



A MANDARIN & COMPAGNIE and FOZ production

Nadia
Tereszkiewicz

Isabelle
Huppert

Dany
Boon

The Crime is Mine

Rebecca
Marder

Fabrice
Luchini

André
Dussollier

A film by **François Ozon**

Edouard
SULPICE

Régis
LASPALES

Olivier
BROCHE

Michel
FAU

Daniel
PREVOST

Evelyne
BUYLE

Myriam
BOYER

Félix
LEFEBVRE

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SYNOPSIS

In 1930s Paris, Madeleine, a pretty, young, penniless and talentless actress, is accused of murdering a famous producer. Helped by her best friend Pauline, a young unemployed lawyer, she is acquitted on the grounds of self-defense.

A new life of fame and success begins, until the truth comes out.

FRANÇOIS OZON

Director, screenwriter



Talking pictures have always struck me as the art of lying par excellence, and I've wanted to tell the story of a fake offender for as long as I can remember. When I discovered the 1934 hit play by Georges Berr and Louis Verneuil, I knew I'd found the perfect opportunity to tackle this theme.

I retained the historical and political context of the 1930s but freely adapted the plot to resonate with contemporary concerns around power and control in gender politics. And I played with the parallels between theater and the justice system.

In these times of collective depression, I felt a need for whimsy and lightness to combat the harsh realities of the present. So I leaned into the spirit of screwball comedy, with its rapid-fire dialogue and use of zany, unexpected dramatic situations to challenge its protagonists. This felt like the ideal way to tell the story as a tender, ironic farce, playing up the absurd and embracing theatricality.

THE CRIME IS MINE can be seen as the final installment in a trilogy including 8 WOMEN and POTICHE. All three films explore the status of women with humor et glamour. My long-time collaborators and I had so much fun recreating the 1930s styles and working with seemingly outdated material in such a way as to highlight its inherent fast-paced modernity that is still every bit as contemporary, lively and joyful today. The sharp, witty dialogue of the original play reminded me of Sacha Guitry's biting comedies where the actors really shine. And the film was an opportunity to work with talented young actresses in the lead roles and surround them with an array of established actors and actresses in juicy supporting roles.



NADIA TERESZKIEWICZ

Madeleine Verdier

I loved the whole idea of playing an actress who is constantly acting. How do you express your sincerity when you're acting, and thus lying? That is the question all actors ask themselves.

My answer was to be on Madeleine's side at all times, sincere in every situation. I believe in her. She's spontaneous, she never plans anything in advance. She moves forward as best she can: suicidal one moment, breezy and excited to go the movies the next. We see her in love, mischievous, even manipulative, but always for a good cause. She's pure, in her way.

A year before shooting *THE CRIME IS MINE*, I played a 1980s actress in Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi's film *LES AMANDIERS*. 1930s Madeleine is not so different. In *LES AMANDIERS*, acting is an absolute necessity, a matter of life

and death. For Madeleine, whether she's acting for the judges to save her life or performing on stage, her commitment is also total.

Madeleine is young and still a bit too dreamy about her roles, but she's driven by a force she cannot contain. Life takes over. Being an actress means realizing that even while you're acting, even while you're in a lie, life itself is central. During her trial, Madeleine recites a text she's learned by heart, but ultimately she's stating what she truly believes: «Could it be possible, in 1935, for a woman to conduct her career and her life without constraints, with full freedom and full equality?»

Madeleine is opportunistic and attention-seeking, but she also comes to realize that she may be able to help advance the status of women. First with a certain innocence, and then with conviction, she becomes a modern spokeswoman confronting a patriarchal society where women do not yet have the right to vote or even to have their own checking account. For women in the 1930s, the choice was basically between being a legitimate wife or a hidden mistress. Madeleine and Pauline want to escape this condition. They'll do whatever it takes to attain autonomy as women. They fight as best they can with the weapons at their disposal, instinctively, manipulatively, but with no cynicism or malice. They could seem unsympathetic, and yet we're on their side. They're defending a cause, their cause. The cause of women.

In his adaptation of the original play, François underscored the surprising resonances with our times. His film is profoundly feminist. When I read the script, I was moved by the sisterly bond between Madeleine and Pauline. It's strong, indestructible. They want to make it... together! They have each other's backs. And they reach out in solidarity to Odette Chaumette, when they could have seen her as a threat to be taken down. Instead, they offer her a comeback. There is no jealousy. Their collective emancipation is all that matters.

As an ensemble cast, we actors had to strike the right rhythm and balance. This is a film about acting, about the life and work of actors, so we were ourselves always acting, which was a hoot! It was so stimulating, and such a dream to be working with all the amazing actors François brought together: Isabelle Huppert, André Dussollier, Fabrice Luchini, Michel Fau... We all really bonded. Playing these modern notes in a comedy set in the 1930s was a challenge, and so much fun.



REBECCA MARDER

Pauline Mauléon

I joined *La Comédie Française* at the age of 20 and spent seven years there. The theater was my life. After passing the audition for *THE CRIME IS MINE*, I discovered a screenplay that embraced the theatricality of the original play with taut, witty lines and contemporary themes. This was a familiar world to me, but with a new dimension: cinema. As in the theater we rehearsed a lot, sometimes right on the sets. The costumes were tailored to us. Everything was thought out and sorted out in advance, so that by the time we were on set to shoot, we had the confidence and assurance required to surrender to the almighty act of acting.

I'd laughed out loud reading the script, and the set was abuzz with excitement. We were constantly on the move. The shoot went very quickly. I felt like I never really stopped acting - it felt similar to the dramatic continuity you feel on stage when you're doing a play. And we had the cohesion and spirit

of a troupe. The big, established actors and those of us who are still green were all treated as equals. Acting alongside them lifted us up. We were like children playing, losing ourselves in it. There was a real enthusiasm, we were all so happy to be having fun together with this material. And we shared that same enjoyment with the technicians as we all worked together to bring the comedy to life.

My character starts out as Madeleine's best friend, her shoulder to cry on, her confidante. She initially seems to be the stronger of the two, but behind her assertive personality, we come to realize that she is fragile, especially in matters of the heart. And yet, she's not jealous of Madeleine. She's very open and available: to Madeleine, Odette Chaumette, the young reporter.

Madeleine and Pauline are solid BFFs. I imagined that Pauline felt a kind of symbiotic love for Madeleine, a hybrid of romantic love and admiration. The film only suggests this; nothing is explicit. And that's what makes Pauline both powerful and relatable. We pick up on her feelings, and can interpret them any way we like.

At first glance, Pauline and Madeleine may seem like classic rivals: the blond vs. the brunette, the airheaded actress vs. the brainy lawyer. But their bond and their complicity make them a force to be reckoned with. This duo is firmly bonded in solidarity. They're very clever, but beyond that, they're allies. They dare to speak out. One dares to be an actress; the other, a lawyer. They take chances. They're betting on their futures as women. Their relationship is itself a story about the status of women, the pressure on women, and the revolution they're initiating, far from the catty clichés that would have them devouring each other.

I see the end of the film as an ironic wink and a nod to masterpieces like Mankiewicz's *EVE*, where the actresses are rivals who scratch each other's eyes out. *THE CRIME IS MINE*, on the contrary, promotes transmission. As Pauline watches Madeleine and Odette triumphing on stage, she knows this was made possible because they all helped each other. And this nose-thumbing at sexism moves her to tears.



MANU DACOSSE

Director of Photography

The first questions François and I asked ourselves were: Do we use natural light or not? Do we shoot in black and white or in color?

He showed me films from the period that he loved and wanted to emulate in spirit, without resorting to overt referencing or pastiche. Films by Lubitsch (DESIGN FOR LIVING, TROUBLE IN PARADISE, BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH WIFE...) and Guitry (QUADRILLE, BONNE CHANCE...).

Our challenge was to create «realistic» cinematography that was true to the period without attempting to reproduce what we were seeing in those 1930s films.

Film equipment today is very different than it was back then. Digital in particu-

lar has changed the way we light films. Other than the black-and-white flashback scenes - shot on 16mm film in 4:3 aspect ratio and over-lighted to create the appearance of silent films - I always sought to light the scenes from within. It was such a pleasure recreating the art deco atmospheres. We avoided the temptation of film-buff nostalgia as we highlighted the structural elements the film, from the actors' faces to the sets, from costumes to language. We needed to «see» these elements, not leave them in the dark, so I emphasized them with the lighting.

I had long discussions with production designer Jean Rabasse, who was totally focused on getting the details exactly right, and Pascaline Chavanne, François' long-time costume designer. Prior to the shoot they had assembled a dense file with precise visuals. These are brilliant people with great taste, and they're also committed team players. I wanted to adapt my work to their ideas. When Madeleine enters an understated set in a sumptuous dress, I highlight the dress. When Odette Chaumette makes her entrance in the film, I light her like a proper star, emphasizing the fabric of her beautiful clothes, her hairstyle, her dramatic expressions.

The film's visual style took shape over the course of meetings and location scouting with François and the other department heads. The most difficult scene for me was the trial. François wanted me to study the trial scenes in Guitry's LA POISON and especially in Clouzot's LA VÉRITÉ, for the way it was edited, and how it included the audience at the trial and brought them to life in the shots. This takes us back to the theater. It was a real challenge - with all the extras, the different angles, the use of two cameras so the actors could deliver their lines uninterrupted - and it took three days.

The scale of this film was more momentous than my previous collaborations with François: DOUBLE LOVER (a genre film), BY THE GRACE OF GOD (a naturalistic approach) and even PETER VON KANT (technicolor stylization), where the huis-clos décor featured large windows, so I could use the variations afforded by exterior light. For THE CRIME IS MINE, filming in the studio, with all the adjacent elements, essentially amounted to a total artistic creation. You have to figure it all out in advance, create everything from scratch. The studio is the proverbial blank page.



JEAN RABASSE

Production Designer

This is my first film with François Ozon. It was very exciting to combine the breezy, sunny tone of the film with its cold and striking art deco visuals. We spent a lot of time scouting locations together, discovering gorgeous places never before seen on film.

We refurnished many of the places, to get away from the ubiquitous woodwork so often used to create the feeling of the 1930s. For the judge's second office, we went to Charleroi City Hall in Belgium, an incredible place that had never been filmed before. Its art deco style is harsher and busier than what we see in France. It feels quite American, in the spirit of the sophisticated, golden-age Hollywood comedies that had inspired François.

The Bonnard factory office features a panoramic window where the boss can watch his workers toil. The overall impression is precise and authentic, yet it's a combination of influences from three or four different architects, plus a scene from Chaplin's MODERN TIMES. We play with the codes, lending an offbeat feel. We're in the 1930s, but it also feels modern, colorful and graphic, almost pop. We're in one reality that leads us to another.

We remembered Blake Edwards' masterpiece VICTOR VICTORIA, a remake of a German film from 1934 which takes place in the same setting. That film featured a Parisian street that was entirely recreated in the studio. We didn't have the budget for that, so we recreated Rue Jacob in Bordeaux, where we found the patina of old Parisian streets, and I was able to build studio elements in a natural environment. The combination of the real and the fabricated (we redid a number of façades), along with the possibility of digital alteration, was in keeping with the spirit of the project: theatricality with a twist.

Pascaline Chavanne and I both feared we'd end up with tone-on-tone sets and costumes, so we used color charts and worked closely together on the colors. We worked just as closely with Manu Dacosse to obtain - with the help of his cinematography - the pastel tones François wanted, a surprising departure from his usual bold, saturated colors.

For Madeleine's theater stage we followed the avant-garde tradition, Cocteau style, with a clearly-stated pictorial intention. More subtle theatrical references are dotted throughout the film. With few exceptions, decor has no reason to be invisible. It's not there just to fill space; it also tells the story. It is a very powerful element of expression.

In THE CRIME IS MINE, each set has its own style and a signature color reflecting the feelings and evolution of the characters. The apartment that opens the film is dark and heavy, conveying the heroines' poverty. In contrast, after their social ascension, we get the luminous, creamy white tones of their *hôtel particulier* in Boulogne. The interior designer added ebony objects, light fabrics and verdigris to reinforce the tonality.

I see THE CRIME IS MINE as a film of joy and pleasure whose dominant colors are champagne and emerald.



PASCALINE CHAVANNE

Head Costume Designer

On a film like *THE CRIME IS MINE*, my work with François Ozon (our 20th film together) is not done in a museum. We're not seeking to reproduce the period exactly as it was. Bodies change, and we adapt to the physiques of today's actors. I work with their figures, complexions, expressions. They begin playing their characters in our fitting sessions. The costumes guide them, even transport them.

I started by compiling a file of iconographic images. François and I used these visuals to establish the path we would follow to give our adaptation a Hollywood touch, right down to the realism at the beginning, when the heroines are poor.

To dress the extravagant Odette Chaumette (Isabelle Huppert), we needed to be as theatrical in her clothing as she is in her behavior. We based our ideas on Sarah Bernhardt, so Odette's clothing is dated for the period. She wears 1900s theater attire even though the film takes place in 1935. But this makes

perfect sense for Odette Chaumette. As a survivor of silent cinema with its grandiloquent theatrics, she's forever playing a scene. Her clothing tells that story. Odette wears typical turn-of-the-century greens, burgundies, blacks... I work a lot with complementary colors, and these colors beautifully complemented Isabelle Huppert's red hair and fair complexion.

On the other end of the spectrum, our two young heroines are defined by pastels. We wanted to create a sharp contrast between Odette - a living legend who sports bold colors - and the heroines who are just starting out in life. Pauline and Madeleine are completely of their time, each in her own way and with her own temperament.

On one end of the spectrum, we have the modernity of Pauline (Rebecca Marder). Her clothing conveys a masculine, buttoned-up reserve. And then we have the come-hither, triumphant femininity of Madeleine (Nadia Terzskiewicz), with her form-fitting dresses, plunging necklines, accentuated hips and bosom...

When Madeleine is on stage performing *Suzette's Ordeal*, her haircut, strict black dress and necklace remind us of Louise Brooks' legendary silhouette in Pabst's *LOULOU*. Then, at the post-play cocktail party, Madeleine wears a backless white gown. Even if we only catch a glimpse, this dress conveys a feeling of rebellious eroticism. A costume should suggest, physically, what's happening at the heart of a scene, the tensions between the characters.

The men's costumes are differentiated by an array of more subtle elements: ties, fabrics, scarves, watches, shoes. Each man needed to have his own visual identity, and we went deep on the details. This is a social comedy, and we had to illustrate that with each character.

A nouveau riche from Marseille, Palmarède (Dany Boon) makes his entrance in a cream-colored striped suit that's a bit pimpish. He's bold; we sense his confidence and determination. For Rabusset (Fabrice Luchini), we needed to punctuate his social rise. Initially he's a lowly civil servant, dull and gray. After the trial sends him up the social ladder, he wears a custom-tailored three-piece suit.

The elder Bonnard (André Dussollier) represents pure tradition, good taste and bourgeois classicism. Young reporter Raton (Félix Lefebvre) is a nod to Tintin. And François wanted Madeleine's love interest André Bonnard (Édouard Sulpice) to remind us of a young Gary Cooper or James Stewart.

Costumes are always a major part of the visual essence of François' films. As in the very stylish *8 WOMEN* and *POTICHE*, the costumes in *THE CRIME IS MINE* blend Lubitsch glamour with a dash of *VIOLETTE NOZIÈRE*'s acidic realism.



LAURE GARDETTE

Editor

For the first comedy we worked on together, POTICHE, François and I took pleasure in accentuating the humor. For this film, however, François wanted to highlight the subtlety of the writing and the situations. Whenever I was tempted to select takes that made me laugh out loud, with the actors pulling faces, using quirky tones or comic exaggeration - all the tropes we love in popular comedies - François preferred to rein it in. In EVERYTHING WENT FINE, he continually sought to rein in the emotion so the final tears would carry their full weight. In THE CRIME IS MINE he sought to rein in the enormity of the humor, so we would feel the very real stakes involved.

When adapting a play, it might seem necessary to overedit, keep things moving at a fast pace, be modern. But François likes his shots to linger. What matters most is for the audience to empathize with the characters. We need time to see them, feel what they're experiencing. While we're editing, François always asks what the image is telling us. There should be a dramatic motive

and an emotional motive. He has a very clear vision of the direction his film needs to take. Here, he wanted to respect the theatricality. We must never forget we're in a game of artifice, whose twists and turns correspond to the movements of the times. It's so great to realize the audience is participating in that game. And then the editing acts as a revelator, revealing and showcasing the prowess of the staging, and highlighting the essential comic elements without detracting from the dialogue and the themes, still so relevant today. Madeleine and Pauline are experiencing a MeToo situation before that movement was born! In the edit, we walked this tightrope as we selected our takes, prioritizing the truth of the characters over laughter.

Dany Boon had improvised a funny gesture in the factory scene, smoothing his mustache with satisfaction. François initially preferred to leave those few seconds out, to keep the audience focused on what mattered in the scene. However, as the edit got tighter, we added Dany Boon's improvised gesture back in. Now we could see that it wasn't distracting at all; it actually reinforced the tension between the characters, and enriched the scene. It's all about getting the doses right.

This film has its own unique DNA. The dialogue from the play is very 1930s. The actors have different styles based on their different backgrounds. From her years with *La Comédie Française*, Rebecca Marder has solid theater experience, as do Isabelle Huppert, Fabrice Luchini, André Dussollier, Michel Fau, Franck de Lapersonne and Édouard Sulpice. They all fell right into line with the stylization François wanted. Nadia Terszkiewicz approaches acting from a more visceral place. Olivier Broche tends towards burlesque, as does Dany Boon, who surprises us here with his great sensitivity.

Balancing all these contrasts is beautiful. The edit plays with all the tones, all the voices as they modulate in accordance with their personalities. Actors Évelyne Buyle, Myriam Boyer and Daniel Prevost bring a kind of outrageous, working-class sensibility to their characters. The edit seeks to temper all the various effects so they can coexist. Cutting images is about harmonizing. We need to hear the notes and make them resonate. The actors really cut loose with this script, which is what François was looking for. Nothing is naturalistic, yet everything seems natural. He finds the truth in each one of them.



PHILIPPE ROMBI

Musician

While reading the script for THE CRIME IS MINE, I «heard» very different things, notes of gaiety, nostalgia and suspense. Then François gave me documents compiled by the production designer and costume designer. Those visual references and sources of inspiration made it clear what he was looking for. François and I both love themes in music, and I immediately sensed there would be a number of them in THE CRIME IS MINE. First I needed to come up with the main theme, the key to the whole story. It's like a summary of the film, its DNA. And then there's the orchestration, which for me is indissociable from the composition, and brings a particular color and atmosphere.

The trick was to avoid falling into a retro pastiche, which we had no interest in doing. The singularity of this film - set in the 1930s but with great relevance to contemporary issues - allowed me to widen my musical palette. Sound is perceived differently today than back then, so I had no need to systematically reinforce the image with a full symphonic orchestra. I could save the big effects for key moments.

The main theme has a certain lyricism and a nostalgic melody. It can be glamorous and sentimental, with sparse orchestration (strings, a few woodwinds, a violin solo, a jazz trumpet and piano), as in the scene on the rooftops of Paris, or lyrical and passionate, with the full orchestra, as in the final scene.

A second theme adds jazz brass to the orchestra and accompanies the police investigation in a film noir blend of suspense and mystery.

A third, sunnier theme accompanies lighter moments, like when the two young women leave their cares behind and go out to the movies.

A panting allegro theme punctuates the trial scenes and newsreel inserts in a syncopated manner, like a steamroller announcing events to come.

Another leitmotif underscores the mystery of the crime scene and links Madeleine exiting Montferrand's villa at the beginning of the film to Odette entering it at the end.

And then there's the humor of theatrical, even vaudevillian situations, which I enhanced with mischievous airs, like the one for MAGIC FLUTE.

My work then becomes very precise. I compose directly to the image and the tonalities of the dialogues. There is my music, and the music of the actors. Huppert and Luchini in THE CRIME IS MINE clearly suggest a different melody than Deneuve and Depardieu

in POTICHE. My notes adapt to their rhythms and their silences. Along with camera movements and editing cuts, these elements constitute a parallel score that guides me as I compose mine. The music is there to help us feel what is happening beyond the words and images. It seeps in and orients the viewpoint of one character or another.



CAST

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Madeleine Verdier | Nadia TERESZKIEWICZ |
| Pauline Mauléon | Rebecca MARDER |
| Odette Chaumette | Isabelle HUPPERT |
| Judge Rabusset | Fabrice LUCHINI |
| Palmarède | Dany BOON |
| Mr. Bonnard | André DUSSOLLIER |
| André Bonnard | Édouard SULPICE |
| Mr. Brun | Régis LASPALÈS |
| Trapu | Olivier BROCHE |
| Gilbert Raton | Félix LEFEBVRE |
| Pistole | Franck DE LAPERSONNE |
| Simone Bernard | Evelyne BUYLE |
| The Public Prosecutor | Michel FAU |
| The Presiding Judge | Daniel PREVOST |
| Madame Jus | Myriam BOYER |
| Montferrand | Jean-Christophe BOUVET |
| Céleste | Suzanne DE BAECQUE |
| Madame Alvarez | Lucia SANCHEZ |
| Émile Bouchard | Jean-Claude BOLLE-REDDAT |
| Head Waiter | Dominique BESNEHARD |
| Bonnard's Secretary | Anne-Hélène ORVELIN |
| Newsreel Voice | Georges BECOT |

CREW

| | |
|--|--|
| Screenplay & Direction Freely adapted | François OZON from the play <i>Mon Crime</i> (1934) by Georges BERR & Louis VERNEUIL |
| In collaboration with | Philippe PIAZZO |
| Produced by | Éric & Nicolas ALTMAYER |
| Director of Photography | Manu DACOSSE |
| Production Designer | Jean RABASSE |
| Costume Designer | Pascaline CHAVANNE |
| Original Music | Philippe ROMBI |
| Editing | Laure GARDETTE |
| Sound | Jean-Marie BLONDEL |
| | Julien ROIG |
| | Jean-Paul HURIER |
| Casting | David BERTRAND |
| | Anaïs DURAN |
| Production Manager | Aude CATHELIN |
| 1 st Assistant Director | Marion DEHAENE |
| Stills Photography | Carole BETHUEL |

SONGS

Danielle DARRIEUX – “Le Bonheur C’est Un Rien”

Duet with Pierre MINGAND

Wal BERG, Composer

Les Éditions Musicales du Petit Duc, Publisher

Danielle DARRIEUX – “Sans Un Mot”

Franz Waxman, Composer

Jean Bernard Neuburger, Composer

Wilhelm Maco, Lyrics

Éditions Salabert France, Publisher

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