

# **COCO BEFORE CHANEL**

**A Film by Anne Fontaine**

**A Sony Pictures Classics Release**

**Starring**  
**Audrey Tautou**  
**Alessandro Nivola**  
**Benoit Poelvoorde**  
**Emmanuelle Devos**  
**Marie Gillain**

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A little girl who is sent with her sister to an orphanage in the heart of France, who waits in vain every Sunday for her father to come for her...

A cabaret performer with a weak voice who sings to an audience of drunken soldiers...

A humble seamstress, who stitches hems at the back of a provincial tailor's shop...

A young, skinny courtesan, to whom protector Etienne Balsan offers a safe haven, amongst the idle and decadent...

A woman in love who knows she will never be anyone's wife, refusing marriage even to Boy Capel, the man who returned her love...

A rebel who finds the conventions of her time oppressive, and instead dresses in her lovers' clothes...

This is the story of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, who begins her life as a headstrong orphan, and through an extraordinary journey becomes the legendary couturier who embodied the modern woman and became a timeless symbol of success, freedom and style.

*Coco Before Chanel*, starring Audrey Tautou (*Amélie*, *The Da Vinci Code*) in the title role, along with Benoît Poelvoorde (*Entre ses mains/In His Hands*, *Podium*), Emmanuelle Devos (*Rois et reine/Kings and Queen*, *L'Adversaire/The Adversary*), Marie Gillain (*L'Enfer/Hell*, *Les Femmes de l'ombre/Female Agents*) and Alessandro Nivola (*Junebug*, *Jurassic Park III*). *Coco Before Chanel* is directed by Anne Fontaine (*La Fille de Monaco/The Girl From Monaco*) from a screenplay by Anne Fontaine and Camille Fontaine (no relation), with the collaboration of Christopher Hampton (*Dangerous Liaisons*), loosely based on *L'irrégulière* by Edmonde Charles-Roux. The producers are Philippe Carcassonne (*La Fille de Monaco/The Girl From Monaco*), Caroline Benjo (*Entre les murs/The Class*) and Carole Scotta (*Entre les murs/The Class*).

The director of photography is Christophe Beaucarne. The production designer is Olivier Radot. The film is edited by Luc Barnier. Catherine Leterrier created the original costumes. The production was given the support of the Maison CHANEL, who opened their archives and collections. Alexandre Desplat (Oscar Nominated Composer of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*) composed the score.

Shot in French in the Paris region and in Normandy, *Coco Before Chanel* will be released in the United States by Sony Pictures Classics.

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## THE MANY LIVES OF CHANEL

Brilliant, dynamic and diverse, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel's life was lived out in an extraordinarily colourful century. Film producers often claim that, "Reality is stranger than fiction," and Gabrielle Chanel's reality was certainly above and beyond the hopes of even the most imaginative screenwriter.

For Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, "*Legend is the accolade of celebrity.*" More than 40 biographies have been written about this extraordinary fashion designer and her legendary life. Chanel's experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was full of audacity, love, turmoil and allure, and her story reads like a lesson on life, a novel bursting with adventure.

Born on August 19, 1883, into a modest and provincial home, Gabrielle Chanel was orphaned at a young age and grew up in a convent school. There she learned the rudiments of sewing, and at the age of 18 was employed as an assistant in hosiery. She embroidered and sewed but soon grew bored and turned her attention to the local *cafés-concerts*. Her lean, gracious figure did not go unnoticed, and she would sing on stage, applauded by an audience who called her "Coco": a name that would stay with her forever. It was here that she was spotted—and subsequently adored—by Étienne Balsan, a rich racehorse owner. With him, Gabrielle discovered the equestrian world, a world that was to inspire her throughout her career, and its accompanying high society with women dressed in hats she thought looked like "pies."

Coco stood out from the other ladies in Balsan's entourage and soon caught the eye of the man who was to become the love of her life, Arthur "Boy" Capel. He encouraged Gabrielle in her hat making, lending her the money to open her first milliner's studio in Paris' rue Cambon, in 1910. A boutique in the French seaside town of Deauville quickly followed, as did those in Biarritz and Cannes. Her success was meteoric and she soon paid Boy Capel back every penny he had lent her.

The young Chanel was a unique designer. When the American press saw the new designs she was creating, they could not get enough of her. It was her romance with Boy Capel that drew a masculine energy into her constantly evolving wardrobe. She borrowed his trousers, pyjamas, straw boaters and jackets.

The lovers she had throughout her life often had a direct influence on her designs. From the Grand Duke Dimitri she borrowed the *roubachka*, a traditional Russian blouse, fur-lined coats and embroidery. And from the Duke of Westminster, she took a penchant for sailing jumpers, gold buttons, white cuffs and tweed jackets.

In 1921, she launched her first perfume, CHANEL N° 5, with its unfolding notes of May roses, jasmine and aldehydes. Its success has never been matched by another fragrance, and

most likely never will be. It was Marilyn Monroe who, when asked what she wore to bed, famously replied, “*A splash of CHANEL N° 5.*”

Coco created a lexicon of style that came to signify the excellence of the Chanel brand. She was a daredevil for whom style was a sixth sense. She summed up her remarkable little black dress of 1926 by stating, “*Women think about all colours except the absence of colour. I have already said that black has it all. White too. Their beauty is absolute.*”

In 1932, she presented her “Bijoux de Diamants” jewelry to all of Paris. All are dazzled by this *Haute Joaillerie* collection, entirely dedicated to platinum and diamonds, her favourite stone. She explained, “If I have chosen diamonds, it is because it represents the greatest value in the smallest volume.”

Chanel spent time among the artistic luminaries of her era, collaborating with Cocteau and Picasso at the theatre and providing financial support to Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Radiguet and Pierre Reverdy. She was everywhere at once: from Venice with friends such as Misia Sert to Paris at the Ritz—the hotel that was to become her home. As a business woman she never left anything to chance; her pronouncements echo as profound aphorisms, such as, “*If you’re born without wings, do everything you can to grow some,*” or “*I do not like when one speaks of the Chanel fashion. Chanel is above all a style. Fashion passes, style remains.*”

In 1939, she closed her Couture house. Then, aged 71, she returned with a legendary fashion show presented on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1954. It was a second revolution. In just a few seasons, she gave women the trimmed tweed suit, the ‘2.55’ handbag in quilted leather, the camellia, the two-tone shoes... and regained her position reigning over a world that had believed her to be long gone. She launched ‘Pour Monsieur’ and received a Fashion Oscar in the American city of Dallas, Texas, for being “the most influential designer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

Everything about Chanel’s life, love and personal style found its way into her work. She never put limits on anything and her unique approach to fashion design was penetrated with life, personal acquisition and discovery. The sport that she loved affected the cut and simplicity of her clothes. The jewels she was given were reinvented in new and original forms. The journeys she took, the people she met, the friendships she cultivated, her superstitions, everything found its way into her creative process, resulting in a durable oeuvre that traces the history of the century she lived in.

“I created fashion for a quarter of a century. Why? Because I knew how to express the present,” said Chanel, who passed away on January 10, 1971, just days before her spring summer Haute Couture show. The world paid tribute to one of the most influential women of the century but the Chanel book was by no means closed.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

### ANNE FONTAINE

Director Anne Fontaine has long been fascinated by the figure of Coco Chanel. “It was not so much the fashion as much the characteristics of this exceptional woman that interested me,” says Fontaine. “I had been particularly touched by the fact that she was a self-made person. This girl, coming from the heart of the French countryside, poor, uneducated, but endowed with an exceptional personality, was destined to be ahead of her time.”

Years after Anne first became inspired, the opportunity to make a film about the legendary woman presented itself. “I had to think about whether it was possible to stick to the first period of her life—the training years, what had happened before Chanel, herself, understood her dazzling destiny,” the director explains. “So, I went back and read her biography by Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Chanel and Her World: Friends, Fashion, and Fame*. The other imperative condition was to find an actress to embody such a character, and not someone who would ape or make a pale imitation of Chanel.”

Fontaine found her Chanel personified in Audrey Tautou. “During my first encounter with Audrey, I was struck by her will, her audacity, and the density of her gaze that goes through you,” Fontaine recalls. “Chanel looked at everything. Her culture was not one of knowledge, but a culture of observation. I had not yet written a single line of the screenplay when I met Audrey, but I knew that if she gave me her trust and if the production agreed to stick to the years of apprenticeship, I could then embark on the adventure of my first period movie.”

### AUDREY TAUTOU

Tautou was likewise fascinated by Chanel, and though the prospect of the role had long been hovering around her, she was captivated by Fontaine’s vision. “I was secretly hoping to get an offer with a particular point of view because the modernity of this character—her spirit, and the position she gave women—fascinates me,” says Tautou. “In addition, when Anne Fontaine explained how she intended to treat the subject, I immediately agreed.”

“Anne has allowed me to develop the nature of Chanel by searching different aspects of this role, by shading the emotions, being fragile and sweet and, at the same time, commanding and proud,” the actress continues. “The fact that a woman directs this movie is already a great advantage to express how difficult it was to be of ‘the weaker sex’ at that time. The intelligence

of Anne Fontaine, her finesse, her global vision of the character and the story have been of utmost importance in her direction of the film.”

To successfully complete this ambitious project and faithfully portray Coco Chanel's formative years, Fontaine was determined to assemble accomplished and acclaimed creative department heads. "It was the first time I was doing a period movie, so I wanted to work with technicians who were experienced in their respective fields," she says.

Fontaine worked at length beforehand with her key crew members and proposed a survey of various great films from the time period in which the story is set. "Some are still classics, others were made by talented directors but are now considered old fashioned," says Fontaine, adding, "The historical film is a very tricky genre because it is easy to fall into the trap of flirting with the conventions of a TV movie. From the outset, we had to take a hard-line attitude against the weighty, picturesque drawbacks of the period film.”

## **PRODUCTION DESIGN**

The production designer, Olivier Radot, was responsible for the sets in *The Lover*, *Queen Margot*, *Lucie Aubrac* and *Gabrielle* (which won the French César Award 2006).

“From our very first meeting, Olivier Radot appealed to me with his corrosive vision for the design of the sets,” she says. “I immediately felt we would be aesthetically in agreement.”

Radot studied the life of Coco Chanel at length. "You must be careful to always focus more on the subject than on the period, and dedicate the world you create to the story, the sentiments and the director's viewpoint," says Radot. "That's what gives a film substance. Instead of just copying the archives, I prefer to interpret, transpose, and feel free to keep the essence, the sensation. In any case, very few documents show Chanel during her years of apprenticeship. What I found most interesting in the end was to trace back to the source to find what had influenced her creation. We paid particular attention to the sets for the orphanage and Aubazine at the beginning of the film, emphasizing the graphic, black and white aspect. The Aubazine uniform, with its black skirts and white blouses, also influenced her style. This starkness resurfaces at the end when Coco Chanel watches a triumphant fashion parade from the steps of the Maison Chanel."

Fontaine wanted the initial sets—the orphanage where she grows up, the cabaret in Moulins where she and her sister perform—framed in tight shots to create a sense of oppression. Then, liberty is made manifest when Coco arrives at Etienne Balsan's château at Royallieu, which is a complete contrast to the severity of Aubazine. "We visited dozens of

chateaux but eventually chose the first place we had seen!" Radot recalls. "Some were too ornate, others too pompous. We eventually chose the 18th-century château of Millemont in the Yvelines, as its white exterior with its chic simplicity could have inspired Coco. It was in these surroundings of Balsan's that she discovered the world."

The other concern the filmmaker shared with her production designer was finding locations that would enable them to shoot the film entirely in France. "Chanel embodies French elegance," says Radot. "Her character is so Parisian that it would have been a shame not to shoot in France."

Fontaine and Radot also collaborated on finding creative ways to bring naturalism to the atmosphere depicted in the film. "One of Anne's qualities is to reject resorting to futile conventions," Radot explains. "For the more spectacular scenes with a lot of extras, she prefers natural, true conditions to ultra-wide frames where considerable means are splashed over the screen for maximum effect. There is greater sensitivity when you feel some things are going on outside the frame. Anne is more into miniature and naturalistic effects than ostentation. In fact, hers is a very contemporary approach. Similarly, we understated the picturesque image of the 'beuglant'—the rather coarse, colorful, thigh-slapping cabaret. I modeled it more on the American Café in Paris, with its dark wood paneling. We felt we had to tone down a place that was going to act as a setting for Mademoiselle Coco Chanel."

The payoff for Radot was seeing the complete vision come alive. "I remember the day we filmed in the milliner's workshop, the first Parisian set, which was the setting for Chanel's initial success," he notes. "When I saw Audrey Tautou wearing a new finger wave hairstyle, with a cigarette at her lips, adjusting the trimmings of a hat, I had an impression I was really looking at Coco Chanel. It was incredible!"

## **COSTUME DESIGN**

To create the critically important costumes for the period of Chanel's life depicted in the film, Fontaine turned to Catherine Leterrier (French César Award winner in 2000 and 2004), who demonstrated her talent working with Fontaine herself on her previous film, *The Girl From Monaco (La Fille de Monaco)*, as well as collaborating with such acclaimed filmmakers as Alain Resnais, Louis Malle, Robert Altman, Luc Besson, Jonathan Demme, André Téchiné, Bertrand Blier and Ridley Scott. Leterrier started her career in fashion (she graduated from the *École de la Chambre Syndicale de la Haute-Couture Parisienne*) before branching into the cinema and becoming one of the most sought after costume designers in the movie business.

"The whole crew was adamant that we should avoid all the traps of imagery, representation or the picturesque, in particular where costumes were concerned," Fontaine says.

"The aim was not to make a movie about the history of fashion," Leterrier says. "We occasionally had to take liberties with time. To fit in with the storyline, the famous striped mariner's sweater worn by Chanel in the legendary photos of the 1930s appears earlier in the movie, in the scene where Coco is walking along the beach with Boy and notices the sweaters of the fishermen as they pull in their nets. At another point, as Anne wanted me to imagine how the world-famous Chanel bag originated, I drew a quilted sewing pouch in the shape of the bag, and had it made out of an old, black, flecked cotton canvas that peasants' clothing used to be made of, as if the young Coco had made it out of a remnant given to her by her aunts."

A key element of the costume design was to show the influences that shaped the Chanel style. "In fashion, every designer has their own line, color and material codes," Leterrier continues. "Chanel's is instantly recognizable. What Karl Lagerfeld did in adapting the Chanel style to the future, I did backwards towards the past. I went back in time, designing the first models that Chanel might have created and which could have fashioned her style. The Chanel style is distinctive in its cut, the supple hang of its fabric and the perfect simplicity of its finish. The costumes designed for the film had to be up to the exacting standards of *haute couture*."

Leterrier set up a temporary workshop for the movie, complete with dressmakers' apprentices and lead hands, that worked full-time to fabricate the extensive costume demands for the film. "For the scenes where there are a lot of extras—the dance hall, the racecourse, Emilienne's theatre etc.—we made, in addition to the costumes, nearly 800 different hats, created by two great milliners, Stephen Jones and Pippa Cleator. Before she made dresses, Chanel was a successful milliner, and her hats were more architectural and less fussy than those of the times. She made fun of the over-ornate hats that some women wore: 'With that on their head, how can they think!'"

One particular challenge was integrating the more contemporary looks with the era in which Chanel introduced them. "The difficulty for me was to contrast the elegance of Chanel's simple and fluid style with the fashion in 1900," Leterrier explains. "I wanted to keep its beauty, with the blouses that enhanced the bust, the ribbons, lace, feathers and frills, whilst showing its excessive, showy and formal side so I could contrast it with Chanel's pure, flowing lines."

For the final catwalk scene, Leterrier chose authentic models and jewelry from different periods in the Conservatoire Chanel. "The collaboration of Chanel was indispensable to us, particularly for the final sequence where it was unthinkable not to have dresses by the Chanel



label,” says Fontaine. “In this sequence, all the dresses come from the Chanel Conservatory. I met Karl Lagerfeld several times; we showed him the sketches of the clothes Catherine Leterrier was making.”

To accessorize, the costume designer went on a scavenger hunt. “I hunted down the cotton braids, silk ribbons, buttons and other period accessories at flea markets and antiques dealers,” she remembers. “I even found a platinum and diamond necklace that had belonged to Mademoiselle Chanel at the *Louvre des Antiquaires*. In the film, this magnificent piece adorns Audrey Tautou's graceful neck in the restaurant scene where she appears in a black sequined evening dress. Audrey showed great interest in the costumes, and during fitting sessions I watched her concentrate and suddenly metamorphose into Coco Chanel.”

Leterrier also relished integrating Chanel elements into the men's costumes. As she notes, “For Balsan's wardrobe, I introduced tweed, which was another of Chanel's codes, and for his dressing-gown I asked Bianchini-Ferrier, in Lyon, to reprint a silk fabric with an old design by Raoul Dufy depicting horses, which I had recolored.”

“My whole team, from lead hand down to trainee, was highly motivated and everyone found it awe inspiring to be making the costumes for Coco Chanel. It's like doing Molière when you are an actor, for us, Chanel is mythical!”

## **CINEMATOGRAPHY**

To shoot the film, Fontaine enlisted Christophe Beaucarne, whose work behind the camera can be appreciated in *Paris*, directed by Cédric Klapisch; *Paint or Make Love* by the Larrieu brothers and Jaco Van Dormael's latest movie. “Christophe Beaucarne is a director of photography who will rise to any challenge,” Fontaine enthuses. “He has an amazing combination of intelligence and humor.”

Fontaine collaborated with Beaucarne to always reflect Chanel's point of view in the cinematography. “The movie had to be like Coco Chanel's character,” she explains. “She was a young woman who never stayed still. The filming had to pulsate and the camera required a certain sensuality and movement. We often used a hand-held camera to shoot. Christophe Beaucarne is a very physical, adaptable cameraman. The openness and integrity with which he approached this film helped me a lot.”

The moviemaker and her director of photography decided to shoot with two cameras to keep up the rhythm and pace and give the scenes a certain modernity. “The idea was to always accompany Chanel in her evolution and follow her inner adventure, her love story. The film is

almost always shot from her viewpoint, except for two or three sequences linked to her feelings," says Beaucarne, adding, "With Anne, we refused to resort to the complacency and contemplative side of period movies; there are no descriptive crane movements lingering on the grandeur of the set with its pageants of horse-drawn carriages and cohorts of extras! The luxury of the movie is precisely in not flaunting our resources. In the race course scene, for example, there are 300 extras on screen, but we have no protracted descriptive shots. The main thing was to portray the atmosphere at race courses in those days. They were packed because it was one of those places where you had to be seen."

Beaucarne chose to shoot the scenes at Royallieu in sunlight to accentuate the château's dazzling whiteness. "Although she was born in the country, Coco was shut up in the orphanage at a very early age," Beaucarne describes. "She then lived in a maid's garret and a smoky cabaret, and suddenly, in the château, she discovered the wonders of nature. I tried to transcribe, via the framing and lighting, the sense of liberation Chanel must have felt there. After the severity of *Aubazine*, where we used a lot of black and white, we wanted sunshine, wider frames and a festive atmosphere that corresponded to Balsan's personality. For this bright and light-hearted side, with the set designer Olivier Radot, we had *The Great Gatsby* in mind as one of our distant references."

Beaucarne also relished reinterpreting Cecil Beaton's iconic photos of Chanel, "such as Chanel in her workshop, for example," he says. "In the final sequence in the stairwell of the Maison Chanel on Rue Cambon, the lighting I devised plays with residual light to give an elliptical feel to the scene, where the fabulous models on the catwalk are seen as reflections in the mirrors only. What was important here was to suggest Chanel's intimate vision."

Beaucarne confesses he was inspired by the extremely photogenic quality of Audrey Tautou. "I played on the contrast between the lightness of her skin and the darkness of her eyes and hair," he reflects. "Her eyes steal the show... I avoided putting direct lighting on her to emphasize a certain soft yet contrasted side, a subtle touch that also let me obtain the contours I wanted for the costumes and materials. Audrey identified keenly with her character, fully grasping Chanel's strong, determined spirit. It was a real delight to film her, for in addition to her good looks, Audrey pays great attention to technique. Her variations of gesture and movement in her acting are extremely precise."

The final element—the music—fell to Oscar-nominated composer Alexandre Desplat (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *The Queen*), who has written the soundtrack to more than 60 films. This gifted and prolific composer divides his time between French productions (*Largo Winch*, *The Singer*, *The Valet*), and international films. His inspired soundtrack for *The*

*Beat That My Heart Skipped* won the César Best Music award in France and a Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival.

## **MUSIC**

Like the physical aspects of the production, Fontaine and Desplat collaborated to reflect Chanel herself in the music. "I think Coco Chanel had a pair of eyes that were very particular in real life, and so does Audrey Tautou," Desplat comments. "They both have the same gravity and intensity. She is not just watching. She's scrutinizing and really intensively watching. She's grabbing a detail, a colour, a shape that becomes something of her own once it goes through her filter. So, I guess that's the main thing that I tried to do with the score: always keep the intensity of her character, not just the fun. She has a lot of courage and a desire to change things. And that's something I like a lot—when artists show the way, a different way, another way, not just follow the flow of the river. My music should follow this."

## **FINDING CHANEL**

The final effect, Fontaine hopes, will be a complete interpretation of a young woman on the cusp of inventing herself. "What particularly interested me was to watch Coco build her destiny before our eyes, by inventing as she went along," she says. "Nothing was programmed with her; she is not pursuing a career to reach success; she is inventing. She does not have the ambition or the tools to conform to the world of the bourgeoisie—its doors were closed to her—so she drew attention to herself to start at the top of provocation. She does not want to abide by this world but to adapt it to her own personality. She also likes to take risks. I liked very much the idea that she was a clandestine when she started her journey in the world. When she arrives to Royallieu, Balsan forbids her to leave her bedroom. She forged her emblematic image upon the secrets of her origins; she always embellished the story of her childhood."

## **ANNE FONTAINE Q&A**

**QUESTION: Why were you interested in the character of Gabrielle Chanel?**

ANNE FONTAINE: I was lucky to meet Lilou Marquand, when I was very young; she had been the closest collaborator of Chanel throughout the last part of her life and later wrote a book on their relation entitled *Chanel told me*. So every day, for a while, I would hear something about

this mythical personality. I also carefully read the book by Paul Morand, *The Allure of Chanel*, one of the authors who knew best how to express the incredible personality of Mademoiselle. It was not so much the fashion as the characteristics of this exceptional woman that interested me. I had been particularly touched by the fact that she was a self-made person. This girl, coming from the heart of the French countryside, poor, uneducated, but endowed with an exceptional personality, was destined to be ahead of her time and of a society where women were the prisoners of alienating behaviours and clothing. The quasi-Balzac style of her path intrigued me in particular. I remember putting up photos of the young Chanel on the walls of my bedroom, but I never thought I would make a whole film on this subject. Many years later, during a conversation on Chanel with Carole Scotta and Caroline Benjo, the producers of *Haut et Court*, they asked me whether I would be interested in developing a project recounting her path. My interest for the character was then reinvigorated. I asked them to give me time to think about it, pointing out that I felt it would be a mistake to try to take in the entire life of Coco Chanel. I had to think whether it was possible to stick to the first period of her life, the training years, what had happened before Chanel herself understood her dazzling destiny. So I went back and read her biography by Edmonde Charles-Roux “Chanel and Her World: Friends, Fashion, and Fame”. The other imperative condition was to find an actress to embody such a character, and not someone who would ape or make a pale imitation of Chanel.

**QUESTION: Audrey Tautou was obviously the ideal actress to portray Coco Chanel.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Yes, and Audrey very naturally embodies the androgynous—something that did not exist at the time and is essential to understand how Coco Chanel invented her style. Chanel drew her inspiration from her own personality; she composed her style on her body, her difference, and her vitality. Today androgyny is in fashion, but at the time of Chanel, women were curvaceous and plump. Chanel also launched the fashion of short hair. The actress had to combine slender silhouette and strong temper, this iron hand in a velvet glove. Audrey has the slimmest waist in the world! She has also this “little black bull” side to her, as Paul Morand used to say of Chanel, a grace, finesse, and an irrefutable charisma. On my first encounter with Audrey, her will, her audacity, and the density of her gaze that goes through you struck me. Chanel looked at everything. Her culture was not one of knowledge, but a culture of observation. I had not yet written a single line of the screenplay when I met Audrey, but I knew that if she gave me her trust and if the production agreed to stick to the years of apprenticeship, I could then embark on the adventure of my first period movie.

**QUESTION: You chose to move away from the biopic aspects of telling this story and stick precisely to her creativity and the genesis of this fabulous career.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Because in those years, there are numerous highly romantic factors, the first being, of course, the youth of a provincial girl living in extreme poverty.

**QUESTION: Chanel's childhood is worthy of romantic literature.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Yes, Chanel is worthy of the great heroines of literature. She immediately got through the worst. The young Gabrielle loses her mother through exhaustion by childbirth and sickness, and soon after her father, a market vendor, abandons her. She is placed in the orphanage of the Aubazine monastery where the canoness taught her the meticulous art of sewing. Then, we see her trying her luck in a cabaret of Moulins where she sings her famous 'Coco qui a vu Coco' in front of an audience of military men on a spree!

**QUESTION: Writing the screenplay about a famous character, you must have had in mind that the audience knows the end of the story. Still you managed to create tension in that.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Suspense is very real in the life of this heroine: How will she make it? How will she overcome her ignorance? It's interesting to see that Chanel, whose name today is emblematic of *haute couture*, was not really interested in fashion at first. She wanted to be a dancer, a singer or an actress. After she dropped her artist's dreams, her dazzling career was nearly built without her knowing it. What particularly interested me was to watch Coco build her destiny before our eyes, by inventing as she went along. Nothing was programmed with her; she is not pursuing a career to reach success, she is inventing. She does not have the ambition or the tools to conform to the world of the bourgeoisie—its doors were closed to her—so she drew attention to herself to start at the top of provocation. She does not want to abide by this world but to adapt it to her own personality. She also likes to take risks. I liked very much the idea that she was a clandestine when she started her journey in the world. When she arrives to Royallieu, Balsan forbids her to leave her bedroom. She forged her emblematic image upon the secrets of her origins; she always embellished the story of her childhood.

**QUESTION: In the beginning, Coco Chanel is a kept woman.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Yes, it is a bit of a contradiction with the image we have today of Coco Chanel, an elegant woman dressed in a sober and chic suit who has built an empire of luxury on her independence; a woman who never got married. However, the young Chanel constructed herself supported by men whom she used at will. Actually, she was a courtesan. During the

years at the Royallieu, Coco exercised her charm on women and men, polished up her personality, and hardened her temper. The 'demimondaines' she used to meet in Royallieu wore lace dresses; so, in order not to 'belong' to their circle, she invented dresses for herself that were so simple they over-emphasized decency. From then on, she will always dress as a reasonable young woman, wearing one of those boater hats that she made herself and became the rage among her friends. She went against things in order to create. 'What I hated I wanted to make out-of-date,' she would say.

**QUESTION: In her designs, Chanel never projected the image of the ideal woman as designers do in general. She built her mythical style upon her particular characteristics and her difference.**

ANNE FONTAINE: She was different. Chanel turned this difference into a fundamental asset, though it must have been a terrible suffering for her. We worked on that transformation with Audrey. At first, she appears as a little peasant girl, unpolished with a beehive hairstyle; then, we see how her style clashes with the other women only to become, in the last part of the movie, the incarnation of French chic. I thought it was interesting to give shape to this evolution without over-explaining things. Little by little, everything in her was grace, and what people looked at was Chanel.

**QUESTION: Your movie is also based on a beautiful and tragic love story.**

ANNE FONTAINE: We watch her meet the two men who will deeply change her destiny: Balsan, a rich eccentric gentleman farmer played by Benoît Poelvoorde; and this young Englishman, Arthur Capel, called 'Boy,' the love of her life, interpreted by Alessandro Nivola. This man believes in her and that is important, but she loses him. 'I lost everything with the loss of Capel' said Chanel. Then, Chanel throws herself into work. What mainly surprised and interested me was that everything Chanel invented came from those years. Later, her fashion adapted and she developed her style; she became a professional. That is the reason why this period of her life is livelier and more moving. There is something within her that is extremely determined and vulnerable at the same time. Chanel has an incredible vitality built on her suffering.

**QUESTION: 'A woman who cried her eyes dry' is what people said about her.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Yes, and Chanel overcomes her pain through work, precisely! I like the way she treats misfortune and turns suffering into creativity. That is another interesting point in

dealing with this part of her life because when she became a celebrity, she inevitably became a bit mechanical, tough and isolated.

**QUESTION: This woman also had a cutting humour.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Chanel has a lot of irony. In the movie, she tells her sister, 'The only interesting thing about love is to make love. It's such a pity you have to have a man for that!' It shows her sense of aphorism. Chanel seduced with her biting replies. At their first encounter, she tells Balsan, 'When I'm bored I feel very old,' so he asks her, 'And how old are you now?' She replies, 'A thousand years!'

**QUESTION: Balsan begins somewhat indifferent but grows very close to Chanel.**

ANNE FONTAINE: I loved creating the character of Balsan, about whom we know very little. Somehow for him, too, love does not exist. He loves his horses; he loves rather naughty parties; and at the same time, the party man hides a deeper emotionalism and humanity. When I thought of this man, I immediately thought of Benoît Poelvoorde. He was the only one who could render both the agitator and endearing side in him. It is through her observation of the little world around Balsan that Chanel will forge her style, drawing inspiration, for example, from the light and functional fabrics of sportswear, modifying riding outfits, or borrowing Balsan's pyjamas. It is while looking into Balsan's wardrobes that she first improvises her boyish outfit.

**QUESTION: With Boy Capel, she finally allows herself to love.**

ANNE FONTAINE: It is actually in a very candid way that she falls madly in love with Boy Capel, and at the same time she doesn't believe in love. She wants to avoid the traps into which her mother fell. She saw her suffer and be abandoned several times by Coco's father, a vendor who went from market to market, and from woman to woman. That is when she understood the condition of women, seeing her mother suffer and die in atrocious pain. So, very early on, she must have said to herself: 'Not me, never!' That is the reason why, maybe, she saw before the others that the modern woman would not go on like that any longer. Always against the tide, Chanel decides to celebrate the freedom and independence of women. The loss of the man of her life is yet another blow of destiny.

**QUESTION: What liberties did you take while working on the screenplay?**

ANNE FONTAINE: In order to interpret a famous person, I had to liberate myself from the diktat of the biography if I wanted to get the freshness back. With my co-screenwriters, we had to

invent some things, go against the chronology, modify, or give more density to some characters. The role played by Marie Gillain is a mix of the real sister of Chanel and Adrienne, her aunt, who was her age and shared the same ambition to make it in life. The character of Emilienne, interpreted by Emmanuelle Devos, is inspired by the famous comedian Gabrielle Dorziat and Emilienne d'Alençon, a dancer and great courtesan. Brilliantly portrayed by Alessandro Nivola, Boy Capel, who has such importance in the life of Chanel, actually was no longer with her. We know very little about the first years of her life, and Chanel lied all the time. She used to say something I find sublime: 'I invented my life because my I didn't like my life.'

**QUESTION: Your direction respects and celebrates the motto of Coco Chanel, which was: 'You always have to remove, to strip, and never add.' Like her, you don't go for the superfluous, the frills, and the pathos.**

ANNE FONTAINE: It was very important to me that the film looked like her, no fuss or aesthetical lyricism. The Chanel style is recognizable among all by its rigour, the elegant simplicity of lines. In the scene at the hippodrome or the beach in Deauville, we noticed the total opposition of the Chanel style with the dresses of those women and their elaborate headdresses, all the frills and corsets that cut them in half! They had a decorative posture, whereas Chanel was concerned with the existence of the individual. You had to beat the heart of things, all the time, with the movie.

**QUESTION: You said that sobriety and minimalism, which determined the originality of her designs, came from the architecture of the Aubazine abbey and the dresses of nuns and boarders in white shirts and black skirts.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Yes. It is important to visualize the little girl in this environment. I wanted to stick to the starkness, with those dominant colours of black and white, which were to become the quintessence of the Chanel style. Later, we see her in Moulins taking one of her dresses and adding to it a white collar and white cuffs from a man's shirt to fabricate a disguise for Emilienne, i.e. the orphanage costume. The famous little black dress was taking shape and was going to become her signature design.

**QUESTION: With your reading of Chanel's love life, we may wonder whether her 'little black dress'—which was her glory—was not designed for herself, Chanel, a woman so marked by loneliness?**



ANNE FONTAINE: In any case, I shot all the couture part in that way, by associating her creation to her life, and particularly to the very violent event she suffered through the accident of Capel. There is a beauty in the way she turns this drama into an obsession with the black, her cult colour. This relation gives a lyrical dimension to her clothes, whereas, by definition, a garment does not have such dimension. What sublimates a garment is when it comes to life once worn. Movement is what Chanel brought to women's clothes. Freedom is what she offered to women.

**QUESTION: In the final sequence, a fashion parade presents the collection that established her fame as the years went by. In this sequence, sitting on her famous staircase, Coco Chanel savours her triumph while reviewing moments of her past.**

ANNE FONTAINE: In the beginning of the movie, she is evolving; in the end, she is metamorphosed. She becomes Coco Chanel and her story cannot be dissociated from the century that is starting. This sequence feels like a daydream: we see her at work and all of a sudden this work generates a parade that is not totally realistic, as various epochs and styles are mixed. With some anticipation, she appears already in the stature of the myth. I tried to construct the end in an allegorical manner to eventually come close to some state of grace. Chanel is triumphant but we sense a certain melancholy behind that. The way I dealt with the moment following her relationship with Boy shows that the only existential alternative she had was to get to work. Sewing is a very humble art: cutting, tearing, assembling with pins, sewing... This humility has something rather beautiful and the challenge was for me to let it show on screen. I tried to recount it in the last part of the film by showing this minimum, this simplicity and, at the same time, the density and tension. On Audrey's face at the end, there is already this determination, an asceticism and concentration that will allow Coco to reach the essence of herself and become the legendary figure everyone knows, the first woman in a man's world, who built an empire that still bears her name today.

**QUESTION: This story of apprenticeship, where the heroine shows her tenacity, her will, and her faith in herself to take her destiny in hand, can interest any woman.**

ANNE FONTAINE: Absolutely. In fact, Chanel used to say, as stated in the book of Paul Morand, 'My life is the story—often the tragedy—of a woman on her own, her miseries, her grandeur, her uneven and fascinating struggle against herself, against men, attractions, weaknesses, and dangers that arise from all sides.' Any man or woman can recognize himself,

or herself, in that, or at least be moved by her love stories and by the rather fatal destiny she suffers at certain moments in the movie.

**QUESTION: Did the Maison Chanel accompany you on this project?**

ANNE FONTAINE: The collaboration of Chanel was indispensable to us, particularly for the final sequence where it was unthinkable not to have dresses by the Chanel label. We shot in the famous staircase. In this sequence, all the dresses come from the Chanel Conservatory. I met Karl Lagerfeld several times. We showed him the sketches of the clothes my costume designer, Catherine Leterrier, was making. When Karl saw pictures of Audrey Tautou, he told me she was the only 'true Chanel.' We collaborated in a very natural way with the Maison Chanel, but it did not influence my artistic approach.

**QUESTION: Audrey Tautou and Benoît Poelvoorde have also trusted you.**

ANNE FONTAINE: I wrote the character of Balsan with Benoît in mind. I have had the chance to appreciate the extent of his talent while directing him on *Entre ses mains (In His Hands)*. We both wanted to work together again. I was rather nervous the day I handed a first version of the script to Audrey Tautou. I told her, 'You have the right to refuse, but as I see no one who could play the part but you, I'll quit if you say no.' Luckily, Audrey reassured me very quickly! You know that Audrey comes from the same area as Chanel. She grew up in Montluçon, 32 miles away from Moulins. Audrey told me, 'I always thought I'd come across this character one day.' She knew she was predestined for the role.

## **AUDREY TAUTOU Q&A**

**QUESTION: What was your reaction when Anne Fontaine suggested you portray the famous Mademoiselle of the rue Cambon?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: The character of Coco Chanel has been hovering around me for several years. Premises of projects about her had been submitted to me before, but I did not want to do a biopic, i.e. participating in some sort of saga recounting her life from birth to death. Imagine, Chanel lived 87 years! We would inevitably have fallen in the clichés that have punctuated her path, and I was not interested in that. I was secretly hoping to get an offer with a particular point of view because the modernity of this character fascinates me, her spirit, and the position she gave women. In addition, when Anne Fontaine explained how she intended to treat the subject, I immediately agreed. Anne precisely wanted to avoid clichés and a mimetic interpretation. She

had not yet written the screenplay, but she was already determined to concern herself solely with the training years, and it seemed to me that the period when Coco was building herself and asserting her personality is the most interesting in her life. When a person succeeds beautifully in life, people have a tendency to say, 'I was sure of this success!' I have been fortunate to experience that, though to a minor degree, with *Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Amélie)*, but before this film, I had no clue that fame would land on me. I was like everybody, trying to move forward with doubts, questions, and uncertainties.

**QUESTION: The path of this little orphan who becomes the empress of fashion may be an example.**

AUDREY TAUTOU: The main goal of this film is not to deliver a message. Working on this character and getting to know her better, I realised the scope and singularity of her destiny. Actually, Chanel can represent a symbol of hope and success. One can start from scratch and reach the top, and in the social context of the time, nothing then meant much worse than today. Her celebrity is all the more exceptional at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Chanel had to fight against conventions that were very paralyzing for women. This film describes the destiny of a woman; it is not only for *haute couture* lovers. Chanel was born with an understanding of life and women that was totally ahead of her time. And her strong nature, her temperament, her arrogance, her pride and her intelligence allowed her to create what she has achieved. Characterised by great honesty and integrity, this woman never gave in. Chanel was not concerned with others, their recognition of her success; she was dedicated to fulfilling herself and refused to consider her condition as a tragedy.

**QUESTION: Were you apprehensive at all about playing a character that had really existed?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: I wanted to give my own interpretation of this character, keeping in mind that the spectator had to recognise in it the mythical image of Chanel. Even if likeness on screen is very productive, the hardest thing was to avoid being satisfied with a mimetic performance, and to try to express her true nature. Her character and temperament that we perceived through photographs have not changed with time. Curiously, her evolution was going to help me. For example, in her years at Moulins, Coco is still a bit of a peasant. We discover a woman in doubt who wants something else for herself. She has her character and temperament but she is still very fragile. While shooting this part, I was uncertain myself, in doubt. I was not controlling her; I was not controlling myself. Then, it started to get clearer. In the last part, I was completely her.

The portrayal was not in the costume. I would even say it was not in the superficial side of the character, but in her inner self. I don't know if I succeeded...I think it was important to express without artifices how much this woman, even in her early years, was different and that she possessed charisma and an aura.

**QUESTION: So much has been said about Coco Chanel. She constantly hid her tracks. How did you imagine her yourself?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: The problem is that it is impossible to imagine her precisely as Chanel always disguised the reality. In preparing myself for the part, I read Paul Morand, then the biography by Edmonde Charles-Roux, *L'Irrégulière*; the portrait by Colette; and of course, all the biographies Chanel had validated. I did notice that she misguided people, maybe out of modesty, a characteristic of rural people. Anyway, it takes some cunning to know who Chanel really was! And I am not sure, without offending anyone, that everything that has been said and written about her—some of it contradictory—is close to her true self. I ended up being confused with all this material and the videos on her. So, I decided to look only at the photographs and give free rein to my imagination.

**QUESTION: The film shows the relationships Coco has with two men from the superficial society she is discovering at Royallieu, both of whom greatly influence her in her formative years.**

AUDREY TAUTOU: Yes, but she is very cunning in the way she imposes and shows herself off to her own advantage, very slowly, in this superficial society of Royallieu she is discovering. She suffers those humiliations cleverly, in any case obstinately and arrogantly, knowing she would not remain there and would never give in. She is immeasurably arrogant. She tells her sister, 'One day, they'll fight to dine at our table.' She always keeps a form of contempt, or at least a distance vis-à-vis the circle around Balsan. She does not want to become a society woman, or worse, a woman of little virtue. She wants to be like a man—a woman who would have a man's freedom. Coco quickly understands that she is not in love with Balsan, so friendship strikes up between them. She calls him her benefactor. She is well aware that Balsan considers her simply like an extravagance that amuses him, but she knows how to use him. He opens doors to her but, most of all, it is thanks to him that she goes to Paris. For a young, provincial girl, it is always extraordinary to discover Paris, even today. The first time I arrived in Paris—ah, Paris!—it's impressive, it's beautiful, it's a dream, it's the possibility to become somebody!

**QUESTION: Coco falls madly in love of Boy Capel. They look alike; both have the same desire to move ahead in life, but most of all he believes in her.**

AUDREY TAUTOU: The confidence and the way Boy Capel looks at her comforts and reassures her. He knows that Chanel holds the future in her, and that the spirit of freedom in this woman embodies modernity. Boy Capel has grasped her remarkable nature, and he makes her understand that her difference is not a handicap, but that on the contrary, it will be her strength. It will trigger change for her destiny. What they have in common is precisely this modernity.

**QUESTION: Yet Coco was wary of feelings. She used to say, 'A woman in love is screwed up...she's there like a submissive dog, nothing more.'**

AUDREY TAUTOU: She does not want to depend on a man. She saw her mother suffer because she was in the emotional and financial grip of her inconstant husband, who regularly used to abandon her. I think Coco made a pact with herself, 'I'll never depend on anyone.' On the other hand, it is interesting to imagine if Boy Capel had dared marry her, the destiny of Chanel would have been different. She loved him so dearly...it could have been all she needed to be happy. Actually, Chanel is a very complex person. Morand said that loneliness was the companion of Chanel. This proximity with loneliness has been one of the keys in my approach of the role. In the final sequence, alone on the staircase, as her models parade under the applause, and she is at the pinnacle of her glory, triumphant, this loneliness must have shown on her face.

**QUESTION: We see Coco Chanel change as the formative years go by. How did you wish to mark this evolution of her character?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: Watching the photographs, I noticed how Chanel held her head haughtily, standing very straight, as if a string pulled her head up. It was impossible to detect her provincial origins in the elegance of her gait, or in her graceful gestures, the way she held her cigarette, for example. Her purely physical transformation is not so obvious during those years, but she acquires deportment and authority the more she grows confident in herself. It also had to show when she was seated, but it did not mean that I had to play her as authoritarian; it was more as if doubts start to disappear little by little. I also wanted to convey the sharp gaze she had from the start. Chanel was very attentive and extremely lucid. That is also the reason why she had this destiny and this creativity.

**QUESTION: You readily recognize having a strong temperament. These are common points between you and Chanel. What else is there of Chanel in Tautou?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: There may also be a similar lucidity on the world that surrounds us, with a sense of attention and observation. A faith in one's instinct. A capacity to decipher quickly the true personality of the other, his psychology, and intentions. That is the reason why I believe that Chanel was not a person who would be easily impressed; she was quick in detecting hypocrisy and superficiality. The common point is mainly behaving adequately with my personality, my convictions, and my nature. I hope I am like her, a very upright person, honest who does not sell her soul.

**QUESTION: Your two male partners are very different actors. How was it to work with them?**

AUDREY TAUTOU: I was very happy to work with Benoît Poelvoorde. I admire this actor, and it is no sycophancy, I think his talent verges on genius. In the film, Benoît is extremely serious and available. Once I got rid of the intimidation he provoked in me during the first scenes, a great complicity grew between us. Alessandro Nivola has been exemplary. He is American, and I know how difficult it is to be at ease acting in a language other than yours. He staggered me with his capacity of adaptation and the sincerity of his acting. Moreover, he is a great professional and the man is adorable.

**QUESTION: The actors working with Anne Fontaine admire the quality of her direction of actors.**

AUDREY TAUTOU: Indeed, Anne has allowed me to develop the nature of Chanel by searching different aspects to this role, by shading the emotions, being fragile and sweet and at the same time authoritarian and proud. The fact that a woman directed this movie is already a great advantage in expressing how difficult it was to be of 'the weaker sex' at that time. The intelligence of Anne Fontaine, her finesse, her global vision of the character and the story have been of utmost importance in her direction of the film.

## FILMOGRAPHIES

### ANNE FONTAINE

#### Filmography

- 1992 **LES HISTOIRES D'AMOUR FINISSENT MAL EN GENERAL** (LOVE AFFAIRS USUALLY END BADLY)
- 1995 **AUGUSTIN**
- 1997 **NETTOYAGE A SEC** (DRY CLEANING)
- 1998 **AUGUSTIN, ROI DU KUNG FU** (AUGUSTIN, KING OF KUNG-FU)
- 2000 **COMMENT J'AI TUE MON PERE** (HOW I KILLED MY FATHER)
- 2003 **NATHALIE**
- 2005 **ENTRE SES MAINS** (IN HIS HANDS)
- 2006 **NOUVELLE CHANCE**
- 2008 **THE GIRL FROM MONACO** (LA FILLE DE MONACO)
- 2009 **COCO BEFORE CHANEL**

### AUDREY TAUTOU (Gabrielle Chanel)

#### Filmography

- 1998 **LA VIEILLE BARRIÈRE** - Lycée Boukhitine (court métrage)
- 1999 **VENUS BEAUTY SALON** - (VÉNUS BEAUTÉ INSTITUT) Tonie Marshall  
**PRETTY DEVILS** - (VOYOUS VOYELLES) Serge Meynard
- 2000 **TRISTE À MOURIR** - (court métrage) Alexandre Billon  
**MARRY ME** - (ÉPOUSE-MOI) Harriet Marin  
**THE LIBERTINE** - (LE LIBERTIN) Gabriel Aghion  
**HAPPENSTANCE** - (LE BATTEMENT D'AILES DU PAPILLON) Laurent Firode
- 2001 **AMÉLIE** - (LE FABULEUX DESTIN D'AMÉLIE POULAIN) Jean-Pierre Jeunet  
**GOD IS GREAT AND I'M NOT** - (DIEU EST GRAND, JE SUIS TOUTE PETITE) Pascale Bailly
- 2002 **HE LOVES ME... HE LOVES ME NOT** (À LA FOLIE... PAS DU TOUT) Laetitia Colombani  
**EURO PUDDING** (L'AUBERGE ESPAGNOLE) Cédric Klapish  
**LOST SEAMEN** (LES MARINS PERDUS) Claire Devers  
**DIRTY PRETTY THINGS** Stephen Frears  
**NOT ON THE LIPS** (PAS SUR LA BOUCHE) Alain Resnais  
**NOWHERE TO GO BUT UP** (HAPPY END) Amos Kollek
- 2003 **A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT** (UN LONG DIMANCHE DE FIANÇAILLES) Jean-Pierre Jeunet
- 2004 **THE RUSSIAN DOLLS** (LES POUPÉES RUSSES) Cédric Klapisch

- 2006 **THE DA VINCI CODE** Ron Howard  
**PRICELESS (HORS DE PRIX)** Pierre Salvadori  
**HUNTING AND GATHERING (ENSEMBLE, C'EST TOUT)** Claude Berri
- 2009 **COCO BEFORE CHANEL** Anne Fontaine

## **BENOÎT POELVOORDE (Étienne Balsan)**

Select filmography

- 1992 **MAN BITES DOG (C'EST ARRIVE PRES DE CHEZ VOUS)** Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde
- 1997 **HIKERS (LES RANDONNEURS)** Philippe Harel
- 1999 **THE CARRIERS ARE WAITING (LES CONVOYEURS ATTENDENT)** Benoît Mariage
- 2001 **GHISLAIN LAMBERT'S BICYCLE (LE VÉLO DE GHISLAIN LAMBERT)** Philippe Harel
- 2001 **DOORS OF GLORY (LES PORTES DE LA GLOIRE)** Christian Merret Palmair
- 2002 **DEAD WEIGHT (LE BOULET)** Alain Berberian
- 2004 **PODIUM** Yann Moix
- 2005 **IN HIS HANDS (ENTRE SES MAINS)** Anne Fontaine
- 2006 **DU JOUR AU LENDEMAIN** Philippe Le Guay
- 2006 **SELON CHARLIE** Nicole Garcia
- 2007 **COW-BOY** Benoît Mariage
- 2007 **LES DEUX MONDES** Daniel Cohen
- 2007 **ASTERIX AT THE OLYMIC GAMES (ASTÉRIX AUX JEUX OLYMPIQUES)** Frédéric Forrestier and Thomas Langmann
- 2008 **LES RANDONNEURS À ST TROPEZ** Philippe Harel
- 2008 **THE WAR OF THE MISSES (LA GUERRE DES MISS)** Patrice Leconte
- 2009 **COCO BEFORE CHANEL** Anne Fontaine
- Filming, april 2009  
**SIGNÉ DUMAS**  
Safy Nebbou



# ALESSANDRO NIVOLA (Boy Capel)

## Filmography

- 1997 **FACE OFF** John Woo
- 1998 **I WANT YOU** Michael Winterbottom
- 1999 **BEST LAID PLANS** Mike Barker  
**MANSFIELD PARK** Patricia Rozema
- 2000 **LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST** Kenneth Branagh  
**TIME CODE** Mike Figgis
- 2002 **LAUREL CANYON** Lisa Cholodenko
- 2004 **THE CLEARING** Pieter Jan Brugge
- 2005 **JUNEBUG** Phil Morrison  
**GOAL!** Danny Cannon
- 2007 **GRACE IS GONE** James C. Strouse  
**THE GIRL IN THE PARK** David Auburn
- 2008 **THE EYE** David Moreau and Xavier Palud  
**\$5 A DAY** Nigel Cole  
**WHO DO YOU LOVE?** Jerry Zaks
- 2009 **COCO BEFORE CHANEL** Anne Fontaine

# MARIE GILLAIN (Adrienne)

## Filmography

- 1991 **MY FATHER THE HERO (MON PÈRE CE HÉROS)** Gérard Lauzier
- 1994 **MARIE** Marian Handwerker
- 1995 **FRESH BAIT (L'APPAT)** Bertrand Tavernier
- 1996 **THE ELECTIVE AFFINITIES (LES AFFINITÉS ÉLECTIVES)** Vittorio and Paolo Taviani
- 1997 **LE BOSSU** Philippe de Broca  
**AN AIR SO PURE (UN AIR SI PUR)** Yves Angelo
- 1998 **LE DERNIER HAREM** Ferzan Ozpetek  
**THE DINNER (LA CENA/LE DINER)** Ettore Scola
- 2000 **LAISSONS LUCIE FAIRE** Emmanuel Mouret
- 2001 **ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS (ABSOLUMENT FABULEUX)** Gabriel Aghion  
**BARNIE'S MINOR ANNOYANCES (BARNIE ET SES PETITES CONTRARIÉTÉS)** Bruno Chiche
- 2002 **NOT FOR OR AGAINST (NI POUR NI CONTRE (BIEN AU CONTRAIRE))** Cédric Klapisch

- SAFE CONDUCT** (LAISSEZ-PASSER) Bertrand Tavernier
- 2004 THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE** (TOUT LE PLAISIR EST POUR MOI) Isabelle Broue
- 2005 HELL** (L'ENFER) Danis Tanovic
- 2007 HAVE MERCY ON US ALL** (PARS VITE ET REVIENS TARD) Régis Wargnier  
**MA VIE N'EST PAS UNE COMÉDIE ROMANTIQUE** Marc Gibaja  
**FRAGILE(S)** Martin Valente  
**THE KEY** (LA CLEF) Guillaume Nicloux
- 2008 LA TRÈS TRÈS GRANDE ENTREPRISE** Pierre Jolivet  
**MAGIQUE!** Philippe Muyl  
**FEMALE AGENTS** (LES FEMMES DE L'OMBRE) Jean-Paul Salomé
- 2009 COCO BEFORE CHANEL** Anne Fontaine

## EMMANUELLE DEVOS (Émilienne)

Select filmography

- 1989 EMBRASSE-MOI** Noémie Lvovsky
- 1991 LA VIE DES MORTS** Arnaud Desplechin
- 1992 THE SENTINEL** (LA SENTINELLE) Arnaud Desplechin
- 1994 THE PATRIOTS** (LES PATRIOTES) Eric Rochant  
**FORGET ME** (OUBLIE-MOI) Noémie Lvovsky
- 1996 MY SEX LIFE... OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT** (COMMENT JE ME SUIS DISPUTÉ... (MA VIE SEXUELLE) Arnaud Desplechin  
**ANNA OZ** Eric Rochant
- 1997 LE DÉMÉNAGEMENT** Olivier Doran  
**ARTEMISIA** Agnès Merlet
- 1999 I'M NOT AFRAID OF LIFE** (LA VIE NE ME FAIT PAS PEUR) Noémie Lvovsky  
**MAYBE** (PEUT-ÊTRE) Cédric Klapisch
- 2000 ESTHER KAHN** Arnaud Desplechin  
**COURS TOUJOURS!** Dante Desarthe  
**VIVE NOUS** Camille de Casabianca  
**OUCH** (AÏE) Sophie Fillières
- 2001 SUR MES LÈVRES** Jacques Audiard
- 2002 THE ADVERSARY** (L'ADVERSAIRE) Nicole Garcia
- 2003 SMALL CUTS** (PETITES COUPURES) Pascal Bonitzer  
**IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL...** (IL EST PLUS FACILE POUR UN CHAMEAU...) Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi  
**THE RED KNIGHT** (RENCONTRE AVEC LE DRAGON) Hélène Angel
- 2004 KINGS AND QUEEN** (ROIS ET REINE) Arnaud Desplechin  
**BIENVENUE EN SUISSE** Léa Fazer

- GILLES'S WIFE** (LA FEMME DE GILLES) Frédéric Fonteyne
- 2005** **THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED** (DE BATTRE MON CŒUR S'EST ARRÊTÉ) Jacques Audiard  
**THE MOUSTACHE** (LA MOUSTACHE) Emmanuel Carrère  
**GENTILLE** Sophie Fillières
- 2006** **WAITING FOR SOMEONE** (J'ATTENDS QUELQU'UN) Jérôme Bonnell  
**CEUX QUI RESTENT** Anne Le Ny
- 2007** **TWO LIVES PLUS ONE** (DEUX VIES... PLUS UNE) Idit Cebula  
**A CHRISTMAS TALE** (UN CONTE DE NOËL) Arnaud Desplechin  
**BANCS PUBLICS** Bruno Podalydès  
**À L'ORIGINE** Xavier Gianolli  
**THE UNSPOKEN** (LE NON-DIT) Fien Troch
- 2009** **WILD GRASS** (LES HERBES FOLLES) Alain Resnais  
**LES COLLEGIENS** Riad Sattouf  
**COMPLICES** Frédéric Mermoud  
**COCO BEFORE CHANEL** Anne Fontaine

## Crew Bios

**ALEXANDRE DESPLAT** (Music) has composed the music for over 50 European films and been nominated for two Cesar Awards. He burst onto the Hollywood scene in 2003 with his evocative score to “Girl with the Pearl Earring” starring Scarlett Johansson and Colin Firth, which earned him nominations for Golden Globe, BAFTA and European Film Awards. His reputation was solidified by his critically acclaimed score to Jonathan Glazier's film “Birth” starring Nicole Kidman, followed in close succession by the scores to “The Upside of Anger” starring Joan Allen and Kevin Costner, “Hostage” starring Bruce Willis and Stephen Gaghan's film “Syriana” produced by Steven Soderbergh and starring George Clooney and Matt Damon, which earned him another Golden Globe nomination. “The Queen,” directed by Stephen Frears and starring Helen Mirren, secured him his first Academy Award® nomination and his third Golden Globe nomination. In the same year, he was also nominated for and won a Golden Globe Award for his score to “The Painted Veil” starring Edward Norton and Naomi Watts.

In 2007, Desplat wrote the music for “Mr. Magorium’s Wonder Emporium” starring Dustin Hoffman and Natalie Portman, “The Golden Compass” starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, which is the first movie based upon the beloved trilogy *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman, and “Lust, Caution” for Academy Award®-winning director Ang Lee.

Desplat was again nominated for an Oscar, a BAFTA and a Golden Globe Award for his acclaimed score for David Fincher’s “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” in 2008. He

recently completed the score for Terrence Malick's "The Tree of Life" starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn.

Balancing a busy Hollywood schedule, Desplat still makes time to lend his talents to a select number of European films. One of his recent scores, "The Beat that My Heart Skipped," garnered him a Silver Bear Award for Best Score at the Berlin Film Festival and a Cesar Award.

Desplat's Greek mother and French father met while attending College at Berkeley in the United States. The multilingual Desplat was classically trained, but fed a constant diet of American jazz and Hollywood movie scores. These influences have been fused in his music to create a fresh and unique, new voice in film music.

### **Filmography - Composer**

**2003 GIRL WITH THE PEARL EARRING**

**2004 BIRTH**

**2005 THE UPSIDE OF ANGER  
HOSTAGE  
CASANOVA  
SYRIANA**

**2006 FIREWALL  
THE QUEEN  
THE PAINTED VEIL**

**2007 LUST, CAUTION  
MR. MAGORIUM'S WONDER EMPORIUM  
THE GOLDEN COMPASS**

**2008 THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON**

**2009 COCO BEFORE CHANEL  
CHERI  
JULIE & JULIA  
THE FANTASTIC MR. FOX  
THE TWILIGHT SAGA : NEW MOON**

**CATHERINE LETERRIER** (Costume Designer) is one of the most prolific and versatile designers working today.

From comedy to drama, period films to modern day classics, Leterrier has designed over 60 films, working with some of the most acclaimed directors: Luc Besson's *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (Cesar Award), Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-porter*, Louis Malle's *Milou en mai*, Michael Apted's *Gorillas in the Mist*, Jonathan Demme's *The Truth About Charlie*, and most recently Ridley Scott's *A Good Year*.

She has collaborated with on multiple projects with two of France's most influential filmmakers: Alain Resnais's *I Want to Go Home*, *Melo* (Cesar Nomination), *Providence*, *Mon oncle d'Amerique*, *Le vie est un roman*. She has also worked with Claude Lelouch on such films as *Partir, revenir*, *Viva la vie!*, *Edith et Marcel*, and *Les uns et les autres*.

Leterrier also excels in production design. She won the Cesar in Best Production Design for Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *Bon Voyage* (For which she also received a Cesar Nomination for her Costume Design). Other notable projects include Willard Huyck's *French Postcards*, Claire Denis's *Vendredi soir*, Istvan Szabo's *Meeting Venus*, Bertland Blier's *Combien tu ma'aimes*, Valerie Lemercier's *Palais royal!*, and Danielle Thompson's *Fauteuils d'Orchestre*.

Leterrier also does a great deal of work in both theatre and opera. Her production of *Don Giovanni* back in 2006 had a very successful tour. She also received a Moliere Award for *Le Dame de chez Maxim*. She is currently designing costumes for *La Traviata* for productions this July in both Orange and in Baalbeck.

Born in Paris, Leterrier studied art history at Columbia University and fashion design in back in her native city. After marrying her husband French filmmaker Francois Leterrier, she began designing costumes for films. She has also collaborated often with such enduring stars of cinema as Gérard Depardieu, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Adjani, Philippe Noiret, Sigourney Weaver and, most recently, Monica Belluci and Marion Cotillard.

