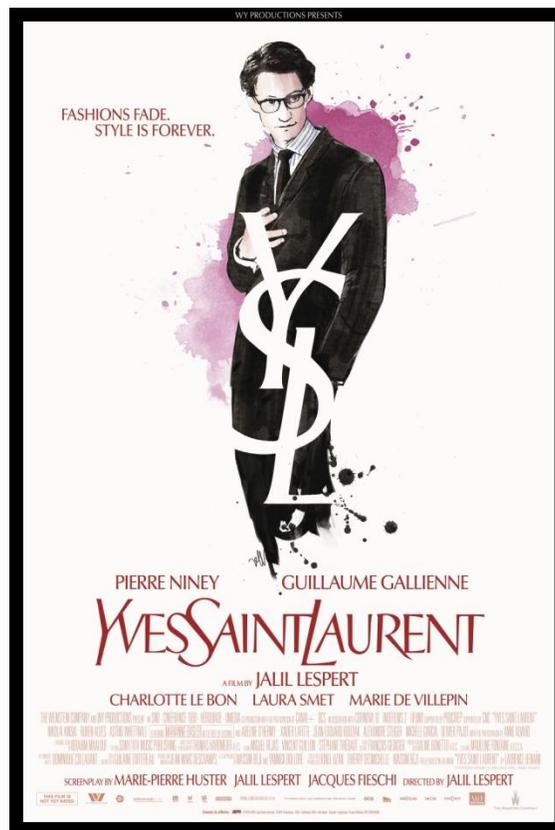




THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

YVES SAINT LAURENT

Production Notes



Publicity materials are available at:
twcpublicity.com

Running Time: 106 mins
MPAA Rating: R

SYNOPSIS

In January 1958, Yves Saint Laurent (Pierre Niney) – aged merely 21 – was unexpectedly called upon to oversee the legendary Paris fashion house established by recently deceased Christian Dior. All eyes turned to this very young assistant as he presented his first collection for Dior and instantly ascended to the heights of haute couture's elite class. During Saint Laurent's breathtaking and groundbreaking show, he met with another fate in being introduced to Pierre Bergé (Guillaume Gallienne), patron of the arts, future love of his life and lifelong business partner. Three years later, the two founded the Yves Saint Laurent Company, which would rapidly become one of the biggest luxury powerhouses on the planet. Directed by Jalil Lespert with a screenplay by Lespert and Marie-Pierre Huster, YVES SAINT LAURENT is at once a captivating story about the making of an icon and a testament to the power of enduring love.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR JALIL LESPERT

How did it all start?

I wanted to tell a powerful, epic love story. I also wanted to portray characters striving to make their dreams come true. As I was thinking over what I wanted to do for my new project, I came up with the idea of YVES SAINT LAURENT. I was thrilled to make a film about the great French designer and Pierre Bergé.

What was it about Yves Saint Laurent's life and career that got you so excited?

To start with, I am extremely impressed by Yves' unique charisma, but also by his vulnerability and innocence. He was tremendously clever and uncompromisingly dedicated to his art. Then, I was deeply moved by his lifelong love story with Pierre Bergé. Then again, in addition to the love story, Yves was obviously an amazing creative force. He was a true creator who was immensely productive, and always ahead of his time – he was a true avant-gardist. Beyond his creations, he understood how important clothes were in daily life. He came up with suits for modern women at a time when women were still considered second-class citizens. He wasn't so much an observer of his times as a contributor to them. He was bold enough to have women wear men's clothes, including tuxedo jackets and pants, without ever denying their femininity. At the time, this was extremely groundbreaking stuff.

What kind of research did you do?

I guess I probably read and saw everything even remotely related to Yves Saint Laurent. I had to do my homework because, at the beginning, I didn't know much about him and because in the books I could get hold of there was hardly anything about Yves' private life. As a result, I had to double-check all the info and piece everything together. It was a long, painstaking process. I was able to put together his life story over the course of twenty years. Then I chose to take some distance in order to either leave room for fiction or to use facts to add pace and enhance the story's developments. And then I began shooting the film.

How was working with Pierre Bergé during the research process?

I wouldn't have made the film without Pierre's consent – not because of the important figure he is, but because he was his lifelong companion. When it comes to Saint Laurent's life, Pierre Bergé is an integral part of it – you can't portray the former without portraying the latter. I needed to feel Pierre was by my side and access specific information only he could give me. I wanted him to share his thoughts and his feelings about the whole enterprise with me. Besides, it was important for me to meet with the "YSL Family" – i.e. the foundation where you can find all those who helped with Yves' creative work. They still feel very close to the designer who passed away only five years ago. I realized from the documentaries I saw that there was a family-like atmosphere in the Saint Laurent house. Naturally, I wished to meet each and every one of them. Even though that haute-couture house was already an industry back then, they developed a team spirit. It is a key element as it echoes back to the love story between Yves and Pierre in that it is at once highly private and public. Both aspects are inseparable, like in a theater company. I wanted all that to come across in the film, and so I had to experience it myself first.

The film is first and foremost a beautiful love story...

What moved me about that story is that it portrays two brilliant characters, including a genius with all that it entails in terms of flaws and wounds. Moreover, Yves was manic-depressive and diagnosed as such by doctors.

What drew me in was how the two protagonists made it possible to live a lifelong relationship, despite Yves' disease and work pressure. They were able to keep their dream going and to push the limits – the further they went, the more their love story was put to the test, and the better it survived every obstacle. This is why it is such an unprecedented, exhilarating love story. The intensity of feelings is increased a hundred fold.

The film also deals with the desire for freedom that manifests itself through artistic creation. Is there a connection between film creation and haute couture creation?

There are probably connections from an industrial perspective. There is a lot of money involved and there are actual economic challenges that totally elude free-spirited artists! There may be some kind of confinement about the creative process, but my belief is that Yves overcame all of this. The way I see it, he had this strong feeling that he'd be artistically limited if he stuck to fashion design – although it was a tremendous success, he must have felt anxious somehow about doing "just" that. And yet, creation is all the more exciting when it is limited by a number of standards – I believe that constraints stimulate creativity. My guess is that Saint Laurent must have suffered from it because he was a free spirit deep down. Now, he had to face a lot of responsibilities at a very young age. He was an extraordinarily multi-layered character – he faltered under the burden of work-related and emotional responsibilities, and all the while he was an iconic figure. And at the same time, he wished for only one thing – to run away! He felt like going far away to see if he still wanted to come back and design dresses, because there were times when he wasn't so sure.

You have kept away from portraying Yves too flatteringly – instead, you present him as a vulnerable, moving figure, but also as an unfaithful, irritable man.

This is the story of a man who was dazzlingly brilliant in his trade for twenty years – from 1956 to 1976. At 21, Yves experienced glory and love. He was actually promoted artistic director of Dior overnight, which came as an overwhelming responsibility for such a young man. The Dior house was a huge French company in those days. Around the same time, he met Pierre Bergé and they spent the next eighteen years together. Then Yves started his own brand and his own house. He was the first to make haute couture more democratic by applying the same high-quality standards of haute-couture to ready-to-wear. But although he was highly productive, he went through emotional breakdowns and suffered from the humdrum of "marital" routine, and later he had misgivings and existential crises. All through those twenty years, we were able to depict powerful emotional moments of his life. When you tell a love story, there is always mounting tension up until you have to raise the following question: "Will the couple pull through?" In Yves' and Pierre's story, paradoxically enough, the answer was to be found in 1976, right while they were going through their worst crisis and when Yves came up with his most perfect collection – the Russian Ballet Collection.

Tell me about the cast.

I was fortunate to meet Pierre Niney and Guillaume Gallienne. They complement each other very well and even though they're very different, they have something in common – they share the same work ethic and love for the written word because they are both highly educated actors. It takes that much dedication and intelligence to portray such brilliant characters. They're both very talented and they approach their craft with an open mind, but they don't over-intellectualize things. They are full of life and actually inhabit their roles. They found the right balance between the technical know-how of portraying a twenty-year-old love story – that includes paying attention to the evolution of language – and the lively, emotional element of acting. I believe that the film rests on their shoulders to a large extent.

How did you work with them?

I'm in love with all my actors, and particularly when I'm filming a love story. I try to be as protective and comforting as possible. But good actors are clever and so I think you have to let them know what you think when it's necessary and ask them to make changes accordingly, provided they agree to do so. Besides, I'm an actor myself, which accounts for my being close to my actors. But I try to pick the best cast and crew members, to let them have their say and to make adjustments from time to time. But more often than not, when they're very talented, they understand what you mean really fast and sometimes even better than the director!

What were your filmmaking options?

I had no set notions in that regard. I don't claim to be an auteur because I believe you need to use whatever technique there is to make the best film possible. I don't mean to make a beautiful shot just for the sake of it and be self-indulgent about it. I try to stretch each shot as much as possible. If, to achieve that, I need to use a Steadicam, a crane, dolly tracks or any other filmmaking equipment, I certainly will in order to remain as close to what I'm shooting as possible. To me, the actor and the situation are my main focus. I need them to be constantly believable. I'm not trying to "be an artist." I want to make a film that tells the story as accurately as possible and that serves my purpose.

How did you go about the costume design?

Actually, there was twice as much work on the costume design as there usually is. First of all, we had to design the period costumes that were supposed to help recreate the period and reflect the changing trends in fashion over those twenty years. Then, we had to do some research and make clever decisions about some of Saint Laurent's key collections. We had the support of Pierre Bergé and the Foundation, and so we were lucky enough to be able to use original costumes. Because, for the Foundation, making reproductions of those costumes was simply not an option, especially as several fabrics used by Saint Laurent at the time do not exist any longer.

How did you pick the models that wore those dresses?

We chose them according to their ability to fit into those unique outfits – those are dresses that are kept by the Saint Laurent Foundation, and that are not actually worn by people but are occasionally on show. So we had to find really slender girls because models in those days didn't have the same build as girls today – they would wear a small or extra small size, at most! It was a real hassle. Now once we found the right

models and began lighting those dresses, it was just fantastic. It was a very painstaking process as the girls could only wear the dresses for two hours in a row, and then had to take them off because of friction or perspiration-related problems. Allow me to praise our costume designer Madeline Fontaine who did an amazing job on this film.

The production design is just stunning.

It was much the same, since we had the Foundation's support. We obviously chose to shoot on location whenever possible and to go for the actual places where Saint Laurent lived and worked – the studio where he worked as early as 1974, Majorelle, Morocco, which was a remodeled and well-kept place, and the Intercontinental Hotel (now the Westin), where Saint Laurent held his shows twice a year. We were inspired by the places and the people who both lived and worked there, so that it could come across in the film.

What did you have in mind for the score?

I asked a young French jazz prodigy, Ibrahim Maalouf, to write the original score, even though he hadn't written a lot of film soundtracks so far. It was wonderful getting to know him. In the beginning, he sent me several themes worked out on the piano that were the script inspired him to write. I wasn't sure I would sign him yet, but his music sold me. It didn't take long to realize that, for me, this was the best soundtrack to serve the story because it was romantic, delicate and even wistful at times, and also extremely original. I didn't feel like it was yet another soundtrack, or that it was just background music, but that it had heart – I could tell there was an artist out there helping emotions take shape.

You've also used period soundtracks.

Yes indeed. We've mixed the original score with pieces of various genres that were popular during the years covered by the film – jazz, Motown, rock and disco, i.e. the kind of music people would listen to in nightclubs and parties. You can also hear Callas who was close to Yves' heart, particularly during the 76 show. It would seem odd today to have a fashion show without music, but Saint Laurent was the first to use any for a show, while Pierre Bergé served as a set designer and ran the shows. *La Wally* was a powerfully emotional masterpiece that worked wonderfully to illustrate the famous Russian Ballet collection. In my opinion, it just epitomizes Saint Laurent's genius and creative talent.

Q&A WITH ACTOR PIERRE NINEY (YVES SAINT LAURENT)

How did you react when you read the script?

I was thrilled! I knew, right away, that this was a strong story with an engaging, multi-faceted character who was both fragile and full of dignity. I was eager to get to work. Being familiar with Jalil Lespert's films and knowing how close he was to actors, I knew that this was going to be a compelling film. I knew that he would find the right tone to deal with this legendary story, a mix of love and creativity and that he would give an in-depth portrayal of the two characters throughout the film.

What moved you about the script?

First of all I was touched by how mature Yves was. His unflinching determination to create and invent from a very early age was very impressive. The only thing that made him happy was creating. In a sense, it was his only goal in life. Then, there was the fact that Jalil had chosen to make this love story the centerpiece of his film. He insisted on portraying not only the wonderful fifty-year relationship between Bergé and Saint Laurent but also the difficulties and manipulations that were part of the story. Finally, what I liked was that the film didn't gloss over the darker aspects of Saint Laurent's personality, his encounter with alcohol and drugs. All this was part of his life and legacy.

Did you have any idea of what the fashion world was like before you were offered the role?

No, not really. I wasn't particularly attracted to fashion because I didn't know much about it. When I started taking an interest in it – a genuine interest – it was rather in the people who made up the history of fashion, the likes of Saint Laurent, Dior and Balenciaga. These creative, unconventional characters were more relevant to me than the catwalks. Having said that, I grew more intrigued by the dresses, the fabric and the style as pre-production and shooting progressed. I was particularly moved when the Mondrian dress for instance was taken out of the museum for the shoot. When you see the Russian ballet collection parading to the Maria Callas aria on the catwalk during the finale and you think of the passion and intensity that this collective work involved, you can't but feel overwhelmed.

Yves is a genius but he was desperately conflicted as a man and he suffered from extreme shyness. How did you deal with the role?

Before anything else, it was necessary to lift the sacred aura surrounding the character so as not to be hindered by the responsibility you are supposed to assume when you are about to play such a famous role. I immediately focused on my work and on the joy of acting. My experience as a stage actor was a great help. When you act in a play by Shakespeare, you bear in mind the performances of brilliant actors and a lot of cult theatre productions but you learn promptly to get over the pressure. You need to create a new personal approach. This was what guided me in prepping for the part. Yves was a fragile character with a wounded psyche; he was extremely shy. At the age of 24, he was diagnosed with manic depressive disorder. I had to portray this aspect of the character too. His shyness is the expression of an unfathomable flaw, which he has

been able to turn into a formidable weapon. In the script there is a man who says to Yves: 'You speak in a low voice' and Yves replies: 'It is to make the other one listen...'

Did you do a lot of research about Saint Laurent?

Yes, I did, I saw as many stories and documentaries as I could, and read every available document, article, interview, bio, you name it. For several months my life was spent with Saint Laurent, I was with him every day as I watched videos and interviews or listened to his voice on my iPod. I wanted to penetrate his innermost thoughts. I wanted to know him better than anyone else on the set. I worked with all my heart, so much so that I became deeply affected by certain aspects of his life; his maturity, his creative ability at the early age of 18, his gift for drawing, his determination to achieve his own goal, his passion for the theatre and his sense of stage served as my working basis.

Then I trained with various coaches for several months: drawing, sewing, designing, and sports coaches. I also learned the specific vocabulary used in the Saint Laurent workrooms, which varied over time.

How did you work on your vocal range?

I'm rather fond of Stanislavsky's following quote – *"When you act, you should use your own experience and then let go."* So I thought to myself that I had to go full blast! As I watched the interviews, I was fascinated by his voice and his elocution, because they tell a great deal about his shyness, his sense of humor and his willpower. I really wanted to portray all of that and acquire that same unique, almost poetic way of talking.

Has Pierre Bergé been a guide of sorts?

Not a guide. I worked on my own as I always do. But he was obviously extremely helpful. He's the one who had the closest relationship with Saint Laurent. Still today, he is the keeper of his work. As I talked with him, I learned a lot about their lives and about Yves' private side, which you don't usually find in the documents pertaining to the public domain. Pierre would tell me private stories and tell me about Yves' sense of humor, about their lives over the years and about places they have been to. I had access to his studio and I was able to meet with Yves' collaborators or close acquaintances, such as Betty Catroux, Clara Saint, Dominique Deroche, and Audrey Secnazi, who showed me how to draw like Saint Laurent. This was one of the crucial stages in the prepping process.

How was it working opposite Guillaume Gallienne, who hails from the Comédie Française, just like you?

I believe we're both in love with the written word. And then, there's a strong, genuine sense of camaraderie in a theater company because you spend so much time together that it creates something quite unique in show-biz – some kind of loyalty, kindness and family-like atmosphere. This was the first time I had worked with Guillaume, but we were on the same page humor-wise because we're both very fond of comedy. But I wouldn't say that there is what you would call a "Comédie Française" method! No two actors from the Comédie Française work in a similar way. I wasn't too sure about it at the beginning, but I soon realized that you find at the Comédie Française people that come from different backgrounds – some of them come from stand-up comedy, others come from the National Academy of Dramatic Art and others are mime artists. On set, we approached our roles in different ways. We all have our secrets, don't we?

How does Jalil direct his actors?

He gets immersed in the scenes alongside us, as if he were one of the characters. We play a scene for him and he tries to feel the energy of it by picking lines here and there and exploring new ideas. He creates a real "actors' laboratory". The thing is, he has a true vision of the film and he knows what he wants to achieve. Jalil has a very organic, restrained way of directing actors, which I like, because Guillaume and I play most sophisticated characters in the film – the kind you don't find too often anymore.

Q&A WITH ACTOR GUILLAUME GALLIENNE (PIERRE BERGÉ)

Tell us how you were offered the role.

I had just heard about the project when I was offered the part. I knew that Pierre Niney had been cast to play Yves and that Jalil Lespert was to direct the film. I very much liked the idea. My father had introduced me to Pierre Bergé when I was quite young. As they happened to have a few similarities, I knew that I could play the part before even reading the script. Besides, I knew that Pierre [Niney] was a very talented actor, but I didn't realize just how immensely talented he was. I had been interested in Jalil's work for quite a long time. I think he is a very good actor and I have always liked working with directors who are actors as well.

What did you think of the script?

The script that I first read was a second draft. By the time we started shooting it had been altered eleven times. Needless to say, it had changed a lot, but what I liked right away was the audacity and free spirit of this couple. They managed to gain iconic status without ever being trapped in politically correct ideology. What's more, the film's complexity is enhanced by the dialogue co-written by Jacques Fieschi.

Were you particularly drawn to fashion and to Yves Saint Laurent's original work?

Yes, I was actually born into that world. I have always loved fashion, jewelry and elegant women. My mother would buy her clothes at the Saint Laurent boutique which was already located on the rue Spontini, and I grew up in the world of fashion and design. It has always been close to my heart and mind.

Incidentally, the film ends in 1976 and I was only 4 years old at the time!

I regard Yves' work as the work of an artist. He was not a mere fashion designer, but a constantly innovative artist. When I saw (Pierre) Thoretton's documentary *L'Amour Fou*, which deals with the relationship between Bergé and Saint Laurent, my eyes unexpectedly welled up with tears when the Mondrian dress was shown. I had never felt so moved by a dress. It was the epitome of perfection. One can easily fall in love with somebody who can achieve such a perfect piece of art, and yet living with a genius is no picnic. Jalil mentioned Salieri in *Amadeus* and pointed out that the man was not jealous of Mozart but in love with him. What made my part pretty moving was Bergé's loyalty to Saint Laurent, a man who was as sick as he was brilliant.

What is your take on the character you play?

Three weeks into the shooting, I realized I had developed nervous twitches, but never when I was alone with Saint Laurent. I couldn't help it. When confronted to other people, Pierre Bergé is tense and also incredibly bold. He is an amazing businessman, a born go-getter. With Yves, he is different – loving, protective but emotionally vulnerable. I like it when he says that although he has no principles, he always sticks to his word.

How did you get into the role?

First of all, I got rid of the image that people have today of Pierre Bergé. I knew that it would be a hindrance. Then I thought a lot about it, and the make-up helped. Moreover, Jalil, Pierre (Niney) and I had spent a lot of time rehearsing some scenes in

particular. It was important to agree on some elements that seemed crucial to me. For instance, Pierre is very energetic and the role that he and Yves played had been defined from the very beginning. I did my best to be Pierre rather than impersonate him.

Was it particularly overwhelming to portray a real life character that is still around?

The role was more akin to a legacy than to an obligation. It was an asset rather than a burden. I had been with Pierre Bergé to the Comédie Française theatre to see Pierre Niney play in *Phèdre* and sometime later he asked me to read excerpts of letters he had written to Yves, during the tribute paid to Saint Laurent at the Opéra Bastille. And all of a sudden it was as if I had inherited all the love and grief there was in this story. I felt endowed with all that and with the joy and life of this couple. That's what I like about Bergé – he is passionate. At the beginning of the shoot, a seamstress working at the Pierre Bergé -Yves Saint Laurent Foundation told me, "*You know, Mr. Bergé would never walk ahead of Mr. Saint Laurent.*"

It seems that Pierre is filled with passionate love for Yves, with boundless tolerance and a will to protect him. Is this the image you wished to project?

When Pierre fell in love with Yves, he became infatuated with a genius, an artist, a god-like figure who was already depressed although the signs of his depression became more severe as time went by. He was morbidly shy, both amazingly vulnerable and arrogant. And by the time he was diagnosed with his ailment, Pierre was already totally in love with him. Bergé once said: "*Yves was only happy twice a year, in the spring and in the fall.*" So, during these two sublime and fleeting moments everything was set in place for them to last as long as possible, so that Saint Laurent could have at his disposal all the tools that were necessary for his work. If it meant overprotecting and isolating him, even turning him into an icon, I think he was ready to do so. Bergé benefitted from it, but he is right when he says that there are no torturers and no victims because otherwise there would be two victims and two torturers. I drew my inspiration from Pierre Bergé's *Letters to Yves*. I have little interest in what is real. I stick to details that add up and people will respond according to their sensibilities. There are times when I am tough and even violent, at other times I am tender and loving. Here lies the complexity of the script – the depiction of the couple and its many layered emotions. I think that it is thanks to these multiple layers that we turned a credible story into a real one.

Pierre had an affair with Victoire, who became Yves' inspiration...

I think that the purpose was to destroy the muse in question. I suppose that Pierre had already sensed that she was outmoded. In order to be creative, this couple would skip over people, and move on to something else in a matter of seconds. I wouldn't be surprised if there was some sort of perversity about Pierre even though he himself was unaware of it. Those people make no compromises - it's impossible to be a brilliant businessman without being a killer...even if you act on the spur of the moment.

It's your first collaboration with Pierre Niney, isn't it?

Yes indeed. We made a great team, probably because of our common stage experience. We were a couple with equal responsibilities. We weren't afraid of speaking frankly and honestly with each other and with Jalil. When there were issues the three of

us would discuss them together because we are very different actors, and this is what made the job so exciting. Pierre has a very sharp sense of accuracy, just like Yves Saint Laurent. He is brilliant and highly gifted, and he knows exactly what emotion he will express before each take. Jalil acts more out of instinct, I think.

What sort of a director is Jalil Lespert?

He is very warm and affectionate. I have never been that happy on a set. I have to acknowledge that this movie allowed me to be totally free: true, the character I play is industrious and manly but at the same time he has very refined tastes, which allowed me to give free rein to my instincts! If I suddenly felt like adopting a slightly dainty attitude or tone of voice, I didn't feel compelled to restrain myself. Jalil is a very inspirational director and at the same time very straightforward with his actors. He always directed us with accuracy and precision.

Q&A WITH ACTRESS CHARLOTTE LE BON (VICTOIRE DOUTRELEAU)

What was your first response to the project?

I was thrilled and a bit surprised, too. Then I felt honored, considering the stunning cast and the magnitude of the film. Obviously, I was a bit afraid I may not be up to the job, especially with all those talented people around throughout the shoot.

What did you like about the script?

I was deeply moved by it. Most importantly, I found out about Victoire, whom I'd never heard about, even though Saint-Laurent's muses, like Loulou de la Falaise and Betty, are pretty famous. But I'd never heard Victoire Doutreleau's name before and when I felt like looking her up online, I hardly found anything. It seemed odd to me and this is what I liked. So I did my homework to gather as much info as I could about the woman.

How did you relate to your character?

I read the biography she wrote named *Et Dior créa Victoire*. The fact of the matter is, her real name was Jeanne and she was Christian Dior's muse before she became Saint Laurent's. It was actually Dior who renamed her Victoire. There's also a book about the days when she was a child model back in the 50s and 60s, just before the House of Saint Laurent was started. It was really important for me to read that book because I modeled for eight years, even though it has become an altogether different profession these days.

What is your take on the character? Is she a muse or Pierre's rival for Yves' affections?

She was a muse but Yves set her apart from other women. As I'm not sure what she looked like exactly, I've tried to portray her as honestly as I could, even if I wish I had met her for real.

Actually, she was Pierre's rival to some extent because Pierre was very possessive and Victoire got a lot of Yves' attention, which Pierre could hardly stand. Saint Laurent and Victoire behaved like young people and had a very innocent relationship, which eluded Pierre and therefore irritated him. Don't forget that Victoire and Yves knew each other from before – they'd met at Dior's and were close friends even before Pierre showed up. So Pierre decided to seduce her, not only because he enjoyed seducing a woman but probably for more insidious reasons.

What kind of research did you do about Saint Laurent?

I watched documentaries and read a lot of interviews – you realize that Saint Laurent's genius is just plain obvious! What I found really moving about him was his kindness. He was profoundly kind to the people he worked with. Although he was a genius through and through, he was a very nice guy. That's how I understood why he got so close to Victoire and what made him so endearing. You wanted to be around him.

How did you work on the voice and the body language?

I took some posture lessons and practiced ballroom dancing. I worked with Violetta Sanchez who was a model for Saint Laurent in the 80s and 90s – she showed me how a model was supposed to do a catwalk and she told me about the right postures. The

ballroom dancing exercises proved helpful too – I learned how to do a catwalk, even though I was stiff all over afterwards!

As far as the voice goes, I worked with Jean Edouard Bodziak who portrays Buffet in the movie. He helped me change accents – since Victoire is not from Quebec – and so I learned how to pitch my voice. As he put it, the point was to have "*a female voice and not a head voice*". That's how he saw her and he was right. It's fun to play in a period film – the body language is different, women didn't have the same posture as they do these days and every gesture was important.

How was it working opposite Pierre Niney and Guillaume Gallienne?

They're just great! I was really anxious to play alongside them because they are no less than two stunning actors from the Comédie Française. They keep working all the time and both have an amazing sense of pace! No wonder I freaked out – I've been acting for only two and a half years and this is only my 6th or 7th movie. But they're both lovely and kind. We had a great time.

How does Jalil Lespert direct his actors?

He's both fun and kind. He can be tough when he has something to say but he keeps a sense of humor and so he gets the message across. As he's an actor himself, he knows how to manage actors – whenever he wants something, he knows how to ask. He's very excited by the project and the pressure on him is huge, but when you see him behind the monitor, he seems to be having fun like a kid. As far as I'm concerned, I didn't have much dialogue, but as Jalil paid close attention to my accent, and as he kept correcting me, I refrained from improvising. As a result, I tried to stick to the script as best I could. Obviously, when I felt like changing a line, he wouldn't object to my doing so. Instead, he was very open to suggestions.

What was the most challenging for you?

The part where I keep modeling. I've been there before and I hated the job! Looking merely decorative is not that interesting, is it? Fashion shows are challenging because they're really stressful for models – you're exposed to everybody's gaze and judgment.

Q&A WITH LAURA SMET (LOULOU DE LA FALAISE)

How did you respond when you were offered to work on the film?

I felt extremely honored because, for me, Yves Saint Laurent is a fashion icon and a true genius. I wasn't that familiar with the character of Loulou de la Falaise but I did my homework. I was anxious to find out who she really was. It was a real honor for me to work on a film that tells such a beautiful love story.

Who was Loulou?

She was a true free spirit. She was cheerful and endearing, and there was something aristocratic about her. As I told you, I watched documentaries and read books to get to know her better. I focused on Loulou's interviews to study her body language, but I chose not to imitate her somewhat aristocratic accent. I also had the chance to talk with a friend of mine who knew her well. Actually, whenever I met someone who knew her, I would just drink in whatever he or she had to say. What really mattered to me was to remain true to the character without totally impersonating her. I realized she was essentially a cheerful woman – you can tell in the film when Loulou asks Yves about the Proust questionnaire and they laugh their heads off. The thing is, when they meet, they're still kids. He later turned out to be a creative genius.

What did Loulou stand for in Saint Laurent's eyes?

She was his muse, even though originally she was just a model working for his haute-couture house. Later on, she was involved in accessories and jewelry. She was the only one that remained by Yves' side, since all the other girls were removed by Pierre Bergé. Loulou was always around and kind to Saint Laurent – she was highly dependable during her working hours, although she was a party animal at night! It's because she was so professional that she could remain by the designer's side.

Was she Betty's rival?

No, I believe that they were good friends. Betty was darker, whereas Loulou was always upbeat, despite all her quirks. I think that Pierre Bergé drove Betty away from Yves because she was a real danger.

How does Jalil work with the actors?

It's wonderful to work under his direction because he gives the actors a lot of leeway. When an actor directs other actors, things are always smoother. Although he never shies away from being a director, he's inspired by his experience as an actor when he directs us. And so it's a real treat. He's very affectionate and light-hearted. Furthermore, since this was such an important production, he had to face overwhelming responsibilities...but he didn't let it affect his good mood.

Are you interested in fashion?

I've always liked it and I feel like it goes hand in hand with my job. For instance, when I dress as Loulou, I get the impression that I actually become her. Wearing a costume is all part of relating to the character. For example, Loulou designed jewelry and I enjoyed discovering and handling her designs. I also learnt a great deal about how to accessorize models and undress them very rapidly backstage. I realized how important

it is to be organized and remain cool-headed during fashion shows. There's a really hectic atmosphere and you should never get carried away!

Q&A WITH ACTRESS MARIE DE VILLEPIN (BETTY CATROUX)

What was your response when you were offered the part?

I was thrilled because Betty Catroux is an iconic figure in the fashion world. She's a fascinating character and a combination of mystery, provocation and quirks. So I felt truly honored.

What did you think of the screenplay?

I was deeply moved by this wonderful love story, and I had seen Pierre Thoretton's *L'Amour fou* (Crazy Love) that reminded me of it. I find the love story between Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé to be a modern one. They have a strong couple relationship that has its ups and downs, even though we realize Pierre Bergé loved Yves unflinchingly. He always gave him unconditional support. The script shows that they cannot live without each other. Granted, Yves would have been successful on his own, but I believe that without Pierre Bergé, he wouldn't have achieved such recognition in his circle. Pierre remained in the shadow and helped Yves establish a name for himself and fulfill his ambitions. I have a lot of respect for that selflessness. Pierre was the creator of a name, of a character and of a myth.

Were you familiar with your character in the film?

I definitely was. I've always had a lot of respect for women who stand up for freedom and who unreservedly come to terms with what they want in life and never shy away from making tough decisions. For me, life is precisely about making choices. When my character claims that she is happy being a muse, she behaves accordingly.

How could you describe Betty Catroux?

Betty carved out a distinct look for herself with her unique hairstyle. She was a true icon. I began getting into the role by cutting my hair that I've always worn very long. I could sense that I wouldn't make it if I just wore wigs. Betty was a very self-composed, smiling, cheerful woman. At the same time, she had some authority and would stare at you fixedly. You wouldn't be able to tell what she was thinking.

What could you say about her relationship with Yves?

Even before I got to work on that project, I knew about her relationship with Saint Laurent, his attraction to her and their mutual resemblance. I think Betty served as a catalyst for Yves by helping him discover things about himself he never suspected. That was precisely the dark side of his personality that would lead to his downfall. She knew how to stay the course and avoid total destruction. She was attracted to self-destruction but would never act on it, as Yves did.

How did you prep for the role?

I learned a great deal by watching documentaries and reading the book written by Loulou's husband. I immersed myself in the period, whether it had to do with fashion, world events or music from the 60s and 70s. This is a time when young people were not yet confronted with AIDS or brutal economic downturns. People were kind of carefree and didn't know about the effects of drug abuse – cocaine wasn't seen as evil as it is today.

Has Pierre Bergé helped you in any way during the shoot?

I met Pierre Bergé very briefly on set, and this was a heartrending experience. We were shooting one of the Saint Laurent shows, at a time when Yves got really ill. We could see Pierre roam the set and we could feel like he was living it all over again. He got into the swing of things back again. It was a powerful moment to see this man find his place and behave during the shoot as if it were business as usual.

Has the fact that you're a model yourself helped you play the part?

It's really not up to me to say, but I guess that my being a professional model was a key factor during the casting process. I've been around the fashion industry for some time now, so I'm pretty familiar with the correct attitudes, poses and gestures. Betty moves like a cat – when she comes into a room, you can feel her presence. And whether you find her pretty or not, you can't help noticing her!

Tell me about the shoot.

It was a relaxed set. We portrayed young people who were carefree, unselfconscious, free-spirited and sexually uninhibited. This came across in the atmosphere on set. I am so lucky to have been given the chance to work opposite such wonderful actors.

How does Jalil direct his actors?

Jalil helped me a lot prior to the shoot, particularly during rehearsal, and I spent a long time prepping for the role. As a director, Jalil gives a lot of leeway to the actors – he's not a control freak and he's always seeking for the true moment. He trusts us and, if we suddenly come up with words or ideas that sound truer than the script, he'll go for them! This makes our work so much more interesting because we don't have to just deliver our lines. Actually, the script is a reference that helps the actors be more accurate in the dialogue and the tone. Jalil keeps challenging us on our ability to be spontaneous, natural and genuine.

Q&A WITH COMPOSER IBRAHIM MAALOUF

What was Jalil Lespert's take on the score?

Jalil asked me to write a personal score that wasn't too formulaic, but that also matched the look of the film and the various musical periods covered by it. This is the second time I've worked on a film, but I had never written such a long score before. The real challenge was that not only did I have to write a full score, close to your traditional film soundtrack, but also more jazzy tunes, inspired by be-bop, that contrasted with the orchestral compositions – not to mention a song for the credits sequence! So we're talking about three different styles for the same goal at the start.

How did you deal with the different constraints?

I just follow my intuition. Above all, I've tried to come up with an authentic score that fits the footage. By the way, I've always written music with images in mind – my work often echoes specific events in my life. For *Yves Saint Laurent*, it was a different process as I had not only to match the images I had in mind, but also images that were not mine. So it was all about adaptation, but not altogether different from what I usually do.

What are your main influences?

I have trouble talking about influences because I've always worked on my own and have always given free rein to my intuition. To start with, I followed Jalil's art direction. Obviously, I read the script several times before getting down to work and I felt that Saint Laurent's character was extremely fragile and that his relationship with Pierre Bergé was brittle and slightly insane. In my opinion, their relationship was a kind of balance between hard work and determination on the one hand, and some kind of total creative freedom on the other hand. I guess this is what I found most inspiring. Besides, the first scores I played for Jalil were all about that – I wanted an elegant score that wasn't as pompous as some movie soundtracks, but that still matched the main character's talent.

Can you tell me about the orchestral work?

First I played almost all the pieces on the piano, then I did the orchestration of the various parts in order to match each instrument with its corresponding pieces. I started with the orchestration for the classical orchestra, and then I worked on the jazz score, probably because that's my specialty. For the jazz part, I brought together the Italian saxophonist Stefano di Battista, the German pianist Frank Woeste, the New York's drummer Nasheet Waits and the French double bass player Christophe Wallemme. In other words, I surrounded myself with today's very best jazz artists in order to get the spirit of the jazz that you could hear in clubs back in the 1950s-60s.

For the classical part, I ran the recording sessions with the orchestra, which was totally new for me. Jalil made it possible for me to express myself. It was truly exhilarating.

We can hear a lot of trumpet in the score.

That is what Jalil wanted. At the beginning, I didn't want so much of it, but as we went along, he wanted more of it. And so I did what he asked me to.

What did you think of the film?

I thought Pierre Niney and Guillaume Gallienne were just stunning – they totally blew me away! I'm a film buff and my feeling is that the relationship between Yves and Pierre is so accurately portrayed. I had so much fun working on such a truthful film.

ABOUT THE CAST

Pierre Niney (YVES SAINT LAURENT)

Pierre Niney first stepped on stage at the age of 11. He won a scholarship to the "Classe Libre" of the Cours Florent and then at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art of Paris.

In 2007, he attended the Cannes Film Festival for RISING TALENT ADAMI and made his first appearance in director Lisa Azuelos' LOL with Sophie Marceau, which was a big hit in France.

Robert Guédiguian directed him in both LES NEIGES DU KILIMANJARO and L'ARMÉE DU CRIME, presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009.

He acted alongside Benoit Poelvoorde and Isabelle Carré in LES ÉMOTIFS ANONYMES (ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS) which was directed by Jean Pierre Améris.

In 2010, Pierre was invited to join the historic national theatre company La Comédie Française, and became the youngest resident of the troupe. He has performed in more than 15 plays since then, including Shakespeare, Brecht, and Marivaux.

Last year, he was cast as the lead in UN CHAPEAU DE PAILLE D'ITALIE and received the Beaumarchais Figaro Award for best actor.

He won his first lead role in a feature film with J'AIME REGARDER LES FILLES (18 YEARS OLD AND RISING) for which he received a nomination for Best Male Newcomer at the national Cesar Awards.

In 2012, he received a second nomination for his role in Hugo Gelin's feature COMME DES FRÈRES (LIKE BROTHERS) and received acclaim with David Moreau's 20 ANS D'ÉCART (IT BOY), also starring Virginie Efira.

He can currently be seen in the biopic YVES SAINT LAURENT, where his embodiment of the mythical character has been acclaimed by both the public and the critics. The film is set for a world wide release in 2014.

He directed his short film POUR LE RÔLE, produced by Dominique Besnehard, which was presented at the Cannes Film Festival last year, and in many festivals around the world.

He also created and directed a series for CANAL+ called CASTING(S), produced by Zazi Films.

He is currently working on the second season which will be aired every night on French national TV during the Cannes Film Festival 2014.

Guillaume Gallienne (PIERRE BERGE)

Guillaume Gallienne's film and television credits as an actor include ME, MYSELF AND MUM, *The Little Prince*, CONFESSION OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY, L'ITALIEN, ENSEMBLE, NOUS ALLONS VIVRE UNE TRÈS, TRÈS GRANDE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR, SAGAN, THE CANDIDATE, THE COLONEL, THE JUNGLE, MARIE ANTOINETTE, AVENUE MONTAIGNE, TU VAS RIRE, MAIS JE TE QUITTE, THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF GUSTAVE KLOPP, MONSIEUR IBRAHIM, FANFAN LA TULIPE, JET SET, THE DANCER, UNE POUR TOUTES, MONSIEUR NAPHTALI, THE TANGO LESSON, JEUNESSE, UN SAMEDI SUR LA TERRE, SABRINA, and LIST OF MERITE.

Charlotte Le Bon (VICTOIRE DOUTRELEAU)

Charlotte Le Bon's film credits include THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY, LIBRE ET ASSOUPI, LA MARCHÉ, L'ECUME DES JOURS, LE GRAND MECHANT LOUP, LA STRATEGIE DE LA POUSSETTE and ASTERIX AU SERVICE DE LA MAJESTE.

Laura Smet (LOULOU DE LA FALAISE)

In 2002, Laura Smet was discovered by Olivier Assayas who recommended her to Xavier Giannoli. Giannoli was searching for an actress to play a leading role in his first motion picture LES CORPS IMPATIENTS. The film and Laura's performance had a great success. Her first film role was awarded by the Romy Schneider's award and she also was nominated for the César of the Most Promising Actress in 2004.

That same year, Laura appeared in films like LA FEMME DE GILLES by Frédéric Fonteyne and LES DEMOISELLES D'HONNEUR by Claude Chabrol with the French actor Benoît Magimel.

In 2007, she appeared in an adaptation of an Agatha Christie novel directed by Pascal Thomas. Then she starred with Louis Garrel in LA FRONTIÈRE DE L'AUBE directed by Philippe Garrel.

In 2010, she starred with Marc-André Grondin in the thriller INSOUÇONNABLE by Gabriel Le Bomin. That same year she also appeared in the drama PAULINE ET FRANÇOIS by Renaud Fely.

After a three year break, she shot three movies in 2013 : YVES SAINT LAURENT by Jalil Lespert, 96 HEURES by Frédéric Schoendœrffer and EDEN by Mia Hansen-Løve. In 2014 she will star in ETATS DE FEMME, the new film by Katia Lewkowicz.

Marie de Villepin (BETTY CATROUX)

Marie de Villepin is a young French actress and model based in Paris and New York City. The daughter of a diplomat, she spent most of her childhood in India before moving to various countries in Latin America and Africa. This vagabond upbringing left her with a longing to experience the world's diversity of cultures, characters, and languages, but most importantly it developed in her a talent for shapeshifting. From an early age she had a passion for theater and film.

As a young girl she landed a role in Danielle Thompson's movie *La Bûche* and then took acting classes at the prestigious Cours Florent as well as from Raymond Acquaviva, both in Paris. When she turned 18, she moved to New York to pursue a modeling career. After several seasons on the catwalks of New York, Milan and Paris, appearing in ad campaigns of major designers shot by the likes of Mario Sorrenti, Inez and Vinoodh, and Gilles Bensimon, Marie was selected to be the face of Givenchy's perfume *Ange ou Démon*, following in the footsteps of Audrey Hepburn and Liv Tyler.

Recently, for her starring role in Veit Helmer's *Baikonur*, shot in the steppes of Kazakhstan and in Moscow, Marie completed a full cosmonaut training course in zero gravity, and indeed she is no stranger to extreme physical situations. She has over four years training in kickboxing and Judo, and she excels in all hi-octane water sports, and has been an excellent equestrian since the age of six.

In 2009 she formed a 4 piece band called PINKMIST in which she sings, writes and plays guitar. After recording their first EP and many shows all over Europe, including, London, Paris, Brussels and Berlin the members of PINKMIST are in the process of recording their debut album.

Nikolai Kinski (KARL LAGERFELD)

Nikolai Kinski was born in France and grew up in the USA. He made his film debut at the age of 11 in Klaus Kinski's final film *PAGANINI*.

Kinski studied acting at UCLA, and went on to act in American independent films (*TORTILLA SOUP*) and off-Broadway productions in the early 00's. In 2004, he moved to Berlin where he became fluent in German and has acted in a wide range of European art house films such as Raoul Ruiz's "*KLIMT*", playing Egon Schiele opposite John Malkovich (for which he won the Romy Award for best newcomer), Hal Hartley's *FAY GRIM* and Michael Dreher's *THE TWO LIVES OF DANIEL SHORE*, in addition to studio films (*AEON FLUX* with Charlize Theron) and European television (*KRUPP*, *THE SINKING OF THE LACONIA*, *MARY OF NAZARETH*).

Kinski has also starred in numerous stage productions in Germany including Pirendello's "*Naked*" directed by theater legend Peter Zadek at St. Pauli Theater Hamburg and Schnitzler's "*The Lonely Way*" at Schauspielhaus Bochum.

Current projects are German-language TV films *GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN* and *THE SUSPECT*, based on Michael Robotham's thriller, as well as the Berlin based romantic comedy *POSTHUMOUS* starring Jack Huston and Brit Marling and multi-platform project *NETWARS*.

Although French was Kinski's first language, he stopped speaking it when he moved to the U.S. at the age of 5, and had to train intensely for the role of young, sharp-tongued Karl Lagerfeld.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Jalil Lespert (DIRECTOR/WRITER)

Jalil Lespert is a French director, screenwriter and actor.

Born in Paris, France, on 1976, to a French father, actor Jean Lespert, and an Algerian mother, he studied law before turning to acting.

Lespert made his film debut as an actor in 1995, in Laurent Cantet's film *JEUX DE PLAGE*, opposite his father. His first major role came in 1999, in Jacques Maillot's film *OUR HAPPY LIVES*. The following year, he appeared in another Laurent Cantet film *HUMAN RESOURCES*, which earned him a César Award for Most Promising Actor in 2001. His actor's filmography shows his taste for independent and adventurous movies. Among his most notable apparitions : *NOT ON THE LIPS* by Alain Resnais with Audrey Tautou, *THE LAST MITTERRAND* by Robert Guédiguian, *THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT* by Xavier Beauvois, *LOVE & BRUISES* by Lou Ye. He's also popular in France for his role as a melancholic man desperately searching his missing sister in the TV Drama "Pigalle, la nuit."

He started his career as a director with the short film *COFFEE AND DREAMS* in 2000. His first feature film, *24 BARS*, was released in France in 2007, followed in 2011 by an adaption of the thriller *DES VENTS CONTRAIRES / HEADWINDS* by Olivier Adam.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

As an actor

- 1995 - *Jeux de Plage*, directed by Laurent Cantet
- 1997 - *Les Sanguinaires*, directed by Laurent Cantet
- 1999 - *Human Resources*, directed by Laurent Cantet
- 1999 - *Our Happy Lives*, by Jacques Maillot
- 2000 - *Sade*, directed by Benoît Jacquot
- 2003 - *Not on the lips*, directed by Alain Resnais
- 2004 - *L'ennemi naturel*, directed by Pierre Erwan Guillaume
- 2005 - *The Young Lieutenant*, directed by Xavier Beauvois
- 2005 - *The Last Mitterrand*, directed by Robert Guédiguian
- 2006 - *Tell No One*, directed by Guillaume Canet
- 2008 - *Black Out*, directed by Jean-Christophe Klotz
- 2011 - *Love & Bruises*, directed by Lou Ye
- 2012 - *Le mille e una notte : Aladino e Sherazade*, directed by Marco Pontecorvo
- 2013 - *Landes*, directed by François-Xavier Vives
- 2013 - *Post Partum*, directed by Delphine Noels
- 2014 - *De guerre lasse*, directed by Olivier Panchot

As a director

2000 - Coffee and dreams

2007 - 24 Bars

2011 - Headwinds

2013 - Yves Saint Laurent

Marie-Pierre HUSTER (WRITER)

Marie-Pierre Huster's credits as a screenwriter include *AMITIES SINCERES*, *HEADWINDS*, *ENTREVUE*, *TICKET CHOC*, *MEETING*, and *LES COLLEGUES*.

Wassim Beji (PRODUCER)

Wassim Beji created WY Productions, an independent French production company, in 2004. Features he has produced include *AMITIES SINCERES*, *DES VENTS CONTRAIRES*, *THE INCIDENT*, *24 MEASURES*, and *HELL*. He is a 2001 graduate of La Sorbonne Law School. He also earned a Master of Political Sciences at Sciences-Po in 2003.

CREDITS

CAST

YVES SAINT LAURENT
Pierre NINEY de la Comédie-Française

PIERRE BERGE
Guillaume GALLIENNE de la Comédie-Française

VICTOIRE DOUTRELEAU
Charlotte LE BON

LOULOU de la FALAISE
Laura SMET

BETTY CATROUX
Marie de VILLEPIN

KARL LAGERFELD
Nikolai KINSKI

FERNANDO SANCHEZ
Ruben ALVES

YVONNE
Astrid WHETTALL

LUCIENNE SAINT LAURENT
Marianne BASLER

ANNE-MARIE
Adeline D'HERMY de la Comédie-Française

JACQUES de BASCHER
Xavier LAFITTE

BERNARD BUFFET
Jean-Edouard BODZIAK

JEAN-PIERRE
Alexandre STEIGER

RAYMONDE ZEHACKER
Michèle GARCIA

CHARLES
Olivier PAJOT

MARIE-LOUISE BOUSQUET
Anne ALVARO

CREW

PRODUCERS

Wassim BEJI
Yannick BOLLORÉ

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Lionel UZAN **Thierry DESMICHELLE** **Wassim BÉJI**

DIRECTOR

Jalil LESPERT

SCREENPLAY BY

Marie-Pierre HUSTER – Jalil LESPERT – Jacques FIESCHI

FREELY BASED ON THE WORK *YVES SAINT LAURENT* BY LAURENCE BENAÏM

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Thomas HARDMEIER A.F.C.

COSTUME DESIGNER

Madeline FONTAINE A.F.C.C.A.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Aline BONETTO A.D.C.

CHIEF MAKE UP ARTIST

Dominique COLLADANT

CHIEF HAIRDRESSER

Guilaine TORTEREAU

SOUND RECORDIST

Miguel REJAS

ORIGINAL SCORE

IBRAHIM MAALOUF

CHIEF PICTURE EDITOR

François GEDIGIER

CHIEF SOUND EDITOR

Vincent GUILLON

RE-RECORDING MIXER

Stéphane THIEBAUT

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Jean-Marc DESCHAMPS

LOCATION MANAGER
Eric DUCHENE A.F.R.

1st ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Eric PUJOL

SPECIAL EFFECTS
Alain CARSOUX

POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER
Antoine RABATE

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHERS
Thibault GRABHERR, Anouchka de WILLIENCOURT

MAKING OF
Bruno GUILLA

