


MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
la Biennale di Venezia 2014
Orizzonti - Competition

MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

A FILM BY BENOIT DELEPINE AND GUSTAVE KERVERN



NO MONEY PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

A FILM BY BENOIT DELEPINE AND GUSTAVE KERVERN
WITH MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ

SYNOPSIS

Paul works for a cable company and is burning out.

On Friday the 13th, the news on TV sends him a signal that it's time for him to make a life-changing move.

Escaping from the boredom of his routine to the mountains of Provence, he will live a near death experience.

DIRECTORS' NOTE

It's what we'd always dreamed of.

To make a film without any constraints, financial or otherwise.

Just seven of us, in the mountains, with a single, ordinary camera.

The bare minimum.

With one and only intention: to express what's been weighing on our minds.

Our era confronted by death.

As our only actor, we chose Michel Houellebecq, the writer we believe best captures the times in which we live. We hoped that this intellectual acuity would be reflected in his performance and it was. He brought our words to life.

When faced with Death, there is nothing more beautiful than Truth.

Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern

ELEVATION

Above the valleys and the lakes: beyond
The woods, seas, clouds and mountain-ranges: far
Above the sun, the aethers silver-swanned
With nebulae, and the remotest star,

My spirit! with agility you move
Like a strong swimmer with the seas to fight,
Through the blue vastness furrowing your groove
With an ineffable and male delight.

Far from these foetid marshes, be made pure
In the pure air of the superior sky,
And drink, like some most exquisite liqueur,
The fire that fills the lucid realms on high.

Beyond where cares or boredom hold dominion,
Which charge our fogged existence with their spleen,
Happy is he who with a stalwart pinion
Can seek those fields so shining and serene:

Whose thoughts, like larks, rise on the freshening breeze
Who fans the morning with his tameless wings,
Skims over life, and understands with ease
The speech of flowers and other voiceless things.

- *Flowers of Evil, Charles Baudelaire*

SELECTED DIALOGUE - MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ

“I always thought **killing yourself** takes not only bravery, but also luck.

Countless suicides fail because of bad luck.

Some of those desperate souls see this, out of cowardice, as a divine sign.

Not me.

One of the few qualities people see in me is **professional conscientiousness.**

I’ve always seen a job through to the end, both at work and at home.

As a child, for example, I always cleared my plate.”

“There was a tree that same shape next to my parents’ house. Beside it was a rock, and a rubber boot sticking out of the ground. It terrified me because it got me imagining all kinds of things.

How can you face life when you’re scared of a rubber boot?”

“**Obsolete.** That’s all. I’m 56 years old and I’m obsolete.

56, my grandfather’s age when I was seven.

Back then, you could just be old, a grandpa.

You quietly waited to retire. No one asked you to achieve any objectives, or go beyond them.

You weren’t expected to look nice, to dress young, to be virile, to still screw, to do sport, to

eat healthily, to love your wife like the day you met, to be best friends with your kids. You

weren’t expected to be creative, to be funny, to have passions. You were lucky, Grandpa. You

could be just an old man. Look at me. Having reached your age, **I’ve become a sorry guy.**

Obsolete.”

“When I married you, I was proud.

I never really told you, but you can count the women I’ve known on the fingers of one mitten.

Physical love never meant much to me.

Especially since after each orgasm, I fell into a black hole.

I always wanted to die after screwing.

I was sure that with you, my silences would be understood. I knew that life would be sweet.

I never cheated on you. I lost my freedom but I gained peace.”

“**Life must be intoxicating... Life must be intoxicating... Life must be intoxicating.**”

“**When it comes down to it, nature’s a drag.**(...) At the start of my stay here, I did feel some benefits. The relative purity of the air, the soothing silence... But I soon felt the shortcomings of this environment. Modern man simply needs comfort. He didn’t strive for centuries to invent loads of things to then not make the most of it.

The bed, to not sleep on the ground; running water, to not have to go to the well; central heating, to no longer be cold; supermarkets, to not grow stuff yourself; the car, to no longer walk.

If we’re going to stay on this Earth, it might as well be in nice conditions. I have to say, I’ve always been very rigorous – almost autocratic even – when it comes to choosing couches. Sitting comfortably is essential for me.

I can no longer put up with the harshness of nature. **My body demands quilted leather.**”

“**Paul, really, you talk too much and don’t commit suicide enough.**”

MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ

Poet and novelist, he was awarded the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 2010 for La Carte et le Territoire (The Map and the Territory), published by Flammarion.

DIRECTORS' BIOGRAPHY

Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern acquired their skills and knowledge by working in television, both writing and performing sketches. Benoît worked on popular satire shows -- Guignols de l'Info and Groland -- and Gustave on the French rock-n-roll program, Le plein de Super. They met while working together on the show Groland. Their complicity brought them to develop a first feature film screenplay. Encouraged by Maurice Pialat, they shot their first feature film as writers-directors "Aaltra" in 2003, a dark comedy in black and white, a road movie in wheelchair about two disabled men travelling from Picardie to Finland, ending with an appearance by Aki Kaurismaki, who's encounter was a seminal moment in their lives.

"Aaltra" was critically acclaimed and well received by audiences, allowing them to continue their collaboration on "Avida", a metaphysical, absurd, and surrealistic comedy presented at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection, out-of-competition.

In 2008, their dark comedy "Louise-Michel" premiered in Official Competition at the Donostia-San Sebastian International Film Festival where it was awarded the Jury Prize for Best Screenplay. A Special Jury Prize for Originality was also awarded to the film at the Sundance Film Festival. Audiences and critics have praised the film all around the world.

"Mammuth" with Gérard Depardieu, their fourth feature-film as writers-directors, was presented in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival and nominated for several César Awards. Finally, their latest film, "Le Grand Soir", with Benoit Poelvoorde and Albert Dupontel, won the Special Jury Prize of the Un Certain Regard section at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival.

"Near Death Experience" is their sixth feature film collaboration.

Benoît Delépine, born 1958. Gustave Kervern, born 1962.



DIRECTORS' FILMOGRAPHIES

BENOÎT DELÉPINE

Cinema:

- 2014 **NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE** official selection Orizzonti at the Venice Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2012 **LE GRAND SOIR** official selection Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2010 **MAMMUTH** official selection in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2008 **LOUISE-MICHEL** official selection in competition at the San Sebastian International Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2006 **AVIDA** official selection out-of-competition at the Cannes Film Festival
writer, director, actor
- 2004 **AALTRA** official selection in competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam
writer, director, actor
- 1998 **MICHAEL KAEL** writer, actor
- 1996 **A L'ARRACHÉ** short film prized at Gérardmer Film Festival
Writer, director, actor

Television:

- 1992-2014 **GROLAND** Canal+ satirical program, writer, actor
- 1990-1996 **LES GUIGNOLS DE L'INFO** Canal+, writer
- 1989 **DYNAMO** La Sept, cultural program, producer
- 1988 **Canal+** writer of various short programs

Benoît Delépine was editor of the CREATION magazine and has written the scripts of the comic books L'imposteur (2000), La Bombe (2002) and God Killer (2003); he is currently releasing S et Fils with comic-book artist Diego Aranega.

GUSTAVE KERVERN

Cinema:

- 2014 **NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE** official selection Orizzonti at the Venice Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2014 **DANS LA COUR** by Pierre Salvadori, actor
- 2012 **LE GRAND SOIR** official selection Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2010 **YA BASTA!** short film, codirector, writer
- 2010 **MAMMUTH** official selection in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2008 **LOUISE-MICHEL** official selection in competition at the San Sebastian International Film Festival
writer, director, producer
- 2006 **AVIDA** official selection out-of-competition at the Cannes Film Festival
writer, director, actor
- 2006 **ENFERMÉS DEHORS** by Albert Dupontel, actor
- 2004 **AALTRA** official selection in competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam
writer, director, actor
- 1996 **DELPHINE: 1, YVAN: 0** by Dominique Farrugia, actor

Television:

- 2000-2014 **GROLAND** Canal+ satirical program, writer, actor
- 2002 **CAMÉRA CAFÉ** M6, actor
- 1999 **« H »** Canal+ series, actor
- 1994-1995 **LE PLEIN DE SUPER** Canal+ musical program
With Yvan Le Bolloc'h and Bruno Solo, writer, actor
- 1995 **AUDIARD EN TOUTES LETTRES** documentary, writer

Gustave Kervern is the author of the books 50 PROPOSITIONS POUR SAUVER VOTRE POUVOIR D'ACHAT (2008, Danger Public), PETITS MOMENTS D'IVRESSE (2011, Autrement) and IMPERTINENTS (2013, Cherche Midi).



CAST AND CREW

CAST

Paul Michel Houellebecq
The poacher Bertram Marius
Woman in the car Manon Chancé

CREW

NO MONEY PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

a film written and directed by Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN

Screenplay Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
Directors Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
Producers Benoît DELÉPINE and Gustave KERVERN
Director of Photography Hugues POULAIN
Sound Guillaume LEBRAZ
Line Producer Philippe GODEFROY
1st Assistant Director Gérard BONNET
Editor Stéphane ELMADJIAN
Assistant Editor Mélanie BENARD
Production Manager Pierre-Yves MARTRON
Production Assistant Virginie BERRACHI
Associate Producer Charles-Edouard RENAULT

In partnership with le CNC
With the participation of CANAL+ and CINE+

2014 - France – Couleur– 90 min – Format 2.39 – Dolby SR / SRD

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