

**Moritz
Bleibtreu**

**Patricia
Arquette**

VIJAY

A
ROMANTIC COMEDY
BY
SAM GARBARSKI

and I



Will Wilder is sulking because it seems his family and friends have forgotten his 40th birthday. And now everyone believes that he's dead after his stolen car is involved in a bad accident. Life couldn't be worse for a talented New York actor already frustrated by his demeaning role as the green Bad Luck Bunny on a children's TV show.

Will decides to fulfill a fantasy and attend his own funeral to find out what everyone truly thinks of him. With the aid of his best friend Rad, an Indian restaurant-owner, Will becomes Vijay Singh, a handsome and gentlemanly Sikh, complete with turban and beard.

Surprisingly, Will's beautiful wife Julia takes a romantic interest in sexy stranger Vijay. Protected by his disguise, Will soon ends up courting his own widow! As Vijay, Will learns some embarrassing truths about himself and he is confronted with a unique problem: he likes Vijay more than he ever liked himself. And so does everyone else!



ATTENDING YOUR OWN FUNERAL

Will is a neurotic, paranoid actor who pretends he is dead to go to his own funeral. He's already frustrated with his life over the past 20 years and now he thinks everybody has forgotten his 40th birthday. He feels a need to find out what people really think of him. The tricky truth behind this need is, people who want to know what others think about them, know very well what others think about them, but they would like to hear something different, to be somebody different. On top of that, "de mortuis nihil nisi bene", people lie at funerals! I always wondered why people do care so much what the others think about them, and especially what people will say after their death. They won't even be there! And if you ask people, if they would like to attend their own funeral if they could, nearly everybody boasts out "oh yes!" I thought this idea would be very funny soil on which to make a story grow, reality and fantasy so close. It's a subject as human as it is universal and filled with dreams, wonderful raw material for the basis of a film. For years, I've amused myself jotting down ideas, funny, sometimes absurd, but very right for the subject as I write and rewrite the story. Two years ago, my friend, Philippe Blasband, joined me as usual to add his humor, his talent and now the American screenwriter, Matthew Robbins, has finished helping me to write the story I had in my mind, down to the smallest details.

SEPARATE BEDS

Vijay and I is the story of a couple who have grown stagnant from many years of marriage. The first shot of the film encapsulates the current status of Will and Julia's marriage – separate beds. They have been married for 20 years. They have gone from making love every night to cuddling to "Not tonight, I'm too tired." Will's absurd decision will enable their extinct couple to live a second youth. As Julia will discover Vijay, the Indian friend, Will gets a unique opportunity to rediscover his wife.



NEW YORK

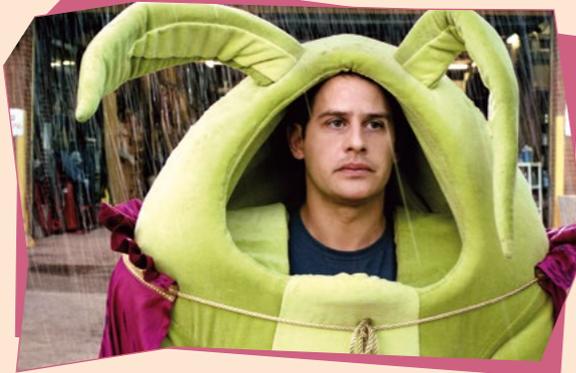
All the exteriors were shot in New York City, the interiors in studios in Luxembourg and Germany. It sounds stupid, but all the clichés are true – New York is magical, inspiring and gives you an unbelievable energy. A story like this could only happen in New York! I wasn't looking to make an

"American movie." In a way, it's a German-born man's story, the story of an immigrant who wants to make it there. The main character is named Will Wilder, which is a nod not only to Billy Wilder, but as well to the other fabulous German artists who left for America in the Thirties and Forties. It's more than the background of the story, it's the tone of the story and above all it is Moritz Bleibtreu's story! He went there in his early 20s and he stayed there for a year to live and study acting.

He said if he had remained in New York, he might have had a career like Will's playing a children's character like Bad Luck Bunny!

TRANSFORMING MORITZ INTO VIJAY

Actor Moritz Bleibtreu spent a few hours in make-up each day he had to be transformed into Vijay. He looks so good as a Sikh that I think he even enjoyed his transformation! With make-up and hair designers Claudine Moureaud and Renee Jordan, I spent an awful lot of time looking for the right texture, color, cut of his beard, hair and everything else to turn Moritz into my elegant Vijay. Sometimes the process drove Moritz crazy, but it was all worth it for him to become the seductive Vijay.



TOTAL DISGUISE

One night in Cologne, Moritz came back to his hotel still disguised as Vijay. Nobody at the reception recognized him. They asked him in English who he was. They knew very well Moritz Bleibtreu who had been staying with them for weeks, but they didn't know this Indian man! I think we did a good job on the transformation. The disguise is total – skin color, beard, hair, turban, removal of body hair. In the end, it's a movie. People want to be taken away (or not) by a story. In general, we want to believe and we wait and see what happens. The history of

film offers us many treasures in which men are disguised as lovers or even as women, or women as men. The list is long: *The Party*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Tootsie*, *Yentl*, *Mrs Doubtfire*, *Victor Victoria*... Each time we believe with great pleasure. In comedy, there are conventions. Once they are set up, they are accepted and then become normal and allow us the pleasure of falling for a story no matter how crazy or absurd.

A DREAM TRIP

I thought that the Sikh disguise was elegant and seductive. I thought it would be perfect for hiding somebody, with the beard, hair, turban. It also made sense to the story as there is a large Indian community, Sikhs in particular, in New York. Completely integrated Sikhs have lived there for one or two generations, as well as partially integrated Sikhs and totally non-

integrated Sikhs. In my mind, the story has always taken place in New York. But when I went back for the initial location scouting, I was surprised to see how much the «Indo/Colombian» neighborhood of Jackson Heights and the «yuppies» from Brooklyn Heights where the rest of the action takes place was what I had imagined with Matthew, my American co-screenwriter. Everything was right. Just as right as I believe Will's trip into Sikhism is given the neuroses of the character. He's always





wanted to be someone else, someone better. Sikhism is a dream trip for Will. More than a religion, it's a philosophy of a noble life: tolerating diversity, optimism, salvation is in this world that can be reached by everyone, etc. This nurtures the character and his internal voyage. To top it all off, Moritz loved diving into Sikhism and becoming a Sikh.

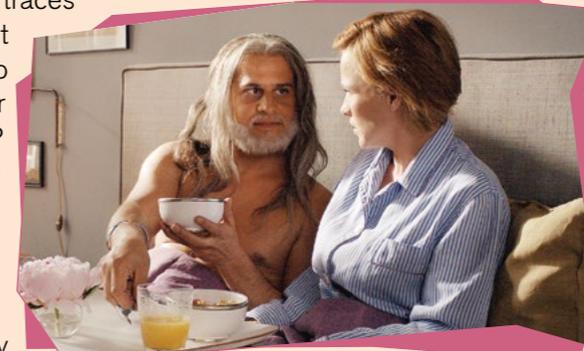
CHANGING YOUR LIFE

I like travelling into other stories in order to leave my own behind from time to time. Amos Oz said a good reader/audience does not look for traces of the author in the story, but for traces of him or herself. So I ask myself, who has never wanted to change their life? Who has never dreamed of being someone else? And who never dreamed of going to their own funeral?! I never really think about links between my films. I don't really plan much in my life, so even less any eventual coherence between my films. That said, *Vijay and I* talks about the need to change your life and in a certain way. It's a subject that has already been present in my other films. I've also changed my life in my real life, to make films, to tell the story of other lives. So maybe it is a subject that dwells in me.

DRAMA AND HUMOR ARE MARRIED

Self-irony is my universal and only remedy against all

the smaller and bigger problems in life. Since my early childhood, humor has helped me through life's trials. Certainly, part of it is genetic, Jewish humor from the "Schtetl" (Central Europe). But consciously, it's Laurel and Hardy, and, above all, Charlot who taught me to laugh and cry at life's big and large misfortunes. Then Lubitsch and Wilder came into my life with their Jewish, German, American humor. After that, I discovered from Italian neorealist films, especially those of Dino Risi and Vittorio de Sicca, self-deprecating humor, the noblest type of humor. It has become my miracle recipe against all woes. I automatically look for a funny, absurd or unexpected side to amuse myself, to work things out or to avoid depression, or all of these at the same time. I watch these films over and over with a physical pleasure that hasn't diminished. The easy humor of most comedies



today creates the illusion for spontaneous laughter but they have never brought me a feeling of well-being. Consciously or unconsciously, these films and their directors inspired me during the writing and they will do it during the shoot. Paradoxically, making a comedy isn't the easiest thing to do in film. I wanted *Vijay and I* to be funny in a subtle, elegant way. And I wanted it as realistic as possible, so I hope I gave it a certain dramatic touch as well. For me, drama and humor are not only very close, they are married and can't divorce.



**MORITZ BLEIBTREU
AS WILL WILDER**

Moritz is one of those physical, genuine actors. Once he is on the same page with you, he gives you everything he has. He came up every day with so many suggestions, I had to filter them with a lot of diplomacy. Casting Moritz as Will Wilder brought me a wonderful artistic plus. When I was in NY casting for Will/Vijay, I read by chance in a magazine that Moritz Bleibtreu had studied in NY. I decided to send the script to Moritz knowing that we were far from the original idea of an American actor. Moritz loved the script so much that he answered me the day after receiving it. We met a few days later and started to rave on together about the film we would make. This gave me an idea: why couldn't our Will be European? An immigrant, a young German artist (Moritz and I were born in Munich) who came to America to

become famous and rich. (And Will does succeed, even if it's as a green rabbit!) I found the idea seductive. The film kept its natural personality, but we planted our own roots in the story and gave it an extra dimension. The American dream, success, the relativity of all success.



**PATRICIA ARQUETTE
AS JULIA**

Patricia became Julia and did much better than I could hope for. She is a consummate professional who asks many, many questions. Once she loved all the details of her character, she required little direction. We did have competitive discussions regarding psychiatrists. Her mother was a psychiatrist, but so was my ex-wife. In the end, Julia became a charming mixture of both our field experiences. Patricia is one of those pearls, you

would be very lucky to find in an oyster. On top of that she is such a good and well-rounded person. She once said to me that she felt celebrity would be useless to her if she couldn't put it toward a good cause. She is constantly supporting humanitarian projects.

**DANNY PUDI
AS RAD**

It was clear to me that Danny was Rad from the moment I heard him for the first time on the phone. He is a brilliant young talent, so funny and willing. Danny and Moritz bonded instantly and they had fun during the whole 8-week shoot. Danny is a real comic actor, constantly funny. Sometimes I had to suppress some of his really funny moments to stay closer to the subtle charming tone I wanted. That's a tough job for a director, but I wasn't looking for one laugh immediately after the other. Luckily, like all great comic actors, Danny can do everything, including being beautifully sad.



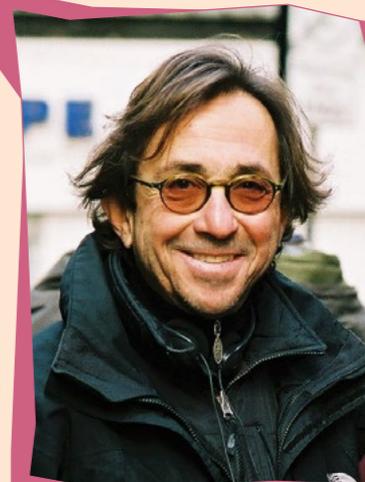


Vijay and I is Sam Garbarski's fourth feature film. Starring Moritz Bleibtreu, Patricia Arquette and Danny Pudi, *Vijay and I* made its world premiere at the 2013 Locarno Film Festival.

Garbarski's second feature film, *Irina Palm*, was an international hit, distributed in over 40 countries and shown in nearly thirty festivals after premiering in Berlin Competition. Starring Marianne Faithfull, the crowd-pleaser also won prestigious awards, including Italy's David di Donatello (Oscar equivalent) for Best European Film.

Garbarski's other features are *A Distant Neighborhood (Quartier Lointain)*, based on Jiro Tanaguchi's popular manga, and *Rashevski's Tango (Le Tango des Rachevski)*, a prize-winner at the 2004 Jerusalem Film Festival.

Born in Germany, but based in Belgium for many years, Garbarski started directing shorts in 1997. *The Turkey, Life, Death, Soccer* and *Merry Christmas, Rachid* were big hits in festivals and benefited from a wide TV broadcast. Garbarski started as a commercials director, having founded the advertising agency Garbarski Euro RSCG. He directed more than 50 commercials, many of them award-winners in international festivals.



2013 *Vijay and I*
 2010 *A Distant Neighborhood (Quartier Lointain)*
 2007 *Irina Palm*
 2003 *Rashevski's Tango (Le Tango des Rachevski)*

Main Cast

Will Moritz *Bleibtreu*
Julia Patricia *Arquette*
Rad *Danny Pudi*
Micky *Michael Imperioli*
Lily (daughter) *Catherine Missal*
Mrs Korkowski *Jeannie Berlin*
Mr Korkowski *Moni Moshonov*
Will's Mother *Hanna Schygulla*
Will's Father *Michael Gwisdek*
Alex (TV director) *Tania Garbarski*

Main Crew

Director: *Sam Garbarski*
Screenplay: *Philippe Blasband, Matthew Robbins, Sam Garbarski*
Based on an original idea by:
Sam Garbarski
Director of Photography:
Alain Duplantier
Editor: *Sandrine Deegen*
Production Designer: *Véronique Sacrez*
Sound Editor: *François Dumont*
Costumes: *Catherine Marchand*
Key Make-up: *Claudine Moureaud*
Key Hair: *Rene Jordan*
Set Photos: *Patrick Müller*
Produced by: *Sebastien Delloye, Jani Thiltges, Reinhard Brundig*



Production companies: *Entre Chien et Loup (Belgium), Samsa Film (Luxembourg), Pandora Filmproduktion (Germany)*

With the support of

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- Casa Kafka Pictures, Casa Kafka Pictures Movie Empowered by BELFIUS
- Film Fund Luxembourg
- Film-und Medienstiftung NRW
- Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein
- Program MEDIA Development and i2i Audiovisual of the European Union

Technical Information

Year: 2013
Country: *Belgium / Germany / Luxembourg*
Length: 96 Minutes
Screening Format: *DCP HD 2K, Scope, Dolby SRD, Color*

Upcoming Releases

Belgium: *Imagine Film 18.9.2013*
Germany: *Senator Film 5.9.2013*
Switzerland: *Xenix 5.9.2013*



CAST & CREW



Festival del film Locarno
Piazza Grande



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