

FRENCH WOMEN – Press Kit

Synopsis

Homosapiennes tells the story of eight 21st Century women. The film takes place in Paris, one spring. Over a period of 28 days, the weather in Paris is unsettled and changeable as is the behaviour of the heroines that feature in this film. Break-ups, blossoming romances, illness, friendship and sex are all part of life's rich pattern, and these women face each happening with plenty of good humour and wit! All the female characters are very different from one another, yet they find themselves in the same place at the same time for a firework display. And this visual spectacle works as a symbol of their liberation and their quick-fired, effervescent humour. The fireworks represent the fast changing, striking transformation of modern-day women.

Introduction

Homosapiennes is a film by women for women....and the men who love women. But it's not a feminist manifesto. Men get a hard time, but women get an even harder time! They're hysterical, complicated, complex, jealous, too made-up, too hairy, too unshaven, too old.....but above all, they're real women....in all their glory, warts and all!

I wanted *Homosapiennes* to be a fun, fiery and cheeky film that makes a connection with women and gives them a sense of belonging – but different from the sisterhood bound by the rules women's magazines and society. I wanted to show a community of women that is varied and diverse, strong and not stereotypical, a community that represents women today, as I see them.

I want women to identify with this film and recognise that they are not alone in their fears, their doubts, their desires, their guilt, their contradictions...

I also want this film to be educational. I want women to leave the cinema feeling that they have learnt something about themselves. (An example being the truth about the contraceptive pill. Although the pill has offered one of the biggest revolutions for women in terms of sexual freedom, it has also alienated women from their own bodies, from their hormones, their true nature, their desire).

Finally, even though most women like to forget that they have animal instincts...this film serves to remind them!

To share, inform, and connect with our animal self.

These were my goals when I took on this ambitious subject.

But this film also vents the frustrations and desires of an actress working in film today. The desire to break the rules, to show the side of women that is never shown on screen, to be funny, REALLY funny.

All the actresses who agreed to take part were asked about the character that they have always dreamt of playing, and the situations that they would like to find themselves in on-screen, and also the actors and actresses that they would like to work with.

So, it was with all this in mind that I created the cast for *Homosapiennes* and wrote each character's story.

I also met and interviewed a lot of women from different walks of life. Women who have made an impact on society as well as women with no voice who live anonymous

lives. I spent two months at a desk just listening to their stories. They made an invaluable contribution to how I set about writing the story and the characters.

Homosapiennes is not the full story. It's a snapshot of eight women's lives - somewhere amongst the crowd in the frame are the eight protagonists. We follow each of their narratives. The action takes place over 28 days, the average length of a woman's menstrual cycle, in Paris, in spring. From 21st March to 17th April. As a backdrop to the women's life events, we have climate change, erratic weather patterns and these echo the emotional ups-and-downs the women experience....At the end of the 28 days, the epilogue shows our protagonists in their 'new lives', or not as the case may be! One woman's experiences form the backbone of the film....Her name is Ysis. She is 27 and mother to four boys....a young woman with a large family may seem unusual today but 50 years ago this was the norm...

We follow Ysis throughout the course of the film. Like many women who have lived over the last fifty years, her life is full on. Like the ball bearing in a pinball machine that has just been fired, Ysis rushes all over the place but is always moving forward.

What better city than Paris as a setting for these characters who are so complex, so contradictory but so endearing. *Homosapiennes* is a stroll through the city, where all the tourist clichés are revisited and reinvented. The actresses represent all the glorious different facets of 'la femme française', and the Parisian setting will play a pivotal role.

This film is an ode to women and to 'the most beautiful city in the world'.

The subject of our heroines' sex lives will be discussed in both the dialogue and the mise-en-scene – but women never appear naked on screen. There are no breasts or buttocks in the frame. The weather conditions will be used to help achieve this! ...(e.g. the wind will slam a door shut at the key moment.)

In essence, I want the film to feel like a fun girls' night out, even though it will deal with subjects of profound significance to all women. When you go out with female friends, it's to chat, to feel less alone but above all, it's to have a laugh! This film is a comedy. I want to laugh ...and to make other people laugh!

I worked hard on creating the mosaic quality of this film, on the rhythm and the music. I paid particular attention to the music, which plays a crucial role. I asked several artists to help write the soundtrack. I wanted it to be upbeat and rock'n roll. Imany oversaw the production and many other artists contributed including Melodie Gardot, Norah Jones, The Do, My Brightest Diamond, Keren Anne....These artists bring an international dimension to this project.

Main characters

Ysis – Geraldine Nakache: 27. Ysis had her 4 sons in quick succession. She abandoned her dreams of becoming a dancer to bring up her children (her husband earns plenty of money to be able to support them). She is a loving mother, and a devoted wife, but the fire that once glowed inside her has started to fade. She is at a crossroads and only she can decide which way to go.

Agathe – Leila Bekhti: 27. Once a brilliant student, Agathe is now embarking on a promising career as a young lawyer. She is very pretty but she has constant doubts about everything, especially herself. She is a very emotional person, which has a tendency to manifest itself physically. She is highly sensitive but she is also determined and sincere. She's a walking paradox. It goes without saying that she has had a stream of disastrous relationships with men.

Rose – Vanessa Paradis: 40. Rose is a businesswoman, she's a statistical engineer. She's very beautiful, very elegant, in fact she's very everything. She's the only woman to get up in the morning looking fresh.... She's the kind of woman we envy, the kind of woman we all want to be.....but....!

Jo – Audrey Dana: 34. Jo has been a speech therapist for the past 10 years. She's an attractive woman with a strong character, but she has a split personality. She is ruled by her hormones and is one person for the first two weeks of her cycle and a completely different person for the second. She behaves as two completely different women in the space of 28 days. In order to enjoy an active sex life without having to put up with a man who could never understand her, she goes for married men. It looks simple...on paper.

Fanny – Julie Ferrer: 38. Fanny is a tube driver and is married to a bus driver. Her life is very dull. She has lots of very strange habits. She's very uptight. When she comes across a jammed door, it will be a life changing experience for her.

Sam – Sylvie Testud: 43. Sam is a petite woman. She's very thin and looks like a little bird. She's a gynecologist, a feminist and very rock'n roll. But she can't sleep on her own. She's scared of everything, really scared.....So when real danger comes knocking at her door, how will she react?

Lili – Isabelle Adjani: 49. Lili is Sam's sister. She is a women's lingerie designer and a bit of a man-eater.....she's always beautifully dressed and is married but is unfaithful to her husband. He spends most of his time abroad and so she has no scruples about cheating on him. She has two children, a son of 6 and a daughter of 16 who is just entering womanhood.which makes Lili feel old, and that is something she can't accept. She's almost 50!

Ines – Marina Hands: 40. Ines is very shortsighted. She is Lili's secretary (and Sophie's, one of the secondary characters). She lives in a blurry world where everything is just

perfect. She's not particularly devoted, she just loves doing everything possible for her darling husband and her darling children, (a 4 year old boy and a 12 year old girl). But the reality is a very different matter....Will her eye operation to cure her vision open her eyes and show the world as it really is?

Secondary characters

Lili's daughter: 16. Beautiful teenage girl. She wants to go on the pill.

Adeline – Alice Belaidi: 24. Rose's personal assistant on a trial period. She's addicted to her mobile phone and social networking. She's both strong-minded but also quite shy. She has a big family secret.

Marie – Alice Taglioni: 34. Marie has created her own babysitting company called 'Freemom'. She's a lesbian, but Don Juan...

Sophie – Melanie Doutey: 37. Sophie is married with two children. She is also a lingerie designer (under Lili's orders). Sophie is unkind and bitchy, as if something is eating away inside her.