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LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – synopsis nl + fr

Francis (Xavier Dolan) en Marie (Monia Chokri) zijn twee goede vrienden. Tijdens een etentje ontmoeten ze Nicolas (Niels Schneider), een plattelandsjongen die net in de stad arriveerde.

Van afspraakje tot afspraakje, verstoord door allerlei tekens aan de wand – sommige overduidelijk, andere dan weer ingebeeld – gaan de twee medeplichtigen ten onder aan de obsessie van hun droombeeld, en al snel bedreigt een ongezond liefdesduel hun vriendschap, die ze onbreekbaar achtten...

Francis (Xavier Dolan) et Marie (Monia Chokri) sont deux bons amis. Lors d'un dîner, ils rencontrent Nicolas (Niels Schneider), un jeune homme de la campagne qui débarque tout juste en ville.

De rendez-vous en rendez-vous, troublés par d'innombrables signes - certains patents, d'autres imaginaires - les deux complices sombrent dans l'obsession de leur fantasme, et bientôt, un duel amoureux malsain menace l'amitié qu'ils croyaient infrangible...

Lengte 97 min. / Taal: Frans / Land: Canada
Durée 97 min. / Langue: français / Pays: Canada



LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – cast

MONIA CHOKRI..... Marie Camille
NIELS SCHNEIDER..... Nicolas M.
XAVIER DOLAN..... Francis Riverèkim
ANNE DORVAL moeder van Nicolas / la mere de Nicolas

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – crew

Regie / Réalisation..... XAVIER DOLAN
Scenario / Scénario..... XAVIER DOLAN
Productie door / Produit par DANIEL MORIN
..... CAROLE MONDELLO
..... XAVIER DOLAN
Beeld / Image..... STÉPHANIE WEBER-BIRON
Kostuums / Costumes..... XAVIER DOLAN
Geluid / Son SYLVAIN BRASSARD
Art director XAVIER DOLAN
Montage XAVIER DOLAN

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – A word from the director

In the beginning, making this movie was not in the cards.

I was returning from a road trip with two friends, Niels and Monia. The journey had laid on some rich moments ranging from arid deserts to outlandish obese people. Locked in together for mile after mile, the dynamics of our intimacy sparked ideas for a project about a love triangle. It was during this Kerouac-like trip that I learned of the cancellation of a film I was meant to shoot in the coming October (for reasons...surprise, surprise... of time and financial constrictions). And, thus, the triumphant traveller came home empty-handed.

The idea of doing nothing for a year terrified me. Worse still, autumn in Montreal was busy with film-shoots: all too many road signs were flagging more movie sets than I can remember. Convinced that my very life force was giving up on me, and scared stiff by the prospect of creative stagnation, I locked into the idea of writing something to a tight, self-imposed deadline.

Come early September, I boarded a train and headed for Toronto International Film Festival. With Lake Ontario's iridescent waters lapping nearby, I took out my laptop and started writing the screenplay for Heartbeats (Les Amours Imaginaires).

During the festival and on the train home, I applied the finishing touches. I returned to Montreal, with my second feature film in hand. All I had to do now was merely lay my hands on \$600,000 so that I could shoot it. Piece of cake!

I did the same rounds, knocking on the very same doors I had visited back in the days of J'ai tué ma mère. I went back to being the young, scrawny filmmaker, vainly begging the tight-fisted fat cats and bogus angels to, once again, put flesh and bones on a dream. I naïvely believed that the bright glow of my summer of success would magically open a few closed doors. Knowing that the wave had to crash and die sooner or later, that my perhaps fleeting success would fade with the end of the season, I wanted to make the most of its momentum in order to gather in the funds..

But nobody answered the call. The few businessmen approached procrastinated. Total strangers to the film-world's tacit moral code, they seemed impaled on their own megalomaniacal frenzy. As the leaves on the trees visibly turned brown, I was badly in need of shimmering colours. Autumn was on its way out. Impatient, I dipped into my modest treasure chest and, using what I had left, I set the wheels in motion, driven by a crazy, deep-seated conviction that, sooner or later, the money would show up.

Hi, Square One – I'm back!

Yanked out of bed at the crack of dawn and chilled by an unforgiving, honest-to-God country frost, we were drinking disgusting coffee in a forest deep in the Lotbinière. It was almost a year to the very day that we had started shooting J'ai tué ma mère, and I was in seventh heaven as I shouted, "Action!"

Nighttime, and it's back to the dormitory. We were lodging in a post-modern, former presbytery that had been converted into a country guesthouse. I was mentally poring over our first day's work and beginning to sense that this film was going to be nothing like *J'ai tué ma mère*. Nevertheless, at that moment, I was not about to rule out the same dense, anguished emotional charge that had informed my earlier work. Nor had I yet decided that this film would be no kind of follow-up inviting unfavourable comparisons with its predecessor. I still had no clear, conscious intention of putting it on a new and different footing. However, almost magically, and as if by an act of will pushing up from the film set's own collective unconscious, I was protected from the pitfalls of redundancy as *Heartbeats* began gradually to assert itself by revealing its own distinct voice, colours and soul.

As for money, private sector investors (whom I had met thanks to the intervention of a guardian angel) emerged from the shadows shortly after we had started shooting. They saved the day. We received everything we needed and they, literally, became the heroes of the film.

Today, I look back and I am stunned by the twists and turns of events and, above all, at the way the universe conspired to bring this work to life with such serendipitous timing. I see now that I could never have made a better second film than *Heartbeats*. Wrapped in the indescribable joy of a completed project, I am already thinking ahead to the next. Art never lets you sit still for long. There's work to be done.

Xavier Dolan



LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – Monia Chokri



Marie Camille

On those rare occasions when her neurotic mask slips, one glimpses Marie Camille for what she really is: a young woman forsaken largely though her own fault who, just like any other 20-plus female, blandly seeks love – albeit with greater desperation and aggression.

As she negotiates a turning point in her life, Marie is still in the grip of a naïve and virginal romanticism that has yet to be dented. Despite her inherent and already active amoral narcissism, she still believes in the impossible dream: a dream she blindly pursues clad in her old dress, as she puffs her way through 60 cigarettes a day while not giving a crap about anybody else.

Marie is medieval and modern woman all rolled into one, incarnating a dilapidated elegance from times gone by while living at a single-mindedly neurotic pace that is unmistakably 21st Century.

As ever, millennia can separate one powerful love story from another: but time does nothing to improve either men or their stories. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Monia Chokri

On completing her studies at the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal in 2005, Monia Chokri threw herself into several theatre projects. These included *L'évangile selon Salomé* (by Alexandre Marine); *Ailleurs* (by Serge Mandeville); *Chroniques* (by Emmanuel Schwartz); and *Les mauvaises herbes* (by Benoît Vermeulen). In 2006, she played in *Le songe de l'oncle* (by Igor Ovadis), and, in 2007, appeared in Fabrice Melquiot's *Le Diable en partage*. Both works were staged by the Du Bunker Company of which the actress is a founder member.

Monia can also be seen on the big screen in Anne Émond's short film *Frédérique au centre*, and Xavier Rondeau-Beauchesne's *Hier, demain, hier*. She also acted in Denys Arcand's *L'Âge des ténèbres*.

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – Niels Schneider



Nicolas M.

What does a typical would-be lover look for in the object of her desire? BEAUTY before all else... because love's first impact usually strikes in silence, as the eye shoots across the separating spaces and claims the face of a future torturer for itself. MYSTERY is another prerequisite. Honest discussion and frankly stated intentions do not give off the heady, specious perfume of risk: and where there is no risk, there is no adrenaline... just the faintest beat of a needy heart. And where there is mystery, there will also be an AMBIGUITY that invites attempts to speculate and interpret the secrets lurking behind the dense veil where the other's true intentions lie in wait. Thus the object of desire never shows his hand. For him, so base a curiosity is the prerogative of his prey. Furthermore, he must be TACTILE because the would-be lover, in her unending search for signs, will always find no greater satisfaction than physical contact. And, whatever its random meaninglessness, physical contact represents love at its most convincing for it appears to provide an almost complete answer, however fleeting, to the burning

question, 'Does he feel what I feel?' Finally, the beloved should be an UNCONSCIOUS creature, something that allows him to deftly but unthinkingly take offence at the affection shown by the other. And all along, as he pleads total innocence, he keeps surprising himself with the effectiveness of his instinctive strategies and moves. A single teaspoonful of INDIFFERENCE will provide the detachment necessary to insulate him from feeling the anguish he has unleashed: and – voilà – shake hands with a social menace whom you would never wish on anybody. Do not rule out that Nicolas M possesses all the above qualities. They make him the perfect candidate for the title of heartbreaker par excellence.

Niels Schneider

Niels Schneider kicked off his career working in both cinema and television. He has featured on the small screen in 15/LOVE; Canadian Case Files III; S.O.S.; and, latterly, Virginie. His cinema work includes short films such as, La Dame de Pique (C. Khoury); La neige cache l'ombre des figuiers (S. Najari); and Les chroniques de l'autre (S. Farkas Bolla). In 2007, Niels played Sacha in Tout est parfait, Yves-Christian Fournier's hard-hitting film. He has since appeared in À vos marques... Party ! 2 (F. D'Amours); 2 Frogs (D. Papineau); and J'ai tué ma mère (X. Dolan).

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – Xavier Dolan



Francis Riverëkim

In friendship, as in love, there will always be a power play as subtle and elusive as the contexts in which it is played out. A couple cannot achieve balance without a dominant figure. And where one is dominant, the other is already bowing in submission.

Submission and Francis Riverëkim go hand in hand. Discreet, timid, and a man of few but precise words, everything points to the palpable vulnerability of a character swathed in shadows and sweetness.

That being said, however... Marie Camille's mild-mannered accessory is no toothless lapdog. If he caresses her with the one hand while backing out of an invitation to the theatre thereby leaving her free to her own devices, he later follows up with a smack from the other:

"Where the hell have you been?" he bluntly asks when Nicolas and Marie walk into the café where he is eating with friends. "We've just left the theatre," explains Nicolas, totally unaware of the game in play. "Oh, the theatre... I'd forgotten it," Francis replies.

Basically, these two adversaries who appear so different thoroughly deserve each other. Upper hand, underhand... do they love to fight or fight to love?

Xavier Dolan

Xavier Dolan first appeared on screen at the age of four in a series of TV advertisements for a well-known pharmaceutical chain. He has since appeared in numerous films (*J'en suis*; *La forteresse suspendue*; *Miroir d'été*) and TV series (*Omertà*; *L'or*). He was recently seen in Pascal Laugier's controversial *Martyrs*.

In May of 2009, his debut feature *J'ai tué ma mère* was selected for Cannes' 41st Directors' Fortnight where he won the Prix Regard Jeune, the Art Cinema Award and the Prix SACD. The film, which is still doing the rounds of the festival circuit, has to date racked up more than 31 awards worldwide. As well as being Canada's official entry for the Oscar nominations for Best Foreign Language Film, *J'ai tué ma mère* was also nominated for the Césars' equivalent award. *Heartbeats* is Xavier Dolan's second feature-length film.

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – Daniel Morin

Daniel Morin holds diplomas in Screenwriting and History and, for more than 20 years, he has worked as both screenwriter and producer.

In September 2000, he founded Boréal Films, a company that already has in excess of ten feature-length fiction films to its name, the majority of which were directorial debuts. Of note among his productions are Jean-Claude Lord's *Station Nord*; Dany Laferrière's *Comment conquérir l'Amérique en une nuit*; and Salif Traore's 2007 film *Faro, la reine des eaux*, winner of numerous prizes on the international festival circuit.

In 2008, Daniel contributed to the production of Xavier Dolan's *J'ai tué ma mère* while simultaneously producing filmmaker Isabelle D'Amours' first film, *Les mots gelés*. He is currently working on the development of three feature-length fiction films, two of which are international coproductions.

LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES – Carole Mondello

College in hand, Carole Mondello took her first steps into the world of production in 1968 when she joined Publicité MacLaren. In 1970, she took on the role of director of commercial production for Onyx Films.

During her career, Carole has worked on productions such as *Bingo* (Jean-Claude Lord); *Jo Gaillard* (Christian Jaque); *Les Plouffe* (Gilles Carle); *Cat Squad* (William Friedkin); *Barnum* (Lee Philips); *Enemies, A Love Story* (Paul Mazursky); *HIGHLANDER III - The Sorcerer* (Andy Morahan); *Les Guerriers* (Micheline Lanctôt); and *Le Génie du crime* (Louis Bélanger).

More recently, she has invested her experience into launching works by young, first-time directors such as Frédéric Leforestier (*The Peacekeeper*), and Yan England (*Moi*, a short film that won many prizes in various international festivals). In 2007, Carole doubled as associate producer and director of production on Xavier Dolan's *J'ai tué ma mère*. She is currently busy with preparations for a Quebec TV series, as well as Xavier Dolan's third feature film, *Laurence Anyways*.