



'Memories' ('Les Souvenirs'): Film Review

11:34 AMPST 1/16/2015 by Jordan Mintzer

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Courtesy of Exodus Entertainment

The Bottom Line

An enjoyable if rather forgettable French family dramedy

Opens

Wednesday, Jan. 14 (in France)

Cast

Annie Cordy, Michel Blanc, Mathieu Spinosi, Chantal Lauby, William Legbail, Flora Bonaventura

Director

Jean-Paul Rouve

Jean-Paul Rouve ("La Vie en Rose") adapts a novel by David Foenkinos ("Delicacy")

A pleasant, easily digestible family dramedy based on a bestselling novel by **David Foenkinos** (*Delicacy*), *Memories* (*Les Souvenirs*) will likely be forgotten in a few years' time, but nonetheless gets the job done as polished middlebrow entertainment. Directed by actor-turned-filmmaker **Jean-Paul Rouve** (*Nobody Else But You*), this coming-of-all-ages story is carried by strong performances and a few welcome stabs at humor, with a seasoned cast that will skew well with older audiences. A wide local rollout should see decent returns, with possibilities for limited art house play abroad.

Foenkinos is one of the most beloved writers working in France today, and already brought his popular novel, *Delicacy*, to the screen in a milquetoast adaptation somewhat salvaged by stars **Francois Damiens** and **Audrey Tautou**. With the more experienced Rouve at the helm and Foenkinos sharing screenplay credit, the formula works better this time around, even if *Memories* suffers from some of the same thoughtful cliches and easy sentiments that seem to mark the novelist's oeuvre.

Romain (**Mathieu Spinosi**) is a sort-of aspiring writer who takes a job as a night watchman in a Paris hotel (his boss is played by Rouve in a short but sweet cameo). When his grandfather dies and his father (**Michel Blanc**) retires, Romain's family is thrown seriously off course, with his parents experiencing a mid-life crisis and his grandmother (**Annie Cordy**) ditching the


retirement home in search of her haunted past.

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Weaving themes of romance, remembrance and the passing of time into a story that progresses smoothly towards a rather foreseeable conclusion, *Memories* hardly breaks new ground and dishes out the sort of wisdom available in a self-help manual. But it treats its characters with considerable tenderness while offering up moments of morbidly dry humor, such as when Romain follows his grandma's trail to Normandy and a tour guide warns him about committing suicide, saying "he has the face for it."

Rouve has always been a good director of actors, and coaxes solid performances out of veterans Blanc (*The Minister*) and Cordy (*Wild Grass*), with relative newcomer Spinosi providing a charming turn as a lost young soul on the brink of adulthood.

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Tech credits are handsome in a generic sense, with DP **Christophe Offenstein** (*Blood Ties*) capturing the city and country settings in lush widescreen, and composer **Alexis Rault** (*Fiston*) supplying sweet melodies that go down like a vat of hot chocolate. It's all a bit mawkish if done with a certain level of tact compared to other French commercial dramedies – not really memorable but enjoyable enough in the preset.

Production companies: NoLiTa Cinema, TF1 Droits Audiovisuels, UGC, Les Films du Monsieur, Exodus Entertainment

Cast: Annie Cordy, Michel Blanc, Mathieu Spinosi, Chantal Lauby, William Legbhl, Flora Bonaventura

Director: Jean-Paul Rouve

Screenwriters: Jean-Paul Rouve, David Foenkinos, based on the novel "Les Souvenirs" by David Foenkinos

Producers: Maxime Delauney, Romain Rousseau

Director of photography: Christophe Offenstein

Production designer: Laurent Ott

Costume designer: Aurore Pierre

Editor: Chrystel Dewynter

Composer: Alexis Rault

Casting director: Gigi Akoka

Sales: TF1 International

No rating, 96 minutes

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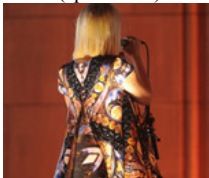
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