

PIERRETTE ROBITAILLE ROMANE BOHRINGER

MARC-ANDRÉ GRONDIN

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A FILM BY DENIS CÔTÉ





IN COMPETITION — 63rd BERLINALE

## VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR

A film by DENIS CÔTÉ  
with Pierrette Robitaille, Romane  
Bohringer, Marc-André Grondin

CANADA 2013 — DCP — Drama — 95min.  
Produced by Stéphanie Morissette  
— La maison de prod and Sylvain  
Corbeil — Metafilms

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## SYNOPSIS

Victoria, an ex-convict in her sixties, wants to start new life in a remote sugar shack. Under the supervision of Guillaume, a young, sympathetic parole officer, she tries to get her life back on track along with Florence, her former cellmate with whom she shared years of intimacy in prison. Stalked by ghosts of the past, their new life together is unexpectedly jeopardized.



# Interview with DENIS CÔTÉ

VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR is your seventh feature film, but only the third, after “All That She Wants” (2008) and “Curling” (2010), not to feature cinéma-vérité elements. What is your current take on this more classic trend in narrative filmmaking?

While I tried to challenge myself about the notion of reality for “Carcasses” and “Bestiaire”, I still need to write more elaborate stories that involve specific emotions. I don’t want to rely on myself every time; I need contributions from actors and other creative partners. To find opportunities in those two poles of filmmaking has become a necessity for me.

VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR is more character- and dialogue-driven than your other films. What was the original dramatic stance of this story?

The art of dialogue is something that inspires me more as time goes by. It’s pretty hard to write meaningful dialogue, but the intention was there from the earliest drafts of VIC+FLO. The other challenge was to write strong female parts. I haven’t done it really often and I was anxious about it. I don’t know if I succeeded at that level.

Recurring elements that were already in “All That She Wants”, “Curling” or even “Carcasses” are also at the basis of VIC+FLO, such as the non-conformist characters trying to lead their lives outside society because of their lack of faith in others’ ability to fulfil their intimate, professional or spiritual needs. They keep to themselves, or at least they’re

hesitant to live by society’s codes.

I’ve stopped trying to reinvent myself. We’re always doing the same film, one way or the other. You need to learn to develop some kind of flair for getting new perspectives on storytelling, emotions and characterization. I’m just trying to learn something with each film, to get it better the next time. For VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR, I was looking to set up a particular kind of story, where what appears to be a love affair involving colourful characters gets hit by a centrifugal force that leads to an unexpected denouement, between the tragic and the grotesque.

Pierrette Robitaille, one of the film’s lead actresses, is well known in Quebec for her many comic talents. In VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR, she had to play a much tougher character. How did she become Victoria?

As much as I can, I try to avoid obvious decisions throughout the filmmaking process. From start to finish, I asked myself: “Why her, why?” I know the Quebec audience will ask the same question: “Why on earth did he pick her?” *In VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR, Pierrette Robitaille is the one who shouldn’t have been on screen.* In the end, maybe because of the peculiarity of her casting, she managed to embrace the screen masterfully and her craft is top-notch. Sometimes, going against the grain turns out to be a powerful creative asset.

How has your relationship with actors evolved, from “Our Private Lives” to “Curling”, and more recently during the filming of VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR?

I may understand them a little better now. I have to admit that I was more afraid of them during my earlier films – I had a tendency to give in to most of their requests! Today, I’m more confident in being demanding toward them, more specific about what I can or need to get from them. And I’ve learned that they are usually inclined to cooperate, as most of the actors I’ve worked with prefer a director who’s in charge, who’ll try whatever’s required to get what he wants – in fact, they like it the hard way! It’s a reassuring feeling, in a sense. I believe a filmmaker should not be intimidated by actors, even the most experienced ones. I may have realized that while working with non-professional actors in recent years.

In your fictional films and in your more experimental projects such as “Les lignes ennemies», the countryside and the woods rule the screen, while the characters have limited movement and interaction with the rest of the world. What perspective on urbanity and sociability do you share with your characters?

I have the impression that a rural setting gives more freedom to my characters. You can do incredible things in the woods! Cities are dominated by codes and if I were to shoot a film there, it would be centered on rules and contingencies. I’m still in a learning stage where the main concern is to draw characters whose identities are shaped by their unwillingness to do what society expects of them.

I’m also well aware that my characters don’t move much. The reason is simple: I hate watching transition sequences and insert shots in movies such as clouds in time-lapse. In my films, the characters are already in the frame, they come and go in a way that the audience doesn’t have to actually

see them arriving and leaving. I’m expecting that they can deal with more ellipses than what they’re used to seeing in films today.

Power, authority and the resistance to others’ freedom are often evoked in your films. How does this affect Victoria and Florence’s relationship in VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR?

In “Curling”, Jean-François, the main character, hesitates long and hard before embracing a social behaviour; his missteps were the driving narrative theme. Everything was fragile, on the verge of collapsing – maybe he wasn’t destined to live among other people. In VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR, the main characters have lived fully and don’t see the point of changing and fitting in anymore. The rest of the world can go to hell! In many ways, this film is less evasive, more straightforward than “Curling”.

Genre artifacts take a more central place in VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR than in your previous films. What’s your relationship with genre cinema?

As a teenager, I saw every horror movie I could. Hitchcock, Franju, Argento, Tarantino, and more recently Winding Refn with Drive: auteur films inspired by genre elements can be rather interesting; when the balance is right, they become exciting hybrids, especially movies that are not strictly homages or copycats. But that’s a hard thing to achieve.

You’ve worked with non-professionals, people with developmental disorders, animals...what was the toughest constraint while shooting VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR?

For the first time, I had to deal with actors with completely different backgrounds and personalities. Pierrette Robitaille (Victoria) is a distinguished, seasoned stage and TV actress with little experience of auteur cinema, so we had to make her feel at ease. As for Marc-André Grondin (Guillaume),

he’s an incredibly talented young actor, with the utmost professional attitude. He wants to go fast and do something meaningful. His passion and devotion during the shoot is something we constantly looked to value and honour. He helped me to stay focused and organized. And then there was Romane Boringher (Florence), who is the same age as me, and shares some of my interests. She has this kind of quiet strength that cooled me down during filming. In the end, I had to manage the set one personality at a time.

You directed “Drifting States”, your first feature film, almost 10 years ago. In retrospect, how has your filmmaking evolved since your early works?

From one project to the next, we can’t help but change the way we see the world. I felt a strong urge to make movies five or ten years ago; it was probably my way of making a splash on the film scene. That’s still important to me, but my motivations have changed. Dealing with “reality” doesn’t interest me as much as before, as both a cinephile and a filmmaker. So my new ideas are less dependent on logic and psychological realism. Film, as a spectacle, is something that speaks to me in a more compelling way today.

*“I felt a strong urge to make movies five or ten years ago; it was probably my way of making a splash on the film scene. That’s still important to me, but my motivations have changed.”*





## Denis CÔTÉ director and screenwriter

Born in 1973 in the province of New Brunswick and now living and working in Montreal (Canada), Denis Côté is a former film critic who learned his craft with numerous experimental short films.

DRIFTING STATES (2005) launched his career on the international stage after receiving the Golden Leopard (video competition) at the Locarno Film Festival and the Indie Vision Grand Prix in Jeonju (South Korea). His first feature film already had all of his trademarks: minimalistic camerawork, a blend of seasoned and non-professional actors, middle-of-nowhere natural settings and elliptical narratives that helped him gain recognition on the festival circuit.

Shot with Bulgarian stage actors, a minimal crew – including Quebec filmmaker Rafaël Ouellet – and self-financed budget, OUR PRIVATE LIVES (2007) pushed Côté’s ambition to blur lines between experimentalism, genre filmmaking and cinéma-vérité, while keeping more distance from classic narrative movies. In Quebec, Côté’s DIY production style earned him much

media exposure and accolades from fellow first-time directors, who share the same personal and uncompromising vision of auteur cinema.

With ALL THAT SHE WANTS (2008), Côté co-opted film noir codes and delivered a low-life, hillbilly-meets-Beckett thriller in black and white from a labyrinthine screenplay. This film marks his first collaboration with cinematographer Josée Deshaies (“L’Apollonide”, “La question humaine”), who has worked with Côté two more times so far. The film garnered the Best Director award in Locarno and made the Best films of the year list of Jean-Michel Frodon, the then-editor-in-chief of Cahiers du Cinéma.

Côté went back to guerrilla-style moviemaking the following year with CARCASSES (2009). Conceived during an artist’s residency in the Montreal south shore area, this unlikely match between a real-life junkyard collector and a militia of autistic lovers premiered at the Cannes Directors’ Fortnight and has been distributed in Canada, the USA and Brazil.

In 2010, Côté became, along with James Benning and Matías Piñeiro, the first North American helmers of the Jeonju Digital Project, under which he directed LES LIGNES ENNEMIES, his first film starring Quebec movie star Marc-André Grondin, who played a soldier

whose battalion gets lost in the woods.

Then CURLING (2010) marked the beginning of a new stage in Côté’s career. Driven by dialogue and a gallery of rich but idle characters, the film won the awards for Best Director and Best Actor at Locarno, while reaching a wider audience through festivals around the world. CURLING got distribution deals in Canada, France and the USA and garnered 3 nominations at the Jutra Awards – the “Quebec Oscars” – in 2011.

Neither documentary nor visual arts, BESTIAIRE (2012) aimed to deconstruct animals’ traditional representation on screen as well as the notion of spectacle in movies. Launched in Berlin (Forum) and Sundance, this Canada-France co-production was named one the New York Times “Best Movies You May Have Missed in 2012”, and one of the 3 finalists of the Rogers Best Canadian film selected by the Toronto Film Critics Association (TFCA).

Since 2008, Denis Côté’s body of work has been subject to several retrospectives held in Montreal, Vienna, Toronto, Ottawa, La Rochelle, Seattle, Sderot (Israel), St. Petersburg, Paris, New York City and Prague. In 2013, VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR is selected in competition at the 63rd Berlinale.



# Pierrette ROBITAILLE



## Pierrette ROBITAILLE (Victoria)

Pierrette Robitaille is one of Quebec's most sought-after stage, TV and film actresses. Since 1976, she has performed in more than 80 stage productions and 20 of the most popular movies and TV shows in Quebec's recent history.

Her work garnered Jutra Awards nominations for both her performance in *C'TA TON TOUR, LAURA CADIEUX!... LA SUITE* (Dir.: Denise Filiatrault – 1999) and *NUIT DE NOCES* (Dir.: Émile Gaudreault – 2001). She has also worked under the direction of Denys Arcand, Charles Binamé, André Melançon, Yves Simoneau and Érik Canuel. She was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 2011.



# Romane BOHRINGER

## Romane BOHRINGER (Florence)

Born in Pont-Sainte-Maxence (France), Romane Bohringer made her film debut in *KAMIKAZE* (1986), alongside her father, French actor Richard Bohringer.

Her career took off after she received the Best newcomer César award in *LES NUITS FAUVES* (Dir.: Cyril Collard – 1992). She earned public recognition with the back-to-back French and international box office success of Claude Miller's *L'ACCOMPAGNATRICE* (National Board of Review's 1992 Best Foreign Film), Martine Dugowson's *MINA TANNENBAUM* (1994) and Gilles Mimouni's *L'APPARTEMENT* (1996).

Bohringer then appeared in films directed by Yves Angelo, Agnès Varda, Bigas Luna, Bertrand Bonello, Olivier Dahan and Maiwenn, while having her break in English-speaking productions such as Agnieszka Holland's *TOTAL ECLIPSE* (1995) – alongside Leonardo DiCaprio – and Julien Temple's *VIGO* (1998).

In 2005, Romane Bohringer narrated the Academy Award winning documentary *MARCH OF THE PENGUINS* (Dir.: Luc Jacquet). She has also appeared in numerous stage and TV productions.

# Marc-André GRONDIN

## Marc-André GRONDIN (Guillaume)

Marc-André Grondin has worked on Canadian, French and American productions since the international success of C.R.A.Z.Y. (Dir.: Jean-Marc Vallée – 2005), which helped him scoop Best actor prizes in Vancouver and at the Jutra Awards.

In 2009 he became the first Canadian actor to win the Best newcomer Cesar award in France for his performance in LE PREMIER JOUR DU RESTE DE TA VIE (Dir.: Rémi Bezançon – 2008).

Grondin's versatile talent earned him leading parts in historic movies (Jean-Pierre Améris' L'HOMME QUI RIT in 2012, alongside Gerard Depardieu), comedies (Michel Delgado's BOUQUET FINAL in 2008, alongside Berenice Bejo), musicals (Christopher Thompson's BUS PALLADIUM – 2010), horror movies (Éric Tessier's 5150 ELM'S WAY – 2009), biopics (Steven Soderbergh's CHE: GUERRILLA, alongside Benicio del Toro – 2009 and Podz' L'AFFAIRE DUMONT – 2012) as well as suspense (Jean-Paul Salomé's LE CAMÉLÉON – 2010).

In 2012, the Michael Dowse-directed sports comedy GOON, in which Grondin played one of the main characters, was a box-office hit in Canada and the United States.



## Stéphanie MORISSETTE producer

Stéphanie Morissette is one of the Quebec auteur film scene's top producers. First with nihilproductions, then with Coop Vidéo de Montréal, she has worked on a dozen feature films screened at more than 50 international film festivals since the mid-2000s.

In 2005, she started a creative partnership with director Denis Côté, with whom she co-produced DRIFTING STATES, winner of the Golden Leopard – video competition at the Locarno Film Festival (Switzerland) and the Indie Vision Grand Prix at Jeonju (South Korea). To date, she has produced six more films with Côté, including ALL THAT SHE WANTS (Best Directing award – Locarno 2008) and CURLING (Best Directing & Best Actor awards – Locarno 2010).

In 2007, Morissette produced BEHIND ME, Rafaël Ouellet's second feature film, which was screened in San Sebastián and Toronto (TIFF). She again teamed up with Ouellet on CAMION (2012), which won the Best directing award and Ecumenical Jury Prize at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival.

Shot in Burundi (East Africa), JOURNAL D'UN COOPÉRANT (2010) marked her first collaboration with veteran director Robert Morin, one of Quebec's leading figures in experimental cinema. The film was screened on closing night at the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois, and won the Best Canadian Film award at the Moncton Film Festival (Canada). Morissette was also one of the producers of the documentary feature film OVER MY DEAD BODY (Dir.: Brigitte Poupart), who made the Contenders 2012 list issued by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Stéphanie Morissette founded La Maison de Prod in 2010. Denis Côté's VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR (co-produced with Metafilms' Sylvain Corbeil) and Robert Morin's FOUR SOLDIERS, her most recent works, will be both released in 2013.

## Sylvain CORBEIL producteur

Sylvain Corbeil co-founded Metafilms in 2003, where he has produced more than 15 short films, including works by Simon Lavoie, Anne Émond and Guy Édoin, which have garnered several awards in Canada and around the world.

He first worked with director Denis Côté in 2008, as a line producer on ALL THAT SHE WANTS (Best Directing award in Locarno – 2008) and CURLING (Best Directing and Best Actor awards in Locarno – 2010), then as producer of CARCASSES (Cannes Director's Fortnight – 2009), LES LIGNES ENNEMIES (2010) and BESTIAIRE (Sundance and Berlinale – 2012).

Corbeil also produced Julie Hivon's TROMPER LE SILENCE (2010) for Les Films de L'Autre; the film received the Best Canadian Film Audience Award and the Innovation Prize at the Montreal World Film Festival.

Other Metafilms productions earned nods on the international scene, among them Anne Emond's NUIT #1 (Jutra award for Best Canadian First Feature Film, plus prizes at Vancouver, Montreal and Tübingen in 2011) and LAURENTIE, directed by Simon Lavoie & Mathieu Denis (Best International Film – Raindance and Best Directing award – St. Petersburg 2012).

After producing Simon Lavoie's LE TORRENT (2012) with Jacques Blain from Lusio Films and Denis Côté's VIC+FLO SAW A BEAR (2013) with Stéphanie Morissette from La Maison de Prod, Sylvain Corbeil completed Frederick Pelletier's DIEGO STAR (2013), co-produced with Man's Films (Belgium). The film premiered at the 42nd International Film Festival Rotterdam.



Victoria

**PIERRETTE ROBITAILLE**

Florence

**ROMANE BOHRINGER**

Guillaume

**MARC-ANDRÉ GRONDIN**

Jackie/Marina St-Jean

**MARIE BRASSARD**

Émile Champagne

**GEORGES MOLNAR**



Nicolas Smith

**OLIVIER AUBIN**

Charlot Smith

**PIER-LUC FUNK**

Yvon Champagne

**GUY THAUETTE**

Jackie's assistant

**RAMON CESPEDES**



Go-Kart driver

**DANY BOUDREAU**

Bar owner

**JOHANNE HABERLIN**

The lover

**TED PLUIOSE**

The cadet

**RAOUL FORTIER-MERCIER**

# WIG + FLO ONT VU UN OURS

A film by DENIS CÔTÉ

Produced by STÉPHANIE MORISSETTE SYLVAIN CORBEIL  
Cinematography IAN LAGARDE Sound FRÉDÉRIC CLOUTIER STÉPHANE BERGERON  
Art direction COLOMBE RABY Costume design PATRICIA MCNEIL  
Makeup department MAÏNA MILITZA Editing NICOLAS ROY  
Original score MÉLISSA LAVERGNE Associate producer NANCY GRANT

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