

HEY, GOOD LOOKING **(Comme t'y es belle!)**

a film by Lisa Azuelos

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Screening from 5 April, 2007
at Elsternwick Classic Cinema

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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CAST

Michèle LAROQUE	Isa
Aure ATIKA	Léa
Valérie BENGUIGUI	Alice
Géraldine NAKACHE	Nina
Andrew LINCOLN	Paul
Marthe VILLALONGA	Liliane
Francis HUSTER	David
Alexandre ASTIER	Gilles
Thierry NEUVIC	Michel
David KAMMENOS	Simon
Amel DJEMEL	Latifa
Dora DOLL	Mémé
Macha BERANGER	Tante Régine
David ELMALEH	Serge

CREW

Director	Lisa AZUELOS
Producer	Jani THILGES
Co-Producer	Claude WARINGO Albert MARTINEZ MARTIN Juliette RENAUD
Assistant Producer	Benoit HEMARD
Screenplay	Lisa AZUELOS With the collaboration of Michaël LELLOUCHE & Hervé MIMRAN
Cinematography	Nigel WILLOUGHBY
Sound	Dirk BOMBAY & Philippe BAUDHUIN
Editor	Philippe GRELLAT & Nathalie HUBERT
Production Design	Baptiste POIROT
Costumes	Magdalena LABUZ
Key Make-up Artist	Katja REINERT
Key Hair Stylist	Alex VOLPE
Original Music	Philippe GRELLAT, Alexandre LIER, Sylvain OREL & Nicolas WEIL
Casting	Stéphane FOENKINOS Emmanuelle Prévost
Production Manager	Jean-Christophe COLSON

SYNOPSIS

Desperate Housewives meets Sex in the City in this steamy smash-hit comedy that traces four savvy women and their chaotic lives and loves.

Isa, Alice, Léa and Nina are inseparable friends who meet regularly for frank discussions about men, marriage and children. They're bound together not only by the similar rhythm of their lifestyles, but also by their shared Jewish background. Isa (Michèle Laroque) is the owner of a beauty salon and mother of three whose heart melts for a British biker and financial whiz. Her sister Alice (Valérie Benguigui) is going through a rough patch with her husband but is soothed by the pleasant presence of the single father of her daughter's schoolmate. Pampered heiress Lea (Aure Atika) cannot forget her ex. Nina (Géraldine Nakache) is a ditzy brunette looking for ways to lose weight and gain a boyfriend.

With wit and levity, and insight into the daily struggles of family, friendship and love in a uniquely Parisian milieu, director Lisa Azuelos delivers an insouciant romantic comedy that's naturally funny and funnily natural.

REVIEW

Source: european-films.net

Reviewed By: Boyd van Hoeij

Strong female comedies with a whiff of drama and a dash of romance are fast becoming a staple of the commercial cinematic landscape on the continent, propelled by a newfound sense of girlpower and the success of *Bridget Jones* and US TV import *Sex and the City*. They can be a pleasure if done well, even for discerning males such as myself. Lisa Azuelos' new comedy *Comme t'y es belle* is an excellent example of the genre, painting as it does a whimsical but at the same time not unserious portrait of the friendship of four Sephardic Jewish women in Paris.

Michèle Laroque (*Pédale dure*) stars as Isa, a bitchy blonde beauty shop owner whose heart melts for a British biker (Andrew Lincoln, the obsessive filmer from *Love actually*) and financial wizard she has the good sense to run over with her SUV. (Only the bike is broken.) She is also preparing a partnership registration with her immigrant housekeeper, whom she loves to keep her house tidy and her kids up-to-date with their homework even after her papers will have expired.

Actress Valérie Benguigui, who had a small role in the male-equivalent of this film, the Jewish comedy *La vérité si je mens (Could I lie to you?)* plays Isa's sister Alice, who is going through a rough patch with her couch potato husband (Alexandre Astier) but is soothed by the pleasant presence of the single father (Thierry Neuvic) of a schoolmate of her children. Pampered heiress Léa (Aure Autika, the femme fatale from the recent *OSS 117*) cannot forget her ex but should, and the youngest of the club, ditzy brunette Nina (newcomer Géraldine Nakache) is looking for ways to loose weight and gain a boyfriend, preferably the sleazy Adonis Simon (Davide Kammenos) whom she just knows has a heart of gold.

The above summary may reek of an old fashioned happily-ever after princess tale hidden under some translucent faux-feminist veneer, but writer-director Lisa Azuelos knows enough about women and how to write and direct them to make these four girlfriends come alive vibrantly and convincingly. If this had been a fairy tale, the men

would at a certain point upstage the women as surely as the prince will marry the girl, which never seems an even remote possibility in Azuelos' universe, even when some of the men are suspiciously good-looking, well-mannered and endowed with princely double-qualities that are rarely found in one man in real life: a handsome biker and a learned tax expert and a sexy Brit who speaks some French and a loving sibling... AND still single.

Largely shot on location in Luxembourg which effectively doubles for Paris, the actresses are clearly having a ball and relish their characters' witty one-liners and general contemporary zest. Cinematography and production design are sunny and reminiscent of another successful French contemporary women tale; the recent Cécile Telerman film *Tout pour plaire*. Since the film does not exclusively focus on a women's world that is comprehensible only for women but touches more generally on subjects such as family, relationships, love and other demons, it is a perfect date film that men can also enjoy, except perhaps those who recognise themselves in the couch potato husband. Needless to say those men will not appreciate the potato's inevitable demise, which does seem lifted straight out of a fairy tale.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR LISA AZUELOS

Director Lisa Azuelos' comedy **HEY, GOOD LOOKING** portrays the lives of women in the Sephardic community of Paris. But from her viewpoint, the film plays differently to French audiences. As she explains, in France, it is almost bizarre to see everyday Jewish women as the subject of a film, and the fact that this is a comedy made the experience even more unique, perhaps singular.

What drove you to make “HEY, GOOD LOOKING!”? Are you part of a Sephardic community in Paris?

I wanted to make a movie about women. And although I'm not Jewish (my mother isn't Jewish), I was raised by my father in this Jewish community. So I'm enough of an outsider to have witnessed it, and enough of an insider to talk about it. Being part of the community really grounded me, even though I'm not a real Jew. In fact it would be a pain for me to marry a real Jew because then I would have to convert.

But this community gave me love and affection and food, and gave structure to my life with the dinners, high holidays and celebrations, like a perennial student on the semester system. Every year is structured in a special way. In the end, I really identify with the Jewish community I was raised in.

So that's why this movie is both Jewish and non-Jewish: you see, I am very much Jewish but I'm not. So I'm talking about women in this film, I'm talking about Jewish women, especially, in tribute to my Jewish grandmother who did not speak of god, but who had god in her hands while she worked in the kitchen.

How does Jewish life fit into Parisian life?

Nothing that is not pure French Catholic is fully normal in France. It's difficult for the French to absorb other communities and it's the same for these communities to accept French culture. It's not like here where you put your hand to your heart, say you're an American, and then you are. In France you have to choose between one culture and the other, and in the end nobody really can choose anything. It's odd, but I think it will soon change for the better.

Well maybe your film is in some sense a look in that direction, a hopeful look?

Yes, that's why I made the movie. It is a hopeful look at the relations between men and women, Arabs and Jews. I was trying to bring joy.

Are your characters the type of women one could find in Paris today?

Yes. I've been like this, I have friends like this. I think I've stuck to real life in the film.

Then why do you consider the film to be a challenge for French audiences?

Dramas about Jews are much easier for French audiences: You are a Jew and nobody understands you, you are a Jew and love an Arab; you know, drama. Or you can have a big, big comedy, which is unrelated to real life. My movie, though it is a comedy, takes places in real life, which makes it unique. You know, Woody Allen talks about Jewish people, but really about people more universally. And American audiences get that. But, when it comes to films in France, people think being Jewish should be the only thing, it should eat the other story.

But the French love Woody Allen! Because he's exotic...?

No, because he's great! Well, for us it's exotic to see Manhattan. I wanted to do some of the same things, not to compare of course, but to make fun of certain aspects of Jewish life in Paris.

Is it common for Sephardic Jews to employ North African Muslims?

Yes. In the end, women are more bound by the fact that they come from Morocco than by religion, in a sense. They can speak Arabic together, they are part of the same community.

What sorts of responses did you get when you first showed the film in France?

People were really moved by the women's stories, they could really relate to them. And I'd like to recount this one event: I took my film to a little town called Vannes at the end of Brittany. It has only cows and flowers. Nothing else. And they really don't know what a Jew is. I showed this movie to an audience there, and these 65-year-old ladies were moved by my movie. And I was moved by that.

ABOUT THE CAST

MICHELE LAROQUE (Isa)

As a student, actress/comedian/humorist Michele Laroque was in a car accident. It was whilst she was lying in hospital, recovering that she wondered whether she would make a good or bad actress. She didn't know the answer, but knew that she had to find out.

Armed with this burning question, Laroque began her quest for an answer. Following her recovery, she dropped her studies in economics and began to pursue acting.

Born in Nice to a French father and a Romanian mother (who was a dancer), Laroque grew up taking lessons in sports, piano, singing, and theatre.

"Unlike the other activities, which my mother picked, theatre was chosen by me," she said. "I went there with pleasure." As she grew older, however, Laroque dropped theatre until college and the unfortunate accident. Before her hospital bed revelation, she remembers, "I never wanted to be an actress."

Today, Laroque is one of the top actresses in France, earning two Cèsar nominations. Though best known for her comedic talents, she has also tackled dramatic roles. To English speaking audiences, she is best known for her portrayal of the mother in the Oscar nominated MA VIE EN ROSE and the female boss of Daniel Auteuil in THE CLOSET.

Laroque has trained both in the USA and France, attending drama classes at the University of Texas. Prior to this, she studied economics in Albany, New York; Burlington, Vermont; and Austin before returning to France where she trained at La Comedie-Francaise, the legendary French institution. Predominantly a theatre actor for the first 7 years of her career, her first screen break came when director Patrice Leconte noticed her on stage and cast her in THE HAIRDRESSER'S HUSBAND, the first film for both. Since then, she has never looked back.

FILMOGRAPHY

Anniversaire, L' (2005)
Pédale dure (2004)
Malabar Princess (2004)
Mon voisin du dessus (2003) (TV)
Chose publique, La (2003) (TV)
J'ai faim!!! (2001)
Oiseau rare, L' (2001) (TV)
The Closet (2001)
Marry Me (2000)
Une femme neuve (2000) (TV)
Doggy Bag (1999)
The Wall (1998)
Serial Lover (1998)
Ma vie en rose (1997)
Week-end! (1997) (TV)
The Best Job in the World (1996)
Fallait pas!... (1996)
Death in Therapy (1996)
Aveux de l'innocent, Les (1996)
Elvis Aziz (1996) (TV)
Pédale douce (1996)
Mouton noir, Le (1995) (TV)
Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud (1995)
Nid tombé de l'oiseau, Le (1995) (TV)
Madame Petlet's True Story (1995)
Une femme dans mon coeur (1995) (TV) "Quatre pour un loyer" (1995) TV Series
Nobody Loves Me (1994)
Life's Little Treasures (1994)
Louis, the Child King (1993)
Tango (1993)
Paranoïa (1993)
The Crisis (1992)
Wonderful Times (1991)
The Hairdresser's Husband (1990)
"Télé des inconnus, La" (1990) (TV Series)

AURE ATIKA (Léa)

Aure Atika made her first appearance on screen at the age of 9 in L'ADOLESCENTE by Jeanne Moreau. Continuing her education (law, Ecole du Louvre) and working at small jobs, she was noticed, thanks to a Polaroid photo, by a casting agency that sent her out on auditions. That was how, in 1992, she landed the starring role in SAM SUFFIT by Virginie Thévenet. While enrolled in drama school, she created a magazine, AU HASARD DU COURRIER, prior to hosting the popular show NOVA on Paris Première.

In 1997, Aure Atika's acting career took off thanks to the enormous success of WOULD I LIE TO YOU!, in which she played the wife of Vincent Elbaz. Although she appeared the same year in a dramatic role in LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC by Eric Rochant, she gravitated towards comedy, appearing in films like GRÈVE-PARTY and BIMBOLAND. In 2001, the warm character of Nassera in POETICAL REFUGEE, the first film by Abdellatif Kechiche, enabled her to reveal other facets of her talent. Although she appeared in WOULD I LIE TO YOU 2 and made her first appearance in an action film (CASH TRUCK), Atika, who took her first steps behind the camera in the ironic short film A QUOI CA SERT DE VOTER ÉCOLO? in 2003, still prefers the cinéma d'auteur: she travelled to Morocco, the home of her ancestors, to shoot TEN'JA, before being chosen by Jacques Audiard to star opposite Romain Duris in THE BEAT THAT MY SKIPPED (2005) which she followed with the role of Princess Al Tarouk in the spy romp OSS 117: CAIRO, NEST OF SPIES.

AURE ATIKA FILMOGRAPHY

Comme t'y es belle! (2006)
OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies (2006)
The Beat that my Heart Skipped (2006)
Bonbon au poivre (2005) Mélanie
Testament (2004)
Cash Truck (2004)
Turn Left at the End of the World (2004)
Quattro porte del deserto, Le (2004)
Mister V. (2003)
Combats de femme - Libre à tout prix (2001) (TV)

Would I Lie to You? 2 (2001)
Blame It on Voltaire (2000)
Highway Melody (2000)
Premières neiges (1999) (TV)
Une vie de prince (1999)
Trafic d'influence (1999)
Bimboland (1998)
Long Live the Republic (1997)
The Secret of Polichinelle (1997)
Would I Lie to You? (1997)
Ecchymose (1997)
Just Do It (1997)
Homo automobilis (1996)
Toujours les filles souffriront d'amour (1995)
Sam's Enough (1992)
The Adolescent (1979)

VALÉRIE BENGUIGUI (Alice)

Benguigui is one of France's busiest character actresses who starred alongside her HEY, GOOD LOOKING co-star Aure Atika in the smash hit WOULD I LIE TO YOU.

In HEY, GOOD LOOKING, she plays the unhappily married sister of Isa (Michele Laroque), who falls in love with a handsome father, whose child attends the same school as her offspring. For the first time in many years, she dares to dream of a life away from her self-centred husband and rediscovers that although she is a mother and a wife, she is still, above all, a woman who wants to love and be loved.

VALÉRIE BENGUIGUI FILMOGRAPHY

Comme t'y es belle! (2006)
Advocats & Associes (2001-2005) (TV)
Cavalcade (2005)
Je préfère qu'on reste amis (2005)
Rôle de sa vie, Le (2004)
The Great Role (2004) aka The Great Role

Laughter and Punishment (2003)
Ces jours heureux (2002) Mme Gabison
A Hell of a Day (2001)
Grégoire Moulin contre l'humanité (2001)
Chaos (2001)
Jet Set (2000)
Scénarios sur la drogue (2000)
Mon père, ma mère, mes frères et mes soeurs (1999)
Mes amis (1999)
Accidents (1999)
Droit dans le mur (1997) L'interprète
Bonheur est un mensonge, Le (1997) (TV)
Would I Lie to You? (1997)
"Palace" (1988) (TV Series)
On a volé Charlie Spencer! (1986)

GÉRALDINE NAKACHE (Nina)

In HEY, GOOD LOOKING, Nakache plays 'Nina', a high-spirited beauty therapist who wages a personal and frequently humorous battle with her weight, which she is convinced is the stumbling block to her enjoying a successful love life. HEY, GOOD LOOKING marks Nakache's first role in front of the camera, her previous experience being on the other side lens as a television production assistant.

ANDREW LINCOLN (Paul)

Andrew Lincoln graduated from RADA. Lincoln rose to fame in the popular TV series THIS LIFE playing Edgar "Egg" Cook. He went on to appear in many successful TV shows including BOMBER, A STATE OF MIND, THE CANTERBURY TALES, before going on to star in the comedy drama TEACHERS (of which he directed two episodes in the third series). He has since gone on to star in WHOSE BABY, LIE WITH ME and the runaway hit supernatural series, AFTERLIFE. He has also had several film roles, including HUMAN TRAFFIC, LOVE ACTUALLY, ENDURING LOVE, and GANGSTER NO. 1.

ANDREW LINCOLN FILMOGRAPHY

This Life + 10 (2007) (TV)
Afterlife (2005-2006)
Scenes of a Sexual Nature (2006)
Hey, Good Looking (2006)
These Foolish Things (2006)
"No Waste Like Home" (2005) (TV)
Lie with Me (2004) (TV)
Whose Baby? (2004) (TV)
Enduring Love (2004)
Teachers (2001-2003) (TV)
Love Actually (2003)
State of Mind (2003) (TV)
Offending Angels (2001)
A Likeness in Stone (2000) (TV)
Gangster No. 1 (2000)
Bomber (2000) (TV)
Human Traffic (1999)
"Mersey Blues" (1999) (TV)
A Man's Best Friend (1999)
Understanding Jane (1998)
This Life (1996-1997) (TV)
The Woman in White (1997) (TV)
Over Here (1996) (TV)
Boston Kickout (1995)
N7 (1995) (TV)