

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE PRODUCERS

INTERVIEW WITH JULIETTE SCHRAMECK AND ANTOINE REIN

Juliette Schrameck, producer of the film "Sentimental value" by Joachim Trier

Incredible! A friend told me recently that it took fourteen years between her signing a project with a director and the film's final wrap.

What role does the producer play in creating a film?

J.S.: I think it's important to remember that, even when it's not the producer who had the idea for the film, which can happen, the producer helps take the idea forward.

Antoine Rein, producer of the film "L'Attachement" by Carine Tardieu

It's often the person who identifies the project, who finds the crew, the screenwriters to work on the film, who are often, moreover, the directors themselves.

J.S.: The casting, everything to do with the shooting location. It's the producer who makes the film possible by seeking the funds needed.

A.R.: And it's the project managers, in other words, the technicians and production managers who'll help make the film. They find the distributor. And then they wait for the film to come out and hope it works.

J.S.: Because, in fact, an idea for a film can take many different artistic directions.

A.R.: We have a useful role, if things go wrong, in limiting the damage.

How long does a project take?

J.S.: Incredible! A friend told me recently that it took fourteen years between her signing a project with a director and the film's final wrap. But that's really an extreme case.

A.R.: It varies a lot and can take ages. In any case, it's never a brief affair. With fiction, the screenwriters work for something between a year and 18 months. We sort out the casting and the financing. Six months, one year. We shoot and then do what is called post-production. Meaning the editing, mixing, etc. This takes six to eight months. So basically, between the moment we decide we want to write a screenplay, and the film's release, between two and a half and three years can go by. Let's say between two and three years.

What's your favourite stage in the production process?

A.R.: My two favourite stages are writing and editing. With the screenplay, there's a key role of assisting the screenwriters, while editing is fascinating. I strongly advise real film buffs to get a glimpse of how editing works. Because with editing, you can tweak here and there and this totally changes the perception.

J.S.: I love development. The moments when we envisage the film with the director. We imagine the film, where we think it stands, and put it to bed together. Then there's the whole moment of releasing the film, showing it to an audience. I also love the financing part. This is when we get partners on board. We share the film, along with our enthusiasm, we share our belief in the film. It becomes possible. And that, too, is a magnificent moment.

What's the most complicated part?

A.R.: The tough part is the casting because you have to wait. Writing the screenplay has taken between one and two years, but let's say a year and a half. And you send it out to actors and actresses, so they'll read it. You get some knock-backs, so you move on to others. And you wait and as long as the casting isn't sorted you can't raise the funding. And so, there's this really frustrating period for the screenwriters and for us, where we can't advance.

J.S.: The funding. The funding is the complicated part because we produce films that are genuine prototypes, in the form of cinematic works which the public doesn't yet know it wants because they don't exist. And that you offer them because you can feel it's in keeping with the times, that a theme is important, that a topic hasn't been covered enough. That we will be able to give the public both pleasure and a chance to reflect on a topic. But that's not necessarily a film they want. Next comes making it, which is obviously the best part for all directors. I must admit that this is the part I like the least. Because I'm usually stressed out.

How do you choose the projects?

A.R.: We all need to really want to make the film. Our niche is films that are upbeat with a human touch. That doesn't mean I want to make a really popular film that appeals to the masses and is accessible, etc. But I want it to hit home with the public. So we just finished "L'Attachement" which is hardly the most upbeat film in the world. It starts with a dramatic incident but develops into something positive.

J.S.: So it's a very good question. And, I only have one answer, and that's my instinct. By that I mean a mixture of my appreciation of the director's work and my interest in the theme. It's also about people just getting along. In fact, a film requires close collaboration with a filmmaker for several years. This is essential for personal balance and the smooth running of the process. In the films I produce, there are very deep-seated intentions, which resonate with society, current events or aspects of human life that have not yet been fully explored in cinema. For example the relationship between siblings which is a theme running through "Sentimental value".

How do you finance a project?

J.S.: There are several sources of funding. The first, which immediately springs to everyone's mind, is public funding. The

well-known funding from the CNC (“Centre National du Cinéma et de l’image animée” in France) which finances itself. Then there are regional funds. And then private funding.

A.R.: Once you've got a good screenplay and the right cast, you do the rounds of the TV channels and distributors.

J.S.: Then there's private money. So, either through SOFICA funds: small investors who co-finance films, or via private investors.