

JULIE, JULIE



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Does Susac's syndrome really exist?

A. Yes, it does, but that's not what Julie actually has. There are a couple of things that are similar to Julie's condition, but as far as I'm aware, no-one has ever presented with these exact symptoms. Susac's syndrome occurs very seldom, mostly in women in their 20's and 30's and those affected fail to distinguish between their second language and their mother tongue. There are some people who suffer head trauma and as a result briefly gain increased competency in a second language they already know partially, and then there are people who, after strokes, appear to have a different accent. There was a woman from Newcastle in the UK who, after recovering consciousness after a stroke reportedly spoke with a Jamaican accent. She didn't know any Jamaican slang, though, it was just that her brain no longer controlled her speech muscles in the same way.

Q. Is your female lead really fluent?

A. Yes, Stephanie is fluent in both French and Italian. She spent several years in Paris and gained an MA in Aesthetics from the Sorbonne. I was incredibly lucky to find her for this role! Fred isn't, but he did a fantastic job of learning them phonetically.

Q. Do you speak French?

A. A bit, but I needed help from my two translators, Marc and Stephanie. I'm currently living in Bordeaux in an attempt to improve my French. I'm learning lots of argot, but my grammar is still awful! I think I'm still some way from watching "Les Quatre Cent Coups" or "Bande A Part" without subtitles.

Q. Where did you get the idea for the movie?

A. I noticed this trend in French cinema recently. There's almost a genre in which a middle-class couple suddenly have their relationship turned on its head by an unexpected surreal event: movies like "Lemming," "La Moustache" and "Sous la Sable." They're all about the tensions that lie underneath

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our relationships and our everyday interactions, aren't they? I was thinking about that, and wanting to make something that kind of bridged a gap between American and French film styles. Initially I'd thought about having Julie's personality replaced by that of an older French woman, a fully-formed other personality, but that started to get a bit too supernatural for where I wanted things to go.

On top of all that, I'm a huge fan of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, and whenever I do something personal I can't help it if a little bit of that feeling creeps in through the back door.

Q. What's the music?

A. It's by Erik Satie, who wrote "Gymnopédies." He was really the first surrealist composer. When critics accused him of writing "formless" music he responded by writing pieces with titles like "In the form of a pear." I felt his music suited the film both thematically and emotionally. There's something teasing in them. When we came to make our recordings the pianist told me that one of the "Gnossiennes" pieces I wanted her to record was written by Satie about a belly dance, which to me justified my inclination to use it right at the end of the movie.

Q. Does the old Julie ever come back?

A. If you want her to, sure. In my mind I'm not so sure she does. We toyed with the idea of tacking on a scene after the credits. Julie and Charles are back in the diner and Julie is her old self. Charles is testing her to find out if she remembers any French, but she doesn't, much to his annoyance. We ran out of time on the day and never shot it. In any case, I wanted a quizzical ending.