



Patron: Jim Broadbent
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Friday November 9th, 2018
C'est la vie (15)

dirs: **Éric Toledano, Olivier Nakache**

Starring: **Jean-Pierre Bacri, Gilles Lellouche, Suzanne Clement**

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Synopsis: France, present day. Event planner Max and team are preparing for a lavish wedding in a 17th century chateau. Problems occur from the start, his deputy, brother-in-law, girlfriend, the photographer, the wedding singer and an increasingly rebellious staff all creating difficulties. The wedding party arrives - Héléna the bride turns out to be his brother-in-law's ex, the band gets food poisoning and nothing pleases Pierre, the groom. As Max (whose marriage is on the rocks) struggles to keep things together, he receives an offer from a contact to buy his business. Pierre appears above the guests in a hot-air balloon but it comes loose. A disastrous fireworks display is the last straw and Max storms out. He receives a phone call from his wife agreeing to a divorce and returns to find some sort of order has been restored. Max decides not to sell his business.

Writer-director team Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano's last-but-one feature, *Intouchable* (2011), scored an international hit with its feel-good story about a quadriplegic millionaire (François Cluzet) and the young African ex-con (Omar Sy) who becomes his carer and liberates his uptight spirit. A francophone echo of *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), it secreted a nugget or two of easy-to-swallow social comment within the syrup of its simplistic humour. The same can't be said of *C'est la vie!* (the catch-all foreign release title of *Le Sens de la Fête - Life of the Party* might have been more apt), which eschews all hints of deeper significance to offer us spirited ensemble performances steeped in bubbly French farce, like Robert Altman's *A Wedding* (1978) with its teeth drawn.

Altman's film bestowed most of its attention on the families and guests attending the celebrations; Nakache and Toledano swing the balance the other way, with centre stage taken by the shambolic efforts of the wedding catering outfit headed by the beleaguered Max Angély (Jean-Pierre Bacri, known for his script contributions to the edgy comedies directed by his then wife Agnès Jaoui). The tone is set by a prologue in which Max meets a hapless young couple desperate to do their wedding on the cheap - the bride wonders if they might save money by leaving the white borders off the wedding photos - and departs sarcastically suggesting that they ask the guests to bring their own food in Tupperware boxes.

Unashamed crassness on this level fuels many of the gags. Samy (Alban Ivanov), a last minute replacement for a missing waiter, proves so ignorant of cuisine that he believes a turbot is a musical instrument. It's also Samy who causes the lamb intended for the main course to go off, when he disconnects the refrigerator van in order to plug in his razor. Guy (Jean-Paul Rouve), the superannuated wedding photographer, erupt in rage at the guests taking shots with their mobiles, then takes time off for a one night



stand with the groom's mother, while the stentorian singer (Gilles Lellouche) is bugged with requests for smoochy pre-war ballads. The short fused Adèle (Eye Haidara) blasts obscenities at anyone who aggravates her, and Julia (Vincent Macaigne), Max's depressive brother-in-law, is cast into yet deeper despair on finding that the bride is his is his long-lost love. Against this tide of idiocy and rampant temperament, Max's fallback professional maxims - "Let's stay calm" and "We'll adapt" - offer scant refuge.

Subtlety of humour, in other words, is in short supply. Still, if you're not seeking sophistication, *C'est la vie* passes the time divertingly enough, and the 'everything works out fine in the end' finale, while nothing if not predictable, is executed with sufficient brio to slip down without offence - especially the improvised reggae/jazz/North African fusion number, laced with Sri Lankan flute riffs, to which staff and guests happily cavort. It's only surpassed for ingenuity by a brief glimpse of arrival affair: a country and western bar mitzvah, complete with Apache rabbi.

Credits

Max Angély	Jean Pierre Bacri
Guy	Jean-Paul Rouve
Etienne, 'DJ James'	Gilles Lellouche)
Julien	Vincent Macaigne
Adèle	Eye Haldara
Josiane	Suzanne Clement
Samy	Alban Ivanov
Pierre's mother	Hélène Vincent
Pierre	Benjamin Lavernhe
Héléna	Judith Chemla
Seb	William Lebghil
Patrice	Kevin Asais
Henri	Antoine Chappay
Roshan	Manmathan Basky
Nabil	Khereddine Ennasri
Bastien	Gabriel Naccache
Nicole, 'Nico'	Jackee Toto
Valéry Laprade	Grégoire Bonnet
Director	Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache
Screenplay	Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache
Dir. of Photography	David Chizallet
Editor	Dorian Rigal Ansous
Art director	Mathieu Vadepiéd
Music	Avishai Cohen
Sound	Pascal Armant, Selim Azzari, Jean-Paul Hurier
Costume	Isabelle Pannetier
	France/Belgium/Canada 2016 115 mins

Another View

Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano, the writing-directing duo behind French smash *Intouchable*, return with this charming comedy about the preparations for a chateau-set wedding. Following in the tradition of films like Robert Altman's 1978 comedy *A Wedding*, it's a finely tuned ensemble piece that delivers plenty of big laughs.

At the centre of the action is Max (Jean-Pierre Bacri), the head of a catering company with wedding planner duties, whose motto is 'We adapt'. That phrase is tested to its limit with the impending nuptials of groomzilla Pierre (Benjamin Lavernhe) and his bride-to-be Héléna (Judith Chemla). Max's problems begin when egotistical wedding singer Etienne, aka DJ James (Gilles Lellouche), turns up as a last-minute replacement and quickly picks a fight with Adèle (Eye Haidara), Max's foul-mouthed second-in-command. Other disasters soon follow, including a bout of food poisoning, an unexpected power outage and the fact that one of the waiters is in love with the bride.

Nakache and Toledano have a strong feel for ensemble comedy, keeping multiple characters in the mix and arranging for each storyline to reach a deliciously comic climax; the highlight involves a special request from the groom – an inspired and brilliantly executed set-piece that will have you crying with laughter. The script is equally effective in the smaller moments, setting up and paying off a number of great gags and touching character beats, while ensuring that not a second of screen-time is wasted.

The cast are a riot. Bacri is the master of the withering stare / sardonic put-down combo, while Lellouche is on terrific form as DJ James, and both actors share engaging comic chemistry with Haidara. Similarly, Lavernhe is brilliantly irritating as the pushy groom (a nice twist on the usual cliché) and there's a fun turn from Jean-Paul Rouve as Guy, a canapé-obsessed, selfie-hating photographer, whose young intern (Gabriel Naccache) introduces him to geo-locating dating apps, with hilarious results.

Matthew Turner: The List

**Our next screening: Friday November 23rd, 7.30pm
L'Amant double (France 2017. Cert 18)**

After the reflective romanticism of *Frantz*, Society regular François Ozon turns the dial up to 11 with a visually dazzling, provocative story that references Hitchcock, De Palma and David Cronenberg. Chloe, plagued with stomach pains, is referred by her gynaecologist to psychoanalyst Paul. He is attracted to her and when they start a relationship, he cuts off professional contact. But Chloe discovers Paul has an identical twin, also a psychoanalyst; and when she makes contact with him, she is soon swept into a maelstrom involving sexuality, confused identity, sibling rivalry and buried feelings.

Advisory note: this film contains graphic images

Membership News

We are trialling the idea of a half-season membership when we return after the holiday season. Available from now until the end of November and costing £25, anyone taking up the offer will be entitled to see the remaining 16 films in the programme from January 4th to May 10th on the same terms as a full member.