

# THE BEAT MY HEART SKIPPED

PRESS KIT



# THE BEAT MY HEART SKIPPED

[De Battre Mon Coeur S'est Arrêté]

55<sup>TH</sup> Berlin Film Festival  
IN COMPETITION

ROMAIN DURIS  
in a film by JACQUES AUDIARD

with Emmanuelle Devos, Neils Arestrup, Linh Dan-Phan, Aure Atika,  
Jonathan Zaccai, Gilles Cohen

Written by Jacques Audiard and Tonino Benacquista  
based on "Fingers", a film written and directed by James Toback

PLEASE NOTE: the film title for the Australian release is  
"The Beat My Heart Skipped" not "The Beat That My Heart Skipped"

"The Beat My Heart Skipped is scorching melodrama...with an Oscar-worthy performance from Romain Duris..."

Harvey S. Karten, COMPUSERVE

"Audiard's latest stunner recounts the tale of Tom (Romain Duris), a real estate broker following in his father's footsteps whose miserable profession...stands in stark contrast to his dream of being (like his mother) a concert pianist. Tom is a man at odds with himself, his nimble fingers employed for contradictorily aggressive and artistic purposes, and Audiard's mise-en-scène—preoccupied with the contrast between light and dark, moral and immoral, hope and resignation—deftly enhances his film's meditation on the contrary nature of masculinity and filial loyalty."

Slant Magazine

## CAST + CREW

TOM  
Romain Duris

ROBERT  
Niels Arestrup

MIAO-LIN  
Linh-Dan Pham

ALINE  
Aure Atika

CHRIS  
Emmanuelle Devos

FABRICE  
Jonathan Zaccai

SAMI  
Gille Cohen

MINSKOV  
Anton Yakovlev

MINSKOV'S GIRLFRIEND  
Melanie Laurent

DIRECTOR  
SCREENPLAY

ORIGINAL SCORE  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
EDITING  
SOUND

PRODUCTION DESIGN  
COSTUMES  
MAKE UP  
HAIR  
ARTISTIC ADVISER  
STILL PHOTOGRAPHY  
PRODUCTION MANAGER  
PRODUCED BY

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Jacques Audiard  
Jacques Audiard  
Tonino Benacquista  
Based on "Fingers"  
a film written & directed by James Toback  
Alexandre Desplat  
Stephane Fontaine  
Juliette Welfling  
Brigitte Taillandier

Pascal Villard  
Cyril Holtz  
Phillippe Amouroux  
Francois Emmanuelli  
Virginie Montel  
Frederique Ney  
Pierre Chavialle  
Thomas Bidegain  
Jean-Claude Lothar  
Martine Cassinelli  
Why Not Productions

Celluloid Dreams

co-produced by  
Why Not Productions/Sedif/France 3 Cinema  
in association with COFIMAGE 15  
with the participation of CANAL + /CINE CINEMA  
with the support of LA REGION ILE-DE-FRANCE  
and the Media Programme of the European Union

## SYNOPSIS

Tom is 28 and destined to follow in his father's footsteps in the sleazy and sometimes brutal world of real estate. But a chance encounter leads him to believe that he can become, like his mother, a concert pianist. In earnest, he starts preparing for the audition with a virtuoso Chinese pianist. She doesn't speak a word of French; music is their only exchange. But pressures from the ugly world of his day job soon become more than he can handle...

# JAQUES AUDIARD

Director

2004	The Beat My Heart Skipped
2001	Read My Lips
1996	A Self Made Hero
1994	See The Men Fall

## INTERVIEW

### **WHAT GAVE YOU THE IDEA OF MAKING A NEW VERSION OF JAMES TOBACK'S "FINGERS"?**

My producer, Pascal Caucheteux, had just finished producing Jean-Francois Richet's remake of John Carpenter's "Assault on Precinct 13". He came to me and said, "Do you want to do a re-make? If so, which would it be?" Well, the answer was obvious. It would have to be James Toback's "Fingers". Why? Because the film had such a big impact on me when it came out. But also because it was a film that's difficult to see now. It's not shown so much, so it has acquired a kind of aura of mystery.

Basically "Fingers" represents the tail end of the comet of seventies American independent cinema. The hero – Tom, or Johnny, I can't remember the character's name – is played by Harvey Keitel, just shortly after his performance in Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets". Much of the rest of the cast comes of Coppola's "world". It's a very well connected movie!

When I screened it for Tonino Benacquisto, I wondered if I hadn't oversold it to him. The plot is full of gaps, the story's got these great highs, but some real lows too. And there's a certain amount of cinematic posturing that ages badly.

### **SO WHY ARE YOU SO FOND OF FINGERS?**

Because of the various themes, both the obvious themes and the underlying, things like: "Fatherhood", "Motherhood", "What it means to be a son" and "How can you change your life?" "the price of doing what you have to do", The business becoming an adult, how a man becomes a man..."

### **WHY DID YOU SET THE FILM, THE CRIME, IN THE WORLD OF REAL ESTATE?**

The original is set among New York's Italian mafia. That wasn't going to work for us. And when you sit down to think of something new, Tonino and I came up with real estate pretty fast (we'd already used it, after a fashion, in "Read My Lips"). Specifically, we wanted to plunge into a world of petty real-estate investors, whose behaviour isn't mindful of legal niceties, not really moral. Aside from which, there is, to my mind, a parallel of sorts between the way a conman obtains control over other people's lives and the way a real estate investor obtains control over the land that people live on, land that is occupied. Both are appropriating something that's not there to be appropriated.

### **THE RAT SCENE POINTS TO THE SORDIDNESS OF THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS...**

Yes, they are the rats. And like rats, they end up eating each other alive. That's the point of the scene.

### **DID YOU LOOK YOU LOOK TO OTHER FILMS FOR INSPIRATION?**

I don't really think we needed many other references. "Fingers" was quite enough! But Tonino and I did watch films by James Foley – like "Glengarry Glen Ross" which is set in the world of real estate, in a very masculine world. It's a hard-hitting picture that oozes unease. Set in one location, free form and yet tightly constrained by formal parameters.

### **WHY DID YOU MAKE THE BEAT MY HEART SKIPPED SUCH A REAL ESTATE PICTURE?**

Well, because film is always realistic. And also because, the more implausible an initial premise seems (can a man be a concert pianist and a good-for-nothing real estate dealer at the same time?), the more realistically the story has to unfold. Otherwise the characters aren't going to be believable, nor is the plot, nor are the actual scenes...besides which, realism brings a moral scale. A movie's realism introduces useful constraints: I know what is right and what is wrong. I can see how difficult it is for the protagonist to switch from evil to good, that it's no pushover, that it costs him something. I decided to shoot the picture on the fly, to take locations and whatever light there was as they came. I decided not to worry about lighting continuity. To make do with whatever came up.

### **WHY IS THE BEAT MY HEART SKIPPED SHOT IN SINGLE SHOT SCENES?**

In Toback's film, the Harvey Keitel character is permanently stoned, almost pathologically so. I didn't want to use that; it seemed facile, too explanatory somehow. But I wanted a fast-moving picture, that didn't seem too rehearsed or staged, not too formal. I wanted a modest picture. I wanted something fast moving and yet close enough to the character to provide emotion and feeling. The paradox was that I wanted to feel Tom's emotions and pace without relying on over-insistent jump cutting. Single-shot scenes demand plausible angles that match an actor's natural pacing, that show the way he breathes and moves. Shooting in long takes frees things up for the actors. If the angles are too formal, the actors end up pushed into the nooks and crannies of a set. They can't perform.

### **WHY IS THE OUTSIDE WORLD OFFSCREEN FOR THE MOST PART?**

In my movies, the characters have to be heroes. The question is, how are they going to be heroes? And what will become of them when they stop being heroes? What challenges must they overcome? I provide answers to those questions, by – in formal terms – keeping the outside world at bay, by keeping it off-screen. My hero has to push his way through the world like some invading force on the march.

From the beginning or very nearly from the beginning, I realized that “The Beat My Heart Skipped” would have to draw its strength from the actor or actors. They would have to be in tight shot. The context around them would only exist in terms of sound, and in terms of someone coming on to say what was going on elsewhere. Which is a theatrical device.

### **HOW DID YOU CAST ROMAIN DURIS AS TOM?**

I needed an actor at a crossroads, both in terms of his career and in terms of his personal life. That was part of the film’s subject matter. And then I needed someone fairly young-looking, who would be credible both as a real-estate investor and as a music addict. I’ve been watching Romain’s progress for ten years now, since LE PERIL JEUNE, made when he was only twenty. I’ve seen him evolve and mature...and then one always casts someone for the simple reason that one wants to film them...I couldn’t just point a camera at anyone. Romain stimulates one’s appetite. One wants to move around him, to watch the way he moves.

### **WHY DOES TOM DECIDE NOT TO AVENGE HIS FATHER?**

Because revenge is not the answer. I thought it would be more interesting to see someone shoving a gun into another person’s mouth and deciding not to kill them, than deciding to kill them. Killing people is easy in movies, but for most people in real life it’s tough – I imagine so anyway. Or rather, I don’t imagine that, I need to think it. I need to think killing is not easy. Otherwise, this is no more than a jungle we’re living in. Tom has to be a bigger person at the end of the movie than he was at the beginning. So killing someone wasn’t going to help us. In Toback’s original, everyone’s out of their mind. It’s a different story.

### **NIELS ARESTRUP PLAYS TOM’S FATHER**

He is an ogre and ogres should be soft-spoken, effeminate in some way, despite the authority they project...Tom Thumb needs to hear the gentleness of his mother’s voice inside the ogre for the hairs on the back of his neck to stand on end...Niels Arestrup’s voice is a feminine voice. Very carefully pitched, almost a whisper...But when the mics are saturated it turns into the voice of the Devil...And then, with the father-character, I wanted to investigate a particular point in father/son relationships, when father’s become their son’s sons – which is also how sons discover that they don’t live forever.



### **IS MR FOX A STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE IN TOM'S LIFE?**

Meeting Mr Fox makes him understand the nature of his relationship with his father. Tom wants the audition to succeed. For it to do, he has to abandon his father and symbolically return to his mother (the piano represents his mother). Fox provides a timetable and an obligation. If Tom had not met him, he would probably have carried on looking after his father. But he now has to become aware of their relationship and the limits to that relationship. Mr Fox can also be seen as a sublimated version of the father, the ideal father, who is loving, reliable and just. A hidden father. A mother-father.

### **WHY THE EPILOGUE, TWO YEARS LATER?**

That's the time it takes for Miao-Lin's talent to become public knowledge, thanks to Tom. The time required to show that their affair is real. Time, also, for Tom to realize that Miao-Lin is the love of his life, a woman he loves and admires, perhaps.

### **WHY DO CHRIS AND ALINE VANISH?**

The film is the story of a man growing up. He grows up because music teaches him that wheeling and dealing is a dead end. As a result of this, he understands women better. He can speak to them now and is able to tell Aline he loves her. But the main thing driving him on is music. And it is with Miao-Lin that things become real, which is not surprising because she is a woman and a musician.

### **THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED RELIES HEAVILY ON MUSIC. HOW DID ALEXANDRE DESPLAT DESIGN THE MUSIC FOR THE FILM?**

The fact that Tom had to listen to and play a great deal of music in the film meant that Alexandre's job was pretty clear: he had to compose something which would be part film-music, part JS Bach. Alexandre mainly worked on Tom's character, to accompany his different moods. His music never underlines the action; it does not create tension or suspense. It's Tom's theme. I don't know if there is such a thing as "psychological music", but it might apply.

### **WHY DID YOU KEEP BACH'S EIM NOR TOCCATA THAT HARVEY KEITEL PLAYS IN THE ORIGINAL?**

In the TOCCATAS, unlike in the MASSES or the PASSIONS, Bach is a keyboard theorist. The TOCCATAS are austere, difficult, virtuoso pieces. It's geometrical music, without much show of feeling, without any kind of romanticism. If Tom had played Schubert, for instance, he would have had to perform the music, to inject pathos and expression. Heart. Which would get too close to Tom's troubles. Is he able to express himself? Does he have a heart? He can only play pieces like the TOCCATAS, because the only question is; can I play the right notes at the right speed in the right order?

# TONINO BENACQUISTA

Writer

Tonino Benacquista's first book NAILED LIKE A PIN UP IN A GI'S LOCKER was published in 1985, followed, four years later, by SLEEPING CAR MADONNA. In 1991, LOSERS' COMMEDIA hit the big time, winning three different prizes in France. Other books by Benacquista include DAWN BITES, THREE RED SQUARES ON A BLACK BACKGROUND, SAGA, SOMEONE ELSE and most recently MALAVITA, several of which have won further prizes.

This is Benacquista's second screenplay, following on from a previous collaboration with Jacques Audiard on "Read My Lips", winner of France's Best Screenplay Cesar.

# ROMAIN DURIS

Actor

2004	THE RUSSIAN DOLLS by Cedric Klapisch THE BEAT MY HEART SKIPPED by Jacques Audiard
2003	ARSENE LUPIN by Jean-Paul Salome EXILES by Tony Gatlif OSMOSE by Raphael Fejto
2002	PAS SI GRAVE by Bernard Rapp LE DIVORCE by James Ivory ADOLPHE by Banoit Jacquot
2001	17 TIMES CECILE CASSARD by Christophe Honore L'AUBERGE ESPAGNOLE by Cedric Klapisch
2000	C.Q. by Roman Coppola SCHMIDT HOTEL by Charles de Meaux BEING LIGHT by Jean-Marc Barr et Pascal Arnold TOM THUMB by Olivier Dahan
1999	MAYBE by Cedric Klapisch
1998	LES KIPNAPPEURS by Graham Guit JE SUIS NE D'UNE CIGOGNE by Tony Gatlif
1997	ALREADY DEAD by Olivier Dahan THE CRAZY STRANGER by Tony Gatlif DOBERMAN by Jan Kounen
1996	WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY by Cedric Klapisch MEMOIRE D'UN JEUNE CON by Patrick Aurignac
1994	LE PERIL, JEUNE by Cedric Klapisch MADAMOISELLE PERSONNE by Pascale Bailly

## STEPHANE FONTAINE

Director of Photography

Has worked, amongst other films, on "Look at Me" (Comme une image) by Agnes Jaoui; "Leo – En Jouant Dans La Compagnie Des Hommes" by Amaud Desplechin; "La Vie Nouvelle" by Phillipe Grandieux, "Bronx Barbes" by Eliane de Latour.

## JULIETTE WELFLING

Editor

Juliette Welfling has cut all Jacques Audiard's films. She also worked on Albert Dupontel's "Bernie", Oliver Dahan's "Already Dead" and "Tom Thumb, A Matter of Taste" by Bernard Rapp, "The War in Paris" by Yolande Zaubermann, "Janis and John" by Samuel Benchetrit, "RRR!!!!" by Alain Chabat...

## VIRGINIE MONTEL

Costume Designer

Virginie Montel has worked with Mathieu Kassowitz ("La Haine & Assassin (s)") with Ferderic Schoendoerffer ("Crime Scenes & Secret Agents") with Dominik Moll ("Harry, He's Here to Help" and "Lemming"), Pierre Salvadori ("The Sandmen & Apres Vous") and on Sophie Fillieres 'Ouch', Christian Carion's "The Girl from Paris", Jacques Audiard's "Read My Lips" and Gilles Marchand's "Who Killed Bambi?"