

The Main Feature

Season 32 - Issue 3 (screening 13.10.11)



UK UK release 19 May 2002 Certificate U 104 minutes

Directed by Nicolas Philibert **Music by** Philippe Hersant Box office 15,486,840 €

Être et avoir is a fly-on-the-wall documentary which centres on the classroom of a village school deep in the French countryside. The village of Saint-Étienne-sur-Usson in the Auvergne has just over 200 inhabitants and the twelve pupils whose ages range from from 4 to 12 are all taught in a single classroom by the patient and kindly village schoolmaster, Georges Lopez. The film follows the pupils' progress through the year beginning with a shot of the empty - well, not quite empty - classroom before the pupils arrive at the start of term.

Nicolas Philibert is a documentary filmmaker whose work is financed by the French television channel Canal+. He spent a great deal of time finding the right school for his film visiting 300 schools which for one reason or another were not what he was looking for. When he came across this school he knew that this was the school he had been looking for. "I was immediately seduced by the personality of the schoolmaster in whom I detected, beneath his slightly authoritarian air, a profound attentiveness." Having found his school, Philibert and his four-strong crew spent seven months in the classroom amassing 600 hours of footage that he edited into a coherent film spanning the school year and the seasons. The children show no awareness of the cameras and the teacher's attention is given entirely to the children with not the slightest hint of self-display.

We soon realise that Georges Lopez, a gentle man in his penultimate year of teaching, is the kind of teacher anyone would wish they or their children could have had. In the scene in which he speaks directly to camera he says, "Everything you put in, the children always return it." His enlightened philosophy is encapsulated in a conversation with a mother worried about her daughter's reticence, calmly stressing that he wants the child "to develop and be happy".

As for the pupils, we observe them in all the normal classroom activities, learning the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as enjoying the more playful activities, such as baking pancakes, tobogganing in the snow, and picnicking in the summer fields. But we also get to see the various emotional traumas of childhood and the sensitivity with which their teacher deals with them. When Julien and Olivier get into a schoolyard scrap he does not chastise them but encourages them to express their thoughts and worries, to get them to understand why their relationship has degenerated into mutual dislike. Later he sits under a tree with Julien and talks to him about the boy's father, who has just undergone a life-threatening



operation: something that it is hard to believe many teachers would have the time or the temperament to do. Then there is the painfully shy Natalie, distraught at having to leave the comforting safety of the little village school and face up to the more rumbustious secondary school where she will soon find herself. Lopez again does his best to be reassuring. The younger children are charming and direct as only young children can be (you will see that at this age it is unwise to ask your peers, "Are you my friend?") with the delightful Jojo stealing every scene in which he appears.

Equally enjoyable are the scenes away from the school. In the farmhouse the family gather round to help with their son's maths only to find that their grasp of mathematical principles is no more secure than their son's. At the secondary school which Georges and his class visit and which some of them will shortly attend, Jojo passes the time counting as far as he knows and then wonders if this is where numbers stop.

The film was nominated as an Out of Competition film at the Cannes film Festival in 2002 and commercial success followed, It was distributed in the UK and was nominated for a Bafta award and it also won awards in Europe and the USA.

In fact *Etre et Avoir* received so many awards and was met with such fanfare that Georges Lopez sued the producer for compensation. He and the students were paid a set amount of money at low-budget documentary prices but he undertook promotional tours and felt that he deserved a larger sum after the film's success. The French judge, however, did not find in his favour. The film unions had opposed his claims, warning that if he had been successful it would have spelt "the death of the documentary, undermining the crucial principle that subjects should not be paid to participate."

NICOLAS PHILIBERT

Nicolas Philibert has been making documentaries since 1978 beginning with *Le Pays des Sourds* (In the Land of the Deaf), an exploration of the world through the eyes of those born without a sense of hearing. He also produced *la Ville Louvre* which focuses on what goes on behind the scenes in a great museum and *Un Animal, des Animaux* which explores another Paris museum, the Museum of Natural History. After making *Etre et Avoir*, the most successful French documentary ever, he returned to an animal theme in his most recent documentary *Nénette*. This 70 minute film features a star who will almost certainly not demand a share of the takings - a 40-year-old female orangutan in a zoo in the Jardin des Plantes. The camera is trained solely on her and some of her ape companions. Humans - visitors to the zoo, naturalists and experts - are heard but not seen, The film has been well received but would it go down well in Woking?



BFFS Film Society of the Year Awards

Roll of Honour 2011

BEST FILM PROGRAMMING WINNERS:

Bracknell Film Society, Forest Row Film Society

DISTINCTIONS: Edinburgh Film Guild, Louth Film Club

COMMENDATIONS: Keswick Film Club, Swindon Film Society, Chorley Empire Community Cinema, Brampton Film Club, Screen at Hay

BEST FILM EDUCATION PROGRAMME

WINNERS: Birmingham International Film Society, Edinburgh Film Guild

DISTINCTIONS: Swindon Film Club, Lewes Junior Film Club

COMMENDATIONS: Passengerfilms (London), Portsmouth Film Society

COMMUNITY AWARD

WINNERS: Portsmouth Film Society, Swindon Film Society

DISTINCTION: Colinsburgh Community Cinema

COMMENDATION: Lewes Junior Film Club

BEST MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

WINNER: Torbay Film Club

DISTINCTIONS: Chatteris Community Cinema, Louth Film Club, Brampton Film Club

COMMENDATION: Campus Cinema (Exeter University)

JIM DEMPSTER AWARD FOR INNOVATION

WINNER: Moorflix with Moorfoot Community Films (Midlothian)

DISTINCTIONS: Dulwich Paradiso and Free Film Festivals

COMMENDATION: Gallery Films (Dulwich)

FILMBANK AUDIENCE AWARD

WINNER: Dedham Films

RUNNERS UP: Lewes Junior Film Club, Brampton Film Club

BEST NEW SOCIETY

WINNER: Pix in the Stix (East Lothian)

DISTINCTIONS: Chatteris Community Cinema, Dedham Films

COMMENDATIONS: Portsmouth Film Society, Moorflix (Midlothian)

AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL

SPECIAL MENTION: Brad Scott (Forest Row Film Society)

Andrew Maddison (Warwick Student Cinema)

Hugh Devonald (Bracknell Film Society)

Owen Morgan (FLIX, Loughborough University)

Aysegul Epengin (Portsmouth Film Society)

Nicola Hay (Edinburgh Film Guild)

Rod Evans (Keswick Film Club)

Reactions toMade in Dagenham – 22 September 2011

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Votes	~	~	~	~	~	~	1	9	16	5	2
Total received	– 33			Average Score – 7.94							

Your Comments

Glad I asked for this film to be shown

Very atmospheric of the times

Reminded me a good deal of "Calendar Girls"

Really enjoyable

There was just a bit of a problem with the sound – a little indistinct

Well written, well acted, some surprising but effective casting

Truth more powerful than fiction

Excellent and beautifully acted – good to be reminded how far we have gone since then

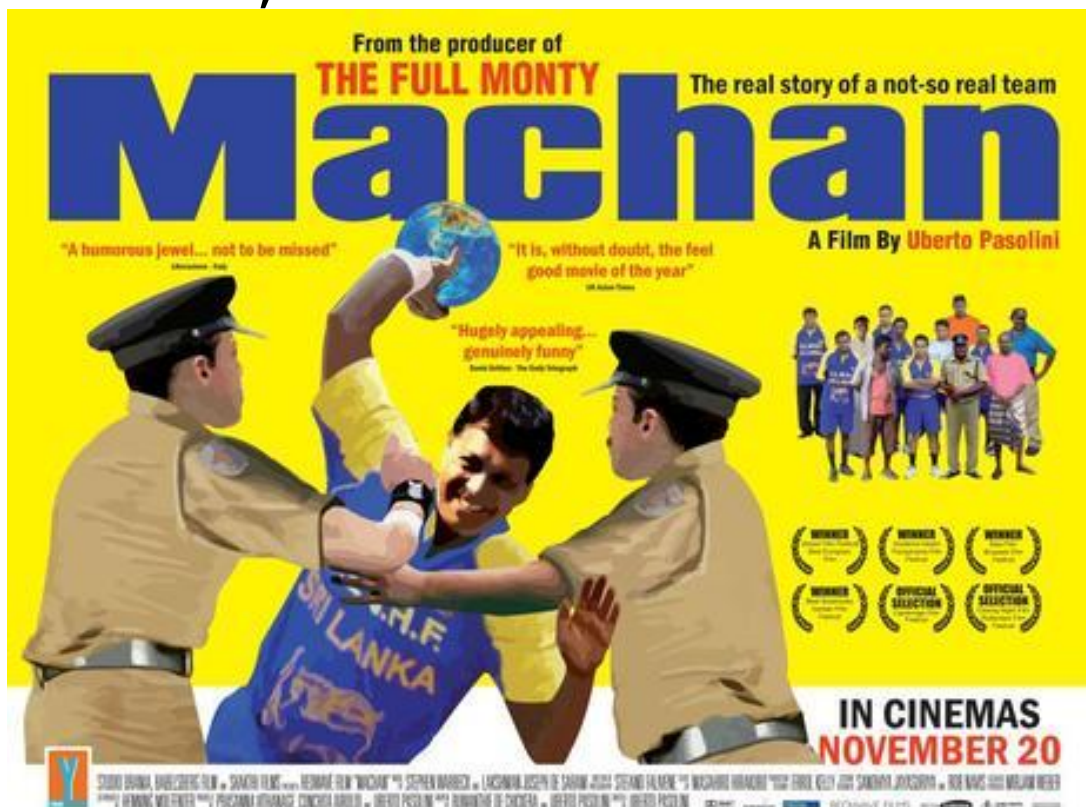
An excellent film well acted and good period piece

A lesson in the history of women's rights – excellent

Good dramatisation of a real event

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	The Kings Speech	8.66
2 nd	Made in Dagenham	7.94

Our next film at 8pm on Thursday 26 October, to mark the "One World" event:



The printing of the notes for each film is undertaken by Repropoint free of charge:

15 Poole Road, Woking Tel: 01483 596280

sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*