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It's Easier for a Camel...

A film by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

Staring

CHIARA MASTROIANNI	VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI
Jean-Hugues Anglade	Denis Podalydès
Lambert Wilson	Roberto Herlitzka
Emmanuelle Devos	Yvan Attal

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It's Easier for a Camel...

FILMMAKERS

Director	VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI
Screenplay	VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI NOÉMIE LVOVSKY AGNÈS DE SACY
Production Manager	SYLVAIN MONOD
Dir. of Photography	JEANNE LAPOIRIE
Editor	ANNE WEIL
Production Designer	EMMANUELLE DUPLAY
Costume Supervisor	CLAIRE FRAISSE
Sound	FRANCOIS WALEDISH
Assistant Director	OLIVIER GENET
Executive Producers	PAULO BRANCO GEMINI FILMS

FEATURING

Federica	VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI
Bianca	CHIARA MASTROIANNI
Pierre	JEAN-HUGUES ANGLADE
Philippe	DENIS PODALYDES
Philippe's Wife	EMMANUELLE DEVOS
The Mother	MARISA BORINI
The Father	ROBERTO HERLITZKA
Aurelio	LAMBERT WILSON
The Priest	PASCAL BONGARD
The Director	NICOLAS BRIANÇON
Man in the Garden	YVAN ATTAL
Celine	KARIN SILLA
The Doctor	LAURENT GREVILL
Ouvreuse	EVA IONESCO
Couple	HELENE DE SAINT-PERE PIERRE-OLIVIER DE MATTEI
Amelie	CHLOE MONS
Dance Professor	HELENE SADOWSKA
Federica (Child)	ALMA SAMMEL
Bianca (Child)	JUTA SAMMEL
Aurelio (Child)	VICTOR NEBBOLIO DI CASTRI

France, 2003

110 minutes, Color

In French & Italian with English subtitles

1:85, Dolby SR

SYNOPSIS

As a little girl, Federica fantasized about having beautiful long hair that would grow back as soon as she cut it, about never-ending cones of cotton candy and about countless adventures that took her to the far side of the world. Now a charming thirty-something-single woman, Federica's fantasies have evolved, adding lovers, stardom, and motherhood to her waking dreams, where Federica continues to press for her everyday life to be as real as the fantasies that invade her. Unfortunately, Federica's daydreams can only provide a meager distraction from the reality she faces. Her career as a successful playwright is heading south, her boyfriend is pressuring her to start a family, a former lover wishes to rekindle an old affair, her sister is barely talking to her, her brother is self-centered and her loving father is terminally ill. And as if to make matters worse, Federica is rich, too rich, and the guilt that consumes her because of it is pushing her over the edge.

As Federica struggles to find meaning in her life, she turns to a local priest for guidance who in his attempts to help Federica deal with the contention in her family life, quickly finds his role reduced from parish priest to Federica's personal analyst. The priest/analyst does manage to offer Federica some comfort in regards to the relationships she shares with her lovers, brother, sister and parents, but her extraordinary wealth is another issue entirely. As the priest dutifully reminds her, the gospels warn, "It's easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." If Federica sees Heaven as a place in which she can exist on her own terms, disconnected from the abnormal, antagonistic relationships she shares with those closest to her, then the trappings of her wealth threatens all hope she has for any peace of mind. Wrestling with her feelings about death and responsibility, Federica alleviates the added weight of the haunting guilt that her wealth derives through her vivid imagination, where her reality grows wonderful and, if only fleetingly, gives her the sense that all is perfect in her world.

This tragicomic romp is the directorial debut of one of France's most talented actresses, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi. Drawing on her own experiences, Bruni Tedeschi based *It's Easier for a Camel* on her memories growing up in a privileged Italian family that immigrated to France in the 1970s. Fittingly, Valeria recruited her mother, Marysa Borini, to play the part of her on-screen mother in the film despite the fact that Borini had no prior experience as an actress. The extraordinary cast in this breezy, witty comedy includes Chiara Mastroianni, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Denis Podalydès, Lambert Wilson, Roberto Herlitzka, Emmanuelle Devos and Yvan Attal.

VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI INTERVIEW

Was your goal to make a film, or to find a way to express yourself about you and your life?

I participated in the writing of a script called *Mots D'Amour (Words Of Love)* by Mimmo Calopresti. It made me keep going. I started writing dialogs, parts of scenes, without knowing what will happen with it. A year later, I showed Noemie Lovski what I had written. According to her there was a film to make, but at this time I wasn't sure if I would direct it myself. Mimmo Calopresti really encouraged me. I felt supported and motivated to work thus the idea of directing this movie suddenly came to life.

After that, I needed more daily meetings and that's when Agnès de Sacy joined us. We had to put things together and find coherent meanings. It took a long time to build the film. I had met several producers before Paulo Branco decided to produce it. Without him the film would probably not exist.

You did not try to disguise the characters, or your life; there is no modesty about your social class, your family, etc. Nonetheless, the film has a non-linear structure that takes us away from the autobiography. We are closer to the self-portrait...

Self-portrait sounds accurate. The autobiography involves a curiosity on the spectator's side who is wondering about exactness, about what is true or not, and this question seems vain to me. I think that when you are telling a story in a film that you direct, it becomes fiction. On the other hand, what you think you are inventing, or imagining in a fiction movie, is sometimes very autobiographical. Of course, there is the character of the mother, the sister, the brother, the father and the Italian origin. I voluntarily made things transparent. I could have kept my name and it would have not changed anything. I believe cinema transforms people into characters, and lives into stories.

Federica is trying to be independent by detaching herself from her family, her heritage and her religion. The film title is referring to this sentence from the Bible: "It is easier for a camel fit through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Federica's "royaume des cieux" (Heaven) may mean existing by herself, being able to live like everybody else. In a few scenes, she is wearing a dress on which is the design of a parrot locked into a cage. Federica feels locked into her family, her social conditions, her relations with men from her past. She is trying to be free. It is like this yarn that is wrapped around her. She is trying to get rid of it, but she can't. It is part of her constitution. She had to go through these threads that make up her life. There had to be an interaction between them: Pierre, Philippe, her job, the priest, the daydreams and all the interactions in her life have been the most difficult things to find. However, the spine remains the family, the Sunday lunch, which is the center of the story with the death of the father approaching. One day, I read a script by Truffaut, *L'homme Qui Aimait Les Femmes (The Man Who Loved Women)*. At the beginning of the script there is this sentence, "It is the story of a man who has not been loved enough by

his mother”. That day I thought that my film was the story of a woman who has been loved too much by her father.

There are many “game scenes” that bring your character back to her childhood, to a kind of happiness that became rare in her adult life.

In an imaginary world, yes. At one point, one of the kids asks, “Let’s play real life.” It is also what I tried to say. How are the different aspects of the present, the memories, the daydreams, and the theater play, mixed into the reality? How can the reality in everyday life be as real as a fantasy that comes across or an obsession that invades us?

Did working with many filmmakers help you directing the film?

Absolutely, I saw the work of many famous filmmakers. I learned a lot from them, but in making my film I didn’t tell myself I would become one. I just told myself that I would film my story, the people I have chosen, in the simplest and most honest way. It is why I played in it. The work of an actress is the only thing I was very familiar with. It would have been foolish not to take advantage of it.

Mimmo advised me to do numerous tests. Every time I could, I was doing tests with the casting director Yann Coridian. It took us two years, which for me, was the only way to work on the “mise en scene.” We had numerous rehearsals in which I was acting with the actors. I was trying to understand how to act and direct at the same time. We also filmed dance classes for a long time. I was trying to figure out where to place the camera for the better shots, to get the emotions and to see the actor’s steps. This long preparation has been my way to make my film. Also the CNC (Centre National Du Cinema) gave me a budget to make tests and I showed them footage. This is how I had the chance to work with actors, a team, and to do some editing. It gave me confidence, like passing an exam, which has been really precious for me.

How did you decide to give Chiara Mastroianni the role of your sister?

We did many tests and she was really good. She offered us something funny and auto-ironical at the same time. The character became less serious and subtle while, at the same time, maintaining a certain hostility, which allowed her tenderness to come out.

Even if the tone seems solemn, the actors – Denis Podalydès, Yvan Attal, Lambert Wilson, Emmanuelle Devos - pull the characters into a comedy...

Yes, I was looking for characters with a dose of madness that are able to bring fantasy and fun to their personage. During the casting I saw many very good actors that were deep and grave in their acting but I have always loved the ones who made me laugh more. I wanted to be as close as I could to what I feel in real life and what other people make me feel - a mix of happiness and sadness, the sense of tragicomedy. The character of Jean-Hugues Anglade is maybe the most serious one, but there is also something unstable and fragile about him. He shouts what he is thinking but at the same time he is loosing control and cannot find his words. There is a very funny and moving contradiction for me between his seriousness and the power of his emotions.

All the characters have this fragility and we get the feeling that you like pursuing that. You underline their instability, like in the scene between you and Dennis Podalydès at the café...

I love moments when we are losing control in a scene. These moments are the best memories I have of my acting life. I think it is why I am doing this job, to be in this specific state of mind. I remember a scene in *Hotel De France* by Patrice Chéreau, where I couldn't stop laughing but I stayed in the scene and the camera kept filming. It is in these kinds of moments where the border between fiction and reality are foggy and that a part of truthfulness does appear.

In spite of humor and mockery, we always stay on the emotional side. It looks like you are only filming people you like...

Choosing the actors, filming them, brings tenderness to me, and a very affective and strong relationship with them. I never understood how the cinema transformed people. It really impressed me with my mother, for example. She was a pianist and she had no experience as an actress. I hesitated for a long time to give her the role because I was afraid of mixing things. But on stage, I saw her transforming herself into an actress with the same stress and the same joy as every actor; opening herself to the pleasure of being seen. I believe that directing an actor is making the people we film feel loved.

Valeria Bruni Tedeschi interviewed by Grégoire Bénabent

FILMOGRAPHIES

VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI

- 2003 *It's Easier for a Camel...* (Dir. Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
Happiness Costs Nothing (Dir. Mimmo Calopresti)
- 2002 *If I Were a Rich Man* (Dir. Michel Munz & Gérard Bitton)
- 2000 *Drugstore* (Marion Vernoux)
Voci (Franco Giraldi)
- 1999 *La Nourrice* (Marco Bellochio)
Empty Days (Marion Vernoux)
- 1998 *The Color of Lies* (Claude Chabrol)
Life Doesn't Scare Me (Noémie Lvovsky)
- 1997 *The House* (Sharunas Bartas)
Those Who Love Me Can Take the Train (Patrice Chéreau)
On a Très Peu D'amis (Sylvain Monod)
Notes of Love (Mimmo Calopresti)
- 1996 *The Liars* (Élie Chouraqui)
More (Pascal Bonitzer)
Nenette and Boni (Claire Denis)
Love and Confusion (Patrick Braoudé)
- 1995 *The Second Time* (Mimmo Calopresti)
My Man (Bertrand Blier)
- 1994 *Montana Blues* (Jean-Pierre Bisson)
- 1993 *Normal People are Nothing Exceptional* (Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa)
Queen Margot (Patrice Chéreau)
Forget Me (Noémie Lvovsky)
Crystal Book (Patricia Plattner)
- 1992 *Condemned to Wed* (Giusuppe Piccioni)
- 1991 *Fortune Express* (Olivier Schatzky)
The Man Who Lost His Shadow (Alain Tanner)
- 1988 *L'amoureuse* (Jacques Doillon)
- 1989 *The Story of Boys and Girls* (Pupi Avati)
I Write in Space (Pierre Étaix)
C'est La Vie (Diane Kurys)
- 1987 *Hôtel de France* (Patrice Chéreau)

CHIARA MASTROIANNI

- 2003 *It's Easier for a Camel...*(Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
2002 *Carnages* (Delphine Gleize)
2000 *Zeno - Le Parole Di Mio Padre* (Francesca Comencini)
Hotel (Mike Figgis)
1998 *Braccia Di Burro* (Sergio Castellito)
The Letter (Manoel De Oliveira)
Time Regained (Raoul Ruiz)
Six Pack (Alain Berberian)
1997 *For Sale* (Laëtitia Masson)
1996 *Chameleon* (Benoît Cohen)
1995 *My Sex Life.....Or How I got Into an Argument* (Arnaud Desplechin)
Diary of A Seducer (Danièle Dubroux)
Nowhere (Gregg Araki)
Three Lives and Only One Death (Raoul Ruiz)
1994 *Ready To Wear* (Robert Altman)
Don't Forget Me, You're Going To Die (Xavier Beauvois)
1993 *À La Belle Étoile* (Antoine Desrosières)
1992 *My Favorite Season* (André Téchiné)

JEAN-HUGUES ANGLADE

- 2003 *It's Easier for A Camel...* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
Leave Your Hands on My Hips (Chantal Lauby)
2002 *The Best Day of My Life* (Cristina Comencini)
Sweat (Louis-Pascal Couvelaire)
Innocents (Gre Marquette)
2001 *Mortal Transfer* (Jean-Jacques Beinex)
2000 *Across the Road* (Mathias Ledoux)
Le Prof (Alexandre Jardin)
Princesses (Sylvie Verheyde)
1998 *The Elective Affinities* (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani)
1997 *Maximum Risk* (Ringo Lam)
Tonka (Jean-Hugues Anglade)
1996 *The Liars* (Élie Chouraqui)
1995 *Dis-Moi Oui* (Alexandre Arcady)
Nelly and Mr. Arnaud (Claude Sautet)
1994 *Années D'enfance* (Roberto Faenza)
Killing Zoé (Roger Avary)
Queen Margot (Patrice Chéreau)
1993 *The Groundhogs* (Élie Chouraqui)
1991 *Gawin* (Arnaud Salignac)
Especially on Sunday (Giuseppe Bertolucci)
1990 *La Femme Nikita* (Luc Besson)
One Summer Night in Town (Michel Deville)
1989 *Nocturne Indien* (Alain Corneau)
1987 *Malady of Love* (Jacques Deray)

- 1986 *Betty Blue* (Jean-Jacques Beinex)
- 1985 *Subway* (Luc Besson)
- 1984 *Dangerous Moves* (Richard Dembo)
- 1983 *The Wounded Man* (Patrice Chéreau)

DENIS PODALYDÈS

- 2003 *It's Easier For A Camel...* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
- The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (Bruno Podalydès)
- Cadets De Gascogne* (Emmanuel Bourdieu)
- 2002 *Summer Things* (Michel Blanc)
- A Great Little Business* (Éric Vénier)
- Almost Peaceful* (Michel Deville)
- 2000 *Comedy of Innocence* (Raoul Ruiz)
- Officer's Ward* (François Dupeyron)
- Safe Conduct* (Bertrand Tavernier)
- 1999 *Charge!* (Robert Guédiguian)
- Liberté Oléron* (Bruno Podalydès)
- 1998 *In All Innocence* (Pierre Jolivet)
- Rien Sur Robert* (Pascal Bonitzer)
- Les Frères Sœur* (Frédéric Jardin)
- The Children of the Century* (Diane Kurys)
- 1997 *La Mort Du Chinois* (Jean-Louis Benoît)
- Jeanne and the Perfect Guy* (Olivier Ducastel & Jacques Martineau)
- 1996 *The Gods Must Be Daring* (Michel Deville)
- 1995 *My Sex Life... Or How I Got Into An Argument* (Arnaud Desplechin)
- Droit De Garde* (Étienne Dahene)
- La Belle Verte* (Coline Serreau)
- Only Got See Me* (Bruno Podalydès)
- 1993 *Something Fishy* (Tonie Marshall)
- Voilà* (Bruno Podalydès)
- 1992 *A Night In Versailles* (Bruno Podalydès)
- Mother* (Henri Verneuil)
- 1989 *Xénia* (Patrice Vivancos)

LAMBERT WILSON

- 2002 *Timeline* (Richard Donner)
- It's Easier for a Camel...* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
- Labyrinth* (René Manzo)
- 2001 *The Matrix Reloaded* (Andy & Larry Wachowski)
- The Matrix Revolutions* (Andy & Larry Wachowski)
- 2000 *Love Torn in Dream* (Raoul Ruiz)
- H.S* (Jean-Paul Lilienfeld)
- 1999 *Jet Set* (Fabien Onteniente)
- 1998 *The Last September* (Deborah Warner)
- 1997 *Same Old Song* (Alain Resnais)
- Too Much (Little) Love* (Jacques Doillon)

- 1996 *The Leading Man* (John Duigan)
Marquise (Véra Belmont)
- 1994 *Jefferson In Paris* (James Ivory)
- 1992 *Shuttlecock* (Andrew Piddington)
Le Porteur De Duvet (Janusz Kijowski)
L'instinct De L'ange (Richard Dembo)
- 1990 *A Man and Two Women* (Valérie Stroh)
- 1989 *Winter of 54': Father Pierre* (Denis Amar)
Suivez cet Avion (Patrice Ambard)
- 1988 *La Vouivre* (Georges Wilson)
- 1987 *Les Chouans* (Philippe De Broca)
The Possessed (Andrzej Wajda)
El Dorado (Carlos Saura)
- 1986 *Le Ventre de L'architecte* (Peter Greenaway)
With All Hands (Benoît Jacquot)
- 1985 *L'homme Aux Yeux D'argent* (Pierre Granier-Deferre)
- 1984 *Red Kiss* (Véra Belmont)
Bleu Comme L'enfer (Yves Boisset)
History (Luigi Comencini)
Rendezvous (André Téchiné)
- 1983 *The Public Woman* (Andrzej Zulawski)
The Blood of Others (Claude Chabrol)
Sahara (Andrew Mac Laglen)
- 1982 *La Boum II* (Claude Pinoteau)

YVAN ATTAL

- 2003 *It's Easier for A Camel...* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
Bon Voyage (Jean-Paul Rappeneau)
- 2000 *Ma Femme Est Une Actrice* (Yvan Attal)
- 1999 *The Criminal* (Julian Simpson)
Le Prof (Alexandre Jardin)
- 1998 *With or Without You* (Michael Winterbottom)
Mes Amis (Michel Hazanavicius)
- 1997 *Alissa* (Didier Goldschmidt)
Melody for A Hustler (Vincent Ravalec)
- 1996 *Saraka Bo* (Denis Amar)
Love Etc... (Marion Vernoux)
I Got a Woman (Yvan Attal)
- 1995 *Shadow Play* (Martine Dugowson)
- 1992 *The Patriots* (Éric Rochant)
- 1991 *Autobus* (Éric Rochant)
Lover (Jacques Doillon)
After Love (Diane Kurys)
- 1990 *Mauvaise Fille* (Régis Franc)
- 1989 *Love Without Pity* (Éric Rochant)

EMMANUELLE DEVOS

- 2003 *It's Easier For A Camel...* (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi)
2002 *The Adversary* (Nicole Garcia)
Small Cuts (Pascal Bonitzer)
A La Rencontre Du Dragon (Hélène Angel)
2001 *Read My Lips* (Jacques Audiard)
1999 *Life Doesn't Scare Me* (Noémie Lovsky)
Maybe (Cédric Klapisch)
Esther Kahn (Arnaud Desplechin)
Dad on the Run (Dante Desarthe)
Vive Nous (Camille De Casabianca)
Ouch (Sophie Fillières)
1997 *Le Déménagement* (Olivier Doran)
Artemisia (Agnès Merlet)
1996 *My Sex Life... Or How I Got Into An Argument* (Arnaud Desplechin)
Anna Oz (Éric Rochant)
1995 *Forget Me* (Noémie Lovsky)
1994 *The Patriots* (Éric Rochant)
1992 *The Sentinel* (Arnaud Desplechin)

AWARDS

- 2004 **CÉSAR AWARDS, FRANCE**
César Nominee
Best First Work
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2003 **TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL, NYC**
Winner
Best Actress
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
Winner
Best Emerging Filmmaker Narrative
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2003 **PRIX LOUIS DELLUC**
Winner
Best First Film
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
- 2003 **MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**
Golden St. George Nominee
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi