

Possibles Média & Freshwater Pictures  
present

# Early Winter

A film by Michael Rowe

Canada / Australia (2015) - 99 min.

## Synopsis

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David, a man in his forties, lives a predictable life with his wife Maya and their two children. To please his wife with the latest gadgets, he works solitary shift work, days and nights, as a janitor in a retirement home, keeping control of his life by taking painkillers. But when he begins to suspect that Maya is having an affair, he starts to lose ground, his past threatening to smash everything in his path.



# Realities of the modern-day couple

The story of a marriage that's been through the ringer, Michael Rowe hopes *EARLY WINTER* brings audiences to reflect on how we seek happiness through our romantic partnerships, and the things we subject those people to. "Western society is stuck in a kind of prolonged adolescence in so many senses," he says. "One of the main carrots that hangs in front of people everywhere is love in the sense of 'falling and being in love.' This kind of altered, psychological, chemical brain state, is a drug. It's an amazing thing, but the nuts and bolts of everyday living under one roof for 15-20 years and raising children is much less glamorous and much more tiring. It's at the centre of most people's lives and yet it's a struggle that is not generally explored, because there's a strong streak of escapism in commercial cinema. It's one of the things that people go to the cinema to escape from."

"Here are two people who might on the surface seem to have a perfectly normal domestic partnership," says Suzanne Clément ("Maya"), "but as soon as you begin to peel back the layers and notice the lack of communication, the discomfort, the act of withdrawing oneself emotionally, the pointed jabs they take at each other, you realize they've reached a point in their relationship where uncertainty and unaddressed grievances prevail. We don't actually know what the outcome will be."

"Maya being of Russian origin, it goes without saying that she's isolated in this godforsaken place in the middle of Quebec, where English isn't really spoken. She probably doesn't try very hard to learn French, resisting the decision she made to live with this man." For Clément, *EARLY WINTER* explores that thorny transition period during which two people reassess decisions they made some time ago. "There are choices couples make when they get together, to embark on a great life adventure. But sometimes, you'll find yourself going back, five or ten years later, after two kids and asking yourself: 'Is this all my life is? Is this what I chose?'"

**"At the end of the day, happiness and living well don't have a whole lot to do with circumstances, but rather with knowing how to be happy and how to interact with the people around you. I think we often get trapped in these emotional cycles... These are issues I explore in *Early Winter*." – Michael Rowe**

# A storyteller of the intimate

EARLY WINTER's laconic narrative naturally evolves between the family home and the aged care unit where David works as a janitor. He is a good listener, and several people at his workplace confide in him, but his own life is impenetrable to those around him. Only when we see his enormous but secret compassion for a dying elderly woman do we feel the depth of his own desperation. Michael Rowe will be the first to acknowledge that his cinematic style is more contained, less pyrotechnical than most commercial directors. He's drawn to slower, quieter, subtler approaches to storytelling.

"My first impression was that the script had great power and potency in its subtleties," recalls Suzanne Clément. "It was almost impressionistic, but the story itself was very strong. Thankfully, I had seen LEAP YEAR, Michael's first film. That helped me grasp the tone. It all unfolded with such subtlety – through unspoken cues, with little fanfare."

For Serge Noël, producer, EARLY WINTER is clearly destined to be an author project – a minimalist drama. Michael seems most comfortable as a director of really intimate cinema. I even sense there is something of an almost 'Bergmanian' nature in the work of Michael, and especially in EARLY WINTER. He looks into our most elemental weaknesses, our frailties, our lack of courage. He is a Bergman of our modern times. There is no attempt made to cover up what has been revealed through dialogue, or to save face after the lies are uncovered. The characters' true nature are not hidden by words.

Reading through a draft of the screenplay, Paul Doucet was taken aback by Michael Rowe's sharp narrative instincts. "With very, very simple things, he's able to tell a story and give us a slice of everyday life that you rarely see. It felt like I was a witness to someone's life – the crudeness and simplicity of it." Doucet talks of being floored by Rowe's fearlessness in seeing some of EARLY WINTER's most difficult scenes through. "It's very bold, very crude, and it takes a lot of courage to tell a story like that. It's the kind of material that I want to work on, that I want to see, that I want to do."

Producer Trish Lake believes Rowe's uncanny ability to hit some kind of emotional bull's eye has to do with the director working in total communion with actors to bring his vision to life. "Audiences feel like they're seeing something that's almost private, something that they're not going to see in most films. There's an almost documentary approach to how he conveys the situation of the characters and what is motivating them. As an audience, to be able to experience that is quite unique, and that's not always achievable, no matter all the smoke and mirrors that we use in making films."

**"I think that in order to make a really great, standout film, you need to be completely fearless." – Michael Rowe**



# Michael Rowe

## Michael Rowe / Writer, Director

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Australian film director and screenwriter Michael Rowe studied English post-colonial literature at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. His artistic career first began as a poet, winning the Melbourne Fringe Festival Poetry Prize. He then moved to theatre and wrote three plays. In 1994, at the age of 23, he traveled to Mexico and made it his adoptive home. In 1998, while in Mexico, he began a career as a journalist while studying screenwriting at a Vincente Leñero workshop. In 2005, one of his first scripts, *Naturaleza Muertas* won at the Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía. In 2006, he directed his first short film, *CACAHUATES*. *SILENCIO* followed in 2007. Though English is his native language, the bulk of his film work is done in Spanish.

In 2010, Rowe directed *AÑO BISIESTO (LEAP YEAR)*, which garnered him the *Caméra d'Or* prize for best first time feature film director at the Cannes Film Festival. The film was well received by critics.

His follow-up film, *THE WELL (MANTO ACUIFERO)* premiered at the Rome Film Festival in 2013.

In 2013, it was announced that Rowe was working on his English feature debut, *EARLY WINTER*, starring Paul Doucet and Suzanne Clément, and slated for production in Montreal. The film is a co-production between Quebec production house, *Possibles Média*, run by Serge Noël and Australia's *Freshwater Pictures*.

# The long take philosophy

For most films, the real magic happens in the editing room, a leg of production that actors generally have no control over whatsoever. But Michael Rowe likes to create the film alongside his cast – what they do is what we see as the final result. “I think there are many, many ways to make films,” he reasons. “I’m a little bit biased toward actors; I really like working with them. I believe that you can tell the story through good acting. I kind of go in a little bit naked in that sense. I don’t generally use music. I don’t do internal cuts within a scene – that lets me focus on the actors, it lets them do their work and allows me do the kind of work I want to do. Of course, it’s risky; it comes with its share of challenges for editing. Sometimes you don’t get all the incredible things happening in the same take. But I think really good acting can get you a lot in terms of emotional results, and if something is well-written and well-acted, you can get anything. It gives you enormous freedom to do things that way.”

Rowe likes to compose each individual shot as meticulously as possible, telling a story through the frame in each scene. He recalls the moment during the shoot when he realized this wasn’t common practice on Quebec sets. “It’s a different way of doing things, I guess. It was the first time I worked with a non-Mexican crew and non-Mexican actors, and everybody was quite freaked out by it, the style of the film. We finished the first take, and I said: ‘Alright, we’ve got it. Let’s move on.’ And there was a silence for, like, four seconds. Everybody looked at each other and somebody said: ‘You’re not going to do coverage?’ I said no, and there was another silence. And then someone said: ‘Okaaaaay. Whoa.’ For the first two days, people weren’t really sure of what was happening, or what we were doing. By day four, everybody on the crew was so excited and blown away, so committed and convinced that they were doing something important that it’s been really gratifying for me to work with them.”

**“As a scriptwriter and director, it’s so wonderful and enriching to build a narrative together with two people who have also been building and structuring characters for 20 years, and are experts at it. I don’t understand why more directors don’t work this way. The whole idea of coming onto a set with a prescriptive script and telling the actor: ‘walk this way, turn around, scratch your head.’ I have no idea why anyone would want to do that.” – Michael Rowe**

# Paul Doucet

## The cast : Paul Doucet / « David »

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Over the past 20 years, Paul Doucet has multiplied attendances in theater, television and films, performing many diverse parts both in English and French.

In theater, he has acted under the direction of Lorraine Pintal, René Richard-Cyr, Denise Filiatrault and Martine Beaulne to name a few. He currently plays in THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, on tour across Quebec, once again under the direction of Lorraine Pintal.

On television, he brilliantly played the title role in the JEAN DUCEPPE series. For this, he won the G meaux for Best interpretation in 2003. Then, he took part in the series MUS E  DEN in 2010, and MAUVAIS KARMA in 2013, for which he was nominated both in drama and comedy at the G meaux. Afterwards, he performed in 30 VIES, LANCE ET COMPTE: LA D CHIRURE, LA PROMESSE and ZOS, ZONE OF S PARATION, an English Canadian production presented on HBO. Currently, he embodies Georges Ste-Marie for the t l roman UNIT  9, back for a 4th season on Ici Radio-Canada, for which he got his first nomination at the 2013 Artis gala, and an Artis award for Best actor in 2014. He is also part of the distribution of MENSONGES by Sylvain Archambault, playing a role for which he was nominated at the 2014 G meaux.

On the big screen, after having featured in many films, he earned a nomination for Best supporting role as R mi in LES 3 P'TITS COCHONS by Patrick Huard at the 2008 Jutra. He also played in FILI RE 13 by Patrick Huard, LANCE ET COMPTE: LE FILM and NO MIE: LE SECRET by Fr d rik d'Amours; not to mention his outstanding performance as Jonathan Aaronson, a character inspired by Coco Douglass L opold in FUNKYTOWN by Daniel Roby. More recently, he has played in FRISSON DES COLLINES by Richard Roy, LA PEUR DE L'EAU by Gabriel Pelletier, HOT DOG by Marc-Andr  Lavoie, LA GARDE by Sylvain Archambault, EXIL by Charles-Olivier Michaud and he also lent his voice to the character of Baymax in the French version of the Disney animated film BIG HERO 6. In 2015, you will see him in GUIBORD S'EN VA-T'EN GUERRE by Philippe Falardeau and EARLY WINTER by Michael Rowe. Note that he will also be resuming his role of R mi in the sequel of LES 3 P'TITS COCHONS, for which the filming is scheduled late summer 2015.

**“With very, very simple things, he’s able to tell a story and give us a slice of everyday life that you rarely see. It felt like I was a witness to someone’s life – the crudeness and simplicity of it.” Doucet talks of being floored by Rowe’s fearlessness in seeing some of EARLY WINTER’s most difficult scenes through. “It’s very bold, very crude, and it takes a lot of courage to tell a story like that. It’s the kind of material that I want to work on, that I want to see, that I want to do.”**



# Suzanne Clément

## The cast : Suzanne Clément / « Maya »

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Suzanne Clément garnered international attention in 2012 when she won the Un Certain Regard - Best Actress award at Cannes for her role as 'Fred Belair' in Xavier Dolan's LAURENCE ANYWAYS. This same role led to another win (Best Actress River Run International Film Festival) and three additional nominations for her performance (Canadian Screen Awards, International Cinephile Society and the Vancouver Film Critics Circle). Clément, has appeared in three of the incomparable director, Xavier Dolan's films, including I KILLED MY MOTHER and his latest, MOMMY. The acclaimed MOMMY, won the Cannes Jury Prize in 2014, and has gone on to countless wins and nominations in film festivals around the world, recently being selected as Canada's Oscar entry for Best Foreign-language Film. For her rich portrayal of the mysterious 'Kyla' in MOMMY, Clément has received numerous nominations and wins including, most recently, her CSA nomination; winning the Best Actress Award at the Namur Film Festival; and being nominated by the Online Film Critics Society for Best Supporting Actress, opposite Patricia Arquette, Jessica Chastain, Agata Kulesza and Tilda Swinton.

In 2014, Suzanne had MOMMY's North American premiere at Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF); followed by Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF), which along with MOMMY, showcased Clément's latest English language features; the World Premiere of FALL and the emotionally-charged film SITTING ON THE EDGE OF MARLENE.

Incredibly hardworking and always in-demand, Clément just completed her second film with director, Philippe Falardeau; GUIBORD S'EN VA-T-EN GUERRE, and recently wrapped two films in Canada and France, simultaneously; EARLY WINTER (in English), directed by fellow Cannes-winner, Michael Rowe; and TAULARDES, from writer/director Audrey Estrougo.

Other credits include: Luc Picard's L'AUDITION; Fernand Dansereau's LA BRUNANTE; Philippe Falardeau's IT'S NOT ME, I SWEAR!; Stefan Miljevic's AMSTERDAM; and Jean-Jacques Zilbermann's A LA VIA.

Other Awards and Nominations include: a CSA; a Genie; 3 Gémmeaux for Comedy; 4 Jutras; 2 VFCC and a Golden Bayard.

**“My first impression was that the script had great power and potency in its subtleties,” recalls Suzanne Clément. “It was almost impressionistic, but the story itself was very strong. Thankfully, I had seen LEAP YEAR, Michael’s first film. That helped me grasp the tone. It all unfolded with such subtlety – through unspoken cues, with little fanfare.”**





# A truly international work

The genesis of this singular coproduction can be traced back to Mexico's Festival Internacional de Cine en Guadalajara, where producer Serge Noël and director Michael Rowe first crossed paths. The two clearly hit it off, with Noël vowing to "find money for an Australian-Mexican writer-director to shoot a film in Canada." The rest, as fellow producer Trish Lake puts it, was about "expanding opportunities for collaborators to work together but in different environments."

"What really interests me in the world is the complexities of human interaction and human relationships," explains Michael Rowe. "When I started to think about writing a story with Canadian characters, I spoke with some good friends of mine in Canada about winter and the emotional effects of being closed up. I think the seasons have a very strong effect on a relationship, so I was interested in exploring a relationship breakdown or crisis, as it's intensified by the isolation that winter brings on. And also, my own themes, which I always explore: immigration and the isolation of characters out of their context, trying to emotionally survive in environments that aren't their own. So it was a combination of those two things."

"When Michael first visited Quebec, we drove across the province," recalls Serge Noël. "Long car rides spent talking about the history of Quebec, relations between Anglophones and Francophones, the structure of Canada and people's relationship to winter, to give him a better sense of what our reality consists of, to allow him to experience it momentarily. Michael's work is deeply engrained in the Mexican reality and to understand the Quebec reality, it's all in the details. It was about giving him a sense of confidence that this made sense, and how that would translate in the nuances and small relationship details of a couple with a linguistic split, so he felt confident that he could tell the story truthfully. Michael's always looking for a certain type of truth, and he can be very demanding to actors because of that. He doesn't compromise on it."

That cinematic authenticity that Serge Noël refers to is what Australian producer Trish Lake describes as Michael Rowe's take-no-prisoners approach to filmmaking. "He's got a very strong vision about his characters and their place, their predicament, the way they view the world, and he can convey that in a way that is very unusual, because people who are filmmakers have many tools at their disposal," says Lake. "It is the work of smoke and mirrors, really; it's the magic. And yet Michael has elected, because he's primarily a writer who's come to directing later in life, to convey story in a very, very disciplined and exacting way."

# Production

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## Possibles Média / Serge Noël (Canada)

Operating in Montreal since 2007, Possibles Média is the production arm of producer Serge Noël, who has produced six theatrical feature or television series in the last ten years. His last two feature productions have respectively won Best Canadian film (CLOUDS OVER THE CITY) and the Special Jury Prize (MISSING VICTOR PELLERIN) at the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma in Montréal. He also worked on the feature coproduction France/Canada FATIMA which was unveiled in the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes 2015.

Possibles Média aims to produce nationally and internationally relevant drama, deep-seated in the complexities of contemporary societies. Possibles Média is mostly dedicated to director-driven films and trans-media work.

## Freshwater pictures / Trish Lake (Australia)

Independent Producer and former ABC Television journalist Trish Lake specializes in feature films and documentaries. Trish is the managing director of Freshwater Pictures, based in Brisbane, Australia. Her credits include FRACKMAN, a feature documentary, produced with partners Smith&Nasht and Aquarius Productions - FRACKMAN was selected for Good Pitch and has been released theatrically in Australia through the cinema-on-demand web platform, TUGG; SHOW ME THE MAGIC, seen in cinemas and on ABCTV; MY AMERICA, selected for competition at Sydney Film Festival and recently released by Film Buff in the US; THE BURNING SEASON, selected for competition at Tribeca Film Festival, and a winner of Best Documentary at the Australian IF Awards; RARE CHICKEN RESCUE a previous winner of Best Documentary at Sydney Film Festival, and the feature film SUBDIVISION, directed by Sue Brooks and distributed by Walt Disney Studios and Denmark's LevelK.

While her films have won numerous nominations and awards, Trish herself won the prestigious SPA Feature Film Producer of the Year Award, for her award-winning first feature, GETTIN' SQUARE, which was directed by Jonathan Teplitsky, written by Chris Nyst and co-produced by Freshwater Pictures, with Mushroom Pictures and Working Title.

Trish is an Adjunct Fellow at Griffith University in Brisbane where she leads a mentor program for emerging producers at Griffith Film School, and where she is also doing post-graduate research.

# Credits

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## The cast

David	Paul Doucet	Jean-François	Didier Lucien
Maya	Suzanne Clément	Henriette	Jane Gilchrist
Lucille	Micheline Lanctôt	André	Maxime Laferrière
Dominique	Lise Martin	Support Group	Antonio Bavaro Alain E. Cadieux
Alexandre	Alexandre Marine	Normand	Bill Corday
Sergei	Michel Riendeau	Grégoire	Charles Licha
Maxim	Ambrosio de Luca	Residents	Jean Guimond Raymond Boudreau
Julie	Céline Bonnier		

# Credits

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Directed by  
Michael Rowe

Original Screenplay by  
Michael Rowe

Produced by  
Serge Noël & Trish Lake

Executive Producer  
Richard Cohen

Co-Producer  
Dan Lake

Story and Dialogue Consultant  
Peter Haynes

Director of Photography  
Nicolas Canniccioni

Production Designer  
Pierre Allard

Costume Designer  
Alexandra Sawicki

Editor  
Geoff Lamb

Sound Designer  
Simon Hicks

Original Music by  
Amy Bastow

1st Assistant Director	Eléonore Létourneau	Production Accountant Assistant (Canada)	Dominique Lafrance
2nd Assistant Director	Danielle Ste Marie	Production Accountants (Australia)	Jane Corden
3rd Assistant Directors	Karine P. Labelle		Daniel Schultz
	Roxanna Macedo		
Script Supervisor	Marjorie Hamel	Picture Post-Production Facility (Australia)	Cutting Edge
		Head of Post-Production	Marcus Bolton
1st Assistant Camera	Guillaume Sabourin	Post-Production Producer	Dani Gard
2nd Assistant Camera / DIT	Julie Caron	Post-Production Line Producer	Jo Tankard
		Digital Intermediate Colourist	Adrian Hauser
		Online Operator	Christian Alcock
Casting Supervisor	Bruno Rosato		
Casting Associate	Kate Yablunovsky	Editor Consultants	Ken Sallows
Extras Casting	Montréal Casting		Dany Cooper
		VFX Producer	Flavia Riley
Production Unit Manager	Jean Francois Roesler	VFX coordinator	Kasia Rymar
Assistant Unit Manager	Yannick Amman	VFX Compositors	Antony Haberl
Production Supervisor	Serge Noël		Ben Ying
Producer Assistants (Canada)	Jeanne-Marie Poulain		Viv Baker
	Leslie Dabit		
Producer Assistants (Australia)	Lauren Brown	Picture Post-Production Lab (Canada)	Studios St-Antoine
	Daniel Schultz	Post-Production Director	Isabelle Bouchard
		Post-Production Coordinator	François Cardin
Production Executive (Australia)	Ben McNeill	Technical Director	Simon Cliche
Assistant to the Director	Pià Gomez	Assistant Editor	Tom Randaxhe
Production Accountants (Canada)	Daniel Morin		
	Josée Gagné	Post-Production Supervisor (Australia)	Lauren Brown
		Post-Production Supervisor (Canada)	Anne-Marie Bousquet
		Post-Production Consultant	Joshua Dawson

VFX (Canada)  
Visual Effects Supervisor  
Visual Effects Coordinator  
Compositing Supervisor  
Visual Effects Lead  
Matte Painter  
Visual Effects Operation Manager

Alchemy 24  
Jean-François Ferland  
Rachelle Bergeron  
Andris Pakalns  
Olivier Péloquin  
Jessica Francoeur-Ducharme  
Catherine Nadeau

Sound

Marcel Chouinard  
Daniel Fontaine Bégin

Sound Consultant  
Boom

Pascal Van Strydonck  
Philippe Lavigne

Sound Post-Production Facilities (Australia)

Cutting Edge  
Soundfirm  
Simon Hicks  
Michael Newton

Head of Audio  
Sound Editors

Foley Facility (Australia)  
Foley Artist  
Foley Recordist

French Dubbing

Music Supervisor

Feet 'n' Frames  
John Simpson M.P.S.E.  
Lisa Simpson

Les Vilains Garçons

Peter Hoyland

*Additional Music*

“Mes Chers Tits Yeux Noirs”

Written by Pierre Bonjour & Vincent Biln

Performed by Pierre Bonjour & Vincent Biln

Published by KAPAGAMA and Universal Production Music

Set Decorator  
Swing

Elise de Blois  
Martin Bisailon  
François Perreault  
François Savard  
André Charlebois

Daily Swings  
Property Master  
Painter

Renaud Fontaine-Deniger  
Alexandre Juneau  
Christian Corvellec

Gaffer  
Best Boy Electro  
Electros

Francois Legris  
Christian Sirois  
Yvan Sergerie  
Xavier Boivert-Lavoie

Key Grip  
Best Boy Grip  
Assistant Grip

Benoit Alarie  
Andrew Dent  
Charli Alarie-Gagnon

Additional Repairs

Carl Fortin

Head Wardrobe  
Key Hair Stylist  
Chief Make-up Artist

Isabel Poulin  
Marcelo Padovani  
Annick Chartier

Location Manager  
Assistant Location Manager  
Location

Marcel Cloutier  
Manon Paiment  
Mike Sposato  
Ville de Montréal Est  
Lafarge Canada Inc.  
Action secours vie d'espoir  
Fondation de l'IUSMM  
Cinezoo

Animal Wrangler

Tutor

Pauline Belhumeur

Set Production Assistants

Alexandre Piuze Gualmini  
Stéphane Doyon

Production Assistants

David Bell  
Brigitte Deshusses

Production Assistant / Driver

Audrey Blais  
Alexandra Halley-Audet  
Yannick Pierre Humbert

Stills Photographer  
Promotional Photographer  
Behind the Scenes Footage

Laurent Guérin  
Billy Kenrick  
Angel Montiel

Key Art / Opening Titles  
Trailer

The Solid State  
The Solid State

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Téléfilm Canada

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Executive Producer: Mark Woods

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Rest Home is an Official Canada/Australia Co-production

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