



THE

PRIME MINISTER

A FILM BY ERIK VAN LOOY





The Belgian PM is abducted while en route to an important meeting. He also finds out that his wife and children have been taken hostage. If he wants to see them again - alive - he has to kill the person he is meeting later that day. And that person is no less than... the president of the United States. The PM is caught in the impossible dilemma of having to choose between his public duty and his wife and children. What started off as a day full of promise spirals into a true nightmare and an emotional rollercoaster.

In The PM - director Erik Van Looy's new thriller - the title character faces a heartbreaking choice and finds himself in an appalling Catch 22-situation. He has to kill the American president, who is making an official visit to Belgium. Failing to do so will result in his wife and two children being murdered. 'You can barely imagine anyone being placed in that kind of predicament,' Van Looy says. 'How far will a human being go to save his family? The PM uses every trick in the book to escape, without putting his family in danger. The result? Dilemmas, choices and tension. That's what makes this thriller so intense. I wanted The PM to keep you on the edge of your seat to the very end.'

When the project was first announced, it was widely described as a 'political' thriller. Even you, as director, do not find this an apt description.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'That's right. The film may be set in the political arena, and I do like the title, which has a nice ring to it. But I wouldn't call it a 'political' thriller. At the end the audience still has no idea what party the PM belongs to. In a 'political' thriller that would be a key issue. But it wasn't relevant here, so I kept it vague on purpose. There is *one* short scene in parliament, where the PM addresses the opposition. It was important to actually see him in his role as PM. By the way, that scene was really shot inside the parliament building. It's the only 'political' moment in the film. It's not that I'm not interested in politics, but I fear I have very little to say on the subject. I do have something to say about the man behind the politician, though. I honestly don't think that audiences out there are waiting for yet another political drama - very few of which have been box office hits, by the way. *All the President's Men* (by Alan J. Pakula, 1976 - ed.) was an exception, but it was hardly a political thriller, was it? It was a crime story about President Nixon and the Republican party committing a crime, and two journalists trying to solve it.'

Yet, in order to prepare for *The PM*, you watched quite a few films that tend to be classified as 'political thrillers'.

ERIK VAN LOOY: ' I must have revisited twenty-odd films three to four times. Films like *Vantage Point*, *In the Line of Fire*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Nick of Time*, *Enemy of the State*, *The Day of the Jackal*, etc.. Films whose main characters alternate between hunter and prey. As far as the concept goes, *Nick of Time* (1995, by John Badham, with Johnny Depp and Christopher Walken - ed.) is closest to this film. I loved the central idea: someone is picked to commit a murder. If he doesn't comply his little daughter will be killed. When I first saw the film years ago, I thought it set off to a promising start. What jarred with me was the fact that Johnny Depp's character - your average family man - is lifted off the street for no particular reason as the guy who has to kill the governor of California. That simply didn't work. By way of homage, I did insert *one* piece of dialogue from *Nick of Time* into my own film. It's the part where Christopher Walken's character says to Johnny Depp: 'You're like a worm on a hook, wiggling around, thinking you might get off'. In my film Stijn Van Opstal says to Koen De Bouw: 'You're a fish on a hook. You think you can wriggle loose, but you can't.' In *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* I had actor Jan Declair quoting a tiny sentence Laurence Olivier uses in *Marathon Man*. I have no problem at all making that kind of references

A close-up, low-angle shot of a man with dark, wavy hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white collared shirt. He is wearing a large black headset with a microphone. He is looking off-camera to the left with a serious, focused expression. The background is a blurred film set with various pieces of equipment and lights. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

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(laughs). My motto is: 'If Quentin Tarantino gets away with it, why not me?'

So, for this main character you chose not to go for your average family man, but for Belgium's PM instead?

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'I wanted the person with the most stressful job in the country. In my book that's the PM, who literally gets everything that happens on his plate, *and* is expected to take responsibility for it, or at least come up with an explanation. It's a job that involves a lot more problems than it does fun. That's how I see it anyway. The main character gets up at 4:30 am and usually comes home around 11 pm. Weekends tend to be spent working. He has to do everything by the book, be available 24/7. He can never switch off. *You* try and have a normal family life in those circumstances! I respect those people, I really do. I'm glad that some of us are prepared to take on the job. Someone has to do it, I guess? (laughs). Being PM

causes massive stress and puts incredible time pressure on you. And as if that wasn't enough you are dealt another massive 'blow' by being forced to kill the president. How much can any person take? That is why, right from the start, this PM is slightly tormented, and tired. Our current prime minister, Charles Michel, doesn't show any signs of that. I actually think he is still enjoying his job, that he's having fun. Politicians who stayed in office longer, like Yves Leterme and Elio Di Rupo, did show occasional signs of fatigue. The job clearly takes its toll.'

The PM in this film is also called Michel.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Yes, the name does get used a few times, but it's his *first* name. It's also pure coincidence. We named our main character eight years ago, when Charles Michel as PM was not yet on the cards. Our PM's surname is Devreese (the Dutch word *vrees* translates as 'fear', tr.), which symbolizes the fears he is gripped by. At film school, we



were taught that a character's name should always say something about that person (laughs)'.

When the idea for *The PM* was gestating, Yves Leterme was still prime minister.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Yes. We actually had lunch with him, because I wanted to find out if the PM himself found the idea plausible. I knew Leterme from *De Slimste Mens* (The Smartest Person on Earth, a TV quiz show hosted by Van Looy, tr.). But he wasn't yet prime minister at the time. That came later (laughs). When we met up all we had was an idea, not a script. *The* question for us was whether or not the PM would laugh off the concept. But he didn't, on the contrary. He liked the suspense and, according to him, it was quite possible, certainly in Belgium. He also gave us a few tips, like the fact that prime ministers do not get frisked, but their retinue does. We use that in the film. The PM does not have any bodyguards either, while today the PM *does* get protection, because of current terror threat level three. When *The PM* starts we explicitly mention level two, *and* the fact that the country is currently 'less terror prone'. Ages ago the PM used to have gendarmes outside his door. Leterme told us that former PM Jean-Luc Dehaene got rid of them as soon as he came into office. He found it a ludicrous idea. The situation is totally different now, of course. Today the prime minister no longer has a chauffeur. He is driven by the State Security Service. That makes abduction virtually impossible. In the current circumstances we would not have been able to tell this story, in other words.

What was your main ambition with this film?

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'I wanted to make the most suspenseful film ever, in a manner of

speaking.

In a manner of speaking! (laughs). I know it sounds arrogant, but I at least wanted to give it a go. I really did intend to make a film that holds the suspense till the very end. I acquired the taste while doing *Loft*, based on a script by Bart De Pauw. There too if you blink you miss something. I love those kinds of films: very intense, with loads of action scenes. Films that take you by surprise at every turn and also, occasionally, lead you up the garden path.'

'The significant challenge invariably lies in taking your audience on a trip that is nothing short of unbelievable. The very idea of anyone being confronted with this kind of dilemma seems far-fetched, but it's 'larger than life'. *The PM* is about a fictitious character, let that be clear. When we first told people the story, Elio Di Rupo was still Belgium's prime minister. Quite a few went: 'Ha, a comedy?!' I kid you not! I mean, honestly: I find Di Rupo an intelligent man. Then, for ages, we had no idea who would be the next PM. Leaving aside political preferences, I did see Kris Peeters (Minister-President of Flanders from 2007 to 2014, tr.) as the potential new PM, *and* the one with the biggest star potential. He does have the looks to be cast as main hero. I actually think Koen de Bouw looks a bit like him. As it turned out, Peeters never did become PM. For a brief while it seemed Maggie De Block (the current Minister of Social Affairs, who occasionally gets criticized for being overweight, tr.) was going to become PM. That gave me a bit of a fright. The PM in this film may be a fictitious character but, whether you like it or not, people's perception is fed by who the actual prime minister is. Maggie De Block? All she has to do is lash out with her handbag, once, and the baddies do a runner (laughs).'



While shooting *The PM* you occasionally referred to James Bond and Jason Bourne in interviews.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'The references were no coincidence. When I first developed the idea eight years ago – in a lounge, on holiday in Tenerife (laughs) – about an abducted prime minister who is ordered to kill the president of the USA, a lot of people found it a whacky premise. They found it too far-fetched. I haven't been getting those comment these last three/four years. *The PM* is drenched in reality, in the same way the James Bond and Jason Bourne films are. It was never my ambition to make a film about what's going on right now, about people's current fears. It's too early to come up with anything that makes any sense on the subject. I mean, this film is partly drenched in reality, but it's also quite removed from it. It's entertainment. It deals with topical issues the same way a James Bond film does. Remotely, very remotely.'

'I myself will never shoot a James Bond film, for the simple reason I will never be asked (laughs). Mind you, Barbara Broccoli, who produces the Bond films, did invite me once. Not to interview me for the job, but because she was a huge fan of *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)*. I wouldn't have the courage to shoot a Bond film. Too daunting. But I did like the idea of making something 'in that vein'. Belgium cannot compete with the US as far as shooting action scenes and explosions is concerned, but that's never stopped us from being clever (laughs). I think the script behind *The PM* is full of surprises, and that in the second part – for reasons I am not at liberty to divulge – it gets *really* emotional. That gives us a head start and allows us to go beyond what most run-of-the-mill films of the genre do. I often get accused of making Hollywood films, but all my films have a sharp edge to

them. This one too, with all the rushing emotions in the second half. Maybe those sharp edges are why *The Loft* (the Hollywood version) flopped. I do not blame the film for that. I'm still proud of the American remake. My guess is that those edges are just that little bit too sharp for the general American public. There were also distribution problems, of course, but the cultural differences also turned out to be bigger than expected. There must be a reason why the remake of *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* never happened either, even though the likes of Morgan Freeman, Clint Eastwood *and* Jack Nicholson were interested in playing the lead. The film starts with a scene in which a father prostitutes his own little daughter. If a remake had been made, that scene would have been cut, mark my words.'

In this film, the president of America is a woman.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'When we first started developing the project eight years ago, the president was a man. It took us ages to decide: man, woman, then man again and finally a woman. Either way it remains a strong statement. I hope Hillary Clinton wins the elections, because the alternative is kind of scary. People deserve the benefit of the doubt, but in this case I'm not so sure. It's high time one of the biggest countries in the world was led by a woman. Russia is next (laughs). It's more than just a statement, though. It's also more interesting for the story. And it's unexpected, since apart from *Kisses for My President* (a long forgotten 1964 comedy), no other feature film has had a female president. A few TV series do, like *Commander in Chief*, in which Geena Davis plays the president of the US. We may turn out to be trendsetters, in fact. Maybe the next Belgian prime minister will also be a woman.'

There's lots of rain in this film, like in *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* and *Loft*. Am I to infer from that that you love shooting rain scenes?

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'I wouldn't go that far. It's a lot of fuss, it's expensive and more often than not the sound is lousy. But you have to admit that it's nice. Rain equals drama! I like doing films about tormented people, people who've been through a lot. And rain is just one tiny tool for increasing that feeling of torment. You're right, *De Zaak Alzheimer* and *Loft* both start with rain. Rain immediately bathes you in a gloomy atmosphere. A man like Ridley Scott likes to use rain scenes too. But he's a Brit, of course. The difference between him and me is that he has the budget to shoot an entire film in the rain, if he wants. I can only afford it in the opening and closing scenes (laughs).'

You used drones for certain scenes. Was that a first?

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'I make so few films that every time I do, I get to use new toys (laughs).

We used drones whenever we could. That kind of shots add grandeur to a film, like that scene in the cooling tower. The location was magical, even when just viewed from the ground. Using a drone with a camera that penetrates inside areas you could never reach any other way makes it truly spectacular. *Plus* you can move in any direction you want. Yes, drones are wonderful gadgets.'

In both *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* and the original *Loft*, Danny Elsen was your Director of Photography.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Meeting Danny marked a crucial moment in my career, because he is incredibly strong, visually. I reckon we form a great pair: I give him opportunities to excel

and he makes my work much better than it would ever be without him. We are on the same page. Our egos may occasionally clash on set, but that's never stopped us. We liaise, and know each other well enough to listen.'

You once again worked with actor Koen De Bouw for *The PM*.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'The funny thing is that I initially feared it might be my first feature without Koen De Bouw. I thought he was too young to play the PM. Then Charles Michel became prime minister, a very young one to boot. As a result, when I started doing the film eight years later, I found myself thinking the opposite: maybe Koen is too old for the part (laughs)? Seriously, when I first developed the idea in 2008, I knew it would be a while before I'd start shooting so I decided to book Koen there and then. We trust each other implicitly. The first time we worked together was in 1991 on the short *Yuppies*, where he played the lead. Koen also had a small part in *Shades*. Then came *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* and *Loft*, making this his third time starring in one of my films. This is the fifth time we work together and we've been friends for ages.'

What is the secret of your long, creative co-operation?

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Koen is a great actor to begin with. He's also lovely to work with. And he has star quality. Koen genuinely is a 'leading man', the way I like them. I love beautiful, charismatic people - beautiful, but also with depth. In a way, Koen was born to be the leading man, especially in my films. He also has some kind of innate tristesse about him, while in real life he isn't like that at all. He's one of the nicest and funniest people I know. Yet point a camera at him and you hit upon several layers, *and* you get

that tristesse. I love it. I make films about people and their hidden secrets, not people who always look on the bright side. Even a film like *Ad Fundum* - a much more youthful spectacle, let's face it - also had its dark moments. As did *Shades*. My films are kind of... sad, come to think of it, yes. Suspenseful films, not feel-good movies. I don't think I'd be capable of that, actually. But I do inject my films with enough humour and gusto to make sure the audience doesn't walk out depressed. I give them something to talk about. And an actor like Koen De Bouw is made for the world of my films. I was about to say 'universe', but that sounds slightly arrogant (laughs).'

'Koen excels in *The PM* and if you ask me - I can't speak for him, of course - this is one of the hardest roles he's ever had to play. He has to be convincing as prime minister, as someone who is trying to save his family *and* someone who has to kill the president. He keeps several balls in the air simultaneously.

We tried a few scenes in which he was a bit more jolly, but that didn't work. We clearly needed that tension all of the time. I'm sure it's been a very intense trip for Koen, and for the others. You are always in fear mode: constantly having to show fear, in every scene, across 52 days of shooting.'

***The PM* opens in cinemas on October 26.**

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Yes, I like the date because it's during the autumn break. *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* and *Loft* opened that same Wednesday and they didn't do too badly, did they? (laughs).'

On Monday 17 October you start hosting the new series of the TV quiz show *De Slimste Mens*.

ERIK VAN LOOY: 'Yes, I'm thinking of sneaking in three opening questions about *The PM*. I'm not sure the editors will agree, though (laughs).'





“THE POLITICAL
BACKDROP IS LITTLE MORE
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We struck lucky again because we had a great crew to work with. Passionate people who give it their all; who are both impassioned and eager. I see that a lot in our line of business', says main character Koen De Bouw, who is working with director Erik Van Looy for the fifth time. 'On the big screen our films have to compete with foreign, often American productions. We have to pull out all the stops, since we can only dream of getting their kind of resources. Yet we do compete. That's quite a feat in its own right.'

The film is situated in the political arena, yet Erik Van Looy doesn't think *The PM* should be labelled a 'political' thriller. Do you agree?

KOEN DE BOUW: 'I do. At our first press conference it was soon clear what the tenor of the questions was going to be. How did you prepare for this part? Did you do any research on the subject of politics? Are you a political man yourself? Did you speak to the country's PM or other politicians? In the case of *The PM*, the political backdrop is little more than a framework, within which the story takes place. The main thing is that it's a story about people of flesh and blood. The main character is the country's PM. He represents every man and woman in it. In a way, the PM is *Elckerlyc*, Everyman. We automatically relate to him and his predicament. That is the main reason why we can identify with him as a human being. Not as a politician, because that is not what this is about. We never even find out what political party he belongs to.'

You did go and talk to the country's PM, didn't you?

KOEN DE BOUW: 'That's right. We had a meal with Yves Leterme, because he was PM at the time. Why do I mention the meal? Because somewhere in the back of a Brussels restaurant everyday politics lose all importance. We were just a few people having a meal together. We may think of ourselves as intelligent and grown up, yet we all look up to people in important positions, and

by doing so we establish a huge distance ourselves. It's like they're cloaked in a veil, and we are star-struck. When we actually sit down with them, we see they are only human. You're having a meal with Yves, not with Prime Minister Leterme. He didn't put up any front at all. That's what I took home with me that day. It was the *only* thing that mattered as I prepared for the part. He did, of course, tell us a few behind-the-scenes stories, which were particularly interesting for the screenwriters. I myself decided there and then that I would play the PM as Everyman. A man with a heart and a soul, who is not above being vulnerable. Because that's what this is about: a vulnerable human being.'

According to Erik Van Looy this has been one of the most difficult parts in your career.

KOEN DE BOUW: 'My character does suffer mortal fears, from beginning to end. Not just for himself, but also for his family. It's an intensity you have to keep up from dawn till dusk, or whenever you happen to be shooting. And you have to dive back into it for every take. While shooting *The PM*, I occasionally noticed I was being disagreeable to the people on set, because the part was so intense. It was pure mental pressure. I told them not to take it personally. I'm quite gregarious on set, actually. But I do need to be able to concentrate, to focus. For me to be able to do what I do, I need to be able to let up. It's the only way I can keep going. A



muscle can't be tense all the time. It would simply tear. I need to be able to pull pranks, before *and* after a scene. Sitcom stuff, I mean. I'm useless at telling jokes. Then, two, three seconds later, I can focus again.'

Do you take your characters home with you?

KOEN DE BOUW: 'In a TV series like *Professor T*. I certainly do. The same goes for *The PM*, yes. You can't just erase them on the drive home. They linger. You're in some kind of mood or flow or whatever you want to call it. You enter the process and you can't step out just like that, not until the last scene has been shot. It's a trip, a high that provides you with everything you need: physical energy, imagination, mental strength. Give that up, and you're back to square one. That's why it's sometimes better to stay in a hotel while shooting a film.'

Erik Van Looy likes rain scenes in his films. 'Rain equals drama', he says. It can't be much fun for an actor, though.

KOEN DE BOUW: 'I remember my closing scene in *Loft*: that fight on the roof somewhere along the River Scheldt, which took three nights to wrap up. It was April and the temperature was *just* above freezing. There were rain machines on the sixth floor. The entire crew is wearing five coats and eighteen hats, so to speak. And you're in a flimsy shirt and suit, in the icy rain. All night long. Until you literally can't utter another word. I did say at one point, in as far as I was still capable of saying anything: 'Erik, *one* last time and that's it. (laughs). One thing all directors do have in common, is that they absolutely refuse to notice that you are tired, or in pain. They simply look past it. Until you point it out yourself. The same goes for director of photography Danny

Elsen, with whom I've made several films. 'Let's go!' is a sentence he utters all through the day. Danny and his camera crew are like the Duracell bunny – they keep on going. (laughs). Impassioned and eager. I see that a lot in our line of business, which is great. *The PM* had an excellent crew. Passionate people who give it their all. After thirty years in this job – I'm not a diva, I hasten to add – I have come to realize it's also my responsibility to say stop at some point. The next day we have to be back, it's as simple as that. And the next day too. Especially if you play a leading part and are expected on set every day, it's your responsibility not to fall ill. Every hour on a set costs money, so you have to report for duty. I've been able to do that so far. The film you're working on, that's what matters. I myself come last. The film always comes first.'

In the film your character takes quite a few blows, both literally and figuratively.

KOEN DE BOUW: 'You can say that again. I hate that. I even found myself occasionally saying: 'Guys, this is not a ballet!'. A while ago I had neck problems. As a result I developed frozen shoulder and was unable to lift my arm, as good as. It took me a year and a half to sort that out. If a director expects a 51-year-old actor to do certain things several times in a row – fight scenes invariably demand several takes – *and* he wants him back on his feet immediately afterwards, he should reserve his slot a few years ahead (laughs). Because of that shoulder problem I barely had time to rehearse. I'm fine now. We also have to bear in mind that our PM is not an action hero. The original script contained a few scenes in which my character performs some James Bond-like moves. I'll put it this way: I'm glad those scenes were cut (smiles). There's plenty of action in the

film. Transforming the PM into an out-and-out action hero, however, would have been impossible to rhyme with his vulnerability. It would also have made it less easy for the audience to identify with him.'

Shooting *The Last Tycoon* in Hollywood threw you in at the deep end as far as working with an American crew is concerned. Did you notice any marked differences?

KOEN DE BOUW: 'Our own technical crews – and I've worked with lots – can easily hold their own. The speed at which we have caught up with technical know-how over the last twenty years is mind-boggling. On the big screen our films have to compete with foreign, often American productions. We have to pull out all the stops, since we can only dream of getting their kind of resources. Yet we do compete. That's quite a feat in its own right. I mean it. American sets have lots more people on them. You have to assess

the situation and find your place in it. There's a certain pattern, a well-oiled one too. If on a hot day somebody holds a parasol over my head, that's not for me as a person. Without that parasol I would perspire and as a result, for the camera, they'd have to keep patting my face dry. The minute you start thinking things happen especially for you, you have a problem (laughs).'

The first time you worked with Erik Van Looy was in 1991, on his short *Yuppies*. You are both 25 years older now and *The PM* is your third leading role in a film by Erik Van Looy. How come the two of you click?

KOEN DE BOUW: 'I remember the Erik of those days as some sort of 'action whisperer'. A very quiet, whispering young man. Three days into filming I asked the unit manager, I think, who that man on set was. He turned out to be the director (laughs).

'The young whisperer of those days has





come a long way. On set Erik still doesn't go around shouting, but he has become... I was about to say 'lippier', although that word does not apply to him at all. He's also much more confident, in a positive sense. Years of working with Erik have boosted my confidence in him. Scenes in his films don't just appear out of the blue. Everything happens for a reason. Nothing is accidental. What struck me in his first major film, *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)*, was the way he casts his actors. That's a fulltime job, in fact, but Erik does most of the casting himself. He has an eye for it, always has had. Erik is also incredibly down to earth. I can still see us on the first night of *Loft*, moving from one

room to the next, feeling the enthusiasm in each single one of them. Instead of enjoying the moment, Erik said to me: 'We'll never be able to top this. Damn.'. *Loft* was a massive success. Needless to say Erik was over the moon, and relieved. At the same time, however, he also worried (laughs). We have covered a lot of ground together, but we're still not bored with each other. We've evolved together, seen each other grow. I can't imagine things ever being any different. Quite a few directors have their fetish actors, with whom they keep that rapport all through their careers. That in itself is a beautiful, humane process.'



THE PM

KOEN DE BOUW

Michel Devreese has been Belgium's PM for years. He is tired. Big-league politics is a constant struggle, which - slowly but surely - is taking its toll. From one moment to the next he finds himself in the eye of a deathly whirlpool, from which there is no escape. But that is exactly what he had in mind: getting out of politics, out of this never-ending whirlwind, out of his life and what it has become. The PM wears his heart in the right place, but it is now beating at an impossible pace. We never do find out what political party he belongs to. He's a politician, full stop: intelligent, talented and widely respected (we soon find out). He is also convinced that this unsettled country of ours still has a future. As do its people. And justice.

Koen De Bouw studied drama at Studio Herman Teirlinck. He has played in TV series such as *Windkracht 10*, *Recht op Recht*, *Sedes & Belli*, *Vermist*, *Salamander*, *Cordon*, *The Team* and *Professor T*. In 2003 he starred in Erik Van Looy's *De Zaak Alzheimer* (*Memory of a Killer*) alongside Werner De Smedt. In 2005 De Bouw played the lead in *De Indringer* (Frank Van Mechelen) and *Verlengd Weekend* (Hans Herbots). That same summer he went to Cuba to shoot *Koning van de Wereld*. In January 2006 he started shooting the feature based on *Windkracht 10* (the series), as well as Jan Verheyen's *Dossier K*. In 2008 he played in Erik Van Looy's *Loft*, followed by Hilde Van Mieghem's *Smoorverliefd* (2009), Frank Van Mechelen's *Groenten uit Balen* (*Germaine*, 2011), Jan Verheyen's *Het Vonnis* (*The*

Verdict) and Daniel Lambo's *Los Flamencos* (2013). In 2014 De Bouw won an award at the Ostend Film Festival for his role in *Het Vonnis* (*The Verdict*) and he acted in *Broer* (*Brother*) by Geoffrey Enthoven. Earlier that year he had taken part in Cristiano Bortone's *Caffè*. He is currently filming *Het Tweede Gelaat*, a feature based on a crime novel by Jef Geeraerts, directed by Jan Verheyen. After that he is off to the US to play a part in the American TV series *The Last Tycoon* for Amazon Studios.

De Bouw is also a stage actor, who has been directed by Jan Decorte in *Amlett*, *In het kreupelhout* and *O Death* for Het Toneelhuis. At Raamtheater he played, amongst others, in *Trojaanse Vrouwen* and later also in *Una Giornata Particolare*.



CHRISTINE TINE REYMER

Behind every great man there is a great woman, the saying goes. That certainly applies to Christine, the PM's wife. She is extremely intelligent and resolute, without flaunting it. On the contrary. She likes to stay in the background as first lady, and only ever comes to the fore when circumstances demand it. Christine is still very much in love with the PM. She's also proud of his political career and her family. In her book the latter takes precedence over everything else.

Tine Reymer studied music/cabaret at Studio Herman Teirlinck. She has acted with theatre companies HETPALEIS and BRONKS, sung with *Flowers for Breakfast*, *El Tattoo del Tigre* and *Billie King* and is currently touring as singer-songwriter REYMER.

She starred as Lena Belli in the TV series *Sedes & Belli* and had supporting roles in the

feature films *Windkracht 10: Koksijde Rescue* by Hans Herbots as well as *Loft*, after a script by Erik Van Looy and Bart De Pauw. She also acted in Erik Van Looy's *Shades* and Jan Verheyen's *Team Spirit*.

On TV she played Patricia Wolfs in the popular één-series *Salamander*, whose season 2 is being filmed this year.



EVA

CHARLOTTE VANDERMEERSCH

Eva Bodart has been the PM's spokesperson for two years. She is ambitious and her work is her life, 24/7 if necessary. She's simply never found time for love, marriage or children. Eva still enjoys her career in politics but also thinks she's ready to turn a page. Not that anybody would guess. She's much too professional for that, and keeps her emotional cards close to her chest. Work comes first, then life...

Charlotte Vandermeersch graduated in 2005 from Studio Herman Teirlinck. She has acted/sung in various theatre productions with the likes of SKaGeN, Wunderbaum, Abattoir Fermé, de Roovers, Walpurgis, HetPaleis, KVS, Laika and many more. She joined theatre company LAZARUS in 2012.

She has played various parts in TV series such as *Flikken*, *Witse*, *Kinderen van*

Dewindt, *Recht op Recht*, *Dag en Nacht - Hotel Eburon*, *Het Goddelijke Monster*, *De Anneliezen*, *Deadline 25/5 and 14/10*, *Red Sonja*, *Salamander*, *Zingaburia* as well as *De Ronde*. She has acted in the shorts *Helsinki*, *Marie* and *Zacharie*. On the big screen she could be seen in *Dagen zonder lief*, *Loft*, *(N)lemand*, *Turquaze*, *Bowling Balls* and *Belgica*.



THE CHIEF

DIRK ROOFTHOOF

The chief doesn't really have a name, and he likes to keep it that way. He's a sort of mercenary who gets hired for large-scale military/criminal operations. He is a master organizer who cancelled out his conscience ages ago. Does he side with the good guys? With arrant knaves? They're much of a muchness to him. He's been through too much, seen too much. Only occasionally does he struggle with ethical questions, but the answer invariably sounds: don't look back, just carry on.

Dirk Roofthoof studied at Studio Herman Teirlinck and has acted with various theatre companies such as Kaaitheter, Toneelgroep Amsterdam, Needcompany, De Trust, Arca, De Tijd, NTG and KVS, where he worked with a wide range of theatre makers such as Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, Luk Perceval, Ivo van Hove, Theu Boermans, Jan Ritsema, Josse De Pauw, Peter Vermeersch and Wim Vandekeybus. He has also worked extensively abroad, in French, Spanish, German as well as English.

Roofthoof has appeared on TV, amongst others, in the series *De bossen van Vlaanderen*, *Moeder, waarom leven wij?*, *Het verdriet van België*, *Terug naar Oosterdonk*, *De Ronde* en *Clan*, for which he was awarded

the TV star for Best Actor in 2013. In 2016 he appeared in *Chaussée d'amour*, a ten-part series by Pieter Van Hees, Nathalie Basteyns and Frank Devos.

He has acted in feature films such as *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* and *Loft* by Erik Van Looy, *Olivetti 82* by Rudi Van Den Bossche, *Rosie* by Patrice Toye, Tom Barman's *Any Way the Wind Blows*, *Pleure pas*, *Germaine* by Alain de Halleux, *Suite 16*, *Hombres Complicados* and *Die Hochzeitsfeier* by Dominique Deruddere and also *De Storm* (Ben Sombogaart). For his roles in *Hombres Complicados* and *Pleure pas*, *Germaine* he was awarded the Joseph Plateau Award for Best Actor.



THE CHAUFFEUR

STIJN VAN OPSTAL

The chauffeur and the Chief have quite a bit in common. He is also nameless, nor does he want a name. But he does look up to the Chief, like some kind of zen master. They both thrive on organization and discipline and excel at their jobs. They are reckless and dangerous, with this one slight difference: the chauffeur likes humour. 'I'm the odd one out', he might say, with that lovely regional accent of his. But he doesn't. The less you know about him, the better, he reckons.

Stijn Van Opstal studied drama at Studio Herman Teirlinck, together with Tom Dewispelaere, Ben Segers and Geert Van Rempelberg, with whom he founded theatre company Olympique Dramatique. He has also worked with Studio Orka, Alex van Warmerdam, Alain Platel, Tg Stan and many more. He also acts at Het Toneelhuis.

Stijn has played in the features *S.* by Guido Henderickx, *Nowhere Man* by Patrice Toye and *Swooni* by Kaat Beels.

On TV Van Opstal has appeared in *Recht op Recht*, *Zone Stad* and *Met Man en Macht*. In *De Parelvisers*, the fiction series by Tom Lenaerts and Michiel Devlieger, he played the part of Lukas Blommaert. Next year he will be seen in the psychological thriller series *Tabula Rasa* by Malin-Sarah Gozin and Veerle Baetens.



US PRESIDENT

SASKIA REEVES

Saskia Reeves is an English actress with an extensive career in theatre, TV and film.

Some of her first movies were *December Bride* (Thaddeus O'Sullivan) and *Close My Eyes* (Stephen Poliakoff), and her most recent are John Le Carre's *Our Kind Of Traitor* (Susannah White) and David Hare's *Page 8* and *Salting The Battlefield*.

On TV she has appeared in the hugely acclaimed BBC's *Wolf Hall* (Peter Kosminsky) and many popular series such as *Luther*, *Wallander*, *Shetland* and *Red Riding*.

In theatre she devised and performed the award winning *A Disappearing Number* with Complicite, which toured the world and went to the West End. She has performed at the National, the RSC, and many other London theatres, working with wonderful directors and actors, in plays ranging from *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hello and Goodbye to Orpheus Descending* and *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf*.

The Prime Minister is her first feature film in Belgium.



CHIEF OF SECURITY

ADAM GODLEY

Adam Godley's film roles include: *Love Actually*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Theory of Everything*, *The BFG*, *The X-Files: I want to believe*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Nanny McPhee*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* and *Battleship*.

TV includes: *Mad Men*, *Suits*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Blacklist*, *The Good Wife*, *Homeland*, *Merlin* and *A Young Doctor's Notebook*.

Theatre in London and New York includes: *Private Lives*, *Cabaret*, *Mouth to Mouth* (Olivier Award nomination), *The Pillowman*, *Cleo*, *Camping*, *Emanuelle and Dick* (Olivier Award nomination), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Rain Man* (Olivier Award nomination) and *Anything Goes* (Tony and Drama Desk Award nominations, Outer Critics Circle Award).

ERIK VAN LOOY

SCREENWRITER AND DIRECTOR

Before making his own films, Erik Van Looy directed film programmes for TV, such as *Première* with Jo Röpcke. His first feature film was *Ad Fundum* in 1993, followed by *Shades* with Mickey Rourke and *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)* with Jan Declair. *Loft*, after a script by Bart De Pauw, is the most successful Flemish film so far. For TV he has directed, amongst others,

De Mol, *Mannen op de rand van een zenuw-inzinking* and *Via Vanoudenhoven*. As host of the hugely popular and long-running quiz show *De slimste mens ter wereld* he has raked in several awards. His most famous quote: *'t Is gebeurd* (It's over). His favourite football team: Royal Antwerp FC. Van Looy wrote *The PM* together with Carl Joos.

CARL JOOS

SCREENWRITER

The PM is not the first script Carl Joos and Erik Van Looy have written together. They also wrote the script for *De Zaak Alzheimer (Memory of a Killer)*, for which they were awarded the Joseph Plateau Award for Best Script in 2004. Carl Joos has also co-written scripts for successful features such as *Dossier K.*, *De Behandeling* and *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. At the Tribeca Film Festival the latter, co-written with Felix

Van Groeningen, was awarded the prize for Best Script. Joos wrote the scripts for various instalments of *Windkracht 10*, *Flikken* and *Witse* as well as the TV series *Recht op Recht*, *The Spiral*, *Dag & Nacht: Hotel Eburon*, *In Vlaamse Velden* and *Cordon*. He also wrote the script for *Het Tweede Gelaat*, which is currently being directed by Jan Verheyen.



PRODUCTION

FBO, formerly *Firmin's Boks Office*, produced Dominique Derudder's 2007 film *Firmin*, starring Chris van den Durpel as boxer Firmin Crets. In 2012 the company changed its name to FBO. In 2013 FBO co-produced Bill Condon's *The Fifth Estate* with Benedict Cumberbatch as Julian Assange (opening film at the Toronto International Film Festival and *Filmfest Gent*), followed in 2014 by *Rendez-vous* by Antoinette Beumer, based on Esther Verhoef's book by the same title. In 2015, FBO and Woestijnvis pooled forces to co-produce *Callboys*, Jan Eelen's long-awaited new fiction series set in the world of gigolos. October 2016 marks the release of *De Premier* (The PM), Erik Van Looy's new feature film starring Koen De Bouw. *De Dag*, a suspenseful series by Jonas Geirnaert and Julie Mahieu, is another one of this year's projects. FBO also co-produces Rachel van Bommel's *Brussel* with Dutch Millstreet Films, a TV series penned by Leon de Winter.

In 1997, Wouter Vandenhoute, Erik Watté and Jan Huyse set up **Woestijnvis** with a view to making good programmes for a wide audience. The first Woestijnvis programme is the daily magazine *Man bijt hond* (*Man Bites Dog*). Woestijnvis delivers quality and innovation and, over the years, it has been the home of a talented group of TV faces/makers.

Over the years Woestijnvis has ventured into a wide range of TV genres: late-night programmes such as *De Laatste Show*, reality show *De Mol*, quizzes such as *De Slimste Mens Ter Wereld* and *De Pappenheimers*, Sunday night programmes such as *De XII Werken Van Vanoudenhoven* and *De Jaren Stillekes*, but also documentary programmes such as *Belga Sport*, *Nonkel Pater*, *Terug Naar Siberië*, *De Rechtbank*, *In Godsnaam* and *Topdokters*, the much praised news show *De Ideale Wereld* and new formats such as *Bloot en Speren* and *De Idioten*.

Woestijnvis also boasts expertise in the field of fiction. Jan Eelen is the man behind *In De Gloria*, *Het Eiland* and *De Ronde*. Bart De Pauw made *Het Geslacht De Pauw*, Tom Lenaerts & Co created *De Parelvisser*, Tom Van Dyck, Michiel Devlieger & Co did *Van Vlees en Bloed*, while Tom Lenaerts and Tom Van Dyck devised *Met Man en macht*. Erik Van Looy's *Loft* is Woestijnvis' first feature film. With its 1.2 million visitors, it has attracted the largest audience of any Belgian film so far.

THE PM	KOEN DE BOUW
CHRISTINE	TINE REYMER
EVA	CHARLOTTE VANDERMEERSCH
THE CHIEF	DIRK ROOFTHOFT
THE CHAUFFEUR	STIJN VAN OPSTAL
US PRESIDENT	SASKIA REEVES
CHIEF OF SECURITY	ADAM GODLEY
LUC	WIM WILLAERT
PAUL	WILLY THOMAS
DOCTOR	KATELIJNE DAMEN
PROTOCOL ASSISTANT	JEROEN VAN DER VEN
OPPOSITION LEADER	ISABELLE VAN HECKE
SECRET SERVICE AGENT	NATHAN WILEY
GUARDS	NICOLAS DE PRUYSSENAERE
	ALI AKKUL
	IGOR PASZKIEWICZ
	STEFAN GOTA
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONERS	MARCEL HENSEMA
	MARK JAX
	PATRIZIA BERTI
	HEIN VAN DER HEIJDEN
CLEANERS	NORMAN BAERT
	DOMINIQUE VERSCHAEREN
TECHNICIANS	LUKAS DE WOLF
LAURA	SARA ENGLEBERT
SANDER	AKIRA REYNDERS
DRIVER	EMMANUEL TAHON
PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT	TESS BRYANT

Duration: 115'

RELEASE: 26 OCTOBER 2016

#THEPRIMEMINISTER

AN FBO PRODUCTION IN COPRODUCTION WITH WOESTIJNVIS AND MILLSTREET FILMS A FILM BY ERIK VAN LOOY "THE PRIME MINISTER" KOEN DE BOUW TINE REYMER CHARLOTTE VANDERMEERSCH DIRK BOOFTHOOF STIJN VAN OPISTAL SASKIA REEVES ADAM GOOLEY
SOUND SIMONE GALVAZI MAKE UP ESTHER DE GOEY COSTUME TINE VERBEURGT PRODUCTION DESIGN KURT LOVENS SOUND DESIGN PETER FLAMMAN WART WAMSTEKER MUSIC MERLJN SNITKER FILM EDITING PHILIPPE RAVOET YODHAN LEYSSENS PHOTOGRAPHY DANNY ELSSEN
COPRODUCERS MICHEL DEVLIEGER RACHEL VAN BOMMEL PRODUCER HILDE DE LAERE SCRIPT ERIK VAN LOOY CARL JOOS DIRECTOR ERIK VAN LOOY
WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF), SCREEN FLANDERS, SCREEN.BRUSSELS, THE NETHERLANDS FILM PRODUCTION INCENTIVE, THE BELGIAN TAX SHELTER FOR FILM FINANCING, TELENET, KINOPOLIS FILM DISTRIBUTION



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