



VANESSA VAN ZUYLEN AND JÉRÔME SEYDOUX  
PRESENT

YOU WILL NEVER LOOK AT IT THE SAME WAY AGAIN!

ROMAIN  
DURIS

EMMA  
MACKEY

# E I F F E L

A FILM BY  
MARTIN BOURBOULON

WITH  
PIERRE  
DELADONCHAMPS

LENGTH : 108 MINUTES

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MATERIAL CAN BE DOWNLOADED ON [WWW.PATHEFILMS.COM](http://WWW.PATHEFILMS.COM)



A silhouette of a man wearing a top hat and a suit, looking towards the right. In the background, the Eiffel Tower is visible, slightly out of focus. The scene is set against a soft, hazy sky, likely at dusk or dawn.

## SYNOPSIS

Having just finished his collaboration on the Statue of Liberty, celebrated engineer Gustave Eiffel is on top of the world. Now, the French government is pressuring him to design something spectacular for the 1889 Paris World Fair, but Eiffel simply wants to design the subway. Suddenly, everything changes when Eiffel crosses paths with a mysterious woman from his past. Their long lost, forbidden passion inspires him to change the Paris skyline forever.

*You will never look at the Eiffel Tower the same way again !*

# E I F F E L

## FROM FACT TO FICTION

Even though this film is not a «biopic» and even less so a documentary, the team behind the film was intent on remaining as faithful and true to the historical context as possible. Hundreds of documents were analysed and many historians consulted in order to establish a realistic context to the events surrounding the life of Gustave Eiffel.

What we know from examining documents from the period:

- Gustave Eiffel did indeed share a passionate love relationship with Adrienne Bourgès while he was building «La Passerelle St-Jean» (the Saint John's bridge) in Bordeaux. He was 28 and she was 18 at the time.
- A wedding was announced but then cancelled by Adrienne's parents.
- While preparing the Exposition Universelle of 1889, Gustave refuses to take on the metal tower project proposed by his team of engineers. Despite their insistence, he is not interested.
- Nevertheless, for no apparent reason, he changes his mind and takes on the insane project of erecting a 300-meter-high tower in the middle of the city, going so far as to mortgage his assets to see the project through to completion.

The assumption made by the film is that Gustave and Adrienne's paths crossed again at this time. Is this fact? Is this fiction?

Since we do know that Gustave and Adrienne did meet one another again since Gustave's son, Edouard Eiffel, married Adrienne's niece, Marie-Louise Bourgès, we can easily imagine that they could have been reunited in 1886...

We have no way of knowing for certain, but this is the only explanation we could find for Eiffel's abrupt change of heart regarding the Tower project.

*«We, the descendants of Gustave Eiffel, see this film as a beautiful tribute to our ancestor. Martin Bourboulon and his team have intelligently transferred to the screen a deeply human portrait of an incredible entrepreneur, audacious and dedicated to the point of working alongside and together with his builders. It is his strength of character, his determination and sensitivity, that allowed Gustave Eiffel to meet the incredible challenge of building this 300-meter Tower that is as beguiling today as it was in 1889.»*

*The descendants of Gustave Eiffel*



**INTERVIEW WITH  
MARTIN  
BOURBOULON**





### **How and when did you become attached to EIFFEL?**

The long story behind EIFFEL began over 20 years ago. The idea for the film and the original screenplay came from Caroline Bongrand. Over time, a few different drafts were written. As for myself, I was brought on to the project in 2017 when I met the producer, Vanessa van Zuylen. I was immediately struck but the ambition of the project: an epic romantic love-story told with the construction of the Eiffel Tower as a backdrop. With Thomas Bidegain and Caroline Bongrand, we reworked the screenplay and a bit later, Tatiana de Rosnay came on board and added the flashback structure. Natalie Carter also contributed.

### **What was the nature of your collaboration with your co-writers?**

The idea was to stick as much as possible to the idea of an epic love story that is also an adventure film, the two revolving around the construction of one of the world's most famous monuments. All of the work that was done on the screenplay – then in the directing and the editing – consisted in making sure that the two stories constantly feed off one another while still respecting the historical markers. Therein lies the power of film – its capacity to fill the gaps left empty by History and develop a fictional hypothesis that becomes the premise for the film: Eiffel decides to build the tower, a project that he had initially turned down, as an act of love for Adrienne. We all wanted to make a spectacular, epic film with a strong emotional pull.

### **Was the casting taking place at the same time?**

In the case of Romain Duris, it was even before! He is the only actor I had in mind for Gustave Eiffel and the only one I approached for the part. He corresponded precisely to the image of modernity I wished to lend to this project. There is an ambivalence in Romain; he is contemporary and rock and roll in the way he carries himself but looks wonderful in period costume. There is something romantic about him that I wanted for this love story and he can play everything! In my mind, he ticked all the boxes.

### **Where did you get the idea to match him with Emma Mackey to form such a unique on-screen couple?**

Vanessa van Zuylen got the idea when she saw Emma in the first season of Sex Education. Thanks to the series and the power of Netflix, Emma was already famous throughout the world... But outside of Sex Education, she was not necessarily known to most people in France. I could not think of a better candidate to embody the mystery surrounding Adrienne. Emma is very talented, has a real flair for acting, very truthful and instinctual. Her presence only heightened the contemporary feel I was looking for.

### **How did you handle the rest of the casting?**

What I love in Pierre Deladonchamps is his ability to play a charming man with as much ease as a dangerous one as well as his ability to express so much through a single look. The menacing empathy he conveys is simply fantastic. I did not want to have a parade of famous faces around this trio of actors. And I'm grateful to my producers for backing me up on this decision. I chose actors I love but who aren't necessarily known to the general public: Alexandre Steiger, Bruno Raffaelli, Armande Boulanger, Andranic Manet...

### **Did you rehearse with the actors?**

No, I explicitly chose not to because it's not something I'm good at. I simply do readings without giving the actors much direction, to see if they are comfortable with the language and whether any changes need to be made in some of the phrasing. I trust them and prefer to work with the actors and provide direction in that magical moment when we are all on set with the cameras rolling.

### **The film is called EIFFEL but Adrienne's character is just as important as Gustave's...**

Yes, the contemporary nature of the film rests very much on her shoulders as well... Bringing to life a strong female character was a desire shared by







everyone. It was evident already in the original script. Adrienne is a woman who defies her bourgeois background and is interested in someone who was not necessarily intended for her. Without revealing too much about the dramatic structure of the story, a big part of what is at stake in the film depends on Adrienne's ability to react. Her decisions, like some of her actions, guide the story. Behind Adrienne, there is the tower and vice versa. Emma Mackey perfectly embodies the character with energy and grace.

### **Did you have any references in mind when you were directing EIFFEL?**

I don't especially draw upon any precise references before shooting. But there is a film that kept coming back to me which was Damian Chazelle's *FIRST MAN*... I like the way the director gives us an intimate perspective of a character facing a challenge so much greater than himself – landing on the moon. He brilliantly succeeds in combining an intimate portrayal where he gets up close to the character using a hand-held camera with a more spectacular story of space conquest. This is exactly what I wanted to achieve in *EIFFEL*: sticking close to the characters while telling a great adventure story, building the Eiffel Tower.

### **Why did you choose Matias Boucard for the cinematography in EIFFEL?**

I really liked his work on *SK1* – the slightly unstructured 16mm photography – a lot like in *ODYSSEY* with a more epic dimension. There is also his work on commercials and all of his on-set experience. I noticed his uncanny ability to adjust the lighting according to the subject matter, always finding just the right tone.

### **How did you go about elaborating together the visual look of the film?**

He immediately referred to M. Cimino's *HEAVEN'S GATE* and P.T. Anderson's *THERE WILL BE BLOOD*. A very textured, grainy image, completely in line with the feel of a period piece but without over-doing it. Not trying at all costs to capture the precise look and feel of the historical period while remaining believable and vibrant. We took some liberties without

shocking the audience. Regarding the costumes, for example, they are period appropriate but they might be worn in a manner that could be considered uncommon for that time. For example, in the scene where Eiffel is declaiming to the crowd, I wanted him to wear his shirt unbuttoned with his collar up. He looked better, sexier (!) and more heroic. At the time, I'm sure Eiffel wore his suit much more conservatively...

### **There is also the challenge of representing the Eiffel Tower... what was your vision for this?**

From the start, there was a clear mission in this film: that the Tower be sufficiently present on screen to deliver something visually spectacular. We also sensed that witnessing the different phases of its construction would be even more spectacular than seeing it in its actual, completed form.

I wanted to integrate the special effects by keeping them in the background, countered by the characters in the foreground. I wanted to create something immersive, captured first-hand, without making a show of technical prowess. To achieve this, I relied heavily on our set designer, Stéphane Taillason and his amazing reconstruction of 19th century Paris. As for the digital special effects, I relied on BUF and Olivier Cauwet who had just worked in *BLADE RUNNER 2049*. We first asked ourselves what was at stake in each scene and we would then integrate the VFX. Olivier helped us tremendously with his talent and expertise.

### **How do you feel on the eve of the first day of production?**

I'm happy that the film is shooting! The most difficult and challenging time are the months leading up to production – completing the financing, the casting and scheduling. On the eve of shooting, we can breathe a sigh of relief; we have finally made it...

### **Were there scenes that you were particularly excited about shooting?**

I was pleased to finally be able to shoot something that was quite new to me: intimate emotional scenes. More than the very technical, complex shots and







sequences, I was impatient to shoot the scene in which Eiffel is overwhelmed with emotion, just by looking at a photograph. With my background in comedy, I was really attracted to the challenge of directing this scene and communicating emotion to the audience through a silent sequence.

**You mentioned comedy. How did your experience in this genre with DIVORCE, FRENCH STYLE helped you with EIFFEL?**

I conceived EIFFEL around a central idea of characters in motion. My comedy background came in handy because rhythm is central to comedy. Just as in DIVORCE, FRENCH STYLE, I always wanted the characters to be pulling the camera towards them to produce energy and movement that I would then accompany with my direction. The rhythm had to come from the filming not from the editing.

In the very first minutes of the film, we are following Gustave Eiffel's energy. He talks fast, walks fast, has no time to waste. The camera is in constant movement, following him. Then, when Adrienne appears, the "mise en scène" changes abruptly, as does Eiffel's attitude. He is overwhelmed, comes almost to a complete stop. The one-shot sequences make way for fixed shots, as if to show time suddenly standing still... These filmic breaks add rhythm to the direction and enable the audience to feel as close as possible to the characters, to identify with how they feel.

**How do you work with actors on set?**

As Spielberg puts it so well, the work with the actor on set starts with the casting!

If the actors have been well chosen, a good part of the work is already done. On set, a good level of trust had already been established between us.

I would never indicate to them what I was expecting on the first take, so as to allow them to trust their talent and not miss out on an approach I had not

thought of myself. My work with the actors was more about reorienting or correcting rather than actual directing.

I would often suggest to Romain that he behave opposite to what the character was saying in order to try and express what Eiffel was really thinking. For example, when Eiffel said to Adrienne: "I hoped I would never see you again", I asked him to play it as though he were saying: "I am so moved to see you again". The goal was to communicate his feelings through his acting and his body, not just through dialogue. Romain does this superbly, using the way he touches his gloves to translate what is going on deep within Eiffel: he is completely in shock to see Adrienne again.

**The editing took 36 weeks. What made it so complicated?**

It was a difficult task, striking a balance between the different timelines of the love story and the construction of the Tower.

One needs to be able to set the script aside at some point and reinvent the structure.

We had beautiful images, amazing actors and superb scenes but the story wasn't quite working, the magic and emotion weren't strong enough. This made for a very long and very cooperative collaboration with the film's editor, Valérie Dessine.

Vanessa van Zuylen, Ardavan Safaee and Marie De Cénival made themselves very available throughout this period, as they followed the different phases of the edit. Their fresh takes and helpful comments helped us to find the right version, the one that satisfied everyone and made us all proud.

**Was it during this editing phase that the music was being composed?**

Absolutely. Alexandre Desplat was working in parallel the entire time, feeding us different samples.

His eye and his suggestions allowed me to see some of the scenes from a different angle. With the music, I was able to see the actors, the frame, in a different light.

He very quickly came up with a leitmotiv which he then broke down into different variations of varying mood and colour. He was able to strike a balance between the intimate and the epic.





# INTERVIEW WITH ROMAIN DURIS



### **What was your immediate reaction when you were first offered the role of Gustave Eiffel?**

Martin Bourboulon came to me full of energy and passion to talk about a crazy project alleging that Gustav Eiffel's desire and inspiration to build the Tower were borne out of love for a woman. I was instantly hooked. Because I understand the need behind this story to make Paris, one of the most beautiful capitals in the world, a dream-like place once again. But to me, this monument has always been magical. Ever since I was a kid and even today, when I walk by the Eiffel Tower I am fascinated. I was very drawn to the theme of the engineer-artist who finds refuge in his work and sees it through to completion as though it were a declaration of love. Needless to say, I couldn't wait to read the script.

### **And what was your reaction once you read it?**

From the start, I love the idea of a crazy, trailblazing architect, like a 19th century Steve Jobs, with larger-than-life ideas told as a grand, sweeping epic. Over time, I read a few successive drafts until the right one came along. More lively, slightly less academic. The one that translated exactly the vision Martin had for the film. This version came through with the flashback construction that Tatiana de Rosnay brought to the script. The story suddenly became more modern. I never doubted that the right draft would come along.

### **How did you create the character of Gustave Eiffel?**

I read a lot about him. And what struck me immediately was the lack of detail regarding his personal life and his personality. His biographies focus mainly on his achievements. The EIFFEL script runs a bit along those lines. It depicts a focused, ambitious man, capable of haranguing a crowd, of seeing to completion a project as insane as the Eiffel Tower, while still being a man, made fragile by an impossible love. There was enough action and concrete situations that I didn't have to constantly ask myself which aspect of his personality should come to the fore at any particular moment... There was room for me to create and invent for myself.

### **What was it like working with Martin Bourboulon before the shooting?**

We communicated a lot. Because the more I read about Eiffel and his work – which I love – the more I would offer up suggestions to Martin, especially about the phrasing of different dialogues. I cannot sit still when I'm preparing a role. I knew all the research I was doing was essential to preparing for this role and that I would need to let it all out once I was on set.

As soon as I read the script and discussed it with Martin, I knew that this is a film that is forward moving, that charges forth, even, as soon as Eiffel decides to take on the challenge of building the Tower as he rediscovers a love that had broken his heart twenty years before, a separation that had been haunting him. To arrive on set with a strongly established character would have ruined the energy. On the contrary, the goal was to be spontaneous, in the moment, not only with the other actors but with Martin, adjusting to his own choices and direction. For example, in the hand-held sequence shots when Eiffel doesn't have a moment to himself just as in the fixed shots in which Gustave takes in the shock of seeing Adrienne again.

### **Martin Bourboulon says that he does not like to rehearse. Does this method work for you?**

Completely. We need to take advantage of the freedom that digital filming offers. We adapted to this rhythm very quickly on set. It was clearly more complicated to work this way for the actors who had less time on set and, legitimately, felt more nervous. But I would reassure them, tell them to really let go on the first take and that we would work on it from there. It is essential to allow ourselves to be spontaneous, let accidents happen, in this type of film.

### **What did you like the most about working with Martin Bourboulon?**

The freedom I just mentioned. The possibility to make my own suggestions. Martin listens to his actors with a lot of consideration. With him there is always room for invention, and, at the end of each take, he asks if you would like to do another one. It is a very skilled and subtle way of working. And thanks to his experience in comedy, he was very aware of rhythm, which is just as essential in a period film.





### **How did you work on the costumes ahead of the shooting?**

We were immediately in agreement that I should not look as though I was wearing a disguise or a costume. We did not want to be obsessive about historical accuracy or the credibility of the costumes and maintained a certain freedom in terms of the cut or the way in which they were worn. For instance, I wasn't constantly wearing a bowtie, sometimes my shirt was open... We must never forget that Eiffel was an artist. He would look chic when he was out in society but could be less strait-laced when he was working. We also know that he worked closely with his workers and sometimes worked alongside them. He therefore would sometimes be wearing workers' clothes as he wasn't going to muck up a three-piece suit. I especially did not want to come off as stiff and stuffy.

### **At what point did you meet Emma Mackey?**

In Cannes in April 2019, during the CANNESERIES festival where she was a member of the Jury and I was presenting *Vernon Subutex*. I immediately felt that she shared the same desire to do the film and also that Martin felt that we would work well on-screen as a couple. It was a genius idea to offer her the role.

Emma has it all, both intelligence and incredible maturity when it comes to acting. She is as comfortable with being physical – energetic and joyful - as she is in delivering sheer, pure emotion in the more dramatic scenes. We really carried one another through each of the scenes we shared together.

### **Was there a scene you were more nervous about shooting?**

Thanks to Emma, I quickly understood that the scenes we had together that revolved around the impossibility of our being able to love one another were going to be powerful. However, the stakes were completely different in the scenes revolving around the Tower, the scenes explaining the architectural project or those depicting the actual construction with the workers. We could not let the rhythm lag in those scenes and risk losing the audience.

For these moments are essential to the story: the building of the Eiffel Tower is as important as the love story. I wanted to get those scenes right.

### **Did the fact that there were two different shooting periods affect your work at all?**

Not really. Because we started by filming the story's present-time 1886-1889 before filming his youth. His younger years were a rather brutal transition for us: he loses 30 years from one day to the next. I wanted there to be a glint in Eiffel's eye, bright and tenacious, like Al Pacino in *Scarface*, "The world is yours". He is afraid of nothing.

### **How does one create a younger Gustave Eiffel?**

You need to have faith in those passionate moments in which Eiffel barges into Adrienne's parents' home in search for wood for the construction of the bridge in Bordeaux. I read up quite a bit about his work on that bridge and his other accomplishments as a young man, as someone who will not let go of anything, who saves a construction worker from drowning while building the bridge, who falls head over heels in love with a young woman of a different social standing. I treated it like we were shooting a new film and tried not to go back too much to what we had already shot. Just to keep it fresh.

### **What state of mind were you in when you got back on-set after having to postpone due to COVID?**

Vanessa van Zuylen was really impressive and made certain we were ready to go as soon as everything opened up again. But, ahead of time, of course, we had no idea when that might be. At any rate, as an actor, you must always be ready to go whenever you're called, no matter what the circumstances. Once we returned to the set, COVID and the lockdown increased our motivation exponentially as we realized how lucky we were to be back at work. We had to get back to it, committed as ever, in honour of the work we had already done in the first half of shooting about which Martin had given us enthusiastic feedback. The atmosphere was magical, as though suspended in time, with everyone reunited and super-motivated, so happy to all be together again.



### **How did you feel on the last day of shooting?**

We were all a bit of a mess. This film was epic on every level. It's a very emotionally charged film with the added intensity of this impossible love-story. The set-design was sensational and spectacular, the costumes were so elegant and chic and the overall experience on a human level was really moving... it's impossible to come back from this experience unchanged...

### **Is the finished film close to what you imagined it would be?**

There's the grandness of the cinematography that bowls you over. And the VFX were amazing. They also did an incredible job with the editing. It is one of the toughest films to edit that I have ever worked on. EIFFEL is incredibly spectacular. I realized this as I wandered around the set where foundations of the Tower had been reconstructed full-scale. And everything is heightened exponentially on-screen. It lends even more strength to your acting.





**INTERVIEW WITH  
EMMA MACKEY**



### **How did you first react when Vanessa van Zuylen and Martin Bourboulon came to London to talk to you about EIFFEL and offer you the role of Adrienne?**

The offer was a huge gift that came to me just as my desire to be in a French film was at its strongest. I grew up in Sablé-sur-Sarthe. But as a teenager, it was crucial for me to go to England and explore the other facet of my dual cultural identity. That's when I started doing theatre and was lucky enough to have a teacher who taught me everything and recommended me to a talent agent. I was almost immediately given the opportunity to audition for the role of Maeve Wiley in Sex Education and got the part.

But I was also really hoping to get the opportunity to work in France. And then this script arrived. It has obviously gone through some changes since then. But as soon as I read it, it was clear to me that I was going to do it, I immediately began to fantasize about it. I could not imagine anything more French than a film about the Eiffel Tower with Romain Duris! I immediately trusted the story and Martin, with the impression that I was in the right place at the right time.

### **Who is Adrienne, in your eyes?**

In her younger years, she is incredibly curious and sincerely eager to discover all that life has to offer. A whirlwind, eager to get a taste of everything. She is constantly running after something. I find this character, so sunny and light-hearted, quite beautiful. Then when we see her later as an adult, Adrienne appears naturally more reserved. Undoubtedly, the result of the pains and difficulties she has experienced. But as she spends more and more time with Eiffel, she will again become the beaming teenager she once was – and who had never completely disappeared – thanks to the love she has for this man and the fascination she has for his work. This is what nourishes her and what makes this role so fascinating. And it is magnificently translated on-screen by the flashback construction and the coming-and-going between the two periods.

### **How did you go about creating Adrienne?**

I imagined in my head all of the things about her that are not mentioned in the script. But it was mostly through my discussion with Martin who was clear about not wanting to make a rigid and stuffy period film. From that point on, it was up to me to decide how Adrienne was to move about, express herself and establish what was different about her in the two periods. Finding the manner in which she carries herself was really key. To show her more reserved than in her adolescence in the 1886-1889 section but then, little by little, show how she behaves more freely as she spends more and more time with Gustave. It was important that we be able to distinguish the characters clearly between the two periods without having to resort to aging through make-up and prosthetics. It needed to be totally organic. But none of this would have been possible without Martin's clear vision.

### **Is there a real difference for you when acting in French rather than English?**

That is a question I asked myself a lot before we started shooting. I have spoken more French than English in my lifetime. And yet, from the beginning – and Martin noticed this immediately - I had this real apprehension about it. I wondered whether I was going to be able to speak French perfectly. I had been living in England for three years, surrounded by English people. I was very nervous about the first few days of shooting, as though I had to prove something to myself as well as to all these experienced actors who have been working in film for years and are now wondering: what this actress from a Netflix series is doing here! (laughter)

But honestly, the path that led me here has been quite healthy, not too stressful. It was necessary for me to be able to reconnect with a part of myself that I had left by the wayside. Otherwise, on a technical level, the musicality varies from one language to the other and this does affect the way you act. In real life, I am someone who speaks very fast but in French I find I need to take more time.





**The filming of EIFFEL took place over two different periods of time. And during the first period, you were also shooting Sex Education. How did you survive this whirlwind of activity?**

Everything overlapped but it was really galvanizing! I realized how lucky I was to spend the week shooting Sex Education then be in Paris on the weekend playing Adrienne, the character of my dreams, surrounded by people I admire. Of course, there comes a moment when your body tells you it is time to rest, and you need to find a balance. But it was a huge privilege to live-out two such intense months.

**What did you like the most about working with Martin Bourboulon?**

How clear communication is with him. Discussing and listening are fundamental with Martin. There are a lot of readings ahead of time, lots of exchanging over the phone and via email. On set as well, this base of communication is solidly established. Martin has never strayed from the sincere and cheerful approach he established with me. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to work with him on my first French film.

**We can detect real chemistry between you and Romain Duris as soon as you appear on-screen together. How did this come about?**

I first met Romain at the CANNESERIES festival in April 2019. I was a member of the Jury and he was accompanying Vernon Subutex. Martin had travelled down from Paris for the occasion. We did some read-throughs of the script. And I immediately felt the chemistry you mention. It was lucky because it is difficult to force it when it isn't there. Romain is a fantastic actor. Very experienced but never using this experience to put you down. He is modest and sensitive when he works. Every day, on set, I never knew precisely what was going to happen in our scenes. It is wonderful that he has maintained this innocence when he works, that we were able to discover things together day to day. His generosity was really an essential element for me.

**The second part of the shooting, originally scheduled for March 2020, had to be postponed due to COVID. How does one reconnect to a role after such a long period?**

First, I just let things happen. It's useless to try to project oneself when the situation is so uncertain. One had to respect the principle that a film does not go before a pandemic. More concretely, this delay gave us a bit more time to work. To have the first part of the film completely shot and edited, to have half of the puzzle already complete was a huge luxury, that everyone, in every department, could look to and depend on. And it was such a joy to get back to work on a project that was so dear to us all and that we felt was so worthwhile. When it comes to taking over Adrienne once again, I almost had the impression that we were shooting another film. But that bright, sunny feeling we had being back on set corresponded to what I needed to play: those younger years.

**Were there any scenes that you were nervous about shooting?**

Not really because whenever I was feeling apprehensive, I would just speak to Martin and to Romain about it. Communication was very transparent. I'm still a bit inexperienced so I live every day on the set like I'm in training. I never feel like I'm suffering. The most exciting days of the shoot are the ones that spontaneously come back to me. The underwater scenes where I'm holding my breath in a studio water tank in which I was given apnoea training. Discovering the work of the design team on the part of the Tower they actually built full-scale. It was incredible! I think that my innocence was perhaps my greatest asset during this entire adventure. It only helped, never hindered me.

**Is the film you have made close to the one you imagined?**

I was really taken by the film. I was in the story, not in my memory of making it, not seeing what I could have or should have done better. I was also able to discover the parts of the film in which my character does not appear. This epic adventure and romance that Martin was looking to make really bursts onto the screen. I found it extremely entertaining but it also moved me tremendously. What I felt as a viewer corresponded quite closely to what I felt during the shoot.

# INTERVIEW WITH VANESSA VAN ZUYLEN

- PRODUCER -





### **How did you come upon EIFFEL?**

It's thanks to François Hamel, the production manager of the first film I produced, UP FOR LOVE, who is also the production manager on EIFFEL. One evening, François comes over for dinner and sees all of the illustrations of the Eiffel Tower I have in my apartment because I have a passion for this monument.

François then tells me that Pathé has asked him to read a script that is made for me. A €75 million project that is still in financing but that he thinks I could maybe help bring to life. He has me read the script and I am instantly spellbound: a wonderful love story told with, as a backdrop, the construction of the Eiffel Tower. He also gives me the name of the screenwriter: Caroline Bongrand. I contact her, we meet and the adventure begins.

### **What inspired you to choose Martin Bourboulon to direct EIFFEL?**

I developed BANLIEUSARDS by Kery James and Leïla Sy with his father, Frédéric, who introduced me to his son. And then it struck me: Martin had exactly the modern touch I was looking for. In my mind, EIFFEL was not going to be just another period film. I wanted the same sort of person behind the camera as Gustave Eiffel himself. A director who is daring, who would be willing to invent or reinvent himself in the face of a new challenge. I was convinced that his experience in comedy would lend a sense of rhythm to the film and draw it out of its comfort zone. And Pathé was very open to this sort of challenge.

### **What changes did you bring to the script?**

Martin is obsessed with authenticity, including what one can or cannot allow oneself to do with a film. Without that sense of truth, Martin would not have gotten on board. Therefore, we researched meticulously for a year, poring over all of Gustave Eiffel's correspondence which is kept at the Musée d'Orsay. We were thereby able to verify that he did indeed meet Adrienne in Bordeaux and that he wished to marry her at this time of his life. It is also thanks to this research that we were able to conclude that Adrienne's reappearance in his life serves as the only plausible reason why he finally accepted to take

on the construction of a 300-meter-high tower – after several times turning down an offer to create a monument for the 1889 Exposition. There was nothing random about this decision. In our view, only Adrienne's return could lend him the necessary strength, emotionally, to take on such a daunting task and nothing in Eiffel's correspondence disproves this interpretation. It is also Martin's obsession with authenticity that made him call upon Thomas Bidegain, who began collaborating with Caroline Bongrand on a re-write of the script.

### **And casting began around the same time. Martin Bourboulon had the idea of Romain Duris and you of Emma Mackey. What made you think of her?**

I'm at home one day and see my 13-year-old son watching a Netflix series that seems to start out the same way as BETTY BLUE. I decide to take a closer look! (laughter) So here I am watching the first episode of Sex Education and again, inspiration strikes. I tell my husband that I have just found Adrienne: Emma Mackey. He looks at me more than a little circumspect: a punk with piercings and a cockney accent! But I see a future Meryl Streep. Very quickly, I learn that she speaks French. I track down her agent and talk about it to Martin who goes along with the idea. Twenty-four hours later, we are on a train to London. Emma has read the script. She accepts. We return to Paris super excited.

### **You've established the duo but does this mean you are ready to go?**

Not really. A short while later, Emma's agent calls to tell me that... Emma can no longer do EIFFEL! Her shooting dates for the second season of Sex Education, in August 2019, clash with those of EIFFEL. And as she is committed to Kenneth Branagh's DEATH ON THE NILE just afterwards, this would push our shooting dates back to March 2020. And I feel certain that if we don't shoot in the summer of 2019, we will lose Emma who will quickly be snatched up by Hollywood. So I decide to split the production into two parts – summer 2019 for the part that takes place in 1886-1889. Then March 2020 – after Emma has completed her two shoots – for the part in Bordeaux when Gustave and Adrienne meet as their younger selves. From that point on,





I bluff! I'm obliged to tell Martin and the rest of the team that everything is fine, to avoid a panic, even though I have no official dates because the producer of Sex Education – who proved himself to be a prince – had none to share.

### **How and why did Natalie Carter and Tatiana de Rosnay get attached as additional writers?**

Because on April 15, 2019, the day of the Notre Dame fire, four months before we were to start production, Pathé asked that changes be made to the script. We needed to come up with another draft that in no way undid the work previously done, but that offered something new. I therefore contacted Tatiana de Rosnay, a childhood friend, with the idea that perhaps a novelist would have the tools to come up with a solution to our script issue: how to handle the 20-year lapse between Gustave and Adrienne's break-up and their reunion. In Tatiana's view, it was not necessary to immediately know who Adrienne is. Tatiana therefore came up with this idea of a flashback structure. Busy with her own projects, she did not have the time to actually write but spent two weeks with Martin to establish the foundations for this flashback. I called upon the very talented Natalie Carter to work with Martin in transferring these ideas into the script as she is familiar with large-scale studio projects and with contributing to works-in-progress. And Pathé loved the draft.

### **Who are the other partners who came on board to finance?**

The Île-de-France region, some SOFICAS, Canal+, L'Oréal Paris, the BNP... But getting a broadcaster on board was again a struggle. France Télévisions and TF1 both said no. I then went to M6 who had been my partners on UP FOR LOVE. Their response was quick and clear: they liked EIFFEL but felt it did not correspond to the DNA of the company.

But I would not leave them alone. I ask them to read the script. I call them every week. They agree to meet with Martin and myself because they loved the script! And just before the meeting, I lose it and tell Martin that I still don't know what dates Emma will be free. He is dumbfounded. But we do not give up. We go to see the people at M6 and we give the best pitch of our lives! Ten days later, they call me back to say they're on board. Bringing this project to

life really wasn't easy. The support and the financing we received from M6 and Pathé were essential.

### **You start pre-production even before you are absolutely certain that the film is actually going to get made?**

We have no choice because time is running out and August is soon upon us. We need to build the Eiffel Tower construction set and that takes time. We take on six architects and twelve engineers to make it happen. Just before they're finished, the insurance company tells us there will be a problem... if ever we find ourselves with 100km winds. We therefore have to take it down and rebuild it. Our set designer Stéphane Taillason was incredible, as he would prove to be throughout the entire shoot. This incredible team spirit is really what carried us through these harrowing moments of anxiety and saved us in the end. And finally, a few weeks before production, we work everything out with Emma. We manage to get the dates we need right in the heart of the production schedule of Sex Education which enables her to travel back and forth between England and Paris. We shoot this first part of the film between late August and late October 2019.

### **And the second part is scheduled to start March 17, 2020...**

Except of course the pandemic starts to rear its ugly head. On Friday the 13th we have a meeting and ask ourselves what we should do. And we decide to go for it! But lockdown is decreed the following day, Saturday May 14th. To be honest, I just assume it is over, that the film would be shelved. But this profound moment of self-doubt only lasts half a day. We decide we are going to continue to fight to make this film and to do everything in our power to be able to pick up where we left off as soon as lockdown is lifted. And once again, the producer of Sex Education makes a miracle happen by postponing production of the third season of the show. I keep in constant touch with our whole team in the meantime. Of course, the context around production changes significantly between the two periods and we are among the first to venture into it on the 1st of June. The shooting lasts five weeks. The military aspect of the new COVID regulations will actually help us gain time in the end.

**What is the most vivid memory this production will leave with you in the long term?**

The power of teamwork and team spirit. Every phase of the project was long, including the editing, where it took time to find the story we wanted for our film, the right balance between the two time periods. But the producer's job is

to solve problems. When everything goes right, we are basically useless. As of today, EIFFEL has sold around the world except China, the UK, the USA and South Korea, where we are still fielding offers. For me, EIFFEL is the movie of a lifetime.







**INTERVIEW WITH  
CAROLINE  
BONGRAND**

- THE ORIGINAL SCREENWRITER -

### **How did the idea for EIFFEL come about 24 years ago?**

It sprung from a profound desire to make a film. After publishing a few novels, I travel to Los Angeles to study screenwriting at USC. One of the professors tells us straight off the bat that one of the main activities of a screenwriter is to pitch their ideas to producers. I have two ideas to pitch at my first meeting with a producer, neither of which pan out. As I leave the producer's office, it turns out I made an impact. The producer asks me back inside. He likes my ideas but the endings do not work at all. Then he asks me, somewhat sarcastically, whether I have anything else. I reply that I do but that it's too expensive for him. I don't know why I say this but he immediately wants to know more. I need to think of something, anything, fast. I tell him that Gustave Eiffel built his Tower out of love and I am the only one who knows the true story behind this. I'm totally bluffing but it works: he hands me a contract to sign. I'm in a complete panic.

### **What do you do?**

I have any and all documentation regarding Gustave Eiffel sent to me from Paris. That's how I discover that he was head over heels in love with a woman named Adrienne Bourgès as a young man. That Adrienne came from a big bourgeois family in Bordeaux who felt that Gustave was not deserving of their daughter and forced the couple to separate. Eiffel was both very saddened and hurt by this. I also learn that the engineer was not in the least interested in taking part in the Exposition Universelle of 1889 until he suddenly and inexplicably changed his mind and took on the Tower project. I was stunned to learn that what I thought I was making up turned out to be true.

I had the backbone of my story – a wonderful love story with the construction of one of the most famous monuments in the world as a backdrop. I get to work, constantly communicating with my two professors at USC, Leon and Mimi Roth, the parents of screenwriter Eric Roth.

### **You then go to pitch the project along with your producer to different studios. What are their reactions?**

They find the project too Franco-French for such a high budget and refuse to invest. They ask whether, for casting reasons, Gustave Eiffel could maybe be twenty years younger to make him a dashing young bachelor or attach to him an American acolyte who never existed, which I refuse to do. I want to remain close to the true story. And then, we pitch it a fifth time when a well-known director who has just met with massive success tells me that he loves the story and would like to direct EIFFEL as his next film. He has already organized a meeting with Paramount. It's a dream come true. Unfortunately, the director in question ends up by stepping away from the project for personal reasons.

Everything comes crashing down around me. We give up on the project, my visa expires, and I come back to France after three years in LA.

### **How does the project then come back to life on this side of the Atlantic?**

I had taken notes on this whole adventure and I publish a book about it entitled PITCH that sells very well. I'm invited on several talk-shows to present the book and as I am leaving one of them, I receive a phone call from Bertrand de Labbey who tells me that Gérard Depardieu and Isabelle Adjani want to do the film. Adjani has even talked about it to Luc Besson who is interested in directing it. Over the course of a single morning, this project that I thought completely dead was rising up like a phoenix from the flames. Unfortunately, despite much initial enthusiasm, the film does not get made.

### **And yet it almost immediately bounces back...**

I get a call from Christian Fechner who asks me to adapt the screenplay into French. I am delighted but do not think I am up to doing this by myself. I therefore ask my husband, Martin Brossollet to work on it with me. Martin





added some wonderful scenes to the script, among which all of the technical scenes with Eiffel's team around the actual construction of the Tower. He has a passion for engineering and succeeded in rendering this entire aspect of the story very concrete. Thanks to him, the story works better than it did before. Christian Fechner is very enthusiastic and pays us the greatest of compliments when he says: "I really believed Eiffel wasn't going to succeed". However, soon afterwards, Christian was diagnosed with a serious illness and explains that he does not have the energy to take on such an ambitious project. Martin and I are very saddened by this news.

### **And then destiny will lend yet another helping hand to EIFFEL...**

Yes, Martin leaves the script behind somewhere and it falls into the hands of Christophe Barratier who reads it out of curiosity. A short time later, we get a call from Jacques Perrin, Christophe's uncle. He would like for us to sign on with his production company. I like the idea. To me, EIFFEL is like a musical, like a movement in a symphony. And the director of THE CHORUS, who is originally a musician, would know how to handle this nicely. But time goes by and we receive no further news. And when the adaptation rights lapse, they do not offer to renew them.

### **At that point, another producer, Manuel Munz, attempts to get EIFFEL off the ground...**

Having become chief editor of « l'Officiel » magazine, I come across Manuel at an AIDS benefit. I know him a bit, as we first met when I was fifteen and he was working at my father's consulting firm. He takes me to lunch. EIFFEL becomes a part of the conversation. I can tell that he is interested. He asks me to start working on another project, the adaptation of a book by Howard Fast, MAX, a wonderful story. He then tells me he is going to try to produce EIFFEL with Olivier Dahan as director. I sign on with him. Pathé calls me the next day announcing that Jérôme Seydoux is also interested in the project. I tell them the project is no longer available. Olivier Dahan says he doesn't want

to change anything about the script except heighten the sensuality in some of the love scenes. I agree to this. But yet again, EIFFEL is too complicated to finance. Until 2017, Manuel Munz will try everything, even working with a US co-producers Paula Weinstein (ANALYZE THIS), but they just can't make it work. The financing never comes together and Olivier Dahan turns his attention to GRACE OF MONACO. We are now in 2017 and for me, EIFFEL is really over. A short time later, I get a call from Ridley Scott's wife, telling me that he has read the script and that he thinks the story is fabulous. He wants to make it his next picture. But they have a strict policy to only take on projects that have not been in the hands of another producer. End of story.

### **Finally, the film becomes a reality thanks to Vanessa van Zuylen...**

She tells me she has read the story and asks me to keep the rights for her. She assures me she will be able to make the film happen. Her passion and conviction fill me with hope once again. I naturally tell her about Pathé's interest in EIFFEL. The film needs to be made with Pathé. And this is indeed how the film will at last see the light of day. I rewrite the script with Thomas Bidegain. The scenes by Martin Brossollet remain, for the most part, intact.

### **Looking back, what is your take on this 24-year long adventure?**

I loved working on EIFFEL. It's a big part of my life. I put myself at the service of something that was much bigger than me. I am happy to have honoured, in my own way, the memory of Gustave Eiffel whose reputation was unjustly tainted afterwards. I am also happy to have shown that sheer persistence, that of EIFFEL, can make even the craziest of projects happen. Above all, I interpret this adventure as a lesson in humility and as a message of hope: one must believe in one's projects. This film is a love story. But it is also, most especially, a declaration of love. To Paris. To cinema. To audacity.



# CAST LIST

GUSTAVE EIFFEL	Romain DURIS
ADRIENNE BOURGÈS	Emma MACKEY
ANTOINE DE RESTAC	Pierre DELADONCHAMPS
COMPAGNON	Alexandre STEIGER
CLAIRE EIFFEL	Armande BOULANGER
M. BOURGÈS	Bruno RAFFAELLI





# TECHNICAL LIST

Director	Martin BOURBOULON	Production	VVZ Production
Original Screenplay	Caroline BONGRAND		Pathé Films
Adaptation and dialogues	Caroline BONGRAND	Producer	Vanessa VAN ZUYLEN
	Thomas BIDEGAIN	Co-producer	SCOPE PICTURES
	Martin BOURBOULON		CONSTANTIN FILM PRODUKTION
	Natalie CARTER		M6 FILMS
	Martin BROSSOLLET	Executive Producer	Vanessa VAN ZUYLEN
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Director	Juliette CRETÉ	Distribution	France Pathé Films
Script Supervisor	Marie GENNESSEAUX	Broadcasters	Canal +
Cinematography	Matias BOUCARD		Ciné +
Editor	Valérie DESEINE		M6
Sound	David RIT		W9
Supervising Sound Editor	Gwennolé LE BORGNE	In association with	Sofica
Production Manager	François HAMEL		SOFITVCINE 7
Music	Alexandre DESPLAT		COFIMAGE 31
Production Design	Stéphane TAILLASSON		COFINOVA 16
Costume Design	Thierry DELETTRE		SG IMAGE 2019
Casting Director	Aurélie GUICHARD		INDEFILMS 8
	Marie-France MICHEL	Film made with	the support of the
Unit Manager	Robin WELCH		Conseil Départemental de l'Eure

