



FILM MOVEMENT

The Grocer's Son

(Le Fils de l'épicier)

Like taking a vacation the French countryside and meeting people there of whom you grow extraordinarily fond, *The Grocer's Son* (*Le Fils de l'épicier*) is an unalloyed pleasure, start to finish. **-Green Cine Daily**

Directed by Eric Guirado



France/ 2007/ Drama/ French with English subtitles/ 96 min./
35mm / Color / 1:1.85/ Stereo DTS SR

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SYNOPSIS

It is summer, and thirty-year-old Antoine is forced to leave the city to return to his family in Provence. His father is sick, so he must assume the lifestyle he thought he had shed—driving the family grocery cart from hamlet to hamlet, delivering supplies to the few remaining inhabitants. Accompanied by Claire, a friend from Paris whom he has a secret crush on, Antoine gradually warms up to his experience in the country and his encounters with the villagers, who initially seem stubborn and gruff, but ultimately prove to be funny and endearing. Ultimately, this surprise French box-office hit is about the coming-of-age of a man re-discovering life and love in the countryside.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Winner – Shooting Star Award for Outstanding Acting, Nicolas Cazalé
– ***Berlin Int'l Film Festival***

Nominated – César- Most Promising Actor, Nicolas Cazalé
– ***César Awards, France***

Official Selection – ***Rendez-Vous with French Cinema***
German Int'l Francophone Film Festival
Belgian Int'l Francophone Film Festival
Lama Film Festival
Cabourg Film Festival
Int'l FF of Kerala
Festival du Film Francais au Japon

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC GUIRADO

How did you take an interest in traveling grocers?

A few years ago, I made a series of filmed portraits of traveling tradesmen in Southern and Central France, such as bakers, photographers and bargemen, for a regional TV network. I spent all my time on the road with them and my camera. I was a great fan of road movies and a radio program called *Là-bas si j'y suis* by Daniel Mermet, who travels round meeting people, telling their stories and making their daily lives seem so exceptional. Even so, it was only after my first feature, *Quand tu descendras du ciel*, that I started shooting documentary portraits of traveling grocers. I felt the need to get back to a more intimate, personal way of shooting and to “do battle” with the frame and lighting in a realistic context. For about 18 months, I filmed traveling grocers in Corsica, the Pyrenees and the Alps.

When did you get the idea for *The Grocer's Son*?

The first draft of the screenplay dates back to 2000. At the time, the film was called *Antoine and his clouds*, and was meant to be my first feature. For various reasons, I put it to one side, promising myself to return to it one day. When I shot those portraits of traveling grocers, in the back of my mind it was to help write the film, and to confront what I had imagined with reality.

The film shows a family that has fallen apart...

What links the family members is this shadowy area of things left unsaid and misunderstandings. The characters rarely talk to each other and when they do, they lie or twist reality. Even so, deep down, I think they're a pretty ordinary family, with nothing very remarkable about them. They do their best to lead simple lives, which is why Antoine saw that he had no future there and ran away.

Besides Claire, the characters often find it hard to express their feelings...

Sure, they're reserved, discreet, timid or shy people who don't make any particular effort to improve their lot. They're indecisive, which can make them alternately irritating and endearing. They remind me of certain characters in Wim Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* or *Paris, Texas*, who say little but keep moving forward.

The film shows the countryside empty of all but its elderly inhabitants...

That's a reflection of my own life and documentary experience in the south of France. The villagers you see in the film cling onto their way of life as long as possible for reasons of personal preference and pride. Traveling storekeepers offer them some kind of autonomy. Some elderly people insist on walking to the grocer's van every day to stay physically fit and keep in contact with the world. I was deeply touched by their isolation. A mailman told me that in some very remote places, people subscribe to the local newspaper simply because it means

they're sure to see him every day, and so will have contact and maybe a chat with at least one person every day. It's the same for traveling grocers.

The relationship between Antoine and Lucienne, played by Liliane Rovère, is very strong...

At the start of the film, Antoine isn't particularly outgoing, when in fact he has a lot to learn from the people he meets. Lucienne is the only one to remind him of a few home truths and call him a little idiot! She puts him in his place and opens his eyes to the world around him. In his own way, the character played by Paul Crauchet, Old Man Clément, also contributes to Antoine's development. Paul Crauchet and Liliane Rovère both have extremely motivational personalities and they grasped exactly what I expected of their characters.

From the start, you give the film an upbeat tempo...

The rhythm was already in the screenplay, I just hammered the nail home on the shoot. I wanted Antoine to be shaken up, caught up in a movement that challenged his way of thinking and prejudices, and swept him away in spite of himself. Despite his strong initial resistance (at the beginning, he's focused solely on his own desires), Antoine eventually opens up to others. He learns to listen to them, observe them and be attentive to them. For him, it's a whole revolution for him, and like all revolutions, it can't take place quietly and calmly. With the countryside as the backdrop, that was my principal concern every day on set.

That countryside, which you film lovingly...

Of course, I grew up in the country and I still feel a very strong bond. When I was young, I started taking nature photos, trying to capture the light, shapes and the full range of matter and color of a forest, for example. I'm still sensitive to that beauty but also wary of it. In editing, I cut out the moments that were just "too beautiful" because they did nothing for the story and distracted us from the real subject.

Where did you get the idea for them to paint the van?

From the beginning, I wanted Claire, who's very impish, to bring a whimsical dimension to Antoine's more taciturn character. To an extent, I could picture her slapping a red nose and clown's make-up on him to get him to smile. When she starts painting the van, she injects some life into this dormant village and shakes up people's habits. She's a breath of fresh air blowing through. There's something almost blasphemous about the way she paints the father's sacrosanct van.

Have your documentaries given you fresh insight for the characters of your films?

In the big city, people tend to have a false or clichéd view of the countryside. I see the country as a place of contrast and paradoxes, which I have always been keen and curious to film. My documentaries were the perfect chance to share

people's daily lives. In a documentary, I like to find people's humanity – tiny heroes lost in the landscape – and I try to bring out that which is exceptional in each of them, while still doing my job thoroughly and with discernment. The portrait of an old shepherd in the Jura mountains, which I shot 10 years ago, still inspires me today when I approach the construction of my characters.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHIES

Director's Filmography

ERIC GUIRADO

- The Grocer's Son (2007).
- Quand tu descendras du ciel (2002) –

Audience Award at Festival d'Angers – 2003

Best Actor Award for Benoît Giros at Festival d'Angers 2003

Audience Award at Festival de Mulhouse 2003

Special Jury Prize at Festival "La Ciotat Berceau du Cinéma" 2003

Audience Award at FilmFest of Braunschweig in Germany 2003

Prix Spécial du Jury au Festival France Cinéma de Florence 2003

Student Grand Prix at Festival France Cinéma in Florence

First Prize at MedFilm Festival of Rome 2003

Best First Film Mention at Festival du Film Francophone in Safi, Morocco 2004.

Actor's Filmographies and Select Biographies

NICOLAS CAZALÉ

- The Grocer's Son (2007), directed by Éric Guirado
- Chaotic Ana (2007) directed by Julio Medem
- UV (2007) directed by Gilles Paquet-Brenner
- Pars vite et reviens tard (2007) directed by Régis Wargnier
- Saint-Jacques... La Mecque (2005) directed by Coline Serreau
- Le Grand voyage (2004) directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi
- Le Clan (2004) directed by Gaël Morel
- L'Amour dangereux (2003) de Steve Suissa
- Under Another Sky (2002) directed by Gaël Morel
- Bella ciao (2001) directed by Stéphane Giusti.

Born in Pau, France, Nicolas Cazalé was encouraged at the age of 18 by a friend to attend a school play. The experience immediately inspired him to move to Paris to take up acting as a career. His first film role was in Gaël Morel's award-winning film UNDER ANOTHER SKY in 2002. In addition to film roles, Nicolas has worked for television appearing, for example, as Friday opposite Pierre Richard in a small-screen adaptation of "Robinson Crusoe" by Thierry Chabert in 2003. He was cast in the male leads for Julio Medem's CHAOTIC ANA, which was shot in Spain and the USA, Gilles Paquet-Brenner's UV, and Eric Guirado's THE GROCER'S SON (LE FILS DE L'ÉPICIER). Nicolas received the award for "Romantic Actor of the Year" in June 2005, in the discovery category at the Cabourg Festival for his central performance as Reda in Ismaël Ferroukhi's THE GREAT JOURNEY (LE GRAND VOYAGE).

CLOTILDE HESME

- The Grocer's Son (2007), directed by Éric Guirado
- Love Songs (2007) directed by Christophe Honoré
- Regular Lovers (2005) directed by Philippe Garrel
- À ce soir (2004) directed by Laure Duthilleul
- Focus (2004) directed by Sébastien Fabioux
- Olga's Chignon (2002) directed by Jérôme Bonnell
- Dieu, que la nature est bien faite ! (1999) directed by Sophie Lellouche.

LILIANE ROVÈRE

- The Grocer's Son (2007) directed by Éric Guirado
- J'invente rien (2006) directed by Michel Leclerc
- Je vous trouve très beau (2005) directed by Isabelle Mergault
- La Captive (2000) directed by Chantal Akerman
- With a Friend Like Harry (2000) directed by Dominik Moll
- Le bleu des villes (1999) directed by Stéphane Brizé
- Peut-être (1999) directed by Cédric Klapisch
- Venus Beauty Institute(1999) directed by Tonie Marshall
- Adultère, mode d'emploi (1995) directed by Christine Pascal
- 'Round Midnight (1986) directed by Bertrand Tavernier
- Buffet froid (1979) directed by Bertrand Blier
- Je t'aime moi non plus (1976) de Serge Gainsbourg...

DANIEL DUVAL

- The Grocer's Son (2007) directed by Éric Guirado
- C'est beau une ville la nuit (2006) directed by Richard Bohringer
- Le Temps des porte-plumes (2006) directed by Daniel Duval
- Time to Leave (2005) directed by François Ozon
- Caché (2005) directed by Michael Haneke
- 36 Quai des Orfèvres (2004) directed by Olivier Marchal
- The time of the wolf (2003) directed by Michael Haneke
- Le vent de la nuit (1999) directed by Philippe Garrel
- Those who love me can take the train (1998) directed by Jeanne Labrune
- Will it snow for Christmas? (1996) directed by Sandrine Veysset
- Stan the flasher (1990) directed by Serge Gainsbourg
- Les loups entre eux (1985) directed by José Giovanni
- La Dérobade (1979) directed by Daniel Duval
- Que la fête commence (1975) directed by Bertrand Tavernier...

CREDITS

Crew

Director	Eric Guirado
Writers	Eric Guirado & Florence Vignon
Based on the original story by	Eric Guirado
Production Design	Miléna Poylo & Gilles Sacuto
Image	Laurent Brunet
Sound	Nicolas Favre
Casting	Brigitte Moidon
1 st Assistant Director	Dominique Henry
Script	Sara Prim
Décors	Valerie Faynot
Costumes	Ann Dunsford
Editing	Pierre Haberer
Music	Christophe Boutin
Sound Mix	Emmanuel Croset
Director of Production	Cristophe Desenclos
General Manager	Pierre-Yves Jourdain

Cast

Antoine	Nicolas Cazalé
Claire	Clotilde Hesme
Père d'Antoine	Daniel Duval
Mère d'Antoine	Jeanne Goupil
Françoise	Stéphan Guérin Tillié
Lucienne	Liliane Rovère
Le Père Clément	Paul Crauchet
Hassan	Chad Chenouga
Fernand	Benoît Giros
Sophie	Ludmila Ruoso