



FABIENNE VONIER presents

KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS    SERGI LOPEZ    YVAN ATTAL

# LEAVING

PARTIR

a film by CATHERINE CORSINI

tiff. toronto  
international  
film festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION 2009

TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL  
SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS



**SYNOPSIS** *Suzanne is about forty years old, a doctor's wife and mother of two teenagers living in the south of France. Her idle bourgeois lifestyle gets her down and she decides to go back to work as a physiotherapist, a job she trained for but quit in order to bring up her children. Her husband agrees to fix up a consulting room for her in their backyard. The man in charge of the building work is Ivan, an odd job man who has been to prison. When he and Suzanne meet, the mutual attraction is sudden and violent. Suzanne decides to give up everything and live this all-engulfing passion to the full.*

# INTERVIEW WITH CATHERINE CORSINI

**The storyline of PARTIR seems quite classical – a wife, a husband and a lover. However, there is a radical aspect with the wife who leaves everything behind from one day to the next to live out her passion. This creates its singularity. Is this what compelled you to tell the story?**

I think that every director at some point in their career experiences the urge and the desire to confront themselves and film a genuine love story. I wanted to tell a typically classical story, one that would be very simple, but allow me to follow the trajectory of a woman like the heroines I had dreamed of... women like Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary. This was the impetus, obviously in this classical context, to portray a woman who dares to go for the adventure. She won't compromise in the least, perhaps because she's at a point in her life when she knows she can no longer miss out on things happening to her. Even her children can't hold her back. I tried to show desire and its irruption in an ordinary, normal and ordered existence. I wanted to show its power and its inevitable nature... I wanted the film to be extremely toned down leaving a large place for sensuality, nature... In this manner, love eliminates all psychology from the film and imparts a pure impulsion to it, that of bodies looking to come together or flee. This in turn imprints movement on the film.

**There is another important element in this story. It's the social context. She is the wife of a doctor. She leaves her husband, children, comforts and home for a Spanish blue collar worker...**

I felt strongly about this social, political dimension, which deprecates a woman's place in a couple. There is a clear feminist point of view in the film. Suzanne is trapped. She has no financial independence and is completely at the mercy of her husband who uses every means at his disposal, even the most disgusting, to keep her from leaving. He is ready to cut her off financially. It's the story of a woman who cuts herself off from her milieu. She emancipates herself at whatever the cost. It's as though she had lived

imprisoned for years and then suddenly, desire, love and passion compel her leave everything behind. She thrusts herself entirely into the relationship knowing full well that she can never turn back. With her lover, she learns to be herself again. Suddenly she is with someone who is there for her, who sees her, hears her, desires her. She even learns detachment. She may have had every comfort, but her lover brings her something much more simple, but essential: desire, pleasure, the promise of happiness...

**Why did you want to work with Kristin Scott Thomas?**

Because she fascinates me. She has a certain quality that is mysterious, a frozen beauty, an apparent hardness tainted with a certain melancholy that makes her fragile and vulnerable. She was the ideal choice for the woman with a rather cold bourgeois veneer. Then there's a faint crack that reveals something desperate... That was the thing I was looking to reveal within her. All the more since I know she is capable of showing deep distress and emotion with such incredible depth. There was also that gentle, virtually imperceptible transformation of her face, at first passive, nearly resolved, to the incredible determination that we read on her face at the end when she shoots.

**The film takes place during the summer in the South of France, Nîmes, where the light is so beautiful.**

I chose Nîmes for that light and heat... We filmed last summer in the middle of the month of August. The sweltering heat was oppressive. But I was delighted because I was looking for a climate that fed into the ardent desire of the characters.

**This is the fourth time you've collaborated with Agnès Godard for lighting. How do you find you work together?**

I know she films women very well. She has a delicate way of shooting love scenes that I wanted to be both raw and beautiful... All of this counts, and I knew

she would give the film a light that was sensual and at the same time emphasize the troubled aspect of the characters. The love story had to be sublimated, giving it grace and beauty. The same held true for the landscapes.

**What do you expect from your actors?**

That they accept to be put out and not settle into a comfortable *savoir-faire*. I want them to remain on the alert. I try to find their weaknesses a little, and their mystery. I try to draw them out and break their system, if they have one, and to place them in danger. I hope they will give us something that they have never given anybody else. I want something to happen between them and the character they are playing... that some element of truth emerges. When editing PARTIR, it was only then that I noticed we could hear Kristin's heart beating in some of the shots.

**You used Georges Delerue and Antoine Duhamel music composed for Truffaut films. Was this a fleeting reference?**

More than that. I was crazy and would record the music in the theatre even before the CDs came out. With my editor, we tried mainly Delerue's music first, with one scene, then two and three scenes... And it was magical. It worked so well that I couldn't live without it! And it gave the film an even more romantic dimension. We decided to keep it, and I was very touched to have obtained the rights.

**The end is a real movie ending...**

The end gives the meaning to the movie. It belongs to the director. I like endings where despite all the ordeals, love triumphs, even if it means death! It's a classical model, but the advantage of this type of story is that because of it, they are stories that can be made, re-made, and revisited eternally. They are truly a challenge to direct. We all dream of living a passionate love story. The movies allow us to live what we don't allow ourselves to live in daily life. We are all yearning to experience these breath-taking moments.



# INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

**What attracted you to the project when Catherine Corsini spoke to you of PARTIR?**

Her. I was immediately attracted by Catherine who is a unique person. She's a little extreme. I like her films very much because there is always something strong and lyrical that takes place. She's daring and tries many things. She came to see me and talked to me about an idea she had for a film with me in it. The story of a woman about my age who experiences something that many women experience today. I was interested, so she started to write it. What's more, the entire undertaking with the crew appealed to me. Not only was there Catherine, but Fabienne Vonier, the producer, as well. I appreciate her very much. She has produced some lovely things. And then there was Agnès Godard who was the chief lighting technician. I wanted to work with these women, to recount a story with them about this woman who had been suffocated for such a long time, and who believes she can reinvent the second half of her life.

**How would you define Suzanne's character?**

She is a woman who takes stock of her life and doesn't like what she sees. Suzanne is unable to work because she was busy raising children for a long time. She loves her husband. He takes care of all her needs. She is well-dressed, has a lovely house, a nice car and goes on vacation... But her husband is constantly putting her down. This woman is HIS wife. She belongs to him and she is part of his social status. When she becomes aware of all this, she suddenly

meets this man who is completely opposite from her husband. He is kind, attentive and simple. He is a Spanish builder, and just a bit of a crook. The meeting is a revelation for her. It is linked to her desire and a sexual pleasure she hasn't experienced in a long time.

**What touched you the most in her character?**

Her hope and her naiveté. She thinks she can change the world, find love again and start from scratch. She's even ready to work at a checkout counter register. Her pride weighs less heavily than her desire and her love. The moment she decides to leave, nothing can stop her. Not even her children. She feels a bit guilty and then after, she doesn't look back. She takes her path. I like that freedom...

**Suzanne and Sergi Lopez's character are both foreigners in France. Do you think that has an impact on the story?**

Yes, of course. Both of them feel displaced. In fact, when you live in a foreign country for a long time, there comes a point when you feel like escaping, to either go home, or leave for another destination. In this situation, going elsewhere is symbolic.

**Were some scenes particularly frightening for you?**

Naturally, like with all the physical scenes. Whether they are violent scenes or love scenes, it is always complicated. I don't like doing them or watching them after the film is completed, but I really like what

they show here. It's a typical story, but not the way Catherine films it. Every time Suzanne sees her lover, after they've become physically intimate, the only thing we see are crossed arms that grab at each other. I found that very beautiful... It's a very sensual film. Just take a look at the way she captures nature, the countryside, the seaside...

**How would you describe Catherine as a director?**

She is very instinctive and directive all at once. And also... rather harsh! Frontal, direct, passionate. But I would work with her again in a heartbeat! She isn't afraid. She is demanding and rigorous. If she doesn't get what she wants, she describes it with total precision and... one must deliver! Actually, that worked out perfectly for me because I liked to be pushed into a corner. I look to be provoked... rather than having someone who's happy with the first take!

**After acting in Philippe Claudel's film I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG, here you are once again in a role of a woman looking to reinvent her life. Do you think French cinema sees you in this light?**

No, I think these women are characters that illustrate issues regarding women in my age group! Each one demonstrates it in their particular manner. And that infamous mid-life crisis is different for each person.

## CAST

Suzanne **KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS**  
Ivan **SERGI LOPEZ**  
Samuel **YVAN ATTAL**  
Rémi **BERNARD BLANCAN**  
Dubreuil **ALADIN REIBEL**  
David **ALEXANDRE VIDAL**  
Marion **DAISY BROOM**

## CREW

Director : **CATHERINE CORSINI** Screenplay : **CATHERINE CORSINI** with the collaboration of **GAËLLE MACÉ**  
Photography : **AGNÈS GODARD** Sound : **YVES-MARIE OMNES, OLIVIER DÔ HÛU & BENOÎT HILLEBRANT** Editing : **SIMON JACQUET** Set : **LAURENT OTT** Costumes : **ANNE SCHOTTE**  
Casting **BRIGITTE MOIDON (A.R.D.A.)** line producer **STÉPHANE PARTHENAY**  
Producer : **FABIENNE VONIER - PYRAMIDE PRODUCTIONS** Co-producers : **CAMERA ONE, VMP & SOLAIRE PRODUCTION** With the participation of **CANAL + AND CINÉCINÉMA**  
In association with **COFINOVA 5** With the support of **LA RÉGION LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON**  
In partnership with **LE CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE**

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