



## Sous le sable

### Under the Sand

#### François Ozon

FRANCE, 2000

90 minutes ■ Colour/35mm  
Production Company: **Fidélité**

#### Productions

Producer: **Olivier Delbosc,**  
**Marc Missonier**

Screenplay: **François Ozon**

Cinematographer: **Jeanne Lapoirie,**  
**Antoine Heberlé**

Editor: **Laurence Bawedin**

Production Designer: **Sandrine Canaux**

Sound: **Jean-Luc Audy**

Music: **Phillipe Rombi**

Principal Cast: **Charlotte Rampling,**  
**Alexandra Stewart, Bruno Cremer,**  
**Jacques Nolot**

Print Source: **Seville Pictures,**  
**2221 Yonge Street, Suite 400,**  
**Toronto, ON M4S 2B4, Canada.**  
T (416) 480-0453 F (416) 480-0501

Foreign Sales Agent: **Celluloid Dreams,**  
**24 rue Lamartine, 75009 Paris, France.**  
T (33-1) 4970-0370 F (33-1) 4970-0371  
E info@celluloid-dreams.com

Production: **Fidélité Productions,**  
**13 rue Etienne Marcel, 75001 Paris,**  
**France.** T (33-1) 5534-9808  
F (33-1) 5534-9810 E fidelite@magic.fr

With this beautifully directed essay on personal loss and what it means to be left alone, François Ozon continues to prove he is one of the brightest lights of recent French cinema. Featuring a brave, understated performance from the luminous Charlotte Rampling, *Sous le sable* is radically different from Ozon's other films. The youthful exuberance and zany antics of *Sitcom* and *Les amants criminels* have been replaced by a wistful maturity and deeply moving sense of pain. More personal than his other work, the film conveys profound and subtle emotional truths.

Marie (Rampling) and Jean (Bruno Cremer) are a comfortable, middle-aged couple, satisfied with the daily rhythms and personal foibles that form the core of their lives together. They are on the way to their summer house, a tradition that stretches back many years. Jean goes for a swim in the sea. Some hours later, Marie wakes from a nap to find he has not returned. She calls in the local lifeguards to try to locate him. There is no sign.

Months later, Marie has returned to Paris, and although she puts on a brave face, she remains a recluse. Her friends try to get her to start dating again, but she insists Jean is not dead, that he has his reasons for staying away, that he will return. Even when a body is found that matches his description, she denies its authenticity. But soon she no longer feels his presence and, after much cajoling, begins dating a charming publisher (Jacques Nolot) who helps

her rediscover herself, emotionally and sexually. Yet she cannot shake her conviction that Jean is alive...

One of the bitterest ironies of the AIDS crisis is the inexplicable sense of loss it leaves in its wake, such as the one Ozon portrays here. Once only an existentialist thought exercise, these difficult emotions have now become hard reality for so many. It is to Ozon's credit that he has the courage and formidable abilities to harness them into such a wonderful cinematic experience.

■ **Noah Cowan**



**François Ozon** was born in Paris, France in 1967. After receiving a Masters degree in film, he went on to attend the prestigious film school FEMIS. He has made several short films, including *Action Vérité* (94), *La petite mort* (95), *Une robe d'été* (96), *Scènes de lit* (97) and *X2000* (98). Filmography: *Sitcom* (98), *Les amants criminels* (99), *Gouttes d'eau sur pierres brûlantes* (00) and *Sous le sable* (00).

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