

PRESS KIT

happiness is a sad song

(le bonheur c'est une chanson triste)

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Synopsis...

Imagine it is summer and that, for the last several days, Montreal has been swimming in sweltering heat and smog.

Then imagine that you are in the city's downtown core and a woman holding a small video camera approaches you. She asks you to participate in a one-question survey. Although you are slightly wary of this proposal, you stop to listen. She asks you: "What does happiness mean to you?" and awaits your answer.

Go on! What are you waiting for? Answer!

HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG tells the disjointed story of Anne-Marie, an unemployed publicist pounding the pavement in Montreal with her mini-cam, collecting testimonials on the subject of happiness. It is happiness that she appears to seek, or understand to the point of being obsessed by her quest. Guided by serendipity and a series of surprising and varied encounters, Anne-Marie dives head-first into her project. She meets a medley of characters whom she engages in engrossing, thought-provoking discussions about happiness. Anne-Marie moves from one character to the next, from one idea to the next in her survey, gathering reactions and challenging viewpoints that give her a chance to reflect upon her own life.

How can her obsession be explained? Why the survey? And why the video camera?

The genesis of *Happiness...*

“Really, this project comes from a genuine love for the craft of filmmaking... I had this distant memory of Chris Marker’s film *LE JOLI MAI*, in which people on the street were asked questions, such as, “Are you happy?”. People didn’t detect a trace of cynicism in the filmmaker’s approach. So they answered freely, and opened up to him their reactions were moving. I wanted to experience the same kind of thing, using a completely free-flow approach, on my own, camera in hand, asking passers by about happiness, with all the risks, disappointments, and successes it would involve. I kind of wanted people to talk about happiness, without theorizing about it. I wanted to discover other possible ‘versions’ of happiness _ and its counterparts _ like variations on a theme. This is a universal theme that touches everyone, regardless of social status, gender, race or age. And this idea, this desire, came to me very instinctively, without really developing the actual story told in the screenplay in advance of shooting.”

“I then proceeded to do what my character would try to do. Just like Anne-Marie, I heard the *vox populi* on happiness, interviewing hundreds of people throughout Montreal during the summer of 2002. This ‘inquiry’ provided me with the main action of the film, the unseen rough cut of the story that is told.”

“I like to shake things up a bit by transforming everything into fictional material. Fiction is how I express myself... I only delved into reality to use the filmed material and real-life experiences as the raw materials for screenwriting. I wanted to challenge my own interpretation of happiness. I wanted to take it as far as I could. I was looking for confrontation. The overall success of this particular undertaking resided, for the most part, in my gall and stamina. Next, I developed characters and a situation drawn from reality, while ‘fantasizing’ about whatever else could have happened. Part of it was unknown and then almost autobiographical. Anne-Marie is rather like my alter ego.”

“Through other people, Anne-Marie comes to question her own ideas about happiness _ and her life _ and decides to ‘jump the fence’ by changing her perceptions, by ridding herself of the restrictive ‘blocks’ she has accumulated, with no real idea about what awaits her on the other side. She is turning to the Other, towards the unknown. She has found a pretext for conversation, it may just be superficial or maybe it’s more personal, like in a love story...”

“To me, happiness is an essentially subjective notion, which takes many forms. I believe that the story takes the point of view that we should ‘stop our fretting and live.’ There is no real set moral to this story.”

“HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG may also be a film about a film. Anne-Marie uses her camera as she would use a notebook. She ‘personalizes’ the footage by hanging around downtown to shoot footage and steal slices of life about happiness. This film comes from a desire to piece together a vision of the world, a world that may be naïve, but is nonetheless free-flowing, close-up and personal... A film that is simple, like a light melody.”

François Delisle

Credits...

in order of appearance

anne-marie

Anne-Marie Cadieux

ragged man

Richard White

subway girl

Sabrina Schimansky

european woman

Magali Millou-Renoire

momar

Boucar Diouf

stéphan

Miro

isabelle

Jeanne Gionet-Lavigne

woman

Joceline Genest

teenager

Zacharie Jos Montpetit

caroline

Marie Brassard

marco

Stéphan Krau

man with suitcase

Joseph Bellerose

the man with lunch box

Didier Dubois

fatima

Mireille Naggar

joey

Gabriel Mandeville

paul

Denis Trudel

zénon

Luc Proulx

raoul

Marco Ledezma

stéphan's girlfriend

Jacynthe Pilote

pascal

Frédéric De Grandpré

father in the home movie

Pierre Pinchiaroli

son in the home movie

William Delisle

mother in the home movie

Natasha M.Leroux

daughter in the home movie

Samuelle Bourgault

mike

Kent McQuaid

diane

Barbara Ulrich

pauline

Micheline Lanctôt

handicapped person

Frédéric Asaya

david

Frédéric Gilles

filmmakers

light

Édith Labbé

camera

François Delisle

sound

Marcel Chouinard

production designer

Éric Bernard

editing

Pascale Paroissien

original music

Ève Cournoyer

line producer

Joceline Genest

assistant director

Éloïse Corbeil

continuity supervisor

Éric Brulotte

location manager

Robert Packwood

grip/electrician

Claudia Bérubé

steadycamers

Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire

Mathieu Charest

production secretary

Patricia Maheu

accounting

Benoit Gauthier

production accountant

Nicolas Proulx

additional casting

Marie-Jan Seille

DVD documentary

Jean-Guy Montpetit

Éric Bernard

photographic sequences

François Delisle

editing technician

Mathieu L. Denis

digitization assistant

David Mollet

online editing

Daniel Dubé

video colour timing

Vince Amari

sound design and environments

François Delisle

sound mixing

Pierre Paquet

head and tail credits animation and design

Steven Woloshen

Biographies...

François Delisle

(director, writer, camera and producer)

François Delisle has been directing films for over twelve years: LA MER ON S'EN FOUT (short), DU COUTEAU AU FUSIL (short), BEEBE-PLAIN (medium-length), RUTH (feature-length). His films have been screened at several international festivals. RUTH, his first feature-length film, was nominated for best feature-length film of the year at Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois festival in 1994. Ever since he completed his university studies, Delisle has staunchly defended his independent and personal approach in the creation and production of his films. HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG is his second feature film.

1967... *François Delisle is born in Montreal on March 22.*

1976... *Delisle sees François Truffaut's L'ARGENT DE POCHE (SMALL CHANGE) at the Cinéma Dauphin. It is an awakening.*

1981... *His burgeoning interest in repertory film programming on public television springs from the faint hope of seeing women in any possible state of undress. Unwittingly, Delisle is otherwise smitten and finds himself appreciating cinema for its own sake. He watches television at night with the volume muted and plays music as an alternate soundtrack. He watches silent film masterpieces by Murnau, Lang, Renoir and Chaplin. Film becomes a bona fide interest. Francois Delisle becomes a film buff.*

1985... *In college, Delisle's creative juices really start to flow. He gets involved in the student radio, the student paper, the film club, and a rock band. A little of everything _ except for his college courses. Until one day when he finds himself making a small Super-8 film with a friend and life takes a decisive turn. Delisle unconsciously commits himself to a vocation that will change his life.*

1986... *Now a fanatical film aficionado, Delisle produces his first solo film: LA GRANDE FOSSE, a Super-8 short that is later selected for the Festival international du jeune cinéma de Montréal. It is his first public screening.*

1987... *He is accepted into a film program at University. For the first time in his life, he is truly in his element. He learns about the early years of Quebec cinema, about cinema elsewhere in the world, and directs short films. These years bring a flurry of pivotal encounters, artistic experiences and freedom.*

1990... *François Delisle's father dies. Delisle uses his inheritance to make his first truly independent film: BEEBE-PLAIN. The film gains public recognition, notably at the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois.*

1991... *Delisle finds himself acting in one of Micheline Lanctôt's films: TWO CAN PLAY (DEUX ACTRICES).*

1992... *The production of the movie RUTH begins. Delisle devotes three years of his life to making the film. He is the film's director, screenwriter, and producer (and much more).*

1994... *RUTH is screened for the first time at the Montreal International Film Festival. After widespread screenings in various film festivals, the film is commercially released and is very well received by critics, at home and abroad.*

1995... *François Delisle's son is born.*

1996, 1997, 1998, 1999... *Along with his film projects, François Delisle produces corporate videos and becomes involved in the world of competitive cycling. He teaches cinematography, sharing his experiences with the next generation.*

SOURCE: WWW.FRANCOISDELISLE.COM

Édith Labbé

(Director of Photography)

Lighting and framing shots has always been the main focus of Édith Labbé's interests. After years of experimentation, she traded her still camera for a movie camera. As she pursued her studies in Cinematography at the Université de Montréal she was schooled in every vocation that has to do with film treatment. Labbé's professional work as an assistant camera lasted more than 10 years. Over the past two years, she has worked exclusively directing photography. Already, she has a variety of films to her credit, including short films, video clips, and documentaries. *UNE VEILLE QUI N'EN FINIT PLUS D'ACHEVER*, *P.417*, *MA VIE COMME UN ROMAN*, *VA SAVOIR*, and *HABITAT _ LE REFUGE* are some of her most recent collaborations. *HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG* is her first feature film experience as Director of Photography.

Marcel Chouinard

(Sound)

After he received his Bachelor's Degree in Humanities from the Université du Québec à Montréal in 1969, Marcel Chouinard went on to work for a few years as a lecturer in Sociology and History at his *alma mater*, at Université de Montréal and at CÉGEP de Rosemont. In 1973-74 he travelled around Europe and the Maghreb. Upon his return, he purchased, renovated, and managed his own restaurant in St-Sauveur-des-Monts. But after about year, he opted to sell everything and move to Northern Outaouais, to get back to the land. In 1977, he joined the Coop Vidéo de Montréal shortly after it was founded. There, he experimented with film editing and directing. He also worked in sound design, which has since become his main professional activity.

Éric Bernard

(Artistic Director)

After his studies in Theatre Set Design, Éric Bernard went on to complete a Bachelor's degree in Film at Concordia University, where he met François Delisle. He was a cameraman on François Delisle's film, *BEEBE-PLAIN*, and has also worked as a costumer on several major motion picture productions. Since he began working as Artistic Director on two television series, he has also had the pleasure of collaborating again with François Delisle as Artistic Director on *RUTH*. For the past few years, he has dedicated himself to graphic design, a subject he has taught in training seminars abroad. Bernard is excited about being part of the production team in François Delisle's most recent film.

Pascale Paroissien

(Editor)

When Pascale Paroissien completed her college and university studies in Film, she became an Assistant Editor, then a Film Editor. Paroissien has since accumulated over 10 years experience working in both major motion picture productions and independent films. In addition to *HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG*, she edited Francois Delisle's first feature film: *RUTH*.

Ève Cournoyer

(Music)

When she became a mother in 1994, Ève Cournoyer dusted off her guitar, started to write songs and began recording her own compositions every day. In 1999, she participated in the Francolies de Montréal, continued to perform, and relentlessly composed music. In 2000, armed with only a computer and a digital multitrack, she re-mastered her songs one-by-one and breathed new life into them. Her first album, **SABOT-DE-VÉNUS**, was released in October 2002 and was an immediate hit with both the public and the critics.

Steven Woloshen

(Animated Sequences in Credits)

Steven Woloshen first experimented with film in a Montreal community centre at 12 year's of age. While studying Film in college and university, Woloshen has dedicated himself to producing Super-8 and 16-mm films. Since 1984, he has produced numerous animated and experimental films. His work has been shown worldwide and has been the subject of numerous retrospectives. Woloshen has spoken at film conferences and led workshops on the subject of "cameraless" cinema. He also creates film animations for film festivals and other filmmakers.

Biographies...

Anne-Marie Cadieux

For many years now, Anne-Marie Cadieux has been leading an active career as an actor in theatre, television and film. On stage, she has worked under the direction of Brigitte Haentjens on several occasions. Her unforgettable performances include **QUARTETT** (which made her a finalist at the Gala des Masques in 1996), **COMBAT DE NÈGRE ET DE CHIENS**, **MARIE STUART** (a role for which she received Theatre du Nouveau Monde's **GASCON-ROUX AWARD**), **ÉLECTRE**, **MADEMOISELLE JULIE**, and **FARCES CONJUGALES**. As one of Robert Lepage's loyal collaborators, she has toured with many of his international productions, most notably the river-play **THE SEVEN STREAMS OF THE RIVER OTA (LES SEPT BRANCHES DE LA RIVIÈRE OTA)**. More recently, her performance of Lainou in Réjean Ducharme's **L'HIVER DE FORCE** was lauded by audiences and critics alike, and earned her a nomination at the Gala des Masques. Cadieux's television appearances include series such as **TAG**, **ANNIE ET SES HOMMES**, **TRIBU.COM**, and **FORTIER**. In 1994, Cadieux premiered on screen in Robert Lepage's **LE CONFSSIONNAL (THE CONFSSIONNAL)**, gained public recognition and won the **LUCE-GUILBAULT PRIZE** for the Breakthrough Performance of the Year at the **Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois**, as well as a nomination at the **Genie Awards**. Another **Genie Award** nomination followed for her role in Robert Lepage's **NÔ**. Cadieux later received a **JUTRA AWARD** for her role as Paulette in Charles Binamé's **STREETHEART (LE COEUR AU POING)**. More recently, she appeared in **SERAPHIN, HEART OF STONE (SÉRAPHIN, UN HOMME ET SON PÉCHÉ _** also by Charles Binamé), Sébastien Rose's **HOW MY MOTHER GAVE BIRTH TO ME DURING MENOPAUSE (COMMENT MA MÈRE ACCOUCCHA DE MOI DURANT SA MÉNOPAUSE)**, and in Robert Lepage's latest film, **THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOON (LA FACE CACHÉE DE LA LUNE)**. Anne-Marie Cadieux will appear in François Bouvier's film, **MAMAN LAST-CALL**, slated for release in theatres this fall.

Miro

Since he graduated from Quebec's National Theatre School in 1996, Miro has been very busy, sharing the stage with the likes of André Brassard, Wajdi Mouawad, Alexis Martin and Alice Ronfard. In addition to **HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG**, he has appeared in films by Louis Saïa, Michel Jetté, and Wajdi Mouawad.

Frédéric De Grandpré

A graduate of Quebec's National Theatre School in 1996, Frédéric De Grandpré has played many roles in theatre (**UNE SI BELLE CHOSE**), on television (**SIMONE ET CHARTRAND**, **JEAN DUCEPPE**, **FORTIER**) and in film. In 2000, he became known for his role in the television series, **QUADRA**, which subsequently earned him a **Gemini** nomination for **Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role**. In 2003, De Grandpré played the role of a tormented policeman in **LE PIÈGE D'ISSOUDUN**, a film by Micheline Lanctôt.

Kent McQuaid

Kent McQuaid was born, and currently resides, on the Montreal's South Shore. Having earned a diploma from Montreal's Dome Theatre, he has managed to find enough work in television and film to avert starvation. Red is his favourite colour, and his favourite word is "coyote."

Boucar Diouf

Originally from Senegal, Boucar Diouf has been living in Rimouski since 1991. Diouf holds a PhD in Oceanography and teaches biochemistry and physiology at Université du Québec à Rimouski. He alternates between science and the arts, with his stage show, entitled D'HIVER CITÉ. The show takes the audience on a journey that incorporates humour, proverbs, song in the philosophical fairytale of the imaginary land of Sérère. HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG is Boucar Diouf's first foray into motion picture acting.

Luc Proulx

As an original actor and member of the Carbone 14 Theatre Company, Luc Proulx has many years of experience in creative theatre under his belt. He has shared the limelight with artists such as Robert Gravel, Jean-Pierre Ronfard, Brigitte Haentjens and René-Richard Cyr, to name but a few. Proulx has participated in a variety of commercial film projects and several independent film productions, including LES IMMORTELS, SERAPHIN, HEART OF STONE (SÉRAPHIN, UN HOMME ET SON PÉCHÉ), FEBRUARY 15, 1839 (15 FÉVRIER 1839), FULL BLAST, THE THREE MADELEINES (LES FANTÔMES DES TROIS MADELEINE), LE PARTY, and LE ROYAUME OU L'ASILE. Luc Proulx is a self-taught musician and composer for the Fanfare Pourpour Band.

Micheline Lanctôt

For more than 30 years, Micheline Lanctôt has led a successful career in the combined fields of acting, screenwriting and directing. Although she began her career in animated film, she was cast in the leading role in Gilles Carle's THE TRUE NATURE OF BERNADETTE (LA VRAIE NATURE DE BERNADETTE). Many more roles followed, including performances in VOYAGE EN GRANDE TARTARIE, THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DUDDY KRAVITZ, TI-CUL TOUGAS, and A SCREAM FROM SILENCE (MOURIR À TUE-TÊTE) and her recent appearance in HOW MY MOTHER GAVE BIRTH TO ME DURING MENOPAUSE (COMMENT MA MÈRE ACCOUCHA DE MOI DURANT SA MÉNopause). In 1980, Lanctôt directed her first feature film, THE HANDYMAN (L'HOMME À TOUT FAIRE), followed by SONATINE (recipient of a Silver Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival) in 1983. Her independent feature, TWO CAN PLAY (DEUX ACTRICES), won the Best Picture Award at the 1994 Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois. Lanctôt's recently released A HERO'S LIFE (LA VIE D'UN HÉROS) and LE PIÈGE D'ISSOUDUN. Having previously appeared in RUTH, this is the second time Micheline Lanctôt has appeared in a François Delisle film.

Marie Brassard

Since she left the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique de Québec, Marie Brassard has focussed her creative efforts almost exclusively on theatrical production. For several years, her career was closely tied to that of playwright/director Robert Lepage. Brassard created her first solo play, **JIMMY (JIMMY, CRÉATURE DE RÊVE)**, for the 2001 Festival de théâtre des Amériques. As Artistic Director for the Infrarouge Theatre Company, her recent play, **LA NOIRCEUR**, was performed in Montreal. The English version of the play will soon be presented in Berlin, Vienna, Vancouver, Stockholm and Bergen (Norway).

Jeanne Gionet-Lavigne

Jeanne Gionet-Lavigne is a high school student who has included roles on television and in the film **THE ORPHAN MUSES (LES MUSES ORPHELINES)**. Gionet-Lavigne enjoys in-line skating, snowboarding and swimming.

Denis Trudel

After he left Quebec's National Theatre School in 1987, Denis Trudel co-founded the **Béton Blues** theatre company and went on to perform in theatre, film and television. On the big screen, his most notable appearances include **OCTOBER (OCTOBRE)**, **THE LEFT-HAND SIDE OF THE FRIDGE (LA MOITIÉ GAUCHE DU FRIGO)** and **FEBRUARY 15, 1839 (15 FÉVRIER 1839)**. Denis Trudel is a founding member of the satirical comedy troupe, **Les Zapartistes** whose activist art and active artistry know no bounds.