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FESTIVAL DE CANNES

OPENING FILM • IN COMPETITION

LEMMING

A FILM BY DOMINIK MOLL

WITH JACQUES BONNAFFÉ



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Diaphana Films presents

LEMMING

a film by **Dominik Moll**

starring

Laurent Lucas
Charlotte Gainsbourg
Charlotte Rampling
André Dussollier

129 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

Alain Getty a young and brilliant engineer and his wife Benedicte, move to a new city following Alain's work transfer. They invite Alain's new boss and his wife to dinner one evening. However the difference between the two couples couldn't be more extreme : on one hand the young model couple, on the other, a pair corroded by hate and resentment.

This disastrous dinner and the discovery of a mysterious dead rodent in their drain marks the descent into pandemonium of their once perfect life.

interview with DOMINIK MOLL

Where did you get the idea for this strange story?

From lemmings. I've been fascinated by lemmings since I was a child. I grew up in Germany where – as in Scandinavia and the Anglo-Saxon world – the mass migrations and supposed collective suicides of this small rodent are a well-known phenomenon. The starting point for the story was the image of a man unscrewing the joints of a blocked sink, noticing something, tugging on it and finding himself clutching a lemming. And naturally the question arises: How did it get there?, for these creatures inhabit only the northernmost parts of Scandinavia.

The basic idea was to start with an ordinary event drawn from everyday life – like a blocked sink – and make this the start of a long voyage through troubled waters, including various episodes of the unreal. I also wanted to create a central character who appeared to be in total control of his professional and emotional lives. A character who thought control was an essential requirement for happiness. And I wanted to watch him gradually falling apart. Alain is a home automation engineer. His job is to ensure that everything remains constantly under control. It's no coincidence that it's him who, little by little, loses his bearings.

You have worked on this project for nearly three years. What were the various phases through which the screenplay passed?

Already in the first draft, both couples were present, but Benedicte and Alain ended up travelling deep into the tundra of northern Scandinavia, and then found themselves in the midst of the famous migration... The plot really didn't work and I felt a bit lost. Then Gilles Marchand and I decided to shift the action back to France and focus on the peculiarities of the relationship between the two couples. We wanted to dig deeper into the notion of Benedicte's alienation and show how in Alain's eyes she was becoming a different person. This allowed us to develop the theme of Alain's control slipping. And it also gave the Alice character much more strength and significance.

When did you come to feel that the story was right?

When we devised the scene on the lake where Benedicte replays Alice seducing Alain. It is a crucial scene in which there is a strange sense of fusion between the two female characters. At this point in the story, Alain no longer quite knows who he is with – which is both an exciting and an unsettling experience.

The discovery of this disturbing lemmus lemmus in the waste-pipe creates an instant sense of intrigue.

The lemming is the spanner in the works, an omen of the strange things that are about to start happening. But the strange things in question are not quite what we expect. The question of the lemming finds a quite simple explanation at the end of the film. It's really a red herring, but it's important all the same, because it paves the way for the irruption of the irrational in a seemingly more ordinary domain, the life of a couple.

A sense of imminent danger creates a feeling of permanent tension. Because the story switches constantly from Alain to Benedicte's point of view, the audience is unsettled. Like the characters themselves, one ends up feeling almost dizzy.

I remember quite specifically the pleasure I felt when first watching Fellini's *Satyricon* aged 12. I understood nothing, but, at the same time, I was fascinated. It was like a long dream. The movie stuck in my mind for many years afterwards because it worked in a way which was different. What I want is for the audience to keep questioning itself what it's experiencing. I want to open doors, then close some in order to be able to open new ones... To enjoy the film it is important to accept to loose one's bearings, to accept that a film can be a labyrinth. It's like when you first set foot in a foreign city. You want to get lost, rather than follow the guide-book. I want my plots to sit on a knife-edge, trapped between worlds, the real world and the world of dreams, without the distinction becoming too apparent. It's like a twilight world in which certain visible signs of reality exist, but where we loose the notions of who we are and exactly where we find ourselves.

LEMMING is a darker, more serious film than HARRY, though the underlying humour and playfulness are the same. Poor Alain, for instance, is in for a rough time...

Yes, there is something delightful about the accumulated knocks he receives. He breaks his arm, is trampled by a horde of lemmings, forgets who his wife is, is humiliated by his boss, gets his hand bitten, his skull beaten in and even his flying web-cam starts malfunctioning. For someone who is into total control, that's a lot of mishap. There is a good screenwriting principle which I had fun applying to Alain: when your character's down, kick him.

Alain and Benedicte are a perfect modern couple, with their perfectly modern bungalow, that is perfectly-equipped. They are on the same wave-length, emotionally-speaking. They work well together, sexually-speaking. They both want children. But then, there's no such thing as a quiet life...

No, you need to keep on your toes. You can't take anything for granted. How can you really know the person you are living with? How can you really know what is going on inside the other person's head? You think you know each other and then when things start getting rocky, you aren't so sure anymore. It's like when Alice tells Benedicte: "Don't you ever think about the day when things will start to go wrong?" That's a question we should all be asking ourselves, but we avoid doing so because we want everything to be perfect. Alain is very busy with his work. He's started to take everything for granted. He thinks it's all in the bag. And that is probably why his world caves in. Benedicte is much more receptive to those questions. So it seemed more logical that things should start with her.

How did you come up with the relationship between the two female leads, Benedicte and Alice?

We spent a great deal of time wondering whether the change in Benedicte should be related to the fact that she was over-identifying with Alice, perhaps even to a pathological extent, or whether Alice was actually possessing Benedicte. In other words, we asked ourselves whether we should adopt an essentially psychological approach, or whether we should go for something closer to the super-natural. The latter solution seemed more cinematographic and more rewarding.

But the movie is not just a ghost story?

No, it's about hidden fears and desires. The super-natural is not a goal in itself, but it does provide narrative structure. Possession takes place in stages. The violence in Alice and in her marriage, followed by her suicide, upset Benedicte and this makes her vulnerable, good territory for Alice to invade. In the night scene, when Benedicte goes up to the guest room, it may be that Alice is swallowed up in Benedicte. Then there is a transitional period in which it seems as though Alice lies dormant inside Benedicte, occasionally erupting in such a way as to cause behavioural malfunctions, until such time as she escapes Alain entirely by sleeping with Pollock. In the end, we see Alice physically take Benedicte's place, inciting Alain to kill Pollock. This is one possible way to see the story, but I didn't want it to suppress other interpretations.

One also wonders whether this is not all in Alain's mind, as if he was combining the two women?

The idea that Alice possesses Benedicte in order to convince Alain to kill Pollock enabled us to really show Alain's fear that his wife is becoming a different person and also his desire for this. Benedicte's change of personality could easily prove to be a fantasy of Alain's. This would relate to his fear that his relationship might go the way of Pollock's. And of course the fact of combining the two women is also a way for him to have them both. A way for him to acknowledge his desire for Alice without having to feel guilty about it.

What's dangerous in this story are people's dreams and fantasies?

Yes. You could say that the Pollock couple - and Alice in particular - generate Alain's fantasies. This danger is even stronger than a "real" threat (such as an invasion of lemmings for instance). Alain, who tries to control everything, may have an unconscious desire that things should escape his control, to perk up his life. The fact that Alice surrenders herself to him ("You can do what you want with me") is unsettling because it's precisely the opposite way in which he functions. He turns down the offer, but it's too late: fantasy is at work. The truth is that he wouldn't object if Benedicte had a bit more Alice in her. But when that happens, he takes fright because he no longer recognizes her.

Alice is the most mysterious of the characters.

Without Alice, there would be no story. She is the lemming. She is the one that triggers the whole business. She tries to seduce Alain, then sows the seeds of doubt in Benedicte's mind about her husband's faithfulness. She is not a scheming person. There is no premeditated intention of evil. She improvises as she goes. Alice is unhappy: the sight of this perfect couple emphasizes the extent of her own failure. She wants to harm them and at the same time, she envies them. The reason she approaches Benedicte is partly at least that she is lonely and lost and needy. When she goes to the lab and tries to seduce Alain, she's not a dominating woman attempting to take control of a nice young man. She is taking a risk. She genuinely yearns for Alain. There is something desperate and highly vulnerable about her.

Alain tries to maintain a control over events. The more the story progresses, the more he starts to flounder.

He thinks he's a decent guy. He has not given in to temptation. He tells himself, "I pulled myself together. That's good. I shouldn't cheat on my wife." But when Pollock lays into him for not sleeping with Alice, poor Alain is all at sea. Pollock is calling his value system into question. So Alain now realizes that there are no absolute certainties. And he starts to feel guilty because, maybe he could have helped save this woman from suicide.

Richard Pollock is a mysterious character too.

I thought it would be fun to give him a double life. He is a respectable businessman and "a man who goes with whores" as Alice says. He has developed his own set of values, which enables him to enjoy the services of call-girls right under his wife's nose and then fly into a rage because an underling has not wanted to sleep with her. I particularly like the moment when he gets angry, because it does show that although the marriage seems to have reached the end of the line, and seems to rest on nothing but mutual contempt, the truth is that things are not quite so simple. The first time I met André Dussolier, I told him that Pollock has reached a point in life where he has decided to do away with guilt.

The specific guilt of having attempted to kill Alice 20 years previously?

Yes, though we never really find out what happened then. The thing that matters is that we need to know this couple have been passionate in the past and that the passion was a truly violent one, a true and mutually destructive force. Destructive passion may of course prove enviable to Alain, who is enjoying a stable but slightly dull relationship. Destructiveness can be highly attractive.

The plot relies on the irrational, but formally the film is very rigorous and precise.

Because the film's content is set in the world of the imagination, in the unconscious, the film's form had to be very clear, very organized. It is a little like in De Chirico's paintings, which enhance the strange atmosphere of a dream through their extreme precision. I was lucky enough to be able to shoot part of the film in studio, which allows for this degree of control and precision.

There is a contrast between the shadowy of the interiors and the radiant light of your exterior locations.

I wanted the daylight of the exteriors to be very sharp – again a reference to De Chirico – with a strong sense of geometry, like the white walls of Alain and Benedicte's suburban house. We shot much of the movie in the South of France in order to ensure that the house and garden were steeped in light. The weather didn't always do what it was supposed to, but even that introduced an unexpected element – wind – which is quite prominent. The wind brings a touch of the irrational to the couple's quiet, residential neighbourhood. Another example of how it's healthy not to try and control everything!

As in HARRY, you pay a great deal of attention to sound.

Yes. I love sound. It brings a great deal to the atmosphere of a film. With Gérard Hardy, the sound editor, we tried to design sound with a great deal of precision and the result is a soundtrack stripped down to the essential, something quite bare. It's a delicate business because the less you put on a soundtrack, the more each sound stands out – like the sound of the coffee machine when Alice and Benedicte are having their conversation in the living-room. Again, the fact that the soundtrack was so spare, lends a nightmarish emphasis to the few scenes that are sonically dense, like the moment the lemmings are discovered in the kitchen, with its thousands of little shrieks.

Once again, you worked on the score with David Whitaker.

I asked David to write something tenuous, suspended, almost free of melody, to emphasize the sense of uncertainty which floats over the film. His orchestration is magnificent and brings a very specific flavour to the film.

You also use a composition by Ligeti, and the "Blue Danube", which puts one in mind of Kubrick.

The Blue Danube is the first thing that came to mind when I started wondering what Alain might whistle under the shower. So it seemed natural to re-use it when the couple is on its way into the mountains, when everything seems to be falling back into place. A reminder of the idyllic era that starts the story. I have to admit that I was a little worried about the Kubrick connection, but it worked so well that I thought, "Stuff it!" I listened to Ligeti's "Continuum" – which is what we hear during the murder scene – a great deal as I was writing the screenplay. Once again, this is the control theme.

"Continuum" is a frenetic, repetitive piece for two player pianos, that seem wildly out of control, although they are controlled by computer. So in fact, it's an entirely mechanical composition, the most controlled thing one can imagine. I liked how that contrast, between apparent frenzy and actual control, relates to the main theme of the film.

The narrative is based on resonance. Some scenes echo others. For instance, at the start of the film, Alain watches a child slapped by its father and later on he will be humiliated himself.

The process of writing is about devising a structural coherence to the world the film describes. Which is why certain correspondences arise, why certain moments come to echo others. As you say, when Pollock brings back the broken camera and says, "I didn't think you were so infantile", it is as if Alain was being slapped himself. He is like a child, playing with flying cameras and stuff, who has had the gumption to enter the world of grown-ups - but the world of grown-ups is too complicated for him. In the same way, Alain has seen the neighbours' son humiliated by his father. Then later, that same child is going to watch Benedicte humiliating Alain. There are also more playful recurrences. For instance the fact that Pollock refers to gas cookers during the dinner, while at the end Alain uses gas to blow up Pollock's house.

How did you go about casting the film?

Initially, I didn't want to cast Laurent Lucas as Alain because he'd already played in HARRY and I felt, slightly inane, that one should change cast with each new film. But gradually, Laurent began to take shape in my mind. There is a certain strength to him, a quiet strength. However hard the knocks, he never falls into being a victim. He plays the straight man perfectly, someone too on the level to quite realize what is happening to him.

I have always wanted to work with **André Dussollier**, since Alain Resnais' MELO and he was my first choice for Pollock. I remember explaining that his character was that of someone who had got rid of any kind of complex. André loved that. "Great," he said, "At last a part without neuroses". It was delight to see the pleasure he took in playing Pollock.

I knew that **Charlotte Rampling** would bring huge scope to the combination of attractiveness, unsettling strangeness and distress that make up the part of Alice, a woman deep in personal crisis. She took the part head on, playing her as a hugely attractive and breathtakingly vulnerable person. Charlotte loved concealing her legendary gaze behind dark glasses during the dinner scene. We also changed her hairstyle, to emphasize the frailness of the part and to bring her appearance closer to the one of Benedicte.

I discovered in **Charlotte Gainsbourg** a combination of delicacy and strength which suited the part of Benedicte perfectly. The part is a difficult one because it's constantly on a knife-edge. We were always having to ask ourselves to what extent she was being herself and to what extent she was possessed by Alice. Charlotte managed to provide an extremely sober combination of the equivocal and the unsettling.

There is a certain kinship between the Charlottes: Their English origins, their slender figure, their restrained and subtle acting styles, which perfectly corroborates the notion that they are playing two women who merge into one and the same. And naturally, I loved the fact that they shared the same first name.

Had these four actors never worked together before?

No, this was their first time. It's very exciting to create a new ensemble, particularly with those four!

CAST

LAURENT LUCAS - ALAIN

"When I first read *Lemming*, I recognized an almost mathematically precise narrative structure similar to that of *Harry*, Dominik Moll's previous film. It also reminded me of Marivaux' play, *The Quarrel*.

Of all the various themes, I was particularly attracted to the way the film deals with the frailty of conjugal life. On first reading, my own thinking on the subject helped me understand what Dominik Moll and his fellow writer, Gilles Marchand, had in mind. Alain, the character I play, has his life turned upside down. He has reached a decision

point. What is he really made of? The man is a home automation engineer. In other words his object is to control everything as precisely as possible... But the human brain remains too complex for a web-cam to penetrate...!

All the various things that happen to Alain and Benedicte seem to threaten the balance of their perfect marriage. But perhaps that marriage is missing something?



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Richard Pollock, Alain's boss, is a subject of fascination to him - though he has no interest in being like him. He is equally unnerved by Alice, Pollock's wife, who tries to seduce him - thereby opening a breach in his unconscious, a passage through which desire and fantasy can pass. "You can do what you want with me," she tells him. When he turns her down, she pronounces one of the key sentences in the script: "The body says yes, but the head says no. What a shame." Which leaves Alain with a question: should he break his own taboos? He thinks that if he gives in to Alice's desire for sex and love - if he cheats on his wife - his love story with her will come to end. But by ignoring a whole side of himself, he puts his marriage in jeopardy.

Dominik Moll has the gift of inventing worlds which are grown-up and child-like at the same time. We live in both. Otherwise we come apart.

Working with Dominik again, after *Harry*, has been a great pleasure. I think about him a great deal in my every day life. He has shown faith in me and I shall always be devoted to him.

As for my fellow-actors, I fell in love with all three!

As for making a film with a lemming - it makes you loose your appetite!"

Films include

2005	DE PARTICULIER A PARTICULIER	Brice CAUVIN
2005	LEMMING	Dominik MOLL
2005	LES INVISIBLES	Thierry JOUSSE
2005	THE ORDEAL	Fabrice du WELZ
2004	AUTUMN	Ra'up McGEE
2004	TOUT POUR L'OSEILLE	Bertrand VAN EFFENTERRE
2003	WORK HARD, PLAY HARD	Jean-Marc MOUTOUT
2003	TIRESIA	Bertrand BONELLO
2003	WHO KILLED BAMBI ?	Gilles MARCHAND
2003	ADIEU	Arnaud des PALLIERES
2003	LAUGHTER AND PUNISHMENT	Isabelle DOVAL
2003	VA, PETITE !	Alain GUESNIER
2002	IN MY SKIN	Marina DE VAN
2000	HARRY	Dominik MOLL
2000	30 YEARS	Laurent PERRIN
1999	HAUT LES CŒURS	Solveig ANSPACH
1999	POLA X	Léos CARAX
1999	RIEN SUR ROBERT	Pascal BONITZER
1999	THE NEW EVE	Catherine CORSINI
1998	SOMETHING ORGANIC	Bertrand BONELLO
1997	I CAN'T STAND LOVE	Laurence FERREIRA BARBOSA

CHARLOTTE GAINSBORG - Benedicte

"I knew that Dominik Moll was screen-testing several actresses for the part of Benedicte. He was looking for someone who fitted the part of Benedicte, obviously, but also someone who would match the three other leads, match with Alain, match with Richard and also, in a more complex way, match with Alice. I knew that getting the part would be no pushover, which of course made me want it all the more. There is something appealing about having to fight for a part, it makes one feel determined.

The scene we used for the screen-test was the lake scene, a tricky moment when Benedicte morphs - in Alain's eyes - into Alice. I was quite nervous about getting the scene right later, when we came to shoot it.



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Benedicte is a particularly difficult part because entering into someone else's skin without seeming ridiculous is a challenge. It was hard to feel confident, because the polarized demands of realism and the irrational kept pulling in opposite directions. Was I Benedicte or was I Alice? But luckily, this perfectly suited Dominik Moll's direction: his camerawork, his lighting, his work with sound and the time he allowed for moments of silence, for quiet looks.

Dominik is a risk-taker and the result of risk-taking is astonishing. His style is so much his own, it's definitely got balls! And everything in this unlikely story seems somehow credible. Lemming is not a horror movie, but just reading the screenplay conjured up images that transported me ... and the fear just kept on rising.

Before the shoot, I wanted to make sure I knew exactly what was what. I went hunting for information, but Dominik left me - deliberately, I'm sure - without the answers I was seeking. So I cooked up a narrative thread of my own. This is a young couple which appears to lead a perfectly normal life in a perfectly normal suburban house. Benedicte is a sensible young woman who is not unduly perturbed by the events of the dinner-party. Indeed, I decided it would be more interesting to avoid suggesting that Benedicte might be fascinated by someone slightly unusual or attracted in any way to someone very different to herself. Perhaps, I decided, she does not quite know how to react to what is happening: after all something unfamiliar seems to descend upon her, seems to take hold of and change her... despite her otherwise very sound mental health. She is, in short, truly possessed by Alice. Dominik did not want this to be a gradual process, in which a series of situations would show Benedicte becoming more and more like Alice. I could not, scene by scene, create a character composed of different notes, some pertaining to Benedicte, others belonging to Alice. The only way to play it, was to be true to the moment, always restraining from forcing any kind of explicit

choices upon myself. At first, I thought that I might be able to lean on Charlotte Rampling's performance for support. For the lake scene, I would have liked to have been present on set, while Charlotte and Laurent played their seduction scene, at the laboratory, in order to be able to perform Alice's words exactly. But neither Charlotte nor I was allowed on set when the other was shooting! We performed the same scene successively, without knowing what the other had done. Dominik was right to insist on this. It's much better, because it meant that there was no mimicry involved, it's more like some kind of telepathy. The subtlety of a fusion between two women is what Dominik was after. It is a form of love - at least on Benedicte's part - for Alice, a closeness made up of a sensual empathy, rather than plain admiration. He directed me with extreme precision. I had to respect every single word, time every gesture exactly. This was a little unnerving, like walking on eggs. But seeing the finished film, I understand his strictness.

Alain and Benedicte have been happy together, as far as one can tell, for three years. But are they for real? Are they normal, to have so few worries? Ultimately, for all their neuroses, the Pollock couple seems much more alive.

Dominik Moll is like a conductor, he uses every possible interpretation of his score. One senses that he has weighed the meaning of every line, the rhythm of every move. Yet, he imposes a kind of neutrality, a plainness of performance, so that no emotion is overplayed. But even though we may have felt we were under-acting, on the screen, it's all there, without artifice. Everything seems very real and at the same time very unreal. Which is exactly what the story is about."

Films include:

2005	THE GOLDEN DOOR	Emmanuele CRIALESE
2005	THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP	Michel GONDRY
2005	LEMMING	Dominik MOLL
2005	L'UN RESTE, L'AUTRE PART	Claude BERRI
2004	AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER	Yvan ATTAL
2004	21 GRAMS	Alejandro GONZALEZ INARRITU
2003	ANNA M.	Michel SPINOSA
2001	MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS	Yvan ATTAL
2001	FELIX AND LOLA	Patrice LECONTE
2000	PASSIONATELY	Bruno NUYTEN
2000	THE INTRUDER	David BAILEY
1999	SEASON'S BEATINGS	Danièle THOMPSON
	French Academy Award 2000 : Best Supporting Actress	
1996	LOVE, ETC	Marion VERNOUX
1996	ANNA OZ	Eric ROCHANT
1996	JANE EYRE	Franco ZEFFIRELLI
1994	DEAD TIRED	Michel BLANC
1993	THE CEMENT GARDEN	Andrew BIRKIN
1992	LOVER	Jacques DOILLON
1991	THANKS FOR LIFE	Bertrand BLIER
1990	IL SOLE ANCHE DI NOTTE	Paolo et Vittorio TAVIANI
1990	AUX YEUX DU MONDE	Eric ROCHANT
1988	THE LITTLE THIEF	Claude MILLER
1987	KUNG FU MASTER	Agnès VARDA
1986	CHARLOTTE FOR EVER	Serge GAINSBORG
1985	L'EFFRONTÉE	Claude MILLER
	French Academy Award 1986 : Most Promising Actress	
1985	THE TEMPTATION OF ISABELLE	Jacques DOILLON
1984	LOVE SONGS	Elie CHOURAQUI

CHARLOTTE RAMPLING - Alice

"I found the film exceptionally moving. I recognized the strange atmosphere of the screenplay, a story as pregnant with meaning as a fable, a legend, a Greek tragedy. Each character's story is governed by his or her unconscious, by what is irrational, making it neither predictable nor controllable. Dominik Moll is a true film-maker, an artist. He belongs to the tribe of those who are able to create an idiosyncratic world of their own; whose way of seeing the world is a rare gift...

Actors inhabit characters who experience stories. Everything is on the screen, especially in the case of this film. The audience is free to receive or to interpret the story as it wishes. To define my character or explain its behaviour would be wrong, in that I might end up reducing Alice's complex nature. She is as she appears in the very first dinner scene, overwhelmed by her torments, her strengths and her weaknesses. Indeed, it is her massive strength that makes her final gesture possible. Her extreme clarity in what

might otherwise seem like a moment of madness or mental weakness. Alice's deed may be seen as a form of sacrifice, which takes place - this is no coincidence - in the very house she has described as "a shitty little place"... The last glance Benedicte and Alice exchange crystallizes the strange possession which will ensue.

Alice is a part I badly wanted. As soon as I had read the script, I rang Dominik Moll to tell him I would do the film. I wanted no one else to



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perform the part. I know Alice. I know, too, that one is attracted to a character because of something in one's past, something one has experienced or perhaps not experienced... Not experienced because of some kind of denial - when you come close to things, but end up avoiding them. By playing that character one does, in fact, end up experiencing all the things one has tried to avoid. I have always chosen parts that had meaning for me, that called me. Sometimes, it is a danger that calls, sometimes some kind of reconciliation, or redemption... That can take one to the brink of exhibitionism. Every creative act, whether it be an act of performance or music or painting or literature, requires of the artist that he or she should abandon himself or herself completely, in all his or her splendour, in all his or her terror, so that the unconscious may spring forth and find expression. *Lemming*, which is an exceptionally mature work, is such an act.

Richard and Alice's marriage is absolutely desperate, but it is also extremely dignified, even when Alice throws a glass of wine in Richard's face: the dignity is in the way she throws it, in the way he receives it. Never mind why the marriage is unhappy. Never mind why they are still together, when so many other couples in similar circumstances would have parted. Not them. Alice says she would like to see Richard croak. Hatred of that sort is a form of terrible love, the consequence of many years' living together. Alice

knows that Richard must die with her. Her suicide is the enactment of the suicide of their love for one another. Which is where we enter tragedy.

In order to avoid melodrama, it was necessary that the emotion should be felt inside the characters, never openly displayed. Dominik Moll is a skilled guide through such tricky territory. Working with him is an enriching experience. With him, an actor is free to express himself or herself, because he or she knows that the director is watching and that he has a very clear idea of what he wants. The actor becomes an embodiment of the director's mental image. And Dominik is someone with great inner vision, who knows how to make us work for our art with rigor and reserve.

The scene in the laboratory during which Alice asks Alain whether he would like to sleep with her contains the notion that with this young man something human and warm is stirring, something organic. In the way she touches him, you can feel that this woman, who is locked into suffering, is in need for tenderness, that she is frail and super-sensitive. There is nothing malevolent about her. She is not a devourer of men. And then, at the end of the scene, she says, "The body says yes, but the head says no. What a shame". Alice has no self-pity at that moment. Only an idea that experience is something to be handed on.

The film constantly unsettles its audience because it allows for multiple interpretations. Such is Dominik Moll's talent, that he can create a puzzle in which dialogue, picture, sound, music, performance, editing, all of which come together to allow a journey into our unconscious, strange and coherent at the same time."

Filmographie

2005	HEADING SOUTH	Laurent CANTET
2005	LEMMING	Dominik MOLL
2004	THE KEYS TO THE HOUSE	Gianni AMELIO
2004	IMMORTAL (AD VITAM)	Enki BILAL
2004	THE STATEMENT	Norman JEWISON
2003	SWIMMING POOL	François OZON
	Official Selection - Cannes Film Festival 2003	
2002	SUMMER THINGS	Michel BLANC
2002	I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD	Mike HODGES
2001	UNDER THE SAND	Francois OZON
2000	SIGNS & WONDERS	Jonathan NOSSITER
1998	LA CERISAIE	Michaël CACOYANNIS
1997	WINGS OF THE DOVE	Yann OFTLEY
1996	ASPHALT TANGO	Nae CARANFIL
1995	HEAD GAME	Anthony HICKOX
1993	TIME IS MONEY	Paolo BARZMAN
1992	HAMMERS OVER THE ANVIL	Ann TURNER
1988	REBUS	Massimo GUGLIELMI
1988	D.O.A.	Rocky MORTON et Annabel JANKEL
1987	ANGEL HEART	Alan PARKER
1987	MASCARA	Patrick CONRAD
1986	MAX MY LOVE	Nagisa OSHIMA
	Official Selection - Cannes Film Festival 1986	
1985	HE DIED WITH HIS EYES OPEN	Jacques DERAY
1985	SADNESS AND BEAUTY	Joy FLEURY
1984	LONG LIVE LIFE	Claude LELOUCH
1982	THE VERDICT	Sydney LUMET
1980	STARDUST MEMORIES	Woody ALLEN
1977	THE PURPLE TAXI	Yves BOISSET
1977	ORCA	Michael ANDERSON
1976	FOX TROT	Arturo RIPSTEIN
1975	FAREWELL, MY LOVELY	Dick RICHARDS
1975	FLESH OF THE ORCHID	Patrice CHEREAU
1974	CARAVAN TO VACCARES	Geoffrey REEVES
1974	YUPPI DU	Adriano CELENTANO
1973	ZARDOZ	John BOORMAN
1973	GIRODANO BRUNO	Giulano MONTALDO
1973	THE NIGHT PORTER	Liliana CAVANI
1972	ASYLUM	Roy BAKER
1972	HENRI VIII AND HIS SIX WIVES	Waris HUSSEIN
1971	'TIS A PITY SHE'S A WHORE	Giuseppe Patroni GRIFFI
1971	GORKY	Léonard HORN
1970	THE SKIBUM	Bruce CLARK
1969	THE DAMNED	Luchino VISCONTI
1969	THREE	James SLATER
1968	SEQUESTRO DI PERSONA	Gianfranco MINGOZZI
1968	TARGET : HARRY	Roger CORMAN
1967	THE LONG DUEL	Ken ANNAKIN
1966	GEORGY GIRL	Silvio NARIZZANO
1965	ROTTEN TO THE CORE	John BOULTING
1964	THE KNACK	Richard LESTER

ANDRE DUSSOLLIER - Richard Pollock

"I was enthusiastic about the screenplay and ten times more so when I saw the finished film. The process by which these two couples come to grips with each other creates tremendous suspense.

To Alain and Benedicte, the Pollocks represent the couple they could end up being... Perhaps for the first time, these young lovers have to confront how hard it is to live with someone else and the dangers their fragile felicity may come to face. They discover two mysterious beings who were once passionately in love and now seem to wage some mysterious, hidden warfare. We learn that Richard and Alice Pollock came close to attempting murder some twenty years previously - and yet they are still together. They cannot split up because after all these years each holds a part of the other's life in his or her hands.



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There is also an unconsciously predatory instinct in the Pollocks. Entering into Alain and Benedicte's private life, are they not perhaps finding a cure for their own unhappiness, their own suffering, in the young couple's innocence? Dominik Moll cleverly keeps giving the audience time to let its imagination run, to speculate on all the possible interpretations of every event. There is another story, "off-screen", which holds one in suspense.

The relationship between the two couples becomes so intimate that they become a kind of new being, a fantasy couple, rather like in Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", in which husband and wife keep referring to an imaginary child, the product of their joint labour.

Soon, also, it is obvious that Alain and Benedicte have been "Pollockized". Every man for himself. Every woman for herself. Yet the original anxiety that perhaps living together is not so easy runs all the way through, until the very end, when Benedicte asks Alain, "Will you love me when I am old?"

The two couples switch places as they interact and eventually fuse. Something similar happens between characters of the same sex. Alain has been appointed by Pollock, who considers him to be as brilliant and promising as he himself was at the same age. After the tragedy, a kind of masculine bonding takes place. Pollock helps Alain mature. He gives him the benefit of his experience, that life involves disorder.

Pollock knows that he has not made his wife happy. Perhaps, he would like to see someone else succeed where he has failed. Which may explain why he takes Alain to task for not surrendering to Alice. This is his way of saying, "If you'd slept with Alice, I would have pretended not to notice, I would have known, I would have understood,

I would have wanted her to have that satisfaction. That's how love works, my young friend, it is cruel, it is monstrous, but it is not blind."

Pollock is a frank man. He tells Alain openly about his affair with Benedicte. "I didn't think that Benedicte would be interested in an old geezer like me, but..." And Alain has to come to terms with this as well, a lesson in living. I like the strong moments in the film, when the characters take their gloves off. They wear no masks at such times. They cast aside their manners. The complexity of human sentiments and relationships covered by the film shows considerable maturity. The story is well constructed. Nothing is left to chance. Images and symbols echo off each other, sometimes in quite ordinary or funny ways. In the opening, dinner scene for instance, Pollock asks as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, "Is it gas you cook with?"... Later we will find out that gas will play a crucial part in Pollock's own story. I love the scene in which the lemming is described, because the popular description (people think these animals commit suicide, but that is simply romantic theory, they actually die of exhaustion), allows Dominik Moll to comment metaphorically on human behaviour - and tell us something about Alice's suicide, which is also the death of a marriage.

Having played Philinte more often than I have played Alceste, I enjoy the opportunity of being cast as Pollock, a character who says what he means, no holds barred. Pollock is not horrible. He's neither temperamental, nor contemptuous, quite the contrary. He is able to face what life has made of him. It is important that his pride does not fail him. I experienced something similar playing Bergman's "Scenes from a marriage" on stage, in which the problems of married life are resolved in an equally radical and clear way. This first opportunity of working with Charlotte Rampling, Charlotte Gainsbourg and Laurent Lucas has been a delight.

As I left the screening, I thought "How wonderful that French cinema should have offered us such a beautiful film!" and I walked and walked so that the pleasure of the film might stay with me a little longer."

Interviews by Gaillac-Morgue

Films include:

2006	UN TICKET POUR L'ESPACE	Eric LARTIGAU
2005	MON PETIT DOIGT M'A DIT	Pascal THOMAS
2005	LEMMING	Dominik MOLL
2004	36, QUAI DES ORFÈVRES	Olivier MARCHAL
2004	A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT	Jean-Pierre JEUNET
2004	SECRET AGENTS	Frédéric SCHOENDOERFFER
2003	TAIS-TOI	Francis VEBER
2003	STRANGE GARDENS	Jean BECKER
2003	18 ANS APRÈS	Coline SERREAU
2001	TANGUY	Etienne CHATILIEZ
2001	OFFICER'S WARD Official Competition - Cannes Film Festival 2001	François DUPEYRON
2001	VIDOCQ	PITOFF
2001	A CRIME IN PARADISE	Jean BECKER
2000	OUCH	Sophie FILLIERES
2000	ACTORS	Bertrand BLIER
2000	CRIME SCENES	Frédéric SCHOENDOERFFER
1999	CHILDREN OF THE MARSHLAND	Jean BECKER
1998	STOLEN LIFE	Yves ANGELO
1997	SAME OLD SONG	Alain RESNAIS
1997	AN AIR SO PURE	Yves ANGELO
1997	QUADRILLE	Valérie LEMERCIER
1996	ROMANZO DI UN GIOVANE POVERO	Ettore SCOLA
1994	COLONEL CHABERT	Yves ANGELO
1994	LIFE'S LITTLE TREASURES	Michel DEVILLE
1994	MONTPARNASSE PONDICHERY	Yves ROBERT
1993	THE GROUNDHOGS	Elie CHOURAQUI
1993	THE LITTLE APOCALYPSE	Costa GAVRAS
1992	ROI BLANC, DAME ROUGE	Sergei BODROV
1992	A HEART IN WINTER French Academy Award 1993 : Best Supporting Actor	Claude SAUTET
1991	SUSHI SUSHI	Laurent PERRIN

1990	LA FEMME FARDÉE	José PINHEIRO
1990	BORDER LINE	Danièle DUBROUX
1988	MY FRIEND THE TRAITOR	José GIOVANNI
1988	L'ENFANCE DE L'ART	Francis GIROD
1988	FREQUENT DEATH	Elisabeth RAPPENEAU
1987	BLOOD AND SAND	Jeanne LABRUNE
1986	MÉLO	Alain RESNAIS
1986	YIDDISH CONNECTION	Paul BOUJENAH
1985	THREE MEN AND A CRADLE	Coline SERREAU
1984	LOVE ON THE GROUND	Jacques RIVETTE
1984	STRESS	Jean-Louis BERTUCELLI
1984	LOVE UNTO DEATH	Alain RESNAIS
1984	THE CHILDREN	Marguerite DURAS
1984	FRONTIÈRES	Léon de WINTER
1983	LIBERTY BELLE	Pascal KANE
1983	LIFE IS A BED OF ROSES	Alain RESNAIS
1982	I WON'T DANCE	Edouard MOLINARO
1982	A GOOD MARRIAGE	Eric ROHMER
1982	WHAT MAKES DAVID RUN ?	Elie CHOURAQUI
1982	THE TRIPLE DEATH OF THE THIRD CHARACTER	Helvio SOTO
1981	LES FILLES DE GRENOBLE	Joël Le MOIGNÉ
1980	TEMPORARY PARADISE	Andras KOVACS
1980	EXTERIOR NIGHT	Jacques BRAL
1979	PERCEVAL	Eric ROHMER
1977	BEN AND BENEDICT	Paula DELSOL
1977	THE MODEL COUPLE	William KLEIN
1977	ALICE OR THE LAST ESCAPE	Claude CHABROL
1976	MARIE THE DOLL	Joël SERIA
1975	A HAPPY DIVORCE	Henning CARLSEN
1975	IT IS RAINING ON SANTIAGO	Helvio SOTO
1974	AND NOW MY LOVE	Claude LELOUCH
1972	SUCH A GORGEOUS KID LIKE ME	François TRUFFAUT

DOMINIK MOLL

DIRECTOR

Dominik Moll is a graduate of the City University of New York and French film school, IDHEC. He has directed six short films, including "The Gynaecologist and his Secretary" and, subsequently, three features.

1994 **INTIMACY**

2000 **2000 WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY (aka HARRY, HE'S HERE TO HELP)**
in Official Competition at the Cannes 2000

2005 **LEMMING**

GILLES MARCHAND

CO-WRITER

After *WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY*, *LEMMING* is the second screenplay Gilles Marchand has written with Dominik Moll.

He has also worked as a screenwriter with Laurent Cantet (*LES SANGUINAIRES*, *HUMAN RESSOURCES*), Cedric Kahn (*RED LIGHTS*, *THE PLANE*) and Jean-Paul Rappenu (*BON VOYAGE*).

In 2003, he has directed his first feature film, *WHO KILLED BAMBI?*, shown in Cannes, and nominated for two French Academy Awards.

CAST

Alain GETTY

Benedicte GETTY

Alice POLLOCK

Richard POLLOCK

Nicolas CHEVALIER

Francine

Veterinary Surgeon

Nurse

Doctor on Duty

Neighbour's Son

Water Company Employee

Bruno

Laurent LUCAS

Charlotte GAINSBURG

Charlotte RAMPLING

André DUSSOLLIER

Jacques BONNAFFE

Véronique AFFHOLDER

Michel CASSAGNE

Florence DESILLE

Emmanuel GAYET

Félix GONZALES

Nicolas JOUHET

Fabrice ROBERT

CREW

Director	Dominik MOLL
Producer	Michel SAINT-JEAN
Screenplay	Dominik MOLL and Gilles MARCHAND
Original Score	David SINCLAIR WHITAKER
Director of Photography	Jean-Marc FABRE
Production Designer	Michel BARTHELEMY
Sound Engineer	François MAUREL
Costume Designer	Virginie MONTEL
	Isabelle PANNETIER
Editor	Mike FROMENTIN
Sound Editor	Gérard HARDY
Sound Mixer	Gérard LAMPS
Digital Effects supervisor	Pascal LAURENT
First Assistant director	Rafaele RAVINET-VIRBEL

France 2005 - 129 minutes - 1:85 - Dolby SRD and DTS - Colour

