



PRESENTS
A MENUET & TOPKAPI FILMS PRODUCTION

THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN

A FILM BY FELIX VAN GROENINGEN

SCREENPLAY BY CARL JOOS & FELIX VAN GROENINGEN WITH JOHAN HELDENBERGH AND VEERLE BAETENS

Run Time: 112 Minutes | Language: Dutch w/English subtitles
Platform theatrical release starting November 1, 2013

1-Nov	New York	Sunshine Cinema
8-Nov	Los Angeles	Nuart
15-Nov	Boston	Kendall Square
15-Nov	Washington	E Street
15-Nov	Philadelphia	Ritz Bourse
15-Nov	Irvine	WESTPARK 8
15-Nov	Los Angeles	Sunset Cinemas
22-Nov	Asbury Park, NJ	Showroom
22-Nov	New York	Cinema Village
22-Nov	San Francisco	OPERA PLAZA
22-Nov	Berkeley	Shattuck 10
22-Nov	Seattle	Varsity
22-Nov	Minneapolis	Lagoon
22-Nov	San Diego	Ken Cinema
22-Nov	Washington	Avalon Cinema
22-Nov	San Rafael, CA	Rafael Film Center
27-Nov	Washington	West End Cinema
29-Nov	Santa Fe	Jean Cocteau
29-Nov	Southern Pines, NC	Sunrise Theater
29-Nov	San Diego	Gaslamp 15
4-Dec	Santa Barbara	Plaza de Oro
6-Dec	Hartford	Real Art Ways
6-Dec	Monterey	Osio Cinemas
6-Dec	San Jose	Camera 3
6-Dec	Irvington, NY	Irvington Town Hall
6-Dec	Phoenix	Camelview
6-Dec	Fort Wayne, IN	Cinema Center
6-Dec	Gainesville	Hippodrome Theater
6-Dec	Atlanta	Midtown Art
6-Dec	Denver	Chez Artiste
6-Dec	Winston Salem, NC	a/perture cinema
6-Dec	Austin	Arbor 8
6-Dec	Portland	Fox Tower
6-Dec	Miami	Tower Theater
6-Dec	Hollywood, FL	Cinema Paradiso
6-Dec	Boca Raton	Living Room Theater
6-Dec	Daytona Beach	Cinematheque
6-Dec	Coral Gables	Cosford Theater
6-Dec	St Johnsbury, VT	Catamount Arts Center
6-Dec	Wilmington	theater N
7-Dec	Lakewood Ranch, FL	Burns Court at Lakewood
13-Dec	Tucson	Loft Cinema
13-Dec	Ogden, UT	Arthouse 502
13-Dec	Lake Park, FL	Mos' Art
13-Dec	Wilmington, DE	Theater N
13-Dec	Lake Worth	Lake Worth Playhouse
13-Dec	Three Oaks, MI	Vickers Theater
13-Dec	Denver	Sie Film Center
13-Dec	Dallas	Magnolia 5
13-Dec	Pelham, NY	Picturehouse
13-Dec	Athens, OH	Athena Theater
15-Dec	Coral Gables	Cosford Theater
17-Dec	Miami	Tower Theater
18-Dec	Los Angeles	Crest
20-Dec	Ft Worth	Modern Art Museum
20-Dec	Riverside, CA	Culver Center
20-Dec	Miami	MB Cinematheque
26-Dec	Boulder	Boedecker Theater
27-Dec	Savannah	Cinema Savannah
27-Dec	Tulsa	Circle Cinemas
2-Jan	Albuquerque	Guild Cinema
7-Jan	Tacoma	Grand Cinema
10-Jan	Missoula, MT	Roxy Theater
17-Jan	Columbus	Gateway Film Center
24-Jan	Chicago	Music Box Theater
24-Jan	Louisville	Village 7
25-Jan	Montgomery, AL	Capri Film Theater
31-Jan	Cleveland	Cleveland Cinematheque
1-Feb	Cornelius, NC	Cornelius Art Center
9-Feb	Macon, GA	Douglass theater
21-Feb	Winchester, VA	Alamo Drafthouse
22-Feb	Williamsburg, VA	Kimball Theater
27-Mar	Ithaca, NY	Cornell Cinema

Winner of:

*Panorama Audience Award at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival
Europa Cinemas Label as Best European Film in the Panorama section in the Berlin International Film
Festival*

Best Screenplay for a narrative feature – 2013 Tribeca Film Festival

Best Actress in a narrative feature (Veerle Baetens) – 2013 Tribeca Film Festival

9 Ensor Awards of Flemish Cinema including for Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, and Best Music

Festivals:

Premiered at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival

2013 Tribeca Film Festival

2013 Seattle International Film Festival

2013 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

SYNOPSIS

Elise (Veerle Baetens) and Didier (Johan Heldenbergh) fall in love at first sight. She has her own tattoo shop and he plays the banjo in a bluegrass band. They bond over their shared enthusiasm for American music and culture, and dive headfirst into a sweeping romance that plays out on and off stage — but when an unexpected tragedy hits their new family, everything they know and love is tested. An intensely moving portrait of a relationship from beginning to end, propelled by a soundtrack of foot-stomping bluegrass, *The Broken Circle Breakdown* is a romantic melodrama of the highest order.

INTERVIEW WITH FELIX VAN GROENINGEN

On the origin of the film

The Broken Circle Breakdown is an adaptation of a theater play by Johan Heldenbergh. Johan is a friend and I've worked with him as an actor on two of my previous films. When I saw his play I was totally flabbergasted. The combination of the personal story, the music, and the theme (reason vs. religion) just blew me away. Johan is very interested in film, so he was very excited when I expressed my interest in an adaptation. He was also in favor of not collaborating on the screenwriting. So I started working on the script together with screenwriter Carl Joos, but we had to start over a couple of times, before we could really crack it, as it was a pretty complex story.

On the difficulties of adaptation

I had concerns about adapting the play to the screen. The play was so perfect that I wasn't sure the film was going to reach the same high standards. I debated if it was really worth making it. That particular romantic drama genre wasn't my cup of tea either. The play also had a lot of monologues, which isn't very cinematic material. It had so many layers. I had the feeling that I would never be able to translate them into a film. But in the end it was my gut-feeling that convinced me. I was so deeply touched by this play that this would give me the energy to somehow find a way to make it work. I also felt that the fact that it wasn't going to be easy, would make it an interesting and personal film. All the not-so-evident particularities (bluegrass, melodrama) became the challenging features of the project.

On the structure

The structure of *The Broken Circle Breakdown* was created during editing. It was always the idea to cross-cut between different times of Didier and Elise's life, but the concept of the script was different than how it ended up being in the final film. This however, has been the case with almost all of my films. Longtime collaborator editor Nico Leunen is a real magician with this kind of storytelling, and my films have benefitted a lot from it. The main reason, I guess, is that my films are not plotted story wise but emotion wise. And there are always a lot of things that work very different on screen (as opposed to on paper), so questioning all this during editing has become an un-inevitable part of my filmmaking process.

On Johan Heldenbergh as Didier

Johan co-wrote the play and starred in it, and while adapting it, it never crossed my mind that he shouldn't play this role. The reason is simple: he and his character Didier are very much alike. They like to talk and don't mind being in the center of things. They have opinions on almost everything. Didier's atheist view on life is also very much Johan's. There is a difference between theatre and film however, and during rehearsals Johan and I researched other sides of Didier's character that he didn't need to explore on stage. This was a very interesting process, and we both learned a lot from it.

On Veerle Baetens as Elise

The character of Elise is an enigma. She's very strong and very fragile at the same time. She loves life, but on the other hand has been so extremely hurt by it. As the film is more explicit than the theatre play in some ways, I had to alter some characteristics of Elise, but in a lot of ways they stayed a mystery to me too, up until I met Veerle during an audition. At that moment, everything came together. She had to play Elise, and Veerle would give her the balls Elise needed. Veerle is a real pitbull, she bites and won't let go until it's over. She's a perfectionist, on every level.

On love

The film is about more than just parental love. It's about the love between two people who are extremely different and about loss: how you lose one another, whereas that's the very last thing in the world that you want. The film recounts how difficult it is for both our protagonists, Didier and Elise, to accept this concept when their little daughter becomes ill. Didier conceals his sorrow with great principles and theories, Elise escapes into symbolism, religion and superstition. I understand that sorrow can be so overwhelming (the loss of a child!) that people feel the need to make up stories about a God, heaven and a life after death. I suspect that many people recognize this fence-straddling attitude. On the one side rationally convinced that there is no God or life after death, yet on the other, emotionally open to it because there is no other way.

We find the same duality in Elise and Didier. As long as things are going well, their opposite views on life are usually a source of amusement or at most they lead to a heated discussion. However, when their daughter develops a life-threatening illness, these diametrically opposed views lead to a dramatic climax, because Elise and Didier are completely torn apart in their inner selves. In the end, this causes them to lose both themselves as well as each other.

On bluegrass

Didier and Elise play in a bluegrass band and that is no accident. Bluegrass is integrated in a variety of ways into the story and forms the intrinsic link between all the main issues that appear in the film: live, death, birth, America, motherhood and fatherhood, finding consolation, life after death,... Music is also what unites the couple. We have tried to let the songs find their spot in the scenario in a more organized manner and by doing so, give them the greatest possible dramatic impact. Sometime a song is purely narrative and helps to tell the story or is even used as an ellipsis. In other places, we select a given song because it underpins the emotions.

While writing the screenplay, we put in songs from the original play. But, as I got to know more and more bluegrass songs, other songs found their way into the script. Bjorn Eriksson composed the bluegrass songs and also created the score. Meeting Bjorn was very important for the film, in lots of ways. You have to know that a lot of bluegrass musicians have something nerdy, but that is not how I saw Didier and Elise. Bjorn has been a bluegrass aficionado since he was 16. But he's also a very cool guy, and so meeting him, influenced not only the sound but also the look of the film. Bjorn conducted the recordings and guided Johan and Veerle's performances to the max (they sing everything themselves!). Bjorn himself plays dobro and guitar.

On Elise's tattoos

The tattoos were designed by Emy La Perla, a Brussels-based tattoo designer I interviewed for research I did during preparation. It was a marvelous encounter, I learned a lot about tattooing and I loved her drawing-style, so I asked her if she wanted to design them. The tattoo's were mentioned in the play, but became a leitmotiv in the film. I guess it was just too nice not to actually see them and use them fully in the story.

On Nell Cattrysse as Maybelle

Nell – only 5 years old – was cast out of a hundred or so kids. She was very shy in the beginning, but she was a good listener and willing to co-operate. We had her come back, together with some other kids, to do a couple of rehearsals, and every time she returned, she improved. So we decided to cast her. Everything came together at the first rehearsals with Johan and Veerle, because Nell was immediately at ease and very much in love with her “film parents”. Often, between takes, it was not me directing Nell, but Johan and Veerle, who were so close to her.

All the tough situations were explained to Nell, together with her parents. She also visited a children's hospital with her parents, our film-nanny and a child-psychologist. Nell's unprejudiced look at things also made things easier. For example: her favorite scene was when she had to play dead, because that was the easiest. Also, because during the shoot the tough situations are often very technical (e.g. the bald head which requires hours of make-up), they're not so dramatic, but fun to do.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Didier... is totally independent and a born fixer: practical, technical and resourceful. Didier's hallmark is his charm, to say the least. Always passionate, never aggressive.

The source of his atheism was hearing that Santa Claus does not exist. This was a true revelation to him; everything fell into place for him. Many ambiguous abnormalities that he had pondered with incredulity were, apparently, just made up. It was that simple.

Didier has many passions, but the leading one is bluegrass, a pure form of American country music. He plays in a band with some friends. Didier falls hard for Elise. She becomes the love of his life. He was wary of having children because he didn't want to play God over someone's life, let alone the life of a helpless child. But in the end, love wins him over and he becomes a loving father.

Their daughter Maybelle's illness will make Didier increasingly unreasonable...

Elise... crackles with lust for life. But sometimes she lets life take control. She is pure emotion. If she is happy, she is ecstatic. If she is sad, she is inconsolable. She is exceedingly sexy, and at the same time mature and intelligent.

From an early age, she has had to be independent, taking over her father's tattoo shop. Her body is a testimony to her love life. Every time she falls head over heels in love, she tattoos the name of the lucky man. When they break up, she replaces it with a cover-up tattoo.

When Elise gets pregnant, she remains the same fun-loving person, but she wants to do everything as good and naturally as possible for her child. Her world falls apart when six-year-old Maybelle falls sick...

MAIN CAST AND FILMMAKER

Johan Heldenbergh, Didier

Johan Heldenbergh, together with Mieke Dobbels, created the 2009 stage play *The Broken Circle Breakdown* featuring the Cover-Ups of Alabama. Johan learned how to play the banjo, guitar and mandolin for his leading role as Didier, a member of a bluegrass band.

Both the public and the press were unanimous in their praise for the sold-out performances in Belgian Flanders and the Netherlands of the production by Compagnie Cecilia. The success of Felix van Groeningen's movie version is a highlight in the unique history of this play. (And Johan doesn't mind the title having been cut in half for the movie!)

Johan previously worked with Felix van Groeningen in *The Misfortunates* and *Steve + Sky*. Johan's other screen credits include Marleen Gorris' *Antonia* (1995 Oscar winner) and Tom Barman's *Any Way the Wind Blows*.

Johan is a graduate of Studio Herman Teirlinck. He has performed in a number of much talked-about stage productions, including *Massis*, the musical, a monologue written by himself, *Ten Oorlog* (Blauwe Maandag Compagnie), *Mijn Blackie* (HetPaleis & Nieuwpoorttheater), *Allemaal Indiaan* (Victoria en Les Ballets C. de la B.) and *Maria Eeuwigdurende Bijstand* (DasTheater & Theater Zuidpool).

Veerle Baetens, Elise

In addition to her leading role in *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, Veerle Baetens' other film credits include Flemish titles *Code 37*, *Zot Van A.*, *Love Belongs to Everyone* (aka *Dennis Van Rita*) and *Long Weekend*.

2011's box office hit *Code 37* is a feature film based on the TV series in which Veerle played character Hannah Maes, the tormented chief of the Ghent Vice Section. The successful series recently completed its third season.

In 2008, Veerle won the Flemish TV-Star Award (Flemish equivalent of the Emmy Award) for Best Actress and Most Popular TV Personality for her work as the title character in the popular TV series "Sara."

Veerle recently released her debut CD as the singer of the group Dallas. She is a graduate of Brussels' Academy of Dramatic Arts, and she played the leading role in the 2005 Dutch stage musical adaptation of *Pippi Longstockings* for which she earned awards for "Best Leading Actress" and "Best Emerging Talent".

Felix Van Groeningen, director and co-writer

The Broken Circle Breakdown is Felix Van Groeningen's fourth feature film. It has been a box-office hit in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Felix's 2009 film *The Misfortunates* (*De helaasheid der dingen*) received international attention after making its world premiere in Cannes (Directors' Fortnight). This movie was a number one Flemish cinema hit and also successful abroad, collecting awards like Istanbul's Golden Tulip.

Felix graduated in 2000 from KASK (Royal Academy of Fine Arts) in Ghent with a Masters of Audiovisual Arts. He has also written and directed theatre plays with Ghent's theatre group Kung Fu. All four of his feature films have been collaborations with producer Dirk Impens (Menuet).

Feature Filmography

2012 *The Broken Circle Breakdown*
2009 *The Misfortunates (De helaasheid der dingen)*
2007 *With Friends Like These (Dagen zonder lief)*
2004 *Steve + Sky*

Cast

Elise..... Veerle Baetens
Didier..... Johan Heldenbergh
Maybelle..... Nell Cattrysse
William..... Geert Van Rampelberg
Jock..... Nils De Caster
Jimmy..... Robby Cleiren
Jef..... Bert Huysentruyt
Koen..... Jan Bijvoet

Crew

Director..... Felix van Groeningen
Screenplay..... Carl Joos
..... Felix van Groeningen
Based on the play by..... Johan Heldenbergh
..... Mieke Dobbels
Producer..... Dirk Impens (Menuet – Belgium)
Co-producer..... Topkapi Films (Netherlands)
Line producer..... Johan Van den Driessche
Assistant Director..... Sofie Tusschans
Director of Photography..... Ruben Impens
Editing..... Nico Leunen
Sound..... Jan Deca
Sound design..... Michel Schöpping
Production design..... Kurt Rigolle
Costume design..... Ann Lauwerys
Make-up..... Diana Dreesen
Original score..... Bjorn Eriksson

The Broken Circle Breakdown Band
Veerle Baetens - vocals
Johan Heldenbergh - vocals
Bjorn Eriksson - guitar, dobro & vocals
Lennart Dauphin - bass
Geert Waegeman - violin & mandolin
Nils The Caster - violin, mandolin & vocals

Hank Van Damme (Karl Eriksson) - banjo, guitar & vocals
Composition arranged by Bjorn Eriksson

David Buyle - violin on 'Sand Mountain'
Arno Kuypers - guitar on 'Sand Mountain'
Peter Pask - acoustic guitar on 'Sand Mountain'

Geert Rampelberg, Jan Bijvoet, Robby Cleiren, Bert Heinzmann - additional vocals

Recordings made by Karel De Backer @ Salle Jeanne

Additional music composed and performed by Jef Neve
Recordings made by Dieter Claeys @ Blue Keys Studios

“Will The Circle Be Unbroken” – The BCB Band

A.P. Carter
Peer International Corp./Peermusic
(p) 2012 Menuet

“Mega Mindy tijd” – Mega Mindy

Johan Van den Eede/Hans Bourlon/Gert Verhulst
Studio 100 Publishing
(p) 2007 Studio 100

“Mega Mindy tijd” – Mega Mindy (clip)

Matthias Temmermans (regie), Hans Bourlon (scenario) en Gert Verhulst (scenario)
(p) 2007 Studio 100

“The Boy Who Wouldn’t Hoe Corn” – The BCB Band

Traditional
PD
(p) 2012 Menuet

“Rueben’s Train” - The BCB Band

Traditional
PD
(p) 2012 Menuet

“The Lion Sleeps Tonight” – The BCB Band

Luigi Creatore/Solomon Linda/Hugo Peretti/George Weiss
Abilene Music/CP Masters
(p) 2012 Menuet

“Country In My Genes” – The BCB Band

Larry Cordle/Larry Shell/Betty Key
Pier Five Music/Talbot Music Publishing/Universal Music Publishing
(p) 2012 Menuet

“Wayfaring Stranger” - The BCB Band

Traditional
PD
(p) 2012 Menuet

“Didn’t Leave Nobody But The Baby” - The BCB Band

Alan Lomax/T-Bone Burnett/Gillian Welch

Irving Music/Rondor Music/Universal Music Publishing - Henry Burnett Music/Bug Music

(p) 2012 Menuet

“Cowboy Man” – The BCB Band

Lyle Lovett

Michael H. Goldsen/Belgian Fried Music/2 P's W Music/Talpa Music

(p) 2012 Menuet

“Over In The Gloryland” - The BCB Band

Traditional

PD

(p) 2012 Menuet

“Sand Mountain” – The BCB Band

Johnny Bellar

Silverhill Music/Stone House Music

(p) 2012 Menuet

“Bruiloftsmars” (Musik zu ‘Ein Sommernachtstraum’) - Jan Bijvoet, Robby Cleiren

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

PD

(p) 2012 Menuet

“If I Needed You” – The BCB Band

Townes Van Zandt

JTVZ Music/Will Van Zandt Publishing/Katie Bell Music

by arrangement with Wixen Music Publishing, Inc.

(p) 2012 Menuet

“Where The Soul Of A Man Never Dies” – Veerle Baetens, Johan Heldenbergh, Patrick Riguelle, Nils De

Caster, Pol Depoorter, Mario Vermandel

William M. Golden

PD

(p) 2012 Menuet