

MUSIC BOX FILMS

SHALL WE KISS?
(UN BAISER S'IL VOUS PLAÎT)

Written and directed by Emmanuel Mouret

With Virginie Ledoyen, Emmanuel Mouret, Julie Gayet, Michaël Cohen Frédérique
Bel and Stefano Accorsi

102 minutes. Unrated. In French with English subtitles.

Please download photos at: www.musicboxfilms.com

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Cast

Judith	Virginie Ledoyen
Nicolas	Emmanuel Mouret
Émilie	Julie Gayet
Gabriel	Michaël Cohen
Caline	Frédérique Bel
Claudio	Stefano Accorsi
Pénélope	Mélanie Maudran
Églantine	Marie Madinier
Louise	Lucciana de Vogüe
Waiter at the hotel bar	Jacques Lafoly

Technical Crew

Written and directed by	Emmanuel Mouret
Director of Photography	Laurent Desmet
Sound Engineer	Maxime Gavaudan
Assistant Director	Pierrick Vautier
Production Manager	Gaëtane Josse
Editor	Martial Salomon
Sound Editor	François Mereux
Mixing	Mélissa Petitjean
Art Director	David Faivre
Associate Producer	Moby Dick Films
Producer	Frédéric Niedermayer
Co-Producer	Arte France Cinéma
With the collaboration of	CANAL+
	Centre national de la cinématographie
	TPS Star

With the support of the Île de France region, in partnership with the CNC
The Pays de la Loire region in partnership with the CNC
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Synopsis

While traveling to Nantes for one evening, Emilie meets Gabriel. Equally seduced by one another, but both otherwise committed, they know they will probably never see each other again.

He would like to kiss her. She as well, but a story prevents her from doing so: that of a married woman and of her best friend who were surprised by the effects of a kiss.

Of a kiss that should have born no consequences.

Interview with writer-director-actor Emmanuel Mouret

Less than a year had elapsed since your last film Change of Address, SHALL WE KISS was put together quickly. Are you a filmmaker who works fast or is this an exception?

Above all, I was lucky to find the actors I wanted quickly, and the funding as well. I'm rather impatient by nature, and I do indeed like working fast. It actually helps me identify what seems essential to me.

The film industry is much more precarious than music or writing. A film depends much more on being a hit ...

Yes. If Shall We Kiss? was made quickly, it was also because we were able to take advantage of Change of Address's success. Between Venus and Fleur and Change of Address, more than two years went by and the producer and I were both determined to no longer wait for all the funding we needed in order to make it.

Do you prefer making a film without funding but with a sense of urgency?

Generally speaking, I prefer making a movie, even with very little means, than not making one.

Do you enjoy making one film right after the other?

Oh yes! I really do! This is what I had always hoped for. That's why, with my producer Frédéric Niedermayer, we always tried to find some kind of economic coherence. If we made a film that didn't cost a lot, we had to show, in a way, that we could break-even, even if didn't have that many admissions. I believe you always have to adapt to what you have and to what you are offered.

Where did you get the idea for Shall We Kiss?

My passion in film, and I don't think I am alone, are stories in which desires play with feelings. To begin with, I had a certain number of situations, both comical and romantic, but above all, I wanted to make a film in which there would be a maximum number of scenes that deal with desire. It's a bit trivial, but that's the way it is. The initial idea here was to make a movie about the consequences of a kiss that shouldn't have any consequences. Or, in other words, do kisses without consequences exist?

I had in mind the story of a man who visits his best friend. He hasn't made love in a while and asks her if she can help him. Although she is married and is in love with her husband, she accepts to do it. I am particularly interested in stories about desire. You often have two people who desire one another, and a third person somewhere who ends up cast aside.

The film's topic is hence some kind of utopian reflection on "how to fulfill your desires while protecting the one who could suffer as a result". Hence the idea about the strategies the characters create not to make a third person suffer. What interested me in this situation, is the dilemma it implies: how to be a good, civilized person who wants to be able to experience his or her desires, one of the more delightful things in life, and who at the same time does not want to hurt anyone, neither themselves nor others. In the end, this is a topic for a moralist.

On some level, Nicolas and Judith's story would have been enough to structure the film with. But you got this idea for a tale within the tale. Why?

The idea that a woman prevents herself from kissing a man she desires because of a story she was told, and which she in turn tells this man, was very appealing to me and for several reasons. First of all because I believe that the stories we have heard, read, or seen at the movies, have a lot of impact. They play a significant role in our moral judgments and hence influence our behaviors. I found the idea of filming the influence of a story on a character very playful. But what also interested me a lot was observing how the tale of a story told to another person can also modify its initial effects. And then, these stories that are opened and closed like drawers during the account were very entertaining to me and helped give rhythm to the story while giving it an air of freedom.

We were under the impression that up until then, it was the script that developed that dimension, whereas this time around, and in a perhaps more pronounced manner than in your previous movies, the image, the

framing or the choice of colors and of their counterparts, provide other clues, extends this idea of a game....

With Laurent Desmet, the director of photography, we paid a great deal of attention to the story's rhythm before speaking about visual choices. We talked a lot about variety, contrasts or repetitions, which could almost have a "musical" aspect. We worked a lot on the character/ background relationships, as well as on the connection between the sets. It's based on this, I believe, that games of correspondence can be created. But behind these correspondences, there is no hidden meaning; they are mainly trying to create resonances, to take our eyes, thoughts, pleasure and complicity on a stroll.

There is a constant in your filmmaking, and that is the idea of a perfect understanding. Your characters are always connected through details, sometimes very discreet such as a profession, an object, the color of their clothes...

I believe that cinema helps give us an idea about the world, an idea about human beings. But the world and human beings are such complex and infinite things for our human brains that they have to be simplified. In my mind, to simplify is to create recognizable shapes. Afterwards, the big challenge is to simplify while acknowledging the complexity.

If people were to say that you are a literary filmmaker, would that be a reductive statement that shocks you and is a misinterpretation?

Literary? I would actually say a filmmaker who deals with language. I believe that it is language that, for the most part, creates rhythm in the film. In language there are voices, there is the rhythm of the things being said, and hence the film's. My love for classic Italian and American comedies in which people talk a lot also stems from that. You don't always remember the dialogues, but just the pleasure of having been swept away by speech. The other aspect of language is that, for me, it helps desires unfold.

Your characters are indeed often searching for the proper word...

A man approaches a woman he desires with the help of speech for the most part. That is how he will try to determine her desire and to express his. And that's very complicated! In movies, a great amount of suspense comes from speech. Unfortunately, in certain script writing books, people are taught that a character must say a maximum number things while using a minimum number of words. I think that's ridiculous. The more you talk, the more you expose yourself to the other, to the gaze, to criticism, and the more you stage yourself, the more you try to figure out how to present yourself. And that's where a great number of stakes lie!

In the end, it's a very simple way to write about the characters doubts, inhibitions and fears without falling into the script's obvious pitfalls. Based on how they search for a word, for how to situate themselves, you understand what they are striving to be, what they are afraid of becoming, or of not becoming...

That's it! And they take us much further than what they are able to say. The more the characters talk, the more we can ask ourselves: is he telling the truth? Does he really believe that? That's what makes gazes and faces so captivating in movies.

We always know what your characters do in life; they always have a social reality, even if it does not intervene directly in the story. Why?

Strangely enough, finding my character's jobs is what takes the greatest amount of time while I am writing the script. Really, it's the most difficult thing. In my mind, it helps avoid a certain form of evanescence. It's about showing a little bit of it, but not too much. And I also feel that knowing someone's job tells us something about him or her. It's a door that opens.

What made you envision Nicolas as a math teacher?

Oh! I first saw him in all kinds of different jobs. I think he was an architect at the beginning. The math professor idea came afterwards to show that he was someone who was into abstract reasoning--creating hypothesis and wanting to use individuals as variables. That's probably what pushes him to ask his best friend for help. In fact, Judith is also in a scientific sector, but a more concrete one since it's about research.

Judith is in the field of experimentation, which also suits her character very well.

That's true. Both of them have a very mathematical strategy. As for Judith, I wanted someone very concrete. After all, if she sleeps with Nicolas, it is first of all to do him a favor. In the name of experimentation as she is a straight girl above all, with a solid mind, not at all extravagant and who therefore does not do this on a whim. She is actually really embarrassed when she falls in love with Nicolas. Something in the experiment does not work out. The fact that she feels overwhelmed turns out to be stronger than if she had been an artist.

So, in this story, you invited literature, mathematics, but also two other art forms, beginning with painting: you frame your characters on several occasions on either side of a portrait (Schubert in Judith's home, a more explicit canvas at the museum and in the hotel room...)

In fact, I feel that no matter where you go, there are always portraits, paintings...And I can't help always finding strange these portraits of people who belong to the past and who continue to look at us, or else these representations that throne in many bourgeois living rooms and that are there to evoke and arouse sensual desires. We usually hardly pay any attention to them, and I enjoyed highlighting this here.

Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Schubert...Music is also extremely important...Do you have it in mind at the time you are writing the script?

No, because based on experience, it's very difficult for me to anticipate. On the other hand, once the editing has begun, with Martial Salomon, the editor, we begin putting down the music rather quickly. We first tried some Schubert, because of his relationship with the script, and then came Tchaikovsky, and the tandem came together very quickly--despite a brief interlude with Mozart and an introduction with Dvorak. I have no system regarding the use of music. There is the one that is there, like the air the characters breathe. An atmospheric music side, even if it's a bit tarnished. Afterwards, there is music that accompanies the action, and music that can comment it. It is just about not making a mistake.

Your first two films had a rather summery feel to them. In this one, we feel a more autumnal tonality, more melancholic...

My first two films were shot in Marseille; the last two were shot in Paris for the most part. *Laissons Lucie Faire* and *Venus and Fleur* were exterior films and their tonality comes from the light, just as in this case, it comes from the seasons, from interior spaces.

There is also a certain kind of gravity. Under the appearance of lightness, you evoke betrayal, making the other suffer...

Correct. You could say that in this movie, the consequences are more... consequential.

In terms of directing, the grammar is very simple and very precise in appearance. Was the shooting script planned in advance?

I had a certain concept for the shooting script ahead of time, but above all, an idea for the film's tonality, in other words, the concern to be both simple and varied. The shooting script is not at all static since it really depends on actors and sets which you don't necessarily know in advance. The more films I make, the more I am convinced that mastering directing is not about planning everything that will be on the screen. I actually think it's the complete opposite. It's a work that's based on listening and on availability. You need to see the

actors, to see the set you are in and just try to feel how and where things can be told in the best possible way.

Slapstick is often present in your films—for example, in the scene in which you get rid of your underwear before doing the deed. All the character's clumsiness and emotions transpire at that moment.

I think clumsiness is what actually made me love movies. It can say so many things. I love these big awkward heroes like Pierre Richard. The clumsy person is the one who tries to adapt to new situations and is at the same time overwhelmed by what he is experiencing. It's a dimension which grabs me very deeply. For me, cinema's greatest heroes are not Superman, but Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin or Jacques Tati... the ones who fall and get up without ever holding it against life or against others. They don't have any bitterness. Awkward people have the beauty of great dramatic heroes, this capacity to resist and continue. For SHALL WE KISS? I tried to make a movie that would be at once comical and full of surprises, but also romantic. Most of the actors have very different temperaments and facets to their acting

It feels as if each actor is directed in a specific way...

Absolutely, there are people to whom I will not say anything and others, on the other hand, with whom I will spend weeks doing readings. There is no established rule. I actually tend to follow the actors' wishes because I like actors who make suggestions. So I adapt to each person. I was incredibly lucky to work with these actors. In a way, they are the ones who brought their ideas and their characters. I am there to listen and to choose what I am going to take, or not.

The musicality of your filmmaking and writing was already mentioned. Does the same hold for the casting? Did it happen as with an orchestra where each choice determines the following one?

Absolutely! They are colors, sounds that must echo one another, that must repeat one another, or not. It's all about contrast, sonority, colors, but also about stories. Because each actor comes with a story. People sometimes think that during a casting, actors are chosen because they seem to be the best, but that's not at all the case. Each actor, depending on his or her personality, offers a new reading of the film. It would actually be interesting to redo the same movie with other actors. It would create something else, tell other stories. In theater, this is possible because there is a repertoire. I think there should be many more remakes in cinema!

Do you act in your films a way to save a fee or to earn an additional one?

At the beginning, I began acting in my short films out of admiration for the burlesque. Since then, the producers with whom I worked are the ones who pushed me continue. And I also have to say I have fun doing it. It's a way of prolonging part of my intimacy.

Writing, directing, acting...those are many responsibilities to bear. Isn't that too exhausting?

When you direct, acting is easier, you are more familiar with the director's intentions. And when you perform in your own movie, you make the actors comfortable because they see you trying out things, making mistakes! This reassures them and creates a bond!

About Emmanuel Mouret

Born in 1970 and a native of Marseille, Emmanuel Mouret directed his first short film when he was 19, before heading to Paris. He started working in cinema as a production and directing assistant on various commercials, while also taking classes at the Drama School in Paris's 10th arrondissement. With writing manuals as a guide, he threw himself into writing and entered the prestigious national film school, FEMIS, where he graduated from the Directing section in 1998. That same year, he directed the short film "Promène toi donc tout nu." Acting in his films from his earliest shorts, he developed a recurring character that has drawn comparisons to Jean-Pierre Léaud and Woody Allen.

Emmanuel Mouret filmography

2009

Fais moi Plaisir (Post-production)

2008

God's Offices (Les Bureaux de Dieu) (Actor) (122 min)

2007

Shall We Kiss? (102 min)

Venice Days 2007

2006

Change of Address (85 min)

Cannes Film Festival 2006 – Directors' Fortnight

Tokyo International Film Festival – Official selection

2003

Venus and Fleur (81 min)

Cannes Film Festival 2004 – Directors' Fortnight

2000

Laissons Lucie Faire (91 min)

1999

Promène-Toi donc tout nu (50 min)

Il n'y a pas de mal (fiction, 20 min)

Montre-moi (documentary, 26 min)

About Virginie Ledoyen

One of France's most renowned actresses, Virginie Ledoyen started modeling from the age of 2. Her breakthrough came with Benoit Jacquot's "A Single Girl" (1995) for which she was nominated for a Cesar Award. She has worked with many of France's most acclaimed directors including Olivier Assayas, Francois Ozon, Jean-Francois Richet, Raul Ruiz and Jean-Paul Rappeneau. Outside of France, her best-known role is alongside Leonardo DiCaprio in Danny Boyle's "The Beach" (2000).

Virginie Ledoyen Filmography

2009

Love and Virtue by Raoul Ruiz

L'Armee du crime by Robert Guédiguian (Post-production)

2008

L'Emmerdeur by Francis Veber

London mon amour (Mes Amis, Mes amours) by Lorraine Levy

2007

Shall We Kiss? by Emmanuel Mouret

2006

Holly by Guy Moshe

2005

BackWoods by Koldo Serra

The Valet by Francis Veber

2004

Gang de Requin (voice)

2003

House of Voices by Pascal Laugier

Mais qui a tué Pamela Rose? by Éric Lartigau

2002

Bon Voyage by Jean-Paul Rappeneau

2001

8 Women by François Ozon

52nd Berlin International Film Festival

Best Actress award to the ensemble cast – European Film Awards 2002

2000

All About Love by Jean-François Richet

1999

The Beach by Danny Boyle

Suzanne Bianchetti award (SACD 1998)

1998

Late August, Early September by Olivier Assayas

In All Innocence by Pierre Jolivet

1997

A Soldier's Daughter never Cries by James Ivory

Jeanne et le garçon formidable by Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau

Best Actress Award of the Paris Film Festival 1998

Ma 6-T va crack-er by Jean-François Richet

1996

Héroïnes by Gérard Krawczyk

1995

Mahjong by Edward Yang

A Single Girl by Benoît Jacquot

La Cérémonie by Claude Chabrol

1994

La Folie Douce by Frédéric Jardin

1993

L'Eau froide by Olivier Assayas

Les Marmottes by Elie Chouraqui

1992

Mouche by Marcel Carné

1991

Le Voleur d'enfants by Christian de Chalonge

1992

Mima by Philomène Esposito

About Julie Gayet

Gayet studied piano and singing as a youth, before enrolling at the Actor's Studio in London. After an uncredited appearance in "Blue" by Krzysztof Kieslowski (1993), she earned her first role opposite Matthieu Demy in "À la belle étoile" (1993). In 1994, Agnès Varda cast her in "A Hundred and One Nights"; and she was awarded the prestigious Romy Schneider Prize in 1997 for Laurent Bouhnik's "Select Hotel." Her films released in the US include Michel Deville's "Almost Peaceful" (2002) and Patrice Leconte's "My Best Friend" (2006) with Daniel Auteuil and Dany Boon.

Julie Gayet Filmography

2009

Carré blanc by Jean-Baptiste Léonetti (Post-production)

Huit fois debout by Xabi Molia (Post-production)

2007

Un Certain Regard by Géraldine Maillet

Childhoods (Enfaces) by Ismaël Ferroukhi

Shall We Kiss? by Emmanuel Mouret

2006

Red Ants by Stephan Carpiaux

My Best Friend by Patrice Leconte

2005

Vatanen's Hare by Marc Rivière

Hotel Harabati by Brice Cauvin

A Woman in Winter by Michael Winterbottom

2004

Camping à la ferme by Jean-Pierre Sinapi

Bab el web by Merzak Allouache

2003

Clara et moi by Arnaud Viard

2002

Lovely Rita by Stéphane Clavier

Après la pluie le beau temps by Nathalie Schmidt

Almost Peaceful by Michel Deville

2001

Novo by Jean-Pierre Limosin
Chaos and Desire by Manon Briand
My Camera and Me by Christophe Loizillon
Ce qu'ils imaginent by Anne Theron
Love Vertigo by Laurent Chouchan

1999

Confusion of Genders by Ilan Duran Cohen
Nag la bombe by Jean-Louis Milesi

1998

Les Gens qui s'aiment by Jean-Pierre Tacchella
Paddy by Gérard Mordillant
Why Not Me? by Stéphane Giusti

1997

Le Plaisir by Nicolas Boukhrief
Ça ne se refuse pas by Eric Woreth

1996

Delphine 1 – Yvan 0 by Dominique Farrugia

1995

Two Dads and One Mom by Jean-Marc Longval and Smain
Select Hotel by Laurent Bouhnik
Les menteurs by Elie Chouraqui

1994

Les Cent et une nuits by Agnès Varda

1993

À la belle étoile by A. Desrosières

Michaël Cohen

2008

Kandisha by Jerome Cohen-Olivar

2007

Shall We Kiss? by Emmanuel Mouret
Khandisha by Jérôme Cohen Olivar

2006

Family Hero by Thierry Klifa

2005

Ils by Xavier Palud and David Moreau
Du jour au lendemain by Philippe Le Guay

2004

Cavalcade by Steve Suissa
Little Jerusalem by Karin Albou

2003

I've Been Waiting So Long by Thierry Klifa

2002

Le Bison by Isabelle Nanty

2000

Step by Step by Laurent Merlin

1995

Les menteurs by Elie Chouraqui

1994

Les Misérables du XXème siècle by Claude Lelouch

1993

L'Orange amère by Olivier Sadock

1992

Le nombril du monde by Ariel Zeitoun

1991

Boulevard des hirondelles by Josée Yanne

1990

Opération Corned Beef by Jean-Marie Poiré

About Stefano Accorsi

Born in Bologna in 1971, Accorsi studied acting in Bologna and acted on the stage for several years before moving to cinema. In 1998 he won a Donatello Award for Best Actor for his role in "Radiofreccia," directed by Luciano Ligabue. Accorsi is best known in the US for Gabriele Muccino's "The Last Kiss", Ferzan Ozpetek's "His Secret Life" and Julie Gavras' "Blame it on Fidel!".

Stefano Accorsi Filmography

2008

Baby Blues by Diane Bertrand

2007

Shall We Kiss? by Emmanuel Mouret
The Maiden and the Wolves by Gilles Legrand
Deux Mondes by Daniel Cohen

2006

La Faute à Fidel by Julie Gavras
Les Brigades du tigre by Jérôme Cornuau
Saturno Contro by Ferzan Ozpetek

2005

Romanzo criminale by Michèle Placido
Provincia Meccanica by Stefano Mordini

2004

An Italian Romance by Carlo Mazzacurati
Ovunque Sei by Michèle Placido

2002

La piu longa estate by Michèle Placido
A Journey Called Love by Michèle Placido

2001

Santa Maradona by Marco Ponti

2000

The Ignorant Fairies by Ferzan Ozpetek
The Last Kiss by Nanni Moretti
Tabloid TV by David Blair

1999

Captains of April by Maria de Medeiros
Un uomo per bene by Maurizio Zaccaro

1998

Radiofreccia by Lucciano Ligabue
Ormai è fatta by Enzo Monteleone

1997

I piccoli maestri by Daniele Luchetti
Naja by Angelo Longoni

1996

La Mia Generazione by Wilma Labate

1995

Vesna va veloce by Carlo Mazzacurati
Jack Frusciante Left the Band by Enza Negroni

1992
Un Posto by Luigi Zanolio

1991
Fratelli e sorelle by Pupi Avati

Frédérique Bel

2009
Fais moi plaisir by Emmanuel Mouret (Post-production)
Round Da Way (Les Lascars) by Emmanuel Klotz and Albert Pereira-Lazaro (Post-production)
Safari by Olivier Baroux

2008
Ugly Melanie (Vilaine) by Jean-Patrick Benes and Allan Mauduit
Mes Stars et moi by Laetitia Colombani
The Teeth of the Night (Les Dents de la Nuit) by Stephen Cafiero and Vincent Lobelle

2007
Shall We Kiss? by Emmanuel Mouret

2006
Ma Vie sans Meg Ryan by Marc Gibaja
Tel père, telle fille by Olivier de Plas
Change of Address by Emmanuel Mouret

2005
Camping by Fabien Onteniente
A Ticket to Space by Eric Lartigau

2004
Les poupées russes by Cédric Klapisch
A Very Long Engagement by Jean-Pierre Jeunet
Tu vas rire, mais je te quitte by Philippe Harel

2003
L'Incruste by C. Julius and A. Castagnetti
Vice et versa by Patrick Bouchitey

2002
Il était une fois Jean-Sébastien Bach by Jean-Louis Guillermoz
Leave Your Hands on My Hips by Chantal Lauby

2001

Les Côtelettes by Bertrand Blier

The Truth About Charlie by Jonathan Demme

2000

Deuxième Vie by Patrick Braoudé

About Music Box Films

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films serves the viewing interests of sophisticated US movie audiences in select cinemas nationwide, on DVD and Blu-ray, on cable TV and on emerging electronic delivery formats. With a focus on foreign-language cinema, Music Box's release of Guillaume Canet's TELL NO ONE was the most popular foreign-language film of 2008. 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.