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Presents

HIDEAWAY
(LE REFUGE)

A film by François Ozon

The internationally acclaimed director of
**SWIMMING POOL, UNDER THE SAND, 8 WOMEN,
TIME TO LEAVE and CRIMINAL LOVERS**

**"ONE OF FRANÇOIS OZON'S FINEST FILMS...
SEDUCTIVELY BEAUTIFUL...
SPELLBINDING"**

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Synopsis:

Mousse (Isabelle Carré) and Louis (Melvil Poupaud) are young, beautiful, rich and in love, but drugs have invaded their lives. After Louis' fatal overdose, Mousse soon learns she is pregnant (actress Isabelle Carré was pregnant while shooting). Feeling lost, Mousse escapes to a beautiful beach house far from Paris and is soon joined in her refuge by Louis' gay brother, Paul (French singer Louis-Ronan Choisy in his first screen appearance). The two strangers gradually develop an unusual and deeply moving relationship as Ozon continues his unique exploration of the nature of family and blood ties.

Directed by François Ozon (*Swimming Pool*, *Under The Sand*, *8 Women*, *Time To Leave*, *Criminal Lovers*) and starring Melvil Poupaud (*Time To Leave*, *A Christmas Tale*, *Le Divorce*, *Broken English*), Isabelle Carré (*A French Gigolo*, *Beautiful Memories*), and French singer Louis-Ronan Choisy.

HIDEAWAY

(LE REFUGE)

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Not Rated: This Film Contains Mature Subject Matter

DVD Bonus Features:

- Original Theatrical Trailer
- Original Music Video by Louis-Ronan Choisy
- Other Strand Releasing Trailers

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INTERVIEW WITH FRANÇOIS OZON

Pregnancy

A year ago, an actress friend of mine called to give me some good news: she was pregnant. Two days later, I called her and proposed we do a film inspired by her pregnancy. At first she was delighted, but a week later she pulled out. This was her second child, she knew what she was in for and didn't feel capable of being both an actress and pregnant.

Disappointed, I was about to scrap the project when my casting director Sarah Teper informed me: "There are three pregnant actresses in Paris right now, and one of them is Isabelle Carré." My enthusiasm immediately returned. Isabelle's youthful image was inspiring – she still didn't quite seem like a grown woman to me. I called her, we met and I told her about the project. She thought it over for two days and said yes.

For ages, I'd dreamt of doing a film with a pregnant actress. I've often explored the theme of motherhood, but I've never really looked specifically at pregnancy. It was either passed over with an ellipsis, briefly illustrated with a fake stomach, or the film began after the child was born.

The script

To start with, I had Isabelle read a three-page treatment outlining the character's trajectory. Then I wrote the screenplay, seeing her regularly throughout. She was six months pregnant, and I'd ask her to tell me about the emotions and sensations she was experiencing. I had some hunches, but I needed certain concrete details: can you manage this particular movement? What do you eat? How do you get out of bed? What have you been dreaming about? The film is, in part, a documentary about Isabelle. Even though Mousse is very different from her, Isabelle really nourished the story and inspired us.

Isabelle followed the screenplay development closely, and I think she enjoyed it. Since we needed to write quickly, I asked a young screenwriter, Mathieu Hippeau, to help me. I gave him the framework for the scenes and he fleshed them out. He brought a lot of life and tenderness to the dialogue. We got straight to the heart of things, with no filters. The screenplay didn't go through the usual stages that tend to create a distance.

The desire to film a pregnant woman

A pregnant woman is fascinating to behold. Her body undergoes a metamorphosis, grows rounder... it's very attractive, sensual and mysterious. I feel a little bit like the Marie Rivière character, or the man at the café in the film: everyone wants to touch a pregnant woman! I told Isabelle from the start, "I want to eroticize your body, your belly. It needs to be very present, visible. I'm going to film it, caress it, that's what the film is about." A new beginning starts through this belly. The relationship between Mousse and Paul takes shape around this belly. It's the basis for their connection.

Shooting with a pregnant actress

During the preparation period, Isabelle could easily distinguish between herself and the Mousse character. She had no fear of the dialogue or situations. But when we began shooting, it became more difficult. She found herself speaking lines and playing scenes that didn't jibe with her own personal experience of pregnancy. For example, off camera

she was constantly communicating with her baby, touching her stomach or talking to it, while in the film Mousse pays it no mind, she's pregnant by accident, and she's keeping the baby mainly as a link to the man she loved and lost. Isabelle is a brilliant actress, very aware of her art, but in this film her physical state brought with it a kind of uncertainty, it blurred the lines. She was ultra sensitive and often in a fragile state. Walking along an exposed beach with the wind whipping around her, climbing a dune with eight extra kilos, having to do multiple takes getting up from a chair... She would tire easily and soon found the shoot extremely difficult from a physical standpoint. She was afraid she wouldn't be able to make it to the end, physically or mentally. But I was confident. I knew she was a solid actress.

It's always very moving for a director to capture a moment when his actress loses control... You sense her emotions getting away from her, she wants to resist but ultimately surrenders and offers you this precious, true and very private piece of herself.

The maternal instinct

In our society, motherhood is highly idealized and associated with extremely positive imagery. I wanted to show that things are often far more complex. The maternal instinct is not a given. Mousse does not experience her pregnancy as a process of procreation. Most of all, it's a way of accepting Louis' death, a tool for mourning. Carrying and giving life becomes a way of soothing the pain and injustice of her lover's death. Mousse's body is simply a temporary place of passage, the site of a transmission.

Drug addicts who try to kick the habit are often very clear about their emotions and desires. Their sensitivity is heightened. Mousse is lucid about her situation. She doesn't lie to herself, and to the end she makes a decision that is very honest on a personal level: she'd rather leave than pretend to be a mother.

Mousse

This name imposed itself in a strange way, instinctively and for no particular reason. I liked the way it sounded: sweet and moist. We know nothing about the girl's past, where she comes from, her family... but the name immediately sets her apart from the classic French names of the other characters, Louis and Paul.

The refuge

The apartment where Mousse and Louis shoot up is a cocoon, a refuge in which they have barricaded themselves. But Mousse is going to have to emerge and confront the real world outside. She is devastated by Louis' death, and hurt by her mother-in-law's request that she abort. Ultimately, she leaves the refuge of heroin and finds another refuge, far from the city, close to the ocean and to nature, a place where she will continue to struggle, but will ultimately succeed in making peace with herself. In this place, Mousse opens herself up to moments of serenity and tenderness that she had not allowed herself to feel previously.

For me, LE REFUGE is the story of this healing process, which is violent and painful, but the story is told very gently. It's also a film about loss and doing without. Doing without drugs. Losing love. Losing someone.

Mousse and Paul are two people with no reason to be together, they never should have met, and yet they will help each other, confide in each other. They are both on the margins, seeking their identities. At the end of the film, they find their place, and

freedom. Mousse discovers her ability to make a choice to live and to love, and Paul makes some sense of his past and finds meaning; Mousse's story has echoed his own.

Mousse's pain is wide open at the beginning of the film, whereas Paul's pain reveals itself progressively. I wanted Paul to start off as a secondary character – he's simply a "mama's boy" at first - then gradually become more complex and take on an importance we don't initially expect.

Paul

I didn't want a professional actor to play Paul; I didn't want someone who would be acting. I wanted to place a "virgin", someone very pure, opposite an experienced actress like Isabelle. So I did some tests with the singer Louis, who I sensed was very similar to this gentle male character with a secret. I met him at a concert and liked his "tormented soul" sensitivity and his beauty, which he seemed embarrassed about. His fragility as a non-professional actor appealed to me and blended in with the character's fragility: This was Paul.

Since Louis is first and foremost a singer, I also wanted his voice to be part of the film. He wrote the theme song on set, with the idea that it should be like a lingering perfume, a reminder of his brother's presence.

Melvil

I immediately thought of Melvil Poupaud, but I had some scruples about calling him: I'd already killed him in TIME TO LEAVE. Now I'd be killing him again, and this time, within the first fifteen minutes of the film! But I couldn't imagine anyone else in the role.

He was immediately interested and enthusiastic. He brought his natural charisma and a certain realism to the drug scenes. I knew that eliminating him quickly would leave a void that would make us feel more empathy for Mousse and share her feelings. Like Bruno Crémer in UNDER THE SAND, Melvil didn't have much time to make his mark on the film and the audience, but I knew that once he was gone, we would miss him.

Shooting in HD

As we had to shoot quickly with a reduced crew, I thought this would be a good time to try out HD. We didn't really have a choice anyway, the budget excluded 35mm and 16mm.

So it was a question of budget for the production, and a new technical reality for me, which I needed to learn fast. As I wanted to capture the beauty of the landscape, the light, the natural surroundings and the actors, I chose cinemascope and long lenses to counteract the flatness of digital images, restore focus options and create depth of field. The biggest advantage of these cameras is their ability to shoot in very low light, with little or no artificial lighting. This allowed me to shoot at magic hours: dawn, dusk, nighttime on a beach...

As we had no grip and couldn't do any tracking shots, I simplified my shooting script, adopting a certain frontal approach, and I used a zoom, modifying the way the actors moved... We had to keep things simple, always, and move fast, which was actually consistent with the story we were telling. The film's economy was in harmony with the film itself.

Mousse's letter

If Paul hadn't come into her life, Mousse would've stayed with her baby.

For me, her leaving is not abandonment, it's transmission. Mousse isn't running away, she just needs a little more time to become a mother. By leaving her child with Paul, she's protecting her. She knows Paul will do a better job of looking after her. He's more ready to be a father than she is to be a mother.

I wondered whether I should shoot a scene where Mousse would give the child directly to Paul, to make the transmission concrete, physical. But I felt the letter in voiceover rang truer. When Mousse looks at the camera in the metro, it's her way of addressing Paul, her daughter and the audience, taking them as witness.

Mousse knows she'll be back some day. She has very strong feelings for Paul, but they will never live together. She loves her child, but she leaves her. I love this paradox of absence: a bond exists without physical presence.

INTERVIEW WITH ISABELLE CARRÉ

When did you meet François Ozon?

François offered me the film, just before a month of vacation during which I wanted to really experience my pregnancy. My first thought was 'no', then I told him I needed to think about it. I was really tempted by the experience, especially with a director like him. So I accepted the role, with some trepidation, and on the condition that we shoot in the place where I had planned my vacation, the Basque country.

Why the trepidation?

Actually, only one thing truly worried me in terms of the subject matter: 'What will my child think when he sees the film?' I didn't want him to feel used. It's still a real question, but in fact, playing a woman who practices euthanasia, or doing nude scenes, could also disturb my child. Once we have children, must we reduce ourselves to do only Disney-like scenes?! In the end, I figured this is my job, as my child grows up he'll have time to take it all in, he'll get used to having an actress mother.

Isabelle Huppert, who also was in Saint Jean de Luz, dropped by to see us and she said something that touched me and reassured me: "It's wonderful when the actress meets the woman, when our lives as women mingle with our fictional lives, when the line between reality and fiction becomes finer. Moments like those are always fascinating." Still, I'm nothing like Mousse in real life: our stories are completely different, I was playing a role.

What was it like to shoot a film while pregnant?

Usually when I act, I like to take my time. But in this case, I was always in a hurry! In a hurry to have some time for myself, and to rest. The idea really being to protect my child. I wasn't all that focused on the film, actually. And yet, I retain a very precise sensation of my character, what she was like, the pleasure I felt playing her, the anxiety, the occasional exhaustion. The whole thing forms a very colorful, rich picture. At the beginning of the shoot I was a little bit wary of François, but gradually I came to realize he was sensitive to my needs, even if sometimes I felt he didn't understand how tired I could get physically. Once, I really screamed at him! We were climbing the

dunes, there was no ramp, and I was exhausted that day. And I was afraid for the baby. But he never wielded power. He was always sincere and well meaning.

How did he direct you?

He's very relaxed and natural on set. He doesn't mince words; he's direct, honest. He's very precise with his actors, explaining the exact gestures and expressions he wants. He also leaves room for improvisation, if you want to add something.

He's such a voracious filmmaker, he has a huge appetite for cinema and for shooting. You get the impression he grew up surrounded by films, cinema is his domain. At the same time, you can be very open with him, he takes criticism very well. He has a healthy, balanced approach to the work and to his craft.

How would you explain Mousse's relationship to motherhood?

Mousse is in denial about it, she interprets the presence of a baby in her womb more as a remnant of the man she loved and lost. Unconsciously, she transfers his presence, now lost, to the baby inside her. As I was completely the opposite, I liked it when François wanted to make some cosmetic changes, like giving me bangs or having me wear heavy make-up at certain times, or earrings or tattoos... It helped me keep some distance from the character. There was also the way he had me play her. He always wanted me gazing off into space, or looking down. Whereas in life, I tend to look up, I smile a lot, I'm an optimist.

How did you get into the skin of a pregnant drug addict?

François asked me to talk to a doctor about what it means to be a junkie and pregnant. I called him whenever I had a question. We had several long phone conversations. He gave me concrete details that helped me with physical gestures and behavior. Like when you take methadone, it's like drinking syrup. Which means you feel like running your tongue over your teeth and rinsing your mouth afterwards. He also told me beer enhances the effects of methadone. So we had Mousse drink beer, which loosened her up. I also asked him if taking methadone makes you more fragile emotionally. On the contrary, it stabilizes your mood. It keeps you light, consistent. All this information helped me understand Mousse's state of mind and emotions.

This is the first time we've seen you play a tough person.

Yes, I was really interested in breaking away from the sweet and innocent woman, or the polite and vaguely bland one. I am eager for people to see something beyond my baby face. I have no desire to play old little girls all my life!

How do you explain the connection between Mousse and Paul?

Mousse is very alone, and Paul is a bit lost, searching for himself. It could be he's looking for some maternal affection that he never received. Even if he's not consciously aware of it, he comes knocking on Mousse's door looking for a connection with this woman.

Mousse gives an impression of being solid, not needing anyone, but in fact she's extremely fragile. That's why she's barricaded herself in, and initially refuses Paul's warmth. When you've been alone for a long time, it's sometimes easier to stay alone rather than let a little sunshine in. Mousse would rather stay in the cold, within the walls she's built around herself. But gradually, she opens up.

Another new experience for you: shooting with a partner who is not a professional actor...

I tried to be even more sensitive than usual, and keep things simple and down to earth to make him feel comfortable...

I felt a great deal of affection for Louis right away. He was so sweet to me, so attentive. His thoughtfulness moved me and probably helped him get into his character. Because that's how Paul is: he pays more attention to Mousse than she pays to herself. He takes her under his wing.

Shooting with Melvil Poupaud...

We worked together on LES SENTIMENTS and hit it off well. When we met again for LE REFUGE, it was like we already had a past, a history together. I think that helped us create the impression that Mousse and Louis are an "old" couple. Melvil has a strong outlook and personality. He's very charismatic, part angel, part devil, intense, ambiguous... It's amazing how much he can get into just a few scenes.

What did you feel when you saw the film?

I was moved to see how personal it was for me, and also for François, I think. The film is so tender, benevolent, pure. Seeing it, I realized just how sensitive François had been to me, how respectful and careful he'd been about what mattered to me. I was touched by his thoughtfulness. LE REFUGE is the fruit of a real connection between us.

If you had to do it again...

Funny you ask, because I asked myself that same question at one point during the shoot. I understood why actresses never shoot films when they're that far along in their pregnancy! The exhaustion, the energy required, the implications... At that moment I thought to myself, no, I wouldn't do it again. But then, when we were together again in Paris, in wintertime, to shoot a part of the rest of the film, it was such a pleasure to reunite with François, and the character, and shoot the nightclub scene... I was so glad to be involved in the project and I thought, if I had to do it again, I would.

INTERVIEW WITH LOUIS-RONAN CHOISY

Tell us about how you met François Ozon.

I invited him to a concert for the release of my third album. I knew he'd already seen me opening for Dani, so I figured he probably liked my music.

He came to the show and we talked a little there, we had a nice conversation. Sometime later, he told me he had an idea for a film and he'd like me to do some screen tests. I was curious to see how he worked, so I accepted. Several weeks later, he said the tests weren't bad and proposed doing some more, with Isabelle Carré this time. He wanted to see if there would be any chemistry between us.

What was his advice to you, a novice actor?

For the tests, I had learned my lines with the intention of playing them quite seriously, but François asked me to lighten it up a little. He advised me to learn the lines neutrally from then on, to avoid getting stuck in one approach. He wanted me to stay fresh, and be open to whatever might happen spontaneously.

I think he wrote the character of Paul to correspond to what he sensed was natural for me. Since I'm not an actor, he couldn't really expect me to incarnate a character that was completely different from myself. He's quite perceptive, and analytical. He observes people, taking in their personalities, their capabilities. He chose me like you would choose a lump of clay to be sculpted.

He didn't want me to think too much about the scenes before we played them, he wanted me to be in the moment. Before each scene, he would just tell me what Paul's feeling, emotion or state of mind was at that particular moment. Then he'd let me take it from there. If I was way off, he'd get me back on track... but always with humor. Communication was very open and comfortable.

Also, the co-screenwriter, Mathieu Hippeau, had given me a book written by a woman who had been adopted. She wrote about feeling like she had a dark veil, a hole deep inside her, no roots. I tried to channel that sensation. During the shoot, I often felt like I was walking on eggshells, I felt out of place. But that was probably also because I'm not a trained actor!

Did the idea of playing a homosexual character concern you in any way?

No, but I would have been frightened if François had asked me to caricature Paul's homosexuality. What I find particularly interesting about Paul is that he's seeking his identity, his sexuality is not clearly defined.

How was it to work with Isabelle Carré?

I was extremely fortunate to get to work with an actress like Isabelle. She guided me. Whenever she sensed I was a bit lost, she gave me the rhythm. I was very receptive to her intentions, and as a musician, I would often play off her notes. That worked perfectly for the first scenes in the house, where Mousse has the upper hand over Paul and sets the tone. Paul always reacts off of her in the beginning.

Did your experience as a performing musician help you at all?

Not really. A concert is very different: you give everything you've got for an hour and a half, but then you can relax, you can go out and party. Whereas all I wanted to do after a day of shooting was lie down and sleep! During the screen tests, Isabelle warned me that film shoots are intense. I was thinking, 'Ok, but how hard can it be? I'll just do my scene and then go off and do my own thing!' So I showed up with my keyboard and my computer, thinking I'd have plenty of time to fine-tune my album during the shoot. I didn't realize acting is carnivorous, it gnaws at you. It's difficult to hold the note of a character throughout, to rediscover it each day. My keyboard mostly sat idle in my room. In the end I only used it to compose the theme song for the film!

Who got the idea of composing a song for the film?

To start with, François wanted to listen to my albums to see if there might be a song on one of them that would work with the film. Then one of us - I can't remember who now - got the idea of composing a song during the shoot, inspired by the film's vibe. I liked the idea, I found it amusing, but it turned out to be quite challenging. I was so tired! Even playing piano came less naturally. François got very involved in the songwriting process, letting me know if he liked the direction I was taking or not.

He wanted a sweet, melancholy song, like a lullaby. I based the song on “Mon Ami Pierrot” and pictured a nocturnal ambiance, a bedroom, flickering candles... I wanted the lyrics to be kind of fuzzy, like in a dream, something that might correspond to the love between Mousse and Louis, who found comfort in drugs, or to Mousse and Paul, who take comfort in each other after Louis’ death. I wasn’t interested in specific details, I wanted to create an atmosphere. François encouraged me to keep it simple, to loop the melody like a ritornello. He also helped me with the lyrics at one point. We worked on it in the evenings, after a day of shooting. That’s what we did for fun! While we were working on it, Isabelle would sometimes hang out with us and I would play her the music in progress. She felt an affinity for the song. It was important that she participate more concretely by singing it for the ending credits.

During the shoot, François recorded me on the piano, playing arpeggios and improvisations on the song’s harmonies. He then used them as he edited, and I in turn used them as a guideline as I recorded the instrumental passages of the soundtrack. The main thing was to conserve the natural, spontaneous sound that we got when I first played them during the shoot.

What do you think Paul is looking for in Mousse?

He’s looking for his past. He’s trying to replay it subconsciously. I think the turning point happens when his mother asks Mousse to abort. This takes Paul back in time to a key moment very early in his own personal history, and it makes him more aware of what happened to him. At this moment, the bond with Mousse is established, and the desire to get closer to her is awakened in him. He also feels guilty about his mother’s proposal, because he is present at the time but doesn’t intervene. He’s an accomplice, in a certain sense. When his mother offers the family doctor’s services to Mousse, he has to look away.

Can Paul be a good father?

Knowing him as I do, I would say yes! He’ll give Louise what he never received himself... and in so doing he’ll undoubtedly soothe some of his own pain from his past. I understand why Mousse trusts him with her daughter. Paul is the only person who spends time with Mousse, stands by her and supports her in her desire to bring this baby into the world.

Do you think the way THE REFUGE questions traditional codes of motherhood and family makes it a particularly modern film?

I’m not convinced this story belongs uniquely to our era. I think it could’ve happened anytime, it’s universal. But could it have been told with such lightness and simplicity? Maybe that’s the modern element... although it’s especially because François made the film! I believe he truly loves the human race in all its complexity, with all its light and shadows. He’s so good at illustrating conflicted relationships. He tells it like it is, very naturally, without passing moral judgment.

You’re accustomed to the solitary work of songwriting. Here, you contribute your artistic expression to a group project...

It’s very nice to be of artistic service to someone else, to enter their universe, and not have to carry all the weight on your shoulders. But writing a song follows the same logic: it demands the same energy, the same baring of the soul. The techniques are different, but it’s still about giving what you’ve got deep inside you. I assumed that when you played a character you could have a certain detachment from that character. In fact, no.

The character comes in and takes things that belong to you. It's far more intimate and profound than I expected.

CAST

ISABELLE CARRÉ	Mousse
LOUIS-RONAN CHOISY	Paul
PIERRE LOUIS-CALIXTE	Serge
MELVIL POUPAUD	Louis

CLAIRE VERNET	The mother
JEAN-PIERRE ANDRÉANI	The father
MARIE RIVIÈRE	The woman on the beach
JÉROME KIRCHER	The doctor
NICOLAS MOREAU	The seducer
EMILE BERLING	The drug dealer
MAURICE ANTONI	The priest

CREW

Directed by **FRANÇOIS OZON**
Screenplay by **FRANÇOIS OZON & MATHIEU HIPPEAU**
Produced by **CLAUDIE OSSARD & CHRIS BOZZLI**

PRODUCTION MANAGERS Sylvain Monod & Philippe Delest
IMAGE Mathias Raaflaub
SOUND Brigitte Taillandier
SETS Katia Wyszkop
COSTUMES Pascaline Chavanne
MAKE-UP Françoise Andrejka
HAIR Franck-Pascal Alquinet
1ST ASSISTANT Arnaud Esterez
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR Joelle Hersant
CASTING Sarah Teper
EDITING Muriel Breton
SOUND EDITING Benoit Gargonne
SOUND MIXING Jean-Paul Hurier
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER Jean-Claude Moireau

Original music and song written by **LOUIS-RONAN CHOISY**