



# CORPORATE

A NICOLAS SILHOL FILM

Starring

Céline SALETTE	Lambert WILSON	Stéphane DE GROODT	Violaine FUMEAU
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Runtime: 1:35 – France – 2016 – 1.85 – Dolby 5.1

**FRENCH RELEASE DATE: APRIL 5TH**

## **INTERNATIONAL SALES**

Indie Sales Company

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## SYNOPSIS

Emilie is a bright young workaholic manager in Human Resources, working for a huge French agro-food company. Ambitious and dedicated to her job, she is a good soldier, ready to put ruthless methods of management into practice to meet the higher-ups' requirements.

But, one day, one of the employees commits suicide at the company in front of her. Afflicted by the terrific death of her colleague, she will eventually realize that the company has to take its responsibility too.

While an investigation is underway, stuck between her traumatized colleagues and under pressure of a powerful hierarchy, she will have to get by on her own.

## INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS SILHOL

### **Where did you get the idea for CORPORATE?**

I've always been interested in human relationships in the corporate world. That's not really an accident, because my father teaches management at a business school and works as an HR consultant. I've spent long hours talking about these issues with him. My first short film was already about a role-playing exercise at a funeral home. It was more of a comedy and it portrayed the company as a theater where each individual plays a role and sets aside his or her personal feelings.

Then, like many of us, I was deeply shocked by the spate of suicides at France Télécom. I discovered that "management through terror" can truly destroy lives and individuals. The cynicism of France Telecom's CEO, who said it was time to end "the suicide craze," particularly shocked me. As if employees were responsible for their own suffering.

### **CORPORATE isn't limited to its subject, it deals with a larger issue: personal responsibility.**

Yes, from the beginning, what really interested me was the issue of responsibility. Should those who do the dirty work be held responsible? Should they be blamed for the death of an employee they were trying to break? The complexity of these legal and ethical questions was what

motivated me to write the film.

The character of Emilie was based on interviews with a real HR manager. After telling me how she had very deliberately pressured employees to leave the company, she said point blank: "I won't be a party to this anymore." To me it was a very compelling and brave thing to say. It was an affirmation she was breaking with the system. I think this kind of individual position can really shake things up, because in addition to liberating yourself, you liberate everyone else, it has a snowball effect. And I think that goes far beyond the company.

### **But at first, Emilie bucks the system out of personal interest...**

The first step she takes toward the labor inspector is a clear attempt to save her own skin. Emilie is proactive, and when she sees the situation turning against her, she takes things into her own hands and tries to negotiate the truth with the Inspector. The last thing I wanted was to tell the story of a bad person who is racked by guilt and seeks redemption, or suddenly sees the evil of her ways and changes sides. I didn't want there to be clearly defined good guys and bad guys. In CORPORATE, the issue is more an ethical than a moral one. I don't want to judge anyone.

What's interesting dramatically is that, to turn on the company, Emilie ends up having to turn on herself. At the end of the investigation, the only proof she has against the system is this video that weighs on her.

### **The film also tells the story of an emancipation...**

At first, Emilie is indistinguishable from her function and her uniform. As a human resources manager, her job is to manage. She embodies the values of her company. Hence the title: CORPORATE. But because of the pressure the company puts on her, she gradually lets go. Cracks start to show in her mask. She starts to reconnect with her own emotions, her body, her feelings. By accepting responsibility, she reconciles with herself. I've always been fascinated by characters imprisoned by their functions, who struggle with their own role. I had already explored this dialectic of pride and self-hatred in a short film, through the character of a low-brow comedian chased by a blogger who ends up exposing himself to her.

**Here, the character is female...**

My sense is that women do a better job at soul-searching than men, so I trust them more to change. In any case, I was interested in exploring women's role in the corporate world, and the way bodies interact too. Emilie has tried to fit into what is still a male-dominated world by playing the role expected of her, that of the sexy and virile female exec.

**Did you research a real company when writing the script?**

The issues are above all ethical and legal, and have less to do with the daily operations of the company. Mostly I interviewed labor inspectors. It was through their eyes that I discovered all these management tools – the stages of mourning, forced transfers, behavioral evaluations. How can you prove a causal link between an employee's suicide and his or her working conditions? They have to deal with very complex issues. What qualifies as proof? How can management make it disappear? I also wanted to do justice to this profession, which gets a bad rap even though their work is necessary and fascinating.

I got a lot of enjoyment from creating the character of the Inspector, Marie Borrel. She is an outsider set loose within the company. Like a bull in a china shop or a gust of wind that slams doors shut. She goes wherever she wants, says whatever she wants. She pretends to be naive, she makes people uncomfortable... My co-writer Nicolas Fleureau and I often thought of Colombo!

**Talk about the mirror effect between her and Emilie...**

First, I thought of their relationship like a duel, a face-off, which accentuates their differences: the HR Director vs. the Inspector. At first glance, these are two diametrically opposed women: Emilie has a very controlled and sophisticated femininity, whereas Marie is spontaneous, generous, provocative. She has also made her mark in a male world, but in a much freer way. Still, beyond their different uniforms and functions, I was interested in their similarities and how they manage to form a team. They are the same age, have similar personalities. They could easily become friends and go out for drinks. That doesn't happen, but there is a connection between them. Each recognizes herself in the other.

### **How did you approach the visual style?**

I worked closely with my DP, Nicolas Gaurin. In the company's offices, we wanted to dissect the characters with tight frames, to confine them to partitioned, glass spaces. They are restricted metaphorically and figuratively. We also wanted to shift points of view, to feel the weight of everyone's eyes on Emilie, notably in the first part, which is steeped in paranoia and tension. For the exteriors, which have more energy and life, we used handheld shots to create a more naturalistic style. We wanted this outside world to make its way into the company through the character of Marie Borrel. As Emilie changes, so does the filmmaking style. It becomes livelier, more dynamic, Emilie breaks out of the frame. The film also takes a break from itself with video and audio footage. I love using other media to create a kind of film-within-the-film, which I'd already done in my shorts. This raw, hyper-realistic footage is like the ultimate proof of the truth behind the characters.

### **What about the music?**

The music is used in two ways. Inside the company, for dramatic underscoring to create tension around the investigation. And outside the company, the music is freer, closer to Alexandre Saada's jazzy inspiration. It's gentler too.

### **Emilie's husband is English.**

I see quite a few binational couples around me and the possibilities intrigued me. It gives an international scope to Emilie's character and brings another mentality to bear on the world of work. Emilie's husband isn't particularly disturbed by events: "Shit happens," he says. His pragmatism and individualism are very British.

And anyway, I like that Emilie speaks English at home. Her otherness is also embodied in her relationship to language and words.

### **What were you going for with the character of the HR Director, played by Lambert Wilson?**

I didn't want him to be a stereotypical jerk. It's the position he takes, that of evading all

responsibility, that's shocking. He is the character who most forcefully embodies denial. Lambert has elegance and charisma, and at the same time he is likable to audiences because of his sincerity. It's a mixture of sophistication and humanity. Plus, his voice is a musical instrument.

### **Why did you cast Céline Sallette in the role of Emilie?**

I immediately thought of her from the earliest versions of the script. She impressed me in all the roles I'd seen her in. It's above all her eyes that touch me. They exude a combination of sadness and power, a powerful sadness! I also liked the challenge of not choosing somebody obvious for the role. Emilie is a cold woman who is cut off from her emotions. She doesn't really fit the profile of Céline, who is a very expressive actress and woman, very free, very empathetic. It was stimulating for the both of us to build a character who was very different from her. My sense was the performance would be more powerful if Céline kept her emotions bottled up, and we only saw them in her eyes.

### **And why did you choose Violaine Fumeau to play Marie?**

Unlike for the role of Emilie, I wanted a less identifiable actress for this part, one who could be believable in her job and tied to the real world. I had already worked with Violaine on my short films. The part of the Labor Inspector was perfect for her. She brings modernity and life to the role: indignation, freedom, sensuality. She spent time with real labor inspectors and I think she forged a very personal connection with their struggle. Though Céline seemed quite different from the character, Violaine was perfectly cast as the Inspector!

### **What about Stéphane De Groodt?**

He has another view of Emilie, one that is softer and kinder and she finds that hard to bear. We immediately grasp his humanness, he is sweet but a womanizer. Meanwhile I saw Charly Anson, who plays Emilie's husband, in *Downtown Abbey*. He is at the same time subtle and playful. Very British. Actually, CORPORATE brings together actors from very different horizons. This variety was important to me.

**The film is pretty optimistic.**

Emilie isn't out of the woods, she doesn't get vindicated, but she's made a strong choice which I wanted to applaud. Her path is circuitous, complicated, but I wanted to set a positive example. To me, she's a real heroine.

## **FILMOGRAPHY – NICOLAS SILHOL**

### **2008 TOUS LES ENFANTS S'APPELLENT DOMINIQUE (20')**

Shortlisted for the Oscars 2010, Prix France Télévision l'Express 2009, Grand Prix au Festival de Toronto 2009. The film was also selected at close to 20 international festivals.

<https://vimeo.com/52555161> - Mdp : **psychologique**

### **2010 L'AMOUR PROPRE (35')**

Selected at Cannes' Critic's Week in 2010, the short won the Lutin 2011 for Best Actor in a starring role for Xavier Gallais. It was also selected at the Festival International du Film de Clermont-Ferrand 2011, Festival du film de Vendôme 2010, Festival du Film court de Villeurbanne (Prize for Best Script) in 2010.

<https://vimeo.com/52155860> - Mdp : **daniel**

## **CAST**

Emilie TESSON-HANSEN Céline SALLETTE  
Stéphane FRONCART Lambert WILSON  
Vincent Stéphane DE GROODT  
Marie BORREL Violaine FUMEAU  
Sophie Alice DE LENCQUESAING

## **CREW**

Director **Nicolas SILHOL**  
Writers **Nicolas SILHOL Nicolas FLEUREAU**  
Cinematography **Nicolas GAURIN**  
Editing **Florence BRESSON**  
Production Design **Sidney DUBOIS**  
Casting **Tatiana VIALLE**  
Sound **Antoine CORBIN Julien ROIG Emmanuel CROSET**



Original Music **Mike et Fabien KOURTZER Alexandre SAADA**

Producer **Jean-Christophe REYMOND KAZAK PRODUCTIONS**

Associate Producer **Amaury OUISE KAZAK PRODUCTIONS**

Co-Producer **AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES CINÉMA**

French Distribution **DIAPHANA DISTRIBUTION**

International Sales **INDIE SALES**

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