





Tom at the Farm



Synopsis

Tom, a young advertising copywriter, travels to the country for a funeral. There, he's shocked to find out no one knows who he is, nor who he was to the deceased, whose brother soon sets the rules of a twisted game. In order to protect the family's name and grieving mother, Tom now has to play the peacekeeper in a household whose obscure past bodes even greater darkness for his "trip" to the farm.

Long ways, long lies...

Set in Quebec's rural panorama, this psychological thriller centres on the ever-growing gap between city and country and the opposite nature of men who live there. Stockholm syndrome, deception, grief and secretive savageries pervade this brief and brutal pilgrimage through the warped and ugly truth. Adapted from the original play by acclaimed Quebecois author Michel Marc Bouchard, *Tom at the Farm* is Xavier Dolan's fourth film.



Director's Note

After inadvertently creating a trilogy on the subject of impossible love - *I Killed My Mother*, *Heartbeats* and *Laurence Anyways* - a change of direction was needed.

Several possibilities presented themselves to me. I opened my desk drawer, full of post-its and napkins, blackened with ideas, dialogue, and two or three log lines like you'd find in the TV guide.

There was a political thriller - talk about change - and there was my first English-language movie, *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*; but I wanted to write something I could make right away. I needed something lightning-fast, for an equally fast shoot.

Then, I remembered the play *Tom at the Farm*. It was the winter of 2011, I believe, and I was in pre-production for *Laurence Anyways*.

That night, on stage, Lise Roy - who would ultimately play the same role in the movie - delivered the monologue of a long-suffering mother who, having just returned from the funeral of her son, explodes over the preparation of the macaroni salad she's famous for. She throws the whole salad in the trash - no one had taken a bite - exclaiming her disgust for the recipe and for the people around her who forced her to make it, year after year. The macaroni monologue never strayed from its topic - which is to say, the food - yet it alluded to the profound sorrow of a woman who had never known anything but the farm, and the perfunctory embraces of her deceased husband and her sons, the milking of the cows, and the empty resignation of looking down a dirt road and realizing that no one new will ever darken it. Ironically, this moment never made it into the film, probably due to its theatricality.

This detour into maternal distress, nevertheless, had hit too close to home for me not to keep driving down this road. The play's author, Michel Marc Bouchard, excels in expressing both the point of view of the guest and his hosts, and avoids the a priori urban vs country clichés. The brutality of the rapport between the two male leads, elegant and aesthetic on the stage, already spoke to the promise of a roughness and violence I wanted to express on film and that would take me away from my comfort zone. The play evoked and explored many feelings writ large, but I knew that this sense of fear, anxiety and otherness were made for the big screen and, above all, that this newness was all that I was hoping to find.

After the show, under the marquee, in the haze of well earned cigarettes, I asked Michel Marc who was going to make this into a movie. He said: No one, why? Got someone in mind?

Yeah, me, I replied, with all the humility of Nero in *Britannicus*.

But seriously, that's basically how it happened.





Director's Bio

Born in Montreal in 1989, Xavier Dolan started his career acting in a number of television series and films, as well as doing voice work in the dubbing industry. He attracted international attention when his debut feature *J'ai tué ma mère*, in which he also starred, won three awards from the Director's Fortnight program at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. *J'ai tué ma mère* has since been sold to more than 30 countries, and was Canada's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards. It was selected in numerous festivals, such as Rotterdam, Zagreb, Namur, Istanbul, Reykjavik and Vancouver, where it garnered the top prizes.

Dolan's second feature film *Les Amours Imaginaires (Heartbeats)*, premiered in the Un Certain Regard category at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival in May 2010, and won the top prize of the Official Competition at the Sydney Film Festival. His third film *Laurence Anyways* was, again, selected to compete in the 2012's Un Certain Regard, where it took the Best Actress Award for Suzanne Clément's powerhouse performance.

Apart from his participations in his own films, Dolan has acted in Pascal Laugier's controversial *Martyrs*, Jacob Tierney's *Good Neighbours* and Daniel Grou's (Podz) upcoming *Miraculum*. This fall, he will star alongside Bruce Greenwood in Charles Binamé's *Elephant Song*.

Dolan is now working on his fifth feature film, currently titled *Mommy*. Production is expected to start later this fall.

Director's Filmography

2009
I Killed My Mother

2010
Heartbeats

2012
Laurence Anyways

2013
College Boy (Indochine's music video)
Tom à la ferme

2014-2015
Mommy (in pre-production)
The Death and Life of John F. Donovan (in development)

Actor's Filmography

<i>Martyrs</i> (2008)	Antoine
<i>I Killed My Mother</i> (2009)	Hubert Minel
<i>Lipsett Diaries</i> (2010)	Narrator
<i>Heartbeats</i> (2010)	Francis
<i>Good Neighbours</i> (2010)	Jean-Marc
<i>Tom à la ferme</i> (2013)	Tom
<i>Miraculum</i> (2014)	Étienne
<i>Elephant Song</i> (2014)	Michael

From Stage To Screen

In 2011, when Michel Marc Bouchard and I decided to adapt his play together, it was determined that we would each work on our own. He would send me a first draft that I would then work on, I would send him a second draft, and so on.

Laurence Anyways having been shot and produced over a period of two years, I was back from Cannes in May of 2012 and had to quickly find a project for the fall. Pierre Falardeau, the late Quebecois filmmaker, said that it was better to shoot then to shoot yourself in the foot, and I was ready to rediscover the rush of the set.

Tom at the Farm became this urgent autumn project, and I soon called Michel Marc to tell him cameras would roll in October. He was completely swamped with writing a new play, and revisions on the script *Queen Christina*. Thus the adaptation began immediately, and Michel Marc and I tossed the ball back and forth for a month or two.

In the play, there were only 4 characters: Tom, Francis, Agathe and, at the very end, Sara, who arrives like truth wrapped up in lies, like a deliverance, a spark in a room filled with gas. They shared only a kitchen, a barn and a bedroom; a classic no exit.

We had to play this claustrophobic card in the film, but in such a way that the audience would not grow tired of seeing the same sets and people over and over again. It occurred to me early on that we would need to remove Tom from the farm a couple of times, if only to amp up the fear that he would return.

The funeral, a visit to the doctor and the memories of a bar-brawl, would provide us with a few breaths of fresh air, and the chance to see Tom interact with characters who were not so central to his consenting captivity.

Enough characters, enough chances at least to escape his destiny. Chances he would not take.

There were 10 scenes in the play ; 113 in the film. Choices had to be made - uneasy ones. But from all those play-to-script sacrifices, one thing - one, really - was left behind that I can't forget about as I am truly melancholic it didn't make the cut.

It was a quote from the author's foreword, and taken out of context, it probably would have been pretentious and highly on-the-nose to have any character merely speak it. It is by far the last angle I'd choose for this film, mostly because there is nothing I want more than to avoid ghettos and labels that do nothing but stress the "issue", but that quote, that phrase spanned to herself the movie's complete emotional range, its fragility, its timeless problematics, as well as its dormant disposition for the deviant and unseemly. It was, all things considered, what Tom... was all about. That and so many other things, but THAT, first and foremost, I guess :

"Before learning how to love, homosexuals learn how to lie." — Michel Marc Bouchard



Working with Gabriel Yared

Initially, there was to be no music in *Tom at the Farm*. My obsession with “massive change” was pushing me to want a crushing silence, from which would emerge, according to my theory, a superior tension. I said to myself: howling wind, creaking floorboards: that’s my passport to terror.

And yet, as soon as I got into the editing room, I was going from Philip Glass, James Newton Howard, and even - why not? - Hans Zimmer, carpeting about 150% of the movie in heavy instrumentation as Tom screamed out his need for music.

As I promised myself, pop songs would play only on the radio or in bars. At a private screening, Suzanne Clement noticed that the one musical digression I had allowed myself felt “too me”. I ultimately changed it, honouring my original intent, and removed the song that turned the scene into a music video. It was for the best.

So we came to the problem of the score. What seemed like the most important thing in the world at that moment, had never been part of the plan. After a conversation with my co-producers, it was decided we needed a composer. “Ideally, the best one in the world,” I suggested.

Gabriel Yared received the DVD of *Tom at the Farm*, and watched my other films with all the simplicity and attention to detail of an artist that we admire, and who’s attitude and aesthetic does justice to their lofty reputation. Against all odds, he accepted.

He accepted, and his first few demos were like a bomb being dropped on me. A bomb that dragged everything in its wake - doubt, debris, boredom - and cleared the slate. I had already abandoned my film to write something new, and act in a movie shooting in the spring - I was imagining new projects, something far sexier and easier than finishing old ones, or fine-tuning a movie I thought was, honestly, just ok.

I never met Gabriel Yared. I only ever heard his voice on the telephone. But I met his music, his work, and the enormity of his imagination. His lyrical, confident interpretation and appropriation of the romantic-panic genre was by turns Hitchcockian and Mahleresque. I understood the style of this man through his baroque extravagances - though I think he was just following his own instinctive impulses - and his ability, his ease with accepting the classicism when it was called for, giving the movie its sensuality, its breath.

In fact, watching *Tom at the Farm* with the score in place, I loved it for the first time. I was proud. I regained confidence in the film, and the rest of the production followed, the sound design, mix, colour correcting, with their respective talents who would re-invent the film themselves, as if all Tom was waiting for was them.

I wanted to share the way in which this particular collaboration helped put things in perspective for me.



Credits

Tom	XAVIER DOLAN
Francis	PIERRE-YVES CARDINAL
Agathe	LISE ROY
Sara	ÉVELYNE BROCHU
Barman	MANUEL TADROS
Prêtre	JACQUES LAVALLÉE
Docteur	ANNE CARON
Paul	OLIVIER MORIN
Directed by	XAVIER DOLAN
Written by	XAVIER DOLAN MICHEL MARC BOUCHARD
Cinematography	ANDRÉ TURPIN
Original score	GABRIEL YARED
Editing	XAVIER DOLAN
Production design	COLOMBE RABY
Costume designer	XAVIER DOLAN
Sound design	SYLVAIN BRASSARD
Mix	OLIVIER GOINARD
Produced by	XAVIER DOLAN NATHANAËL KARMITZ CHARLES GILLIBERT
Executive Producer	NANCY GRANT
Associate Producer	LYSE LAFONTAINE
Line Producer	CAROLE MONDELLO
Running time	102 min.
Aspect ratio	1.85
Format	Color 35mm/DCP
Country	Canada/France
Press kit	XAVIER DOLAN
Cover Art	©JOYCE GELEYNSE
Photographer	©CLARA PALARDY
Translation	JACOB TIERNEY



INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Manlin Sterner
manlin@manlin.se
+33 6 63 76 31 13

Charles McDonald
charles@charles.mcdonald.co.uk

Matthew Sanders
matthew@magiclanternart.org.uk

VENICE/FRANCE PRESS

Monica Donati
monica.donati@mk2.com
+33 1 43 07 55 22

QUEBEC/CANADA PRESS

QC

Annie Tremblay
Vice-présidente Communications
atremblay@filmsseville.com
+1 514 878-4979

CAN

Carrie Wolfe
Présidente Communications
cwolfe@entonegroup.com
+1 416 309-4233

INTERNATIONAL SALES

MK2
55 rue Traversière
75012 Paris, France

Juliette Schrameck
Head of International Sales & Acquisitions
juliette.schrameck@mk2.com

Fionnuala Jamison
International Sales Executive
fionnuala.jamison@mk2.com

Victoire Thevenin
International Sales Executive
victoire.thevenin@mk2.com



