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DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT

DANS PARIS

(INSIDE PARIS)

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

**ROMAIN DURIS
LOUIS GARREL
GUY MARCHAND**

**JOANA PREISS
ALICE BUTAUD
MARIE-FRANCE PISIER**

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An homage to the French New Wave, the charming **Dans Paris** is a study in contrasts – dark and light, misery and delight. On one side is the recently divorced Paul (Romain Duris), who moves back home with his father and brother to wallow in bed and feed his depression. On the other side is Jonathan, who appears full of vitality and amorousness. A genuinely honest and unpretentious film about family relationships and brotherly love.

FRANCE • 2007 • 92 mins • Color • In French with English subtitles

Two Brothers, One Down and One Out

MANOHLA DARGIS

The French filmmaker Christophe Honoré was born in 1970, almost two years to the month after his country was seized by revolutionary fervor. By then, the New Wave had crested, and the no-longer-young Turks who had shaken up the art had moved on and apart.

Mr. Honoré appears not to have noticed or much cared. His heartfelt “Dans Paris” picks up where the early François Truffaut and his comrades-in-cinema left off — with a playful, liberatory style, and a song (actually, a few) in his heart and on his actors’ lips.

“Dans Paris” (or “In Paris”) involves two brothers: the older, Paul, is played by the professionally moody Romain Duris, while the younger, Jonathan, is inhabited, lissome body and soul, by that floppy beauty Louis Garrel. When he’s not in school or seducing one in a string of fluttering lovelies, Jonathan lives in an apartment with his loving curmudgeon of a father (the invaluable Guy Marchand) and an enviable view of the Eiffel Tower. Recently, Jonathan has been crashing on the living room couch *au naturel*, having relinquished his bedroom to Paul, who’s deep in a depression so dark and all-consuming that it threatens to swallow him permanently and might just take his family down for the count too.

A story of love between brothers who are a study in contrasts — light and dark, delight and despair, hope and its absence — “Dans Paris” is very much also about that glorious, fizzy, enlivening flashpoint when you think love might have struck, and that crushing, seemingly bottomless moment when you know it has left the room for good.

For Paul, who’s recently separated from the quarrelsome Anna (Joana Preiss), an angular beauty with an unsmiling mouth and hovering rain clouds, the world seems to have collapsed. Tucked in Jonathan’s bed, his face carpeted in new beard, Paul curls into himself like a slug, like a fetus, like a closing circle. He’s dying, or at least thinks he wants to, and he’s taking his story with him.

That leaves Jonathan to tell Paul’s story, which he initially does by brashly talking into the camera. There’s a touch of nostalgia in this form of direct address, which invokes the work of Jean-Luc Godard in much the same way that a later scene of a couple in bed boldly references Truffaut’s 1970 film “Bed and Board.”

The fourth chapter in Truffaut’s Antoine Doinel series, “Bed and Board” is about marriage and mistakes, and that hazardous stretch separating adolescence from adulthood. In some respects, it is about the end of an era — for Truffaut, for the New Wave and its admirers — though it also appears to have served as a point of creative departure for Mr. Honoré, as a new beginning, not an end.

Though Jonathan tells Paul’s story, he talks to the camera only briefly before sliding back fully into character. This wink at the fourth wall works partly because it’s so abbreviated. Mr. Honoré may be a student of the New Wave but he’s not a slave, and he steers clear of pastiche in this film precisely because he



knows the difference between empty imitation and creative inspiration.

In “Dans Paris” he freely uses jump cuts and, on occasion rather more daringly, plays with the camera speed so that the characters race about in herky-jerky fast motion, as if they had been spirited into a badly projected silent movie. The effect is charming, old-fashioned yet invigorating, because of its assertion of form as unabashed content.

While Paul rots in bed (and Papa smokes and stews), Jonathan dives headfirst into the tumult of Paris, immersing himself in its pleasures, its women, its light. Much as many memorable young characters from the French New Wave — the laughing lovers in “Jules and Jim,” the Louvre sprinters in “Band of Outsiders” — he hurtles forward as if his life were at stake, perhaps because it is. Like Mr. Duris (whose naked, touching turn here makes up for the calamity of “Molière”), Mr. Garrel delivers an intensely physical performance that organically conveys a world of impetuous emotion, as he bounds from idealism to anguish and back again. Like Mr. Honoré, these two exceptional performers risk the absurd, beautifully.

DANS PARIS

Written (in French, with English subtitles) and directed by Christophe Honoré; director of photography, Jean-Louis Vialard; edited by Chantal Hymans; music by Alex Beaupain. Running time: 90 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Romain Duris (Paul), Louis Garrel (Jonathan), Guy Marchand (Mirko), Joana Preiss (Anna), Alice Butaud (Alice) and Marie-France Pisier (the Mother).

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