

Sharmill Films presents

# The Valet

Written and Directed by  
Francis Veber

## Production Notes

Featuring

Gad Elmaleh   Alice Taglioni   Daniel Auteuil   Kristin Scott Thomas  
Richard Berry   Virginie Ledoyen   Dany Boon

Running Time: 83 minutes

Rating: M

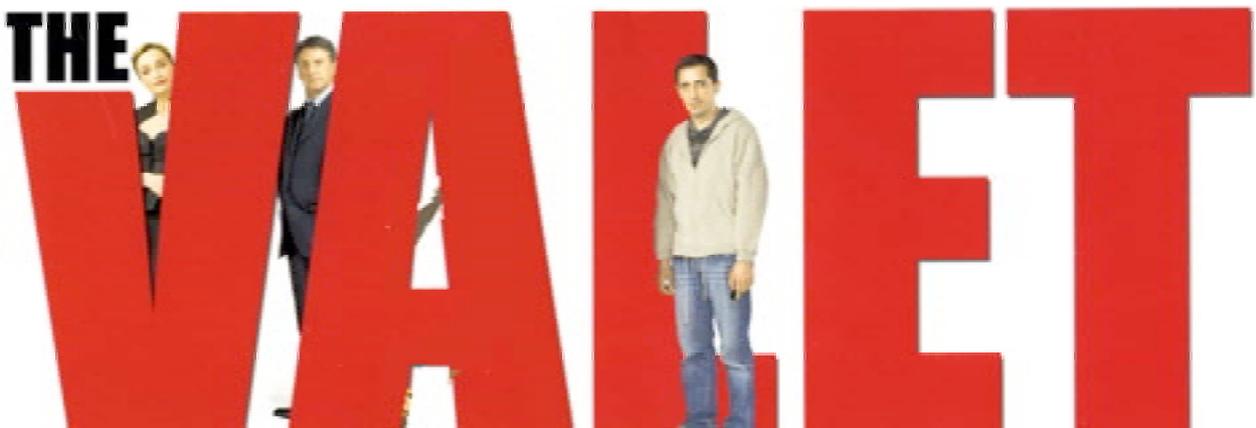
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GAUMONT PRESENTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF COLUMBIA PICTURES FILMS PRODUCTION FRANCE

**GAD ELMALEH ALICE TAGLIONI DANIEL AUTEUIL KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS**  
**RICHARD BERRY VIRGINIE LEDOYEN DANY BOON**

# THE VALET

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY  
**FRANCIS VEBER**

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF MICHEL JONASZ AND MICHEL AUMONT ORIGINAL MUSIC BY ALEXANDRE DESPLAT

PRODUCED BY PATRICE LEDOUX FOR GAUMONT

WITH LAURENT GAMELON DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT FRAISSE SETS DOMINIQUE ANDRE EDITING GEORGES KLOTZ

PRODUCTION MANAGERS PHILIPPE DESMOULINS & BERNARD SEITZ

A GAUMONT-EFVE FILMS – TF1 FILMS PRODUCTION – KAIROS CO-PRODUCTION WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF ARTEMIS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SOFICA SOGECINEMA 4 AND BANQUE POPULAIRE IMAGES 6

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CANAL+ AND CINECINEMA WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MEDIA PLUS PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**RUNNING TIME: 1H25**

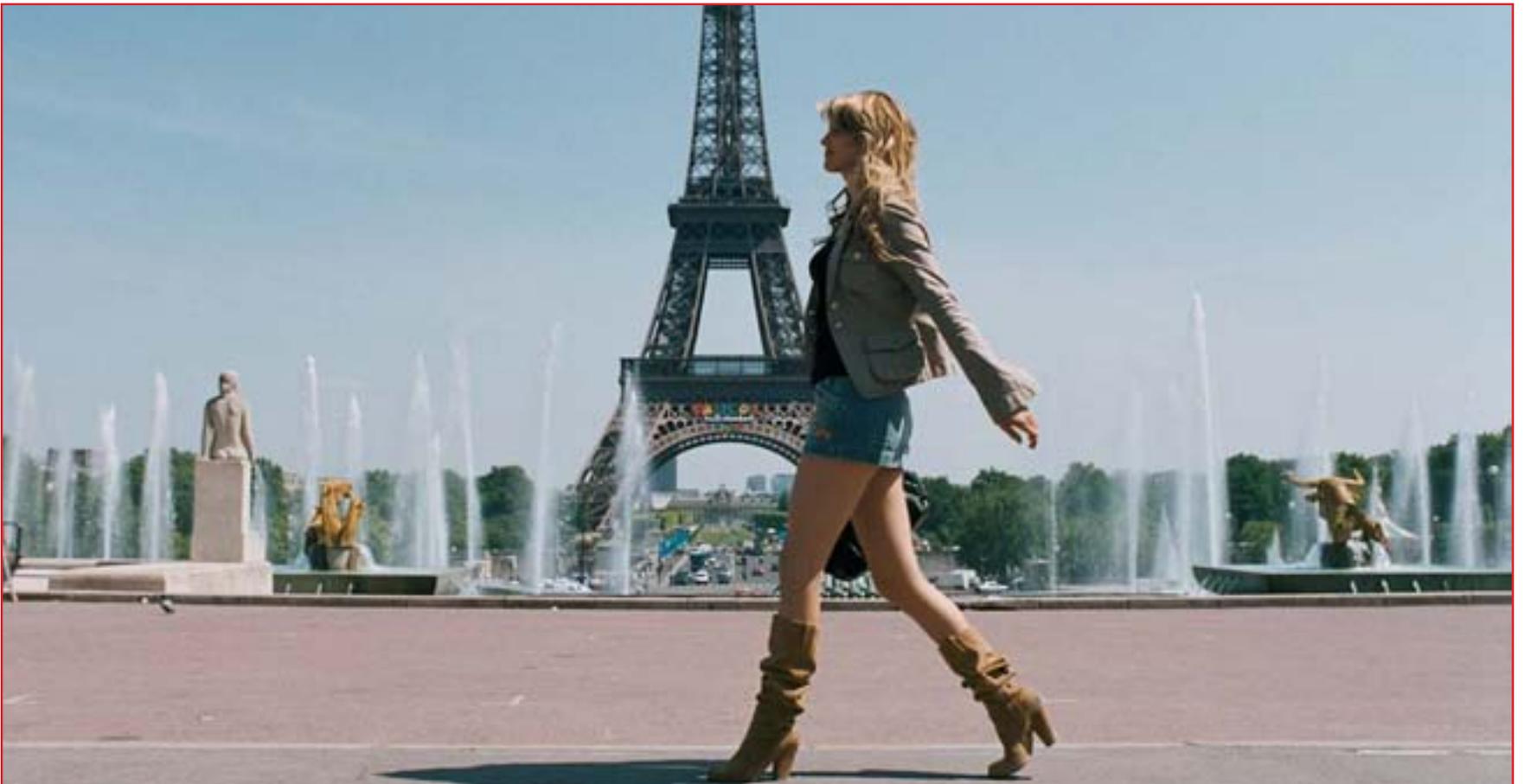
# SYNOPSIS

Snapped by a paparazzo with Elena, his mistress, a dazzling supermodel, billionaire Pierre Levasseur tries to avoid a catastrophic divorce by coming up with an outrageous lie.

He asserts to his wife that a third person, a passerby, François Pignon, who is also on the photograph, was in fact with Elena. She's Pignon's girlfriend not his.

Pignon is a parking valet. He's a very ordinary fellow. Levasseur, to back up his lie, has to convince the overly beautiful Elena to go live with Pignon.

Elena, shackled up with Pignon, is a bird of paradise in an apartment in the sticks. It's also a load of comic situations for «The Valet».



# FRANCIS VEBER

## How did you get the idea for *The Valet*?

**Francis Veber** — That's the hardest question for an author: where does an idea come from. Sometimes, I have inspiration. For example, with *L'Emmerdeur* ("Pain in the A..."), it was when someone shot Martin Luther King from a motel room. And I thought to myself: "It's pretty daring to shoot someone from a public place when a maid can come in at any moment." So, that's how it started. With *The Valet*, it was more mysterious. I tried to imagine what it might be like when a multimillionaire who is married to a dangerous woman (dangerous as she owns a large part of the shares in his company) finds himself in a photo with his mistress, a supermodel, in a celebrity magazine. And a little guy is passing by in the background of the photo — François Pignon, played by Gad Elmaleh in the film — and the man says to his wife in a panic, "She's not with me — she's with him!" I don't know how it came together in my mind, but gradually the situation started to take shape until one day, I said to myself, "This could be fleshed out into a film." When you have an idea, a concept, or the beginnings of a film, you're never sure it'll last the distance. It can just be a starting point. Then, you start to bug your family and friends, saying, "It's the story of a guy who..." And you see from the interest in their eyes if the story is good enough.

## Did the writing of *The Valet* take long?

**F.V.** — For me, writing is the hardest part of making a film. And *The Valet* was particularly difficult, because I had a problem that took me a while to solve. When this supermodel is forced to live with the little guy in the photo to get the millionaire out of a corner, I thought to myself, "What can convince her to accept something so absurd?" When I started to describe

*Cons* ("The Dinner Game") and Gérard Depardieu in *La Chèvre* ("Knock on Wood"), *Les Compères* ("Father's Day"), and so on. The right actor coming together with your text is the most wonderful thing that can happen to a writer.

## How did François Pignon come about?

**F.V.** — He grew out of Jacques Brel's character in *L'Emmerdeur*, and then from one film to the other he emerged as a kind of alter ego character, a good-luck charm. Knowing that Pignon is waiting in the wings makes me feel much more at ease when I start writing a script.

## Daniel Auteuil says it's exhausting to play the part of Pignon. How did Gad Elmaleh manage?

**F.V.** — Gad is a very good Pignon, because he realized that you mustn't overdo it. He had to forget the Gad Elmaleh he plays on stage to get into this character, which isn't easy. Because Pignon isn't the one who creates the effects — others do. Pignon is like those boxers who counterattack. At the end of the fight he may have won, but he's taken a beating.

## Dany Boon is another newcomer to your world...

**F.V.** — Dany Boon is a great actor. I was very satisfied with all the actors in *The Valet*, but I was most surprised by Dany Boon, because I hardly knew him. My casting director, Françoise Ménidrey, saw him in *Joyeux Noël* ("Merry Christmas") and said to me, "He's a future Bourvil." It's a real bonus for a director to have modern young actors like Gad Elmaleh and Dany Boon, and also veteran actors like Richard Berry and Daniel Auteuil, two monuments of French cinema.

## In *The Valet*, you wrote several female roles for the first time, including a lead role...

**F.V.** — The part of Elena was played by Alice Taglioni — who looks like Candice Bergen and who

the basic premise to my American assistant, that was the first question he asked me. My answer was, "Because she gets three or four million dollars." "Oh, okay," he said. When I came back to France, several friends asked me the same question, and I gave them the same answer. Their reaction was, "So, she's a whore!" And I was stuck, because either she accepted out of love and she was dumb (since the billionaire had been taking her for a ride for two years) or else she accepted for the money and so, she was a whore. That was one of the problems in the script, the kind I can spend three weeks agonizing over until I find a solution.

## As a master of comedy, you are very concerned about the rhythm of your films. Do you pay attention to the tempo right from the writing stage?

**F.V.** — Yes, of course! Since I began as a writer and became a director after eighteen screenplays, I know that a film is made at the writing stage. I have trouble understanding people who write a film lasting 2 hours and 20 minutes, and end up with 40 minutes on the cutting room floor. If your film is written in the right rhythm, you won't need to make up for anything during the shoot or the editing! An ideal film is a 90-minute movie where the first edit runs 92 minutes. This compels you to shave off 2 minutes to speed up the rhythm without wasting any rawstock.

## Since the perfection of a screenplay can be ruined by bad actors, the casting must be a crucial stage for you.

**F.V.** — Milos Forman once said: "Casting is destiny." If you get the casting wrong, you're shooting yourself in the foot. I was lucky to have great actors like Jacques Villeret in *Le Diner de*



does comedy to perfection. I was surprised myself. I had no preconceived notions against women — it's just that I didn't have the right subject matter. The stories that came to me most readily were buddy stories. And then, all of a sudden, this love story emerged, so I just had to roll up my sleeves and write a female part. While I was at it, I wrote several for *The Valet*, including the ones for Virginie Ledoyen and Kristin Scott-Thomas. In the end, writing for women isn't any harder than writing for men! I want to do more of it.

## On the set of *The Valet*, you apparently had a memorable burst of uncontrollable laughter with Alice Taglioni and Dany Boon. Moments like that must be sheer joy...

**F.V.** — They're very rare, that's for sure. I worry so much that I don't laugh a lot on the set. I can only remember two occasions in all my films: one was on *La Chèvre* with Depardieu and the other was on *The Valet*: Alice started, Dany Boon caught it, then gave it to me!

**You were exhausted by the end of the shoot. Despite all that, do you find it a pleasurable experience?**

**F.V.** – It's wonderful. It's a drug. In fact, that's the danger. People wonder why directors make so many films. It makes sense, because that's the one time when they have the power. A screenwriter/director is someone who writes on his own, staring at a wall – I do, anyway – and who struggles for so many months. Then, all of a sudden, you arrive on the set and you have the power – it's something I knew nothing about until I was nearly 40. You're looked after during the shoot and then, one day, everything stops. And you end up on your own again.

**Apart from escaping the loneliness of the writer, what drives you?**

**F.V.** – There comes a time in your life when you realize that you no longer work for money, but for success. Success is addictive. And if all of a sudden, you have a flop, you feel like you've betrayed everyone, including yourself. It's so painful to end up in that predicament. And you can get there without realizing it, because you never set out to make a bad movie! That's what I say to critics, "Don't be too hard on people who make bad movies – they don't do it on purpose!" So, as much as possible, you try to have this incredible communion with the audience. In comedy, you do it with laughter. And you have to be a perfectionist for that. When Claude Sautet was at his most successful, he said, "Those idiots think I have a secret!" There was no secret: he just worked hard. If you let yourself go, if you get too confident, if you say to yourself, "I don't need to do a second or third draft. The producers will get out their checkbooks anyway." That's when you take a dive!

**What do you get from making people laugh?**

**F.V.** – Incredible satisfaction. One day, someone said to me, "When I watch *The Dinner Game*, I feel better. Your films should be funded by Medicare." That's the nicest compliment I ever got. Because when I count up the number of people who've made me laugh or cry in literature or in films, there are a lot. But if I just count the ones who've made me laugh, there are a lot less. I don't know if God gave me the gift of amusing people, but if he did, I can't thank him enough.



# DIRECTOR - AUTHOR

## FRANCIS VEBER

- 2002** **RUBY AND QUENTIN** (TAIS-TOI!)
- 2000** **THE CLOSET** (LE PLACARD)
- 1998** **THE DINNER GAME** (LE DINER DE CONS)
- 1996** **THE JAGUAR** (LE JAGUAR)
- 1990** **OUT ON A LIMB**
- 1989** **THREE FUGITIVES**
- 1986** **THE FUGITIVES** (LES FUGITIFS)
- 1983** **FATHER'S DAY** (LES COMPÈRES)
- 1981** **KNOCK ON WOOD** (LA CHÈVRE)
- 1976** **THE TOY** (LE JOUET)



# CAST



**GAD  
ELMALEH**

**2004** OLÉ!  
**2002** CHOUCYOU



**ALICE  
TAGLIONI**

**2004** THE PINK PANTHER  
SKY FIGHTERS  
**2003** MENSONGES ET TRAHISONS



**DANIEL  
AUTEUIL**

**2004** HIDDEN  
**2000** THE CLOSET  
**1998** THE GIRL ON THE BRIDGE  
**1995** THE EIGHTH DAY  
**1992** QUEEN MARGOT  
**1992** A HEART IN WINTER  
**1985** JEAN DE FLORETTE



**RICHARD  
BERRY**

**2002** RUBY AND QUENTIN  
**2000** AUGUST 15TH  
**1994** THE BAIT



**DANY  
BOON**

**2005** MERRY CHRISTMAS



**KRISTIN  
SCOTT-THOMAS**

**1997** THE HORSE WHISPERER  
**1995** THE ENGLISH PATIENT  
**1995** MISSION IMPOSSIBLE  
**1993** FOUR WEDDINGS  
AND A FUNERAL



**VIRGINIE  
LEDOYEN**

**2001** 8 WOMEN  
**1999** THE BEACH

# CAST LIST

FRANCOIS PIGNON  
ELENA  
LEVASSEUR  
CHRISTINE  
Mr FOIX (Legal Adviser)  
EMILIE  
RICHARD  
ANDRE  
THE DOCTOR  
PAUL  
PASCAL  
LOUISE

**GAD ELMALEH**  
**ALICE TAGLIONI**  
**DANIEL AUTEUIL**  
**KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS**  
**RICHARD BERRY**  
**VIRGINIE LEDOYEN**  
**DANY BOON**  
**MICHEL JONASZ**  
**MICHEL AUMONT**  
**LAURENT GAMELON**  
**PATRICK MILLE**  
**MICHELE GARCIA**

BERMAN  
HERVE  
MARIE  
MAITRE D'HOTEL  
KARINE  
LEVASSEUR'S SECRETARY  
MAURICET  
Mr HERVE  
KEN  
PAPARAZZO  
RICHARD'S MOTHER  
PERRACHE

**PHILIPPE MAGNAN**  
**JEAN YVES CHILOT**  
**IRINA NINOVA**  
**PHILIPPE BEGLIA**  
**NOEMIE LENOIR**  
**SANDRA MORENO**  
**JEAN POL BRISSART**  
**PHILIPPE BRIGAUD**  
**ALEXANDRE BRIK**  
**THIERRY HUMBERT**  
**PAULETTE FRANTZ**  
**THIERRY NENEZ**



# CREW LIST

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY  
PRODUCED FOR GAUMONT BY  
ORIGINAL MUSIC  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
CAMERA OPERATOR  
PRODUCTION DESIGN  
EDITING

**FRANCIS VEBER**  
**PATRICE LEDOUX**  
**ALEXANDRE DESPLAT**  
**ROBERT FRAISSE**  
**YVES AGOSTINI**  
**DOMINIQUE ANDRÉ**  
**GEORGES KLOTZ**

SOUND

COSTUMES  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
CASTING  
PRODUCTION MANAGERS

**BERNARD BATS**  
**THOMAS DESJONQUÈRES**  
**GÉRARD LAMPS**  
**JACQUELINE BOUCHARD**  
**ALAIN OLIVIERI**  
**FRANÇOISE MENIDREY**  
**PHILIPPE DESMOULINS**  
**BERNARD SEITZ**





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