

Film Close-Up: Julie Delpy

by Joey_Berlin

Julie Delpy, 37, has worked steadily in film since she was a teenager in Paris, beginning with her first role in "Detective" for French New Wave pioneer Jean-Luc Godard. American audiences know Delpy best for her work opposite Ethan Hawke in "Before Sunrise" and the Oscar-nominated follow-up, "Before Sunset."

JULIE DELPY - Julie Delpy, seen here with Adam Goldberg, stars and directs the romantic comedy '2 Days In Paris.' CNS Photo courtesy of Samuel Goldwyn Films. Today, Delpy is using everything she has learned from working in front of the camera to test her skills behind it.

The fresh and funny romantic comedy "2 Days In Paris" is not just Delpy's directorial debut, she is also the film's writer, producer, editor and composer, and she stars as a Frenchwoman on vacation with her neurotic American boyfriend. He is played by the hilarious Adam Goldberg, a former off-screen flame of Delpy's. On the way back from Italy to New York, the couple stops off for "2 Days In Paris" to visit her family, and their relationship unravels. Delpy's real-life mother and father (both of whom are professional film and stage actors) co-star as her parents in the movie.

Delpy next plans to write, direct, produce and star in "The Countess," a historical thriller about Elizabeth Bathory, the notorious Hungarian sadist.

Q: Why did you cast an ex-boyfriend, Adam Goldberg, in "2 Days In Paris," and how did that change the film?

A: I know him so well. I've known him for 12 years. We had a short thing years ago. He's nothing like the character in the film. It's not based on us at all. Did it change the work? Maybe. It's harder to be directed by an ex-girlfriend!

Q: As a native of France you did not start out speaking English, of course, but you gave this film's dialogue a lot of peculiar English expressions. Do you listen for them?

A: I do. I notice them. When people say something that I've never heard that's funny, I take a mental note of it. And then I use them all the time, at the wrong spot sometimes! English is always a learning process with me.

Q: The film points out how uptight Americans can be about sex. Is that how you see us?

A: I have a lot of American friends who are not that Puritanical, but there's a little of that element in them. Even the most liberated Americans I know are more uptight than the French. I don't know why that is. But it's true, the French do talk about it. Even the most hardcore Catholics in my family talk about sex all the time.

That's the main subject in France. There are three subjects in France: sex, food and politics. It's what you talk about when you are 14 years old and you are skipping school to go to the cafe and smoke cigarettes. I visited some of my family in Tahiti recently and I was struck by how the parents and children talked freely, and by how openly the 20-year-old girl talked about her sex life in front of her parents. That's something you don't see in America. Maybe it's part of the French culture.

Q: In America, it is also impolite to talk about politics and religion at a meal.

A: We talk about food and sex at lunch. In front of the parents! It's a weird thing. With politics and sex, we know our French politicians are womanizers. And we accept that. Liberal Americans would probably accept that. But in some parts of America, it's worse for a politician to have sex with a woman than it is to blow up another country. The French have a lot of flaws but on that level, I like France. They don't take sex as something bad. It's bad to cheat on your wife but it doesn't hurt the world. You agree, right? Am I a crazy person?

Q: Do you think it's healthier to discuss such things than to avoid them?

A: Yes. In France, we talk politics all the time. People disagree and fight. People in my family always fight over politics, but you don't talk about politics in front of my grandmother. She pretends to die. But it is good. It's good and healthy for kids to hear people fighting about politics. That way they can make up their minds and not be brainwashed. They can decide for themselves. Politics and religion is just philosophy.

Q: What is the deal with the cab drivers in Paris? In the film you are constantly battling cabbies.

A: It's true that in Paris you don't have the separation, the window, between you and the driver. You constantly talk to drivers in Paris if you are French. They engage conversation. They listen to the radio and express their political views after about two seconds. They yell at women on the street. They hate all women drivers. I'm like, "Hey! I'm a woman!"

But driving in Paris is so awful that it would turn anyone into a fascist. If a Paris cab driver sees you crossing the street, they accelerate on the chance that they might hit you, maybe. In the film, I get revenge on them. In reality, I'm quiet with them because I'm afraid they'll punch me in the face and I'll never work again!

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