



Avant que j'oublie

Before I Forget

Jacques Nolot

FRANCE, 2007

French

108 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: Elia Films

Executive Producer: Pauline Duhault

Producer: Pauline Duhault

Screenplay: Jacques Nolot

Cinematographer: Josée Deshaies

Editor: Sophie Reine

Production Designer: Gaëlle Guitard

Sound: J.L. Ughetto

Music: Gustav Mahler

Principal Cast: Jacques Nolot

Production: Elia Films,

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Diffusion

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Growing old gracefully is definitely not on anyone's gay agenda in *Avant que j'oublie*. It is a caustic memoir told in the present tense, a cold-eyed appraisal of the indignities faced by a near-death homosexual with no money, mostly dead friends and only bitchy acquaintances to lend any comfort. Sex is paid for or stolen from delivery boys, prostates flare up, work dries up, HIV meds run out and the hot young gay boys look at him with pity. So what's a queen to do? Get high, put on a dress and tell them all to go to hell.

Jacques Nolot's films invariably have a jaw-dropping honesty to them, eliciting serious cringes in fantasy-fed gay men. The films – which typically star Nolot himself – are always partly autobiographical and frequently feature thinly veiled stand-ins for closeted (and not) members of the French film industry. They are strewn with long observational pauses devoted to the contemplation of his various sordid messes and the boredom that he fears, but they are never themselves boring. The sex is alarmingly graphic, the dialogue vicious and the cinematography stunning.

In *Avant que j'oublie*, there is also an interesting subcultural theme at play. The film's (few) narrative sequences involve the way families try to dislodge inheritances from long-time toy boys. They were hustlers when their older, richer partners found them; now, these men are much fatter, less coarse, drink-in-the-afternoon types adept at determining the cheapest price for everything from therapy to a blow job. Obsessed with

wills, they even attend auctions to appraise their partners' estates. Ultimately every action of these aged gigolos is driven by fear: the fear of being forgotten or of dying back where they started – on the streets.

Nolot's films have developed a cult following in France for the rigour of their contempt for bourgeois morality and their breathtaking use of language. He deserves many more fans on this continent. It leaves a particular taste in one's mouth when a woman decked out in Balenciaga comments on a dead architect's proletarian lover thus: "You can go down a floor... but not to the basement."

■ Noah Cowan



Jacques Nolot was born in Marcillac, France. He wrote several plays and scripts, performed on the stage and acted in numerous films by directors including Luc Moullet, Claire Denis, Jacques Demy, François Ozon and others. He also co-wrote André

Téchiné's *J'embrasse pas* (91) and performed several of Téchiné's films over three decades. He has directed, written and performed in the short film *Manège* (86) and the features *L'Arrière-pensée* (98), which won a Prix de la Jeunesse at the Cannes Film Festival, *La Chatte à deux têtes* (02) and *Avant que j'oublie* (07).

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