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Friday October 16th, 7.30pm

**Elle l'adore (15)**

dir: **Jeanne Henry**

starring: **Sandrine Kiberlain, Laurent Lafitte**

sponsors: **Special Editions Chocolate**

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The title of this film is taken from "La Groupie du pianiste" ("The Pianist's Groupie"), a huge chart hit in France in the 1980s for singer Michel Berger. The song recounts the experience of a devoted fan in love with a selfish musician; naively willing to sacrifice her own life for his happiness, she would take any risk, goes the refrain, would even follow him to hell, because "*elle l'adore*" (she adores him).

While the crazy fan is a familiar trope of the psychological thriller - *Play Misty for Me* (1971) and *Misery* (1990) come to mind - it's a particularly fertile topic for a first film by Jeanne Henry, daughter of actress Miou-Miou and Julien Clerc, one of France's most beloved popular singers. Henry smartly resists any temptation to wallow in the musical world of variety crooners or depict the excesses of the celebrity good life, and focuses her attention instead on the co-dependent relationship of two dysfunctional and deeply narcissistic characters.

Muriel (Sandrine Kiberlain) is a middle-aged teenager, her home decorated from floor to ceiling with album covers, concert-ticket stubs, signed photographs and memorabilia from a 20-year obsession with Vincent Lacroix (Laurent Lafitte), a perennially youthful star who is adored by mums and celebrity gossip magazines alike, and whose comeback has been announced on a cheesy afternoon talk-show. When Lacroix's girlfriend dies in the course of a violent argument - hit on the head by an award trophy that he later cynically donates to a charity auction - his career is suddenly in jeopardy and the only person he dares to trust is the loyal Muriel, his number-one fan. But while Muriel's loyalty is second to none, she quickly turns out to be a pathological liar, whose fundamental unreliability will quickly thwart all Lacroix's attempts to manage the situation.

The film plays on the tension between Muriel's charm as a natural storyteller, her latent madness and Lacroix's underestimation of a woman whose vulnerability he knowingly exploits. While his entourage are fond of the immature attention-seeker in their midst, the viewer shares Lacroix's dawning horror that by trusting her he has opened himself up to a greater danger than a mere career setback. She is an unreliable narrator, who permanently veers between half-truth and outright fiction, and whose evolving accounts of the events around the disposal of the girlfriend's corpse can never be fully trusted. When the singer decides his only option is to frame Muriel, she retaliates in the only way she knows how: by being a persuasive liar in the interrogation room. In a tour-de-force of Kayser Sozë-like inventiveness, riffing on the information being fed to her by the police interrogators, she succeeds in saving her own skin as well as his. Does this 'real' drama finally cure her of mythomania? Who knows? She certainly gets rid of all the memorabilia and is



able to walk past her former idol in the street. Lacroix, however, reduced to following her as she resumes her ordinary dull life, now knows exactly what overwhelming obsession feels like.

**Synopsis:** France, the present. Beautician Muriel sees her children off at a railway station and heads to a concert given by her idol, Vincent Lacroix. Sometime later, she's astonished when Lacroix turns up at the door asking for a favour. He reveals that he's accidentally killed his girlfriend Julie following a violent argument. He confides in Muriel, and requests her help in disposing of the body, which is now wrapped up in the boot of his car. Muriel is instructed to drive overnight to Switzerland and deliver the body to Vincent's sister, who will incinerate it at a local pet crematorium. Vincent will then inform the police that Julie has disappeared. Muriel accepts and leaves with the body, but when Vincent speaks to his sister, hoping for confirmation that everything has been taken care of, it becomes clear that Muriel has not taken the body to the agreed destination. With a police investigation under way, Vincent is horrified to find himself linked to Muriel, and takes steps to frame her for the murder. The police are suspicious of the pair, who are both clearly lying to them, but are unable to get at the truth of the matter. Vincent realises he has been outmanoeuvred by Muriel, and becomes fixated on her. Muriel in turn finds that she is over her extreme obsession with the star.

**Credits (selected)**

**Muriel:** Sandrine Kiberlain

**Vincent:** Laurent Lafitte

**Antoine:** Pascal Demolon

**Coline:** Olivia Côte

**Michel Drucker:** himself

**Director:** Jeanne Henry

**Screenplay/Dialogue:** Jeanne Henry with the collaboration of Gaëlle Macé

**DoP:** Axel Cosnefroy

**Editing:** Francis Vesin

**Music:** Pascal Sangla

**France 2014. 104 mins**

**Another view** - *The price of fame and the cost of fandom come crashing together in some amusingly suspenseful ways in Elle l'adore, the debut feature from French actress-turned-director Jeanne Herry.*

*Starring the terrific Sandrine Kiberlain as a groupie who provides way more than a helping hand to her favorite rock star (played by a straight-faced Laurent Lafitte), the film offers up a deadpan modern-day take on Alfred Hitchcock's Strangers on a Train, except here there's only one possible murder but plenty of incompetence to cover up. Filled with strong performances and numerous twists that keep the tension high, even if the plot gets tied up a tad too neatly, this StudioCanal release should see solid numbers at home while breaking out overseas to select small-scale distributors.*

*First seen telling her estranged children a story about how she cruelly impersonated someone else, Muriel (Kiberlain) is a woman who, as the French like to say, is "uncomfortable in her own skin." This may explain why she's not only a mythomaniac, making up lies so that her job as a beautician sounds more interesting, but why she's dedicated the better part of her life to following popular singer Vincent Lacroix (Lafitte), who's about to release his latest album and embark on another tour.*

*Most stars like to keep a safe distance from their fans, but when Vincent accidentally kills his girlfriend (Lou Lesage) during a domestic spat — in a scene that seems inspired by a 2003 incident involving Noir Desir frontman Bertrant Cantet and the late Marie Trintignant — he calls on Muriel to help dispose of the body. While such a choice seems to be totally out of left field, it soon becomes clear that Vincent is one step ahead of everyone around him, including a pair of detectives (Pascal Demolon and Olivia Côte) who are in the process of separating, and whose amorous squabbles aren't helping the case one bit.*

*Cutting between Vincent, Muriel and the cops as they begin to close in on their culprit, the script builds suspense out of the various quid pro quos between the characters, each of whom is missing a key piece of information about exactly what has transpired. For a while, Vincent believes that Muriel has followed his orders by getting rid of the corpse in Switzerland, only to learn that her lies can even extend to such a dangerous task. Meanwhile, Muriel believes that Vincent can do no wrong, and is naively sucked not only into assisting with the homicide, but also into possibly taking the fall for it.*

*First-time director Herry — the daughter of actress Miou-Miou and singer Julien Clerc — maintains a steady intrigue by introducing various plot twists throughout, although the mechanics are less interesting than the two protagonists, who become codependent in unexpected ways while still guarding their star-fan dichotomy. While this works fine for much of Elle l'adore (which means "She adores him" in French), things all too cleanly come to a head in the last act, with Herry taking psychological shortcuts for characters who are surely more complicated than they ultimately seem.*

*Following last year's local breakout hit, 9-Month Stretch, for which she received a César for Best Actress, Kiberlain offers yet another winning performance that mixes deadpan hijinks with*

*something darker: Muriel is clearly out of her mind, yet remains endearing all the same, and the lengthy scene where she's interrogated by the detective couple shows how well Kiberlain can carry a joke to its ambiguous farthest. Lafitte (Bright Days Ahead), on the other hand, is more serious than usual, whereas it might have helped the film if Vincent had been a bit funnier, if not necessarily likable.*

*Tech credits are highlighted by slick widescreen lensing from Axel Cosnefroy (Boule & Bill) and a playful score by Pascal Sangla (Best in Bed). Elle l'adore received the Michel d'Ornano prize at the 2014 Deauville American Film Festival.*

The Hollywood Reporter

**Our next screening: Friday October 23rd, 7.30pm**

**A Pigeon Sat On A Branch Reflecting On Existence (Sweden 2014. Cert 12a)**

Like his previous features *Songs From The Second Floor* and *You, The Living* (shown by LFS in 2008), master Swedish director Roy Andersson takes up the theme of "being a human being" with this meticulously crafted, dreamlike black comedy. Sam and Jonathan, a pair of hapless novelty salesman, take us on a kaleidoscopic tour of the human condition in reality and fantasy, unfolding in absurdist episodes: a sing-along at a 1940s beer hall, a randy flamenco teacher, a thirsty King Charles XII of Sweden en route to battle, and a diabolical metaphor for the horrors inflicted by European colonialism. It is a journey that unveils the beauty of single moments, the pettiness of others, life's grandeur, and the humour and tragedy hidden within us all. (C) Magnolia