



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

Paulo Branco presents

# Fool Moon

A FILM BY GRÉGOIRE LEPRINCE-RINGUET

GRÉGOIRE LEPRINCE-RINGUET PAULINE CAUPENNE AMANDINE TRUFFY

Photo : Kris Macotta / DA : Charlotte Sorel for CARTEL





## Synopsis

Ondine and Paul have loved each other. When she leaves him, he swears not to love again. To prove this to himself, he pursues the beautiful Camille, whom he intends to seduce and abandon. But Camille puts a spell on Paul whom she desires for herself alone. And, while falling under Camille's charms, Paul has to deal with the memory of his past love.

## Interview with Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet

*Gregoire LePrince-Ringuet begins his career with Andre Techiné (Strayed). The 28 years old actor has a flourishing career since, filming with Christophe Honoré (The Beautiful person, Love Songs), Robert Guédiguian (Army of Crime, The Snows of Kilimandjaro) and Bertrand Tavernier (The Princess of Montpensier). Fool Moon is his first feature film as a director.*

### **What was the starting point of the film: the love story or poetry?**

At the very beginning, the screenplay was born of a series of six or seven poems I had written long ago. Sentimental poems, but also more dreamlike things. By arranging them in a certain order, with the idea of bringing them together in a book, I realized that there was a dramatic thread, a narrative that was being outlined. I fleshed out the story, drawing the characters little by little. Through this process, it became a feature film.

### **You started acting during adolescence. Did the desire to be a director come to you at an early age?**

Yes right away! When I appeared in *Strayed* by André Téchiné, I was 14 and I already wanted to be the one who says "Action!" I realized that he was getting the most pleasure from the whole thing. This was confirmed later, when I worked with other great filmmakers like Honoré, Tavernier or Guédiguian. What I required to move to feature film was legitimacy as a writer. I did not want to write just to give myself a role. I had to have a story to tell. It came through writing poetry. Versification gave me this legitimacy in my own eyes.

### **How do you write a script with most of the dialogue in verse?**

I love to write in verse because, strangely, I find it easier. Stress is very liberating: the rhymes and meter guide the writing. The challenge is to make the verse serve the

narrative. I did not want to be systematic, but constantly surprise the audience. Thus many scenes begin in prose, end in verse and vice versa. The ear of the audience had simply to be charmed by the enchanting aspect of the language and, at the same time, the poetic word had to be confused with everyday elements. Pauline Caupenne, who appears in the movie, was my proofreader. She was adamant about comprehension, clarity, and the necessity of verse.

**The function of the verse is comparable to the songs in a musical: we are torn away from reality, and attain a form of truth. The characters seem possessed by poetry, as if a spell had been cast on them.**

In musicals, songs simplify the feeling while amplifying it. With unsung verses, I think we can move further towards a certain complexity in the relationship. We en-





ter into a debate. The characters explain, quarrel, argue. And I liked the idea that one could relate the versification to the fantastic dimension of the film. Verse invites the viewer to open up his imagination. But we also hear verse in very specific or austere situations, like the sequence on the stairs with Ondine, or the one where Camille is crying. The characters truly have to say things to each other. And verse has its part in that pleasure of formulation.

**The cliché associates poetry with mawkishness, yet your movie does not exclude violence, feelings and actions.**

Paul Valéry has a wonderful way of explaining this huge misunderstanding. He says: "Most people have an idea of poetry so vague that the vague in this idea is the definition of poetry to them". In this way, we willingly speak of a landscape or a poetic face to say that we find them sweet or charming, slightly wistful, which is not only simplistic but also wrong. It is obvious to me that poetry is, on the contrary, able to express everything, including anger or violence. The second widespread prejudice about poetry is that it is incomprehensible. It is true that the darkness of some poets is part of their charm. For most of those I admire, on the contrary, their clarity is what fascinates me. In a broad sense, for me all literary text is necessarily poetic. I speak of poetry from the moment where we see that the author is aware of the possible game between the meaning and the sound of words. Thus there is beautiful poetic prose, in Julien Gracq, for example. The concern for color and rhythm in meaning, that's what poetry is for me, it's the aesthetics of language.

In the film, there are lines by Paul Valéry, when Camille says to Paul on the roof: "Oh hasten not this loving act / Rapture where self and not-self meet", it comes from his poem The Footsteps. Valéry is my favorite poet. Concerning the poetic references in the film, there are of course some to Baudelaire and his sublime way of writing poems that take place on the streets, but also obviously Racine, Corneille and Molière for the scenes in alexandrines. I could also mention Aragon and Supervielle for certain passages in octosyllables.

**Where does the idea of La Forêt de Quincunx (meaning "The Forest of Quincunx") come from? (Note: this is the original title of the film in French)**

It's the idea that we get lost more easily in a standardized and rectilinear universe than in the apparent disorder of things. The staggered forest is a mental universe where the character realizes that all the paths open before him are perfectly straight and endless: he is a prisoner of that excessive freedom. I think that disorder helps us to make choices. Secondly, we refer back to the figure of the quincunx for its esoteric and mysterious connotation with the tramp.

**The film is built around a series of oppositions: day/night, city/nature, reality/dream, sky/lake... And the contrast between the two female characters, Ondine and Camille.**

It is true that the film relies a great deal on strong contrasts, in writing as in direction. With David Chambille, the director of photography, we designed a scheme to balance everything. We wanted an equal

number of day and night scenes, indoor and outdoor, and we even split up the sequences into two types for balance: the "natural" sequences and the "artificial" ones. We called a sequence "natural" when the camera was as discreet as possible to capture the scene as the actors were performing it, which often results in quite wide and long shots in terms of editing. An "artificial" sequence, on the contrary, had to be built up by editing effects or deliberate framing to obtain distortion or the stylization of reality. This distinction helped me to develop the film in terms of direction because ultimately both types, "natural" and "artificial", often find themselves mingling in a same sequence and make one another exist through their fusion. As for the characters, Camille is definitely on the side of action: she is the one that moves the story forward, it's through her that the drama occurs and continues to unfold, while Ondine embodies an immobility that places the narrative in a quieter, slower time.

**"Inanimate objects, do you have a soul?" asks Lamartine in a famous poem. In your film, the objects have genuine power.**

Indeed, there is the locket, the watch, the knife... They are the attributes of the characters, and thereby acquire symbolic value, which is necessarily a little enchanted. I am fascinated by coats of arms: those objects or images that contain the few singularities of a family or a city. They are both an emblem and a portrait. We also had to re-enchant everyday places. That's why Paul goes to the Père Lachaise cemetery to burn a photo. Père Lachaise is



a magical spot. It's the resting place of our dead and a true sanctuary, one of the few places in Paris where you cannot jog, where people avoid making phone calls.

**The film contains supernatural elements. How was the question of balance between realism and fantasy raised during writing?**

For me, the fantastic events had to serve the truth of the characters. It's the principle of the tale: an element of reality is exaggerated until it becomes unlikely but more relevant. The spell, in my film, is the strongest expression of this: it's a magical event, but Camille will say later that it was just a prayer, that she simply hoped this boy would love her, and that's plausible. Similarly, when Paul turns around on the stairs and says, "Oh! An apparition..." it's ironic because Ondine is really there before him, yet at the same time there is something a little extraordinary. We had to maintain the ambiguity between the fantastic and the believable so neither one would seem superficial.

**The watch is one of the few elements that refers to Paul's past. His sister Eve is his only family tie. You provide very little information about characters' past life.**

Yes, this watch given by his sister is a bit like the sword and shield that one gives to a knight before he leaves for adventure. I liked the idea that Paul is kind of an adventurous character, always brave, a little naive... In terms of establishing the characters, I didn't want to explain anything. Especially today, the audience is very educated, very accustomed to fiction. It takes only a character to say, "Come, I'll take you to your sister's" for the viewer to already imagine a family, parents, a childhood...

**The film contains few elements of the**

**times that it takes place in. We see, for example, very few cell phones...**

In my personal life, I am very wary of technology. I wait to really need it to use it. I always find it more fun to do things myself (locate where I am, find my way for example). I think it's the same in my film. When two characters call each other or exchange a text message rather than meet, there is a beautiful scene that disappears. Yet I wanted it to be a contemporary film. It seems to me that nowadays certain parts in Paris have been reconquered by pedestrians, hence the absence of cars in the movie. And in terms of narrative, the fact that the characters are walking, or in the subway, brings about encounters, attachment points.

**The film is both very French in its literary dimension, but keeps off the beaten path of naturalism to which French cinema is often confined.**

I made the film for that reason too. My desire was to make a film that would not be naturalistic. This French tradition is very beautiful, and I even think that we are the best in the world at this sort of cinema. But it is good to offer something else, films that exalt the power of the imagination, in the style of Jacques Demy and then Christophe Honoré. Love Songs marked me a great deal as an actor and as a man, it was edifying for me, and I owe Honoré the audacity I needed to move away from naturalism.

**The main characters' names, Paul, Camille and Ondine, are full of very French literary and cinematographic references.**

Paul is a tribute to Paul Dédalus, the hero of *How I Got Into an Argument*. I can't deny that Desplechin is a master for me. I don't think my film resembles his, but it's clear

that *Kings and Queen* is the best movie in the world for me. Paul is also the first name of the depressive character Romain Duris plays in *In Paris*, who also goes through a break-up at the beginning of the film. For Camille, we obviously think of Musset, but it was more for the sound of the name, with the shimmering "i" opposed to Ondine, an aquatic character, with her initial O. Ondine is not a reference to Giraudoux, but rather to a wave, something elusive, a little wistful and nostalgic.

**The character of the tramp occupies a special place in the story. Where does he come from?**

This character was born from a poem I had written and which is still partly present in the film. A poem about a coin, a simple object that can bring closer a lot of contrary notions through heads or tails. The character of the celestial tramp was inspired to me by *Gates of the Night* by Marcel Carné where this character is played by Jean Vilar. There is also a reference to Faust in René Clair's film *Beauty and the Devil*. For the first scene with the tramp, I had in mind the coin scene in *No Country for Old Men* by the Coen brothers, with this very long reverse-angle shot.

**Unlike what one could have imagined about a movie in verse, the camera is not stationary, but on the contrary very mobile. Even the ratio changes...**

If I worked alone on the screenplay and actor direction, the direction is the result of my collaboration with my cinematographer and my first assistant. We were trying to take the film towards a flexibility of direction: a camera that moves, with long takes, hand-held shots, tracking shots, Steadicam... We wanted to vary as much as possible, with the idea of choo-





sing what was best for each sequence. Similarly, the ratio changes were imposed by aesthetic needs: the 2.40 ratio for the most spectacular scenes, 1.33 for the whole belly of the film, the madness scenes, for which we needed to isolate the elements in the frame. And 1.66 was the balance ratio between the two.

**How did you cast your actors?**

I had already directed Pauline Caupenne on stage, she was perfect for Camille and so my decision was immediate. For Ondine, I did a lot of research. I was introduced to Amandine Truffey, and from the first tests I knew she would be perfect. She's a stage actress, like Thierry Hancisse, a superstar of the Comédie-Française. I needed that ease with the text that stage actors have. I also chose Marilyne Canto and Antoine Chappey, who bring a concrete and soft tone.

**Did you decide to play Paul yourself from the very beginning?**

No. But the film was very difficult to produce, and at one point it became clear that everything had to rest on my shoulders. And I must say that it is comfortable to be an actor in your own movie, because you are in close contact with the film and direct from the inside. Moreover, everyone sees that you are taking a risk so they stand together. The other actors directed me at the same time as I was directing them. At the end of a take, I told them what I thought of them, but I also asked them what they thought of me. This empowers actors, establishes trust, and inspires everyone to do better.

**Did you rehearse a great deal with your actors?**

Yes, before shooting, because I did not have time to do rehearsals on set. Shoo-

ting took place over several periods for budget reasons, but that was a very good thing. These constraints were very beneficial because I was able to work on the scenes between sessions and therefore prepare better. It was a lucky break that Paulo Branco agreed to produce the film. Once he says yes, he has total trust in a director: he does not get involved in casting or directing.

**You have given a role to Arthur Teboul, the leader of Feu Chatterton, a group which, like your movie, combines literary style with a very contemporary energy, also with a taste for spectacle.**

We have been friends for ten years. I was there at the group's debuts. We have the same approach. On Feu Chatterton's album, he proved that with lyrical and formal language, one could create something very modern. So it was logical for me to invite him to recite *Consigne à la Gare*, one of his texts that happens to correspond perfectly to Paul's situation at the end of the film. On a formal level, this text is an opening to another family of poetry, which is the one of free verse... I am also very proud that he made his screen debut with me. He had never acted before and understood many things at lightning speed.

**The soundtrack was composed by Clement Doumic, another member of Feu Chatterton, this time with an electro aspect.**

I've known him for a long time too. We have made music together, either for fun or more seriously, for short films for example. I love electro and I wanted to marry the poetry of the film with contemporary sounds. The use of *Des pas sur la neige* by Debussy comes from my editor Nathalie Sanchez.

**For the dance scene, you used a choreographer, Georgia Ives.**

Yes, she works with Jean-Claude Gallotta, a true genius. She designed the choreography according to the moves I could do... It was easier for Pauline who has dance training. Tchaikovsky soon imposed himself as the choice for this scene, for his spectacular orchestration. This idea of the party, of the show, is very important to me. At each stage in the film's creative process, I tried to make sure the audience would feel pleasure. There is the intellectual pleasure, the pleasure of understanding, but it takes trust from the audience to attain that. The spectacular scenes inspire this trust. It is important because then one is ready to accept other scenes that require a little more concentration.

**The image of Paris in the film is both recognizable and not completely familiar. You shoot rooftops, the elevated metro line, and also places that are not identifiable at all...**

We shot exclusively in the north and east of Paris. In some neighborhoods, there are still people working in the streets, in workshops, so it makes the street scenes credible. It's important to me to be able to reclaim the city. One must be capable of setting a camera and saying, "This is ours, I'm showing it to you!" In the east of Paris, there are also several cities in one. The elevated metro stations, with their orange sodium light, make me think of New York. And anyway these are just the parts of Paris that I know best, with the idea of not looking too far for what is just outside our windows.

*Interview by Julien Dokan*

**SEQUENCE 54 EXT/NIGHT/LAKE**

*Night has fallen. Paul is walking in the moonlight on a promontory overlooking the lake. He is contemplating...*

**PAUL**

Let me stop here. The night is so dark.  
One can now see two bright halos.  
Two moons answer one another in the dark:  
that of heaven and its reflection, that of water.  
I gaze at the real one, so perfectly round, so full, so clear.  
Its great circle illuminates both my conscience and the world.  
Wisdom tells me to follow that beacon.  
But I see the other moon.  
Unstable, incensed, capricious, an illusion twisted by the stream.  
And this star broken by the ripples shimmers, irresistible.  
It goes to my head.  
O, deep mystery of the night that I sound,  
I have dedicated my mind to two rival stars.  
But, in secret, I want my soul to merge them.  
And, by diving here below, I will fly up to the heavens.

*He dives.  
Paul swims and comes to rest on the surface, his head turned to the sky.*

*Then, casting a last look at the nocturnal star, he sinks into the depths.  
We then see him swimming in the silvery reflections of the moon.*

*Black.*





## Cast

Paul  
Camille  
Ondine  
The Tramp  
Eve  
Bruno

**Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet**  
**Pauline Caupenne**  
**Amandine Truffy**  
**Thierry Hancisse**  
**Marilyne Canto**  
**Antoine Chappey**

## Crew

Directed and written by  
Produced by  
Cinematographer  
Sound  
Original Music  
Wardrobe  
Set Design  
Editing

**Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet**  
**Paulo Branco**  
**David Chambille**  
**Samuel Aïchoun**  
**Clément Doumic**  
**Juliette Chanaud**  
**Clémence Petinaud**  
**Nathalie Sanchez,**  
**Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet**

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CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA  
ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE  
and ARTE France

Running Time **1h49 min** • Aspect Ratio **2.39** • Sound Format **5.1**