

Film Notes

by Neville Knight

France | 2020 | 101m | 12A | subtitles
Director: Grégory Magne
Starring: Emmanuelle Devos, Grégory Montel

Perfumes / Les parfums

This French comedy-drama provides a glimpse into the life of a former doyen of the perfume business, a professional 'nose' who has in the past produced fragrances for Dior. On setting up on her own, she hires a chauffeur, and the film revolves around this juxtaposition of two characters who are miles apart in class, lifestyle, occupation, and philosophy.

This is just the second feature film by director Grégory Magne, whose first film, *L'air de rien* (2012), starred Grégory Montel and singer Michel Delpech. Magne cut his teeth as a fledgling filmmaker after competing in a transatlantic solo sailing race between La Rochelle, France, and Salvador da Bahia, Brazil — he edited the footage he shot to record his progress into a TV documentary, *24 Hours a Day at Sea / 24 heures par jour de mer*.

'All at sea' could describe the early relationship between the two protagonists in *Perfumes*. Emmanuelle Devos (*Read My Lips* (2001), *Kings & Queens* (2004)) plays Anne Walberg, a creator of fragrances in her former job who is intent on using and not losing her unique skill. Grégory Montel

(one of the stars of Netflix's *Call My Agent!*) plays Guillaume Favre, a man trying to sort out the worries of daily life, dealing with a broken marriage and custody of a young daughter, while working as a chauffeur to help pay the bills. Both normally lead very different lives — can they come to terms with each other's foibles while working together?

Magne explains that the idea for the film came from a desire to explore the sense of smell, often unnoticed in the cinematic world, where visual and auditory senses prevail. Partly because the film involves a chauffeur, the screenplay — also written by Magne — allows the director to change location with ease, taking you to places where smell is a part of the experience (restaurants) and to places with which you might not normally associate it (a cave).

In an interview at the Arras Film Festival, Magne said that 'we have to convey smells on film, there's a game with the audience ... to suggest scents that are familiar to





5

4

3

2

1

Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here:

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Film Notes

them'. In order to help the audience connect with this idea, Magne chose to film in autumn, which provided special lighting effects he hoped would evoke memories of smell. In our present world of Covid-19, the film vibrates with added poignancy: wearing masks and being fearful of losing our sense of smell resonates strongly right now.

The two protagonists complement each other, even as the actors approached their respective roles very differently. Devos displayed her attention to detail by visiting and working with Christine Nagel, the 'nose' of Hermès. She even prepared and made her own brand of perfume. Montel, in

contrast, approached scenes more spontaneously — 'you are never sure what he is going to say next,' admitted the director. This contrast adds to the quality of the film.

As Chris Hughes of *Flickfeast* puts it, '*Perfumes* is a captivating story of the redemptive effect of an unlikely alliance. Like a gentle breeze on a hot summer evening, it satisfies and soothes.'

Thank you so much for attending FilmBath Festival 2020. We are a small local charity supported by BFI Film Hub South West, IMDb, Earthsong, Bath Function Rooms, Clearly PR, The Bunch, and a host of wonderful businesses. We are so grateful to everyone for being so supportive of the festival — and to you, our lovely audience members. This year, more than ever, thank you for coming out to enjoy cinema with us. Without you there would be no festival.

We love hearing what you think. Were you particularly passionate about a film? Perhaps you have an idea to improve the festival? Let us know! We'll be emailing all ticket holders a link to our audience survey — we'd really appreciate it if you could take just a few minutes to fill it out. You can also write to hello@filmbath.org.uk, tweet @FilmBathUK, or find us on Facebook.

Why not consider becoming a FilmBath Benefactor? Your support will enable us to achieve our ambition of promoting diverse film events in and around Bath, and championing equality on screen and behind the camera. Benefactors also receive a special preview of the festival programme hosted by our Creative Director, priority booking, and an invitation to our opening night party, among other exciting benefits. See our website for details.

We hope you'll join us next year for (a hopefully more normal) FilmBath Festival 2021!



Keep up to date with Film Bath Festival and receive Priority Booking FREE.

Name

Email

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!