular tone, both lively and tongue in cheek, without being psychoanalytical or romantic. What I liked is that it's a score that forges ahead, but isn't representative nor over the top in relation to the action. It's a real pleasure to work with Bruno, who knows how to be flexible without renouncing his own universe.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FABRICE LUCHINI

This is the second time you've worked with Anne Fontaine.

And both times she has placed me acting opposite astounding creatures: Louise Bourgoïn in *La Fille de Monaco*, and the extraordinary Gemma Arterton in this film. Anne is a very original filmmaker; she's never in the societal pathos. For me, because of the abandon she shows on set, because of her unwillingness to master, *Gemma Boverly* is her best film.

What was your first impression after reading Gemma Boverly?

I liked its uniqueness; it wasn't about painting a true picture of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*... but rather highlighting the links between the book and contemporary fiction. To smuggle Flaubert out of the past, like Molière in *Cycling with Moliere*. It's the same kind of thing: we seek out old texts to breathe new life into them.

Anne Fontaine - and to a certain extent Posy Simmonds in her comics - had the great idea of foregoing a direct interpretation of Flaubert. She went for the complete opposite approach of Chabrol [who adapted the novel in 1991].

It's almost like a police investigation...

Exactly. The audience is trusted to follow police business about beauty, power and Flaubert-like spirit. From a visual point of view, what's great is that the character I play watches the novel played out right before his eyes whereas we are not in the book. We are so taken in with this sensuality that we don't look for Flaubert references. We are in Flaubert.

Your character, Martin, himself becomes this literary character.

And in becoming this, he reveals to us the beings that are around him. In this sense, I almost feel that the film has surpassed us all. Anne Fontaine included.

Had you read the graphic novel by Posy Simmonds?

I read it after having already discovered the script and found it too to be very original. But I can't judge, I'm not a comic book expert.

The first scene, when Gemma comes into the bakery and gets very excited by the variety of breads on display, is really incredible. She is literally in ecstasy looking at all these breads on display; she practically orgasms! And that's what makes this scene so sublime. As soon as she enters the shop, we're someplace else. "What is beauty?" asks Stendhal, "it's a promise of happiness." This woman who comes into the bakery is a promise of happiness.

Martin falls in love with her instantly.

When he passes by her in the Normandy countryside while she's picking flowers, they have an incredibly boring conversation, she waves goodbye, and we can see that Martin doesn't have interest in his eyes. And there, thanks to the skills of Anne Fontaine and Pascal Bonitzer, the screenwriters, we hear Martin say "and with this insignificant gesture, tens years of sexual peace was over."

A statement confirmed when he explains to her how to knead dough.

A steamy scene... one of immense sensuality.

Literary amateur and literally mad about Flaubert, Martin missed having a career in publishing; he has rather exhausted his options and at his wits' ends.

Yes, he ends up going back to his father's bakery because he no longer had a job. But he has the amazing ability to see everything in a literary way.

Paradoxically, it's while kneading dough that he finds his taste for poetry again: "he is, he says, the crust in life."

Yes, there's a very happy link between baking bread and sensuality. The lighting that Christophe Beaucarne, the director of photography, creates adds even more to the mixture.

Immersing himself so fully into literature, he becomes this Flaubert-like character... which sets the stage for other Flaubert-like characters.

He's a director! Exactly! That's the word Anne Fontaine has been using since the beginning to describe Martin. He also has a little detective side: he is investigating this girl.

He could adopt Flaubert's statement: "Madame Bovary is me."

Absolutely!

What state of mind were you in during filming?

I come across as someone in a kind of idiotic daze; you mustn't be looking to master the whole role, because the less risky, the more malleable you are. We're like bread dough in the hands of the director. It's the opposite of working in theatre. For cinema, you need a certain happy idiocy – interestingly.

How did you prepare for the character of Martin?

Anne Fontaine wanted to make me do work experience in a bakery and I thought,

“She’s turning into Stanislavski! Well, she’s just going to have to get another actor because I’m not going to spend the next fortnight watching some guy make bread!” Anne came round to my opinion. There’s this great horse trainer who I’d dealt with during the filming of *Perceval le Gallois* who told me one day “ a great characteristic of horses is that the second they realize someone’s going to mount them, they know whether or not they’re a good rider. If they’re bad, they determine immediately the moment when they’re going to make him fall off. But Gerard Philippe was such a good actor that he could make the horse believe he knew how to ride it.” Very modestly, I managed to convince people that I was a good baker!

Gemma Arterton fully embodied the role of Gemma.

The woman is sublime. An exceptional actress. She has a kind of perfection and the intelligence of a great British actress. Throughout the two months of preparation, we hardly spoke but she fully understood me. As soon as we moved into production, we clicked through mutual respect and admiration for each other.

Speaking of the shoot...

It was a particularly happy time. I would walk for hours in the countryside before shooting - like a Flaubertian hero, as well as Martin in the film. Then I would arrive on set and didn’t feel like I was acting but rather transmitting my passion for Flaubert.

Gustave Flaubert wrote a lot about the middle classes. In *Gemma Boverly*, it is well-off English people living abroad in Normandy who take it for their own.

You’re right: these English are kind of being given the finger. The role played by Elsa Zylberstein is great as the ultimate caricature. The same goes for the British actor (Pip Torrens) who plays her husband. There was already this kind of shift in Posy Simmonds’ work.

To come back to Flaubert and his vision of the bourgeoisie, I would like to say that he was happy just showing what he observed: he was fascinated by silliness. But we don’t know what Flaubert truly thought and in that way he is a unique writer. His obsession was not to write about himself. He repeats this in much of his correspondence: it’s important not to write about yourself. You have to immerse yourself in the piece, like God in His creation, and be there all the time but never noticeable. The great designers have this in common, that they can go beyond their personal lives. Proust is brilliant because he never wrote about his own childhood, he just wrote about childhood. Celine is brilliant because he never wrote about his own misery, but about misery in general. Anything written about your private life is disgraceful.

Will *Gemma Boverly* make Flaubert more popular?

What is *Madame Boverly* today? A compulsory read for students in order to pass their Baccalaureate? Thanks to *Gemma Boverly*, they can discover a strong emotional force

of crazy desires that confront true feelings and thoughts. It could modernize their view of the author.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEMMA ARTERTON

What attracted you to this project?

I must admit that when I got the script initially, I wasn't sure if I wanted to take part in this project because I'd already filmed *Tamara Drewe*, which is a film adaptation of another Posy Simmonds' novel. The style of it was similar, but the main character was very different, and there was something about her that attracted me more: I see more of myself in Gemma than in Tamara. Besides, the story takes place in France and I was pleased at the prospect of learning French! Not forgetting that Anne Fontaine is a director of great sensitivity and I had really wanted to film under her direction.

Had you heard of the graphic novel by Posy Simmonds?

I knew that the novel existed, but I'd never read it. So I had read the script first, and then the novel, which is extremely brilliant. Besides, the film moves a bit away from the book as the main parts occur in London, which is the opposite of the film. Posy is especially great, she provides lots of detail and is very precise in the characterization of her characters. On the other hand, what interested me was that in the novel Gemma is a lot more aggressive, more bad-tempered and frankly not very nice. When you're filming a movie, you can't portray such a character as nobody would want to see it! I wanted to be able to identify with the character.

Did Flaubert's heroine, Emma Bovary, help you to better understand your character?

Absolutely. It allowed me to get a grasp of the character's identity – her idleness – Madame Bovary doesn't have a lot to do in life, and Gemma is a modern day Madame Bovary. What was equally useful were the scenery, the society and traditions that were painted in the book, and that you still find in Normandy today. It corresponds to this romantic idea of Normandy that English people have, and it's very much exactly in this state of mind that Gemma and Charles arrive in the region.

How could you depict Gemma? Is she aware of being this young woman of ravishing beauty?

Not at all! She doesn't have any self-confidence at all. When she was in London, she was only a normal, young girl who was nothing out of the ordinary, and she had hardly any experience with men. When they settle into Normandy, she lights up, and in my opinion, as an English woman, who is the opposite of those around her, she comes across as exotic, while she herself doesn't feel the least exotic!

Talk to me about the relationship between Gemma and Fabrice Luchini's character.

At the start, she doesn't know anyone, and this man helps her to heal a bit: she sees him everyday when she goes to buy her bread, and she finds him kind, although a bit strange. But when you don't speak the same language, you can't escape from misunderstandings, and that's also what happened between Fabrice and me because at the time I didn't speak French very well. It's a bit similar between Gemma and Martin; they can't communicate well, and so their relationship isn't very clear. She appreciates him, without being conscious that he's obsessed with her. It's important because at the end of the day, when she realizes that he's confusing her with Madame Bovary, it's a shock for her as she's not in love with him. And at the same time, it touches her because he's romantic and he lives in fiction – and she too has always looked for ways to escape her daily life – so they have that in common. He watches her with the enthralled gaze of a child. It's not really sexual because, if that were the case, it would be a bit offputting. There's some innocence in their relationship.

How did you prepare for the role?

As I had to learn French, I moved to Paris a few months before filming began. I freaked out because I didn't speak even one word! As such, I was immersed in the local culture and remember Anne constantly reminding me, "you're just like your character!" In one way, she was right: it was true to Gemma because she was supposed to be submerged in a culture that wasn't her own, feeling like a foreigner. Consequently I returned to Brittany for a few weeks to perfect my French learning. And I also went out with French people, went to concerts with them, etc. and it was a kind of preparation.

Did Anne Fontaine guide you in this stage of preparation?

I spent a lot of time with Anne, and it was the first time I'd filmed with director who had guided me so much during preparation. We met up once or twice a week to talk about the film, and she explained to me how to repeat my dialogue without any intonation, simply so I get used to the sound of the sentences. Besides, once on set, I didn't want to be obsessed with the language to the detriment of my work as an actor. This is without a doubt the longest time in preparation that I've spent on a film, given that I started in January and we finished filming at the end of August.

What kind of director is she?

She has great respect for the original text, which is something I appreciate in a director, since she works on it well in advance to make sure that any changes she wishes to make are ready to go when filming. So that means when she's on set, she knows exactly what she wants and is extremely prepared. At the same time, she is perfectly open to unexpected events that can occur and to spontaneous suggestions. She's a great director of actors: she dedicates an enormous amount of time in preparation, to the extent that once on set she is entirely at the disposal of the actors and doesn't have to worry about the camera angle! And she completely adopts the actor's point of view, which I really appreciated.

This is the first time that you've filmed with a French team...

I've loved this experience, as here they have a great respect for cinema. All the technicians were experts in their area, and our cinematographer was astounding. For everyone, the most important thing involved telling the story as best we could.

How did working with Fabrice Luchini go?

It was very strange – a bit like in the film. The funniest thing, it was only at the beginning, I didn't speak French, and he was telling me all sorts of funny things in this voice that didn't belong to him: that bored me stiff as I didn't have the slightest idea what he was talking about! Everyone burst out laughing except me! That's what our relationship boils down to. Yet near to the end of filming, I loved filming with him more and more, and we took great pleasure in playing opposite each other. I love the scene in which he kills this mouse: he's trying to concentrate, staying silent for quite a long time while I start screaming because the mouse climbs over my foot. How we laughed filming that!

AN INTERVIEW WITH POSY SIMMONDS

A contemporary re-reading of *Madame Bovary*

The idea for the novel came to me one day when I passed a very beautiful woman in a café in Italy. She was weighed down by all these designer shopping bags and treating her lover like a dog. And as he didn't know what to do to please her, she spent her time sighing in boredom. All of sudden I said to myself, "she is a modern day Madame Bovary!" On my return to London, I proposed to my editor the story of an English Madame Bovary. So I reread Flaubert's novel, which I'd initially read when I was 15, and at the time what shocked me was how bad a mother Emma was. But rereading it later, I realized that it was an important piece of literature. I decided to borrow Flaubert's plot: a woman marries a man she doesn't really love, then gets tired of him and is so bored that she imagines that by changing her surroundings, she'll be able to change her life.

A French take

I was convinced that it had to have a French point of view – and thus a French director, to bring the film to the big screen. Suffice it to say I was delighted to learn that Anne Fontaine, whose film *Coco Before Chanel* I love, wished to direct the adaptation. As a result, I understood perfectly that the London-based scenes wouldn't happen in the film, and that the satire of the English in France would be less brutal than it is in the novel. Likewise, the famous black cab sequence has been taken out as it risked making Gemma seem too harsh: in the novel she's often cruel to and cynical about men, but we were keen for her character to come across as sweeter and more endearing in the film.

A dream cast

Fabrice Luchini is extraordinary and, thanks to his acting, his character Martin is a lot more sexy and enigmatic in the novel, even if he is just as much a peeping Tom! It's enough to look at his extremely expressive face to understand that he has a very rich inner life. As for Gemma Arterton, who's a marvel of sensuality, I think that the camera just adores her. Elsa Zylberstein, great in the role of Wizzy, comes across as such a pain in the neck that you want to throw her down the bottom of a well! She's a brilliant actress.

A rediscovery

I loved the film! I laughed a lot and was even surprised by the number of details from the script that I'd forgotten. I love the scene in which Martin teaches Gemma how to knead bread, and also the final twist, which I won't reveal...

CAST

MARTIN JOUBERT	Fabrice Luchini
GEMMA BOVERY	Gemma Arterton
CHARLIE BOVERY	Jason Flemyng
VALÉRIE JOUBERT	Isabelle Candelier
HERVÉ DE BRESSIGNY	Niels Schneider
PATRICK	Mel Raido
WIZZY	Elsa Zylberstein
RANKIN	Pip Torrens
JULIEN JOUBERT	Kacey Mottet-Klein
MADAME DE BRESSIGNY	Edith Scob
THE NEW NEIGHBOUR	Pascale Arbillot
DOCTOR RIVIÈRE	Philippe Uchan
MRS RIVIÈRE	Marie-Bénédicte Roy
PRODUCER OF CALVA 1	Christian Sinniger
PRODUCER OF CALVA 2	Pierre Alloggia
MAÎTRE D'	Patrice Le Méhauté
RÉMI	Gaspard Beaucarne
PANDORA	Marianne Viville

CREW

DIRECTOR	Anne Fontaine
SCREENWRITERS	Pascal Bonitzer and Anne Fontaine
BASED ON THE NOVEL	
« Gemma Boverly »	By Posy Simmonds
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Christophe Beaucarne
EDITOR	Annette Duterte
ORIGINAL MUSIC	Bruno Coulais
SOUND	Brigitte Taillandier, Francis Wargnier and Jean-Pierre Laforce

SET DESIGN	Arnaud De Moleron
COSTUME	Pascaline Chavanne
CASTING	Andy Pryor and Franzo Curcio
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Frédéric Blum
POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER	Guy Courtecuisse
UNIT PRODUCTION MANAGER	Vincent Lefeuvre
1 ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Matthieu Schiffman
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	Lydia Bigard
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER	Jérôme Prébois
PRODUCERS	Philippe Carcassonne, Matthieu Tarot
CO-PRODUCERS	Sidonie Dumas, Francis Boesflug

About Music Box Films

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a leading distributor of international, American independent, and documentary content in North America along with the best in international TV series and mini-series.

Releases in 2014 included Roger Michell's LE WEEK-END, written by Hanif Kureishi and starring Jim Broadbent; the Emmy Award-winning French language series "The Returned"; Pawel Pawlikowski's 2015 Academy Award®-winning film IDA; and the Sundance Audience Award-winning documentary THE GREEN PRINCE.

Recent titles include Edet Belzberg's award-winning documentary WATCHERS OF THE SKY, Dominik Graf's BELOVED SISTERS, Germany's official submission to the Academy Awards®, and Shlomi and Ronit Elkabetz's GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM, Israel's official submission to the Academy Awards®.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.