



Patron: Jim Broadbent
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Friday October 20th 2017
Dans La Cour (Cert 15)

dir: **Pierre Salvadori**

Starring: **Gustave Kervern. Catherine Deneuve**

Sponsors: **Special Editions Chocolate**

Synopsis: Paris, present day. Antoine, the singer in a rock band, sits in his dressing room while his band await his arrival. Antoine is in something of a personal crisis, drinking heavily and engulfed by depression. He leaves the band. Out of work and with few skills, he visits the job centre and is sent for interview as concierge of an upmarket apartment block. Mathilde, an ageing charity worker persuades her husband to employ Antoine (against his better judgement). He settles into his new home and job, performing his duties rather eccentrically. Meanwhile Mathilde is suffering from her own mental health issues. Feeling isolated and lonely, she is becoming distant from her husband and develops an obsession with a large crack in the apartment wall, convincing herself the building is close to collapse. An unlikely friendship develops between Antoine and Mathilde as they find solace in each other's company.

A self-described "expert in despondency" meets his match in "*Dans La Cour*," a wry, oh-so-gentle dual character study saved from sleepiness by the unexpected star pairing of Catherine Deneuve and Gustave Kervern. Their tender, good-humored performances — as, respectively, a restless Parisian retiree and aimless caretaker who discover an unlikely kinship in differently transitional life stages — lend this slight tale more gravity than we've come to expect from Tunisian-born director Pierre Salvadori, who struck gold internationally with the Audrey Tautou-starring romantic comedies "*Priceless*" and "*Beautiful Lies*." More melancholy but still eminently easy-going, Salvadori's latest doesn't have quite the same crossover potential as those films, but the Deneuve brand should ensure widespread arthouse bookings all the same.

Now in her eighth decade, Deneuve's late-career evolution into France's most glamorous character actress continues apace. Like Emmanuelle Bercot's "*On My Way*" (2013), "*Dans La Cour*" makes a poignant virtue of the contrast between the actress's lioness-like physical presence and the modest stature of her careworn character; it's the network of worry lines in that marvellous face, as much as its enduring beauty, that interests Salvadori and d.p. Gilles Henry. Also playing against type, in a sense, is Kervern, a name associated with more manically eccentric comedy than this kind of soft-shoe diversion. (He's best known for his zany work behind the camera with fellow writer-director Benoit Delepine, including "*Le grand soir*" and "*Mammuth*."). As such, he brings a necessary frisson of danger to a story that suggests the



capacity for madness in even the most staid of lives.

Indeed, the film opens with Kervern's character, Antoine, just past the brink of breakdown. A fortysomething rock singer afflicted with insomnia and assorted addictions, he bails on a gig immediately after arriving onstage. Calling time on his music career and looking to disappear from life for a while, he shows up at an employment agency seeking something less stress-inducing. The position of custodian for a quiet Parisian apartment building is just the ticket. Interviewing him for the job, retired resident Serge (Feodor Atkine) is wary of his spaced-out demeanor and evident lack of janitorial experience; his kindly but distracted wife, Mathilde (Deneuve), however, deems him a breath of fresh air, and he's duly hired.

Proving, not for the first time in the film, the wobbliness of Mathilde's judgment, Antoine is amiably ineffective in his new role. He shares drugs with wastrel tenant Stephane (Pio Marmai, underused) while turning a blind eye to his stolen-bicycle racket, and allows homeless cult member Lev (Oleg Kupchik) and his dog to move into the building's storeroom, all to the consternation of resident fussybudget Maillard (Nicolas Bouchaud).

Mathilde, meanwhile, has her own concerns: Convincing herself that the building is on the verge of collapse after discovering a crack in her hallway, she neurotically resolves to fight city hall. Antoine humours her efforts in this regard more than her husband, who dismisses her fears as merely boredom-induced, without seeing the larger psychological cracks behind them. (The script, written by the director with David Colombo-Leotard, may be low-key, but it's not exactly subtle in its symbolism.)

After initially flirting with the tonal and structural properties of an ensemble sitcom, then, "*In the Courtyard*" grows into more of a two-hander. Mathilde and Antoine's friendship builds slowly and sweetly, based on their mutual understanding of foibles and vulnerabilities that others find it easier to ignore,

though it doesn't go anywhere particularly surprising. As a comedy, it's bigger on smiles of recognition than outright belly laughs, but even at its breeziest, the threat of tragedy hangs over the proceedings like a initially unobtrusive raincloud that looks increasingly likely to burst. A more dramatically substantial film could have been fashioned around these characters, but so could a more rapidly sentimental one.

Credits

Mathilde	Catherine Deneuve
Antoine	Gustave Kervern
Serge	Fèodor Atkine
Stéphane	Pio Marmaï
Collette	Michèle Moretti
Laurent Maillard	Nicolas Bouchaud
Lev	Oleg Kupchik
Antoine's ex	Garance Clavel
Specialist	Olivier Charasson
M Vigo	Bruno Netter
Director	Pierre Salvadori
Screenplay	Pierre Salvadori, David Lèotard
Cinematography	Gilles Henry
Editor	Isabelle Devinck
Music	Grégoire Hetzel, Stephin Merritt
Costume	Virginie Montel

Another View

Antoine is a musician, but refuses to play in his rock band due to depression. After wandering in the streets, Antoine finally decides to find a job. Unskilled, inexperienced, he is still lucky enough to be hired as a caretaker in one of the oldest Paris apartment buildings in the city. With his eccentric behavior, and unique attitude towards the residents, he soon becomes very popular and proves that he can be good at his job. Soon after, Antoine develops an exceptional friendship with Mathilde, a recently retired woman whose mental balance is worsening with every passing day.

"*Dans la cour*" introduces us to its hero Antoine (Gustave Kervern), who sits stubbornly in a bar and argues with the manager about his current physical and psychological condition. He leaves the bar forgetting his beloved guitar. Soon after, he gets back to reality and goes to social services to find a job. We would never know what happened next with Antoine, if not for a very kind and caring social worker who finds a piece of paper in her garbage bin that helps this kind man find a job. Mathilde (Catherine Deneuve) is a very educated, but emotionally disturbed woman, who slowly loses her balance between reality and a world that exists only in her head. With Antoine's appearance, she finds in him a trustworthy friend, a companion in her crazy plans, and simply a person who she can go to talk to and cry, if she so wishes. The relationship between these two people is remarkably told by French writer and filmmaker Pierre Salvadori.

Pierre Salvadori is a master at making films about life, feelings, relationships, and love which are all the necessary ingredients needed for a story of a man and woman who fall in love at first sight. In "*Dans la cour*" you should not expect the usual scheme of the love story between a man and a woman, but you can feel, see, and even touch the love if you want just by watching this feature film. If you happen to see Salvadori's "*Beautiful Lies*" (2014) with Audrey Tautou, in which a

hairdresser forwards a passionate letter to her mother, then you will already know what to expect from "*Dans la cour*".

It would take forever to describe the enormous and undeniable talent of Catherine Deneuve who I am sure almost everyone knows. Her performance in the excellent musical "*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*" (1964) still remains one of the best films about love ever made, along with "*Casablanca*", "*Love Story*" and Claude Lelouch "*A Man and A Woman*". Her talent and beauty shines bright and becomes even more unique as she ages, which is noticeable to the naked eye. Salvadori, knowing that, creates Deneuve's character as a woman who was made for life; to live, – to enjoy life. Deneuve is very good as he presents Mathilde in a way that we feel nothing but love and compassion for her condition. Her character is as lovable as the flowers outside of her apartment. Gustave Kervern's Antoine is shy, but hardworking, if given the chance. His kind heart and gentle character makes him unable to tell a lie or harm anyone. And it is all because of Kervern's convincing performance, who does his best, while playing alongside a true legend of French cinematography- Catherine Deneuve.

"*Dans la cour*" is a very touching and mesmerizing story of two people who live their lives in a micro-world, with dignity, respect, and admiration for one another, while the rest of the world does nothing but fight with one another. In this film, the viewers will find something for themselves; learn, and probably share some of the experiences with the people on the screen, because the main viewpoint of "*Dans la cour*" is that everyone deserves a second chance, and true friendship sometimes is all we need to have a fulfilling life.

Our next film: Friday October 27th, 7.30pm A Quiet Passion (UK 2016. Cert 12a)

Terence Davies's film about 19th century American poet Emily Dickinson is one to savour. The script is witty, and literate (several of Dickinson's poems feature in the film), the costumes and setting perfectly capture time and place and the performance of Cynthia Nixon in the lead role demonstrates with clarity and vision the dilemma of a strongly independent-minded woman who longed to be respected and to love but who was trapped in a repressive age. The kind of film that gives heritage cinema a good name, this is not one to miss.