

ADORATION

a film by
Atom Egoyan



Canada 2008 / 100 minutes / 1:85 / Dolby Digital / Certificate: 15
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SYNOPSIS

ADORATION speaks to our connections---with each other, with our family history, with technology and with the modern world.

Sabine (ARSINÉE KHANJIAN), a high school French teacher, gives her class a translation exercise based on a real news story about a terrorist who plants a bomb in the airline luggage of his pregnant girlfriend.

The assignment has a profound effect on one student, Simon (DEVON BOSTICK), who is being brought up by Tom, his uncle (SCOTT SPEEDMAN). In the course of translating, Simon re-imagines that the news item is his own family's story, with the terrorist standing in for his father. Years ago, Simon's father (NOAM JENKINS) crashed the family car, killing both himself and his wife (RACHEL BLANCHARD), making Simon an orphan. Simon has always been led to believe by his grandfather Morris that the accident was intentional.

Encouraged by Sabine to pretend that what starts out as a drama exercise is in fact true, Simon reads his version to the class. In essence, he has created a false identity which allows him to probe his family secret. But the story then takes on a life of its own on the Internet.

Sabine loses her job due to the ensuing scandal. She engineers a meeting between herself and Tom where she reveals the true reason for her interest in both Simon and Tom.

Meanwhile Simon uses his new persona to journey deeper into his past and come to terms with the reality of what happened years ago. The truth about Simon's family emerges. The mystery is solved and a new family is formed.

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CREW

Producer/Writer/Director	ATOM EGOYAN
Producers	SIMONE URDL, JENNIFER WEISS
Executive Producer	ROBERT LANTOS
Executive Producers	MICHELE HALBERSTADT, LAURENT PETIN
Associate Producer	MARCY GERSTEIN
Line Producer/Production Manager	STEPHEN TRAYNOR
Director of Photography	PAUL SAROSSY CSC BSC
Production Designer	PHILLIP BARKER
Editor	SUSAN SHIPTON
Music	MYCHAEL DANNA
Costumes	DEBRA HANSON
Sound Designer	STEVE MUNRO
Casting	JOHN BUCHAN CSA (Toronto) JASON KNIGHT (Toronto)
First Assistant Director	DANIEL J. MURPHY
Sound Recordist	BISSA SCEKIC
Key Hair	ZINKA SHANKLAND
Key Make-Up	SUZANNE BENOIT
Script Supervisor	LISA BURLING
Property Master	PAUL VERNON
Gaffer	BOB DAVIDSON
Key Grip	HARPER FORBES
Location Manager	EARDLEY WILMOT

100 mins– 1:85 – Dolby Digital

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CAST

Sabine	ARSINÉE KHANJIAN
Tom (Simon's Uncle)	SCOTT SPEEDMAN
Rachel (Simon's Mother)	RACHEL BLANCHARD
Sami (Simon's Father)	NOAM JENKINS
Simon	DEVON BOSTICK
Morris (Simon's Grandfather)	KENNETH WELSH
Security Agent	YUVAL DANIEL
Delivery Guy	JEREMY WRIGHT
Nick	THOMAS HAUFF
Car Owner	MARTIN ROACH
Skinhead	MICHAEL BARRY
Simon (young)	LOUCA TASSONE
Carole	GERALDINE O'RAWWE
Parking Security	DUANE MURRAY
Cab Driver	DOMENIC CUZZOCREA
Principal Robert	TONY NARDI
Janet	JANICE STEIN
Passenger	VERA FRENKEL
Second Passenger	MARC GLASSMAN
Hannah	KATIE BOLAND
Bus Driver	RON BELL
Jennifer	HAILEE SISERA
Daniel	AARON POOLE
Ira	PAUL SOLES
Holocaust Survivor	BATHSHEBA GARNETT
Granddaughter	SOO GARAY
Third Passenger	MAURY CHAYKIN
Fourth Passenger	JACK BLUM
Fifth Passenger	SHEL GOLDSTEIN
Sixth Passenger	SHARON CORDER
Berating Woman	IEVA LUCS
Driver	JAMES BINKLEY

ABOUT THE FILM

ADORATION is director Atom Egoyan's twelfth feature film. It is woven with the common threads that appear in much of his work: the differences between appearance and reality; and the subjective nature of truth; prismatic, fragmented structures; multiple time frames and points of view; rich and complex characters; and the dynamics of family.

Egoyan has long been interested in the concept of communication and the role of technology in our lives. In **ADORATION**, Egoyan explores intimacy and the nature of our relationship to media, and technology and its effect on the construction of personal identity.

One of the original inspirations for the film came from a 1986 news story Egoyan had read about a Jordanian man who sent his pregnant Irish girlfriend on an El Al flight with a bomb in her handbag, of which she had no knowledge until security found it.

"The story always struck me because it was one of the first examples of how extreme a terrorist act could be and how one could turn someone close into an abstraction—not only his fiancée but also an unborn child. I came across the story again in 2006 and began to wonder about the child and the legacy of being raised knowing what your father had done."

The ensemble piece follows Simon, a high school student who uses the Internet to misrepresent himself as a figure from recent history (the unborn child), and draws a group of schoolmates and survivors into a community of people mourning a tragedy that never happened. The story shifts between a foiled terrorist plot and its unexpected repercussions on the lives of three contemporary characters living in Toronto.

"In many ways, Adoration is about the need to find objects and places which give a sense of meaning, as opposed to the instant meaning accorded to the sea of responses that Simon is dealing with over the Internet. This actual event of the terrorist plot began to mesh with the story of a young man maturing in an age of invented screen names and the creation of alternate identities through gaming avatars."

Twenty years earlier, Egoyan was shooting *Speaking Parts*, a film that also dealt with intimacy and ways people could connect—at that time through satellite technology and satellite links.

"What's interesting and what has always fascinated me is the exploration of how we communicate as human beings and also how technology allows us access and ways of representing ourselves. In the '80s, society was clearly divided into people who had access to making images and broadcasting them and people who were just watchers—people who were relegated to that position. What has happened in the 20 years since is that now we can all make images and anyone can broadcast their thoughts. There's always been a paradox for me between the ability to communicate and the idea of

reception. I think what's happened in our culture is that people have become accustomed to the notion of broadcasting their ideas and the notion of sharing their ideas but the attention span has attendantly closed down and so we just move on. This is one of the predicaments Simon faces in the film—suddenly, his personal history explodes online and he receives a lot of response but the people then move on and he still has to deal, mentally and emotionally, with the issues that have been raised.”

From the outset, Egoyan's concept for **ADORATION** involved the Internet world of chat rooms. In the fall of 2007 during principal photography, an application like Apple's iChat only allowed up to four people to conduct a group visual communication. Egoyan's vision included open video conversations with dozens of people from all over the world joining in.

“The technology proposed in the film is slightly ahead of its time, however, I have no doubt that by the time the film is released it will be possible to speak with a community.”

To better understand adolescents' approaches to Internet communication, Egoyan conducted sessions in a number of Toronto high schools interviewing students and setting up workshops for several months beginning in the spring of 2007. Using six to eight cameras, Egoyan initiated chats and had the students regard the cameras as though they were looking at each other to gauge how comfortable they were with the medium.

“It was surprising how unselfconscious these kids were and how very comfortable it was for them to have, in some way, two identities, which is what this film is dealing with. In the scripted scenes, there's an attempt at naturalism and there's a tone to those scenes which is very different from the way a person acts when they know they're being broadcast. Simon is a boy who is caught between these two worlds.”

“While Adoration might be dealing with the issue of how new technologies transform our identities, the film is also a coming-of-age story.”

It is about the search for identity in a time when intense personal journeys are compressed and digested by a culture that is in constant fast-forward. In a world where everyone has an opinion that can be instantly broadcast, it's easy to understand the impulse towards embellishment and fantasy. This is an age of instant avatars and wildly improbable icons. In order to understand reality, we have always created mythologies to explain the universe to ourselves. Objects and ideas that were once considered sacred become reformatted and 're-adored' in ways we couldn't have imagined a generation ago.

“Adoration presents the viewer with a selection of traditions and various objects of adoration. Some are ancient and in danger of becoming obsolete. Others are new and

dangerously untried. Each of the central characters finds themselves in the process of re-evaluating the meaning of crucial relationships in their lives.”

The movie **Adoration** speaks of perception, tolerance, terror, fear, adoration, reverence, and truth. The thing about technology is you can neither glorify nor demonize it. It is all around us. In a world that is dependent on modern technology, one can only make informed and conscious decisions.

Technology and the look of Adoration

ADORATION favours the more naturalistic approach Egoyan employed in his earlier films. Although the film’s overall subject of the world of digital communication over the Internet is associated with a disposable visual texture, Egoyan, in contrast, chose a rich and deeply layered palette. For a film obsessed with new technologies, where the Web, computers and video are central ingredients, it’s an interesting juxtaposition that **ADORATION** was shot on 35mm film.

“It’s fascinating to me how the technology of shooting with film negative has become antiquated so quickly. For purely practical reasons the language is simply disappearing. Film is an incredibly beautiful medium and I was really quite convinced that I wanted to shoot this on film stock. The challenge was in finding negative cutters, colour timers—people who still know how to work with film.”

“Scenes between Sami and Rachel have a dreamy feel, and were shot with an extremely long lens which seems to always float around the couple, thus throwing the background of the rooms and places they inhabit out of focus. We come to understand that these scenes exist in Simon’s mind. Indeed, this couple—like all the other sacred objects presented in the story (from the crèche to the stolen Christmas decoration to the severed scroll) are presented in a way that emphasizes their precious nature. Other than the flashbacks where the image was filtered slightly to suggest a differentiation from the present reality, the ‘look’ of the movie was largely accomplished with contrast, colour, production design, wardrobe and lighting.”

ATOM EGOYAN

Cairo-born, Canadian-bred and of Armenian descent, Atom Egoyan is one of the most celebrated contemporary filmmakers on the international scene. Through his uniquely personal feature films and numerous related projects, he has created a remarkable body of work that has received critical acclaim and achieved commercial success around the world.

Egoyan was raised in Victoria, BC, moving to Toronto at age 18 to study International Relations and classical guitar at the University of Toronto. It was there that he began to seriously explore the art and language of the cinema, and started making his own films, which progressed to reflect his own, very personal thematic obsessions, delving into issues of intimacy, displacement and the impact of technology and media in modern life.

Filmography

- 2009 – **Chloé** (Director)
- 2008 - **Adoration** (Writer/Director/Producer)
- 2007 - **To Each His Cinema** (Writer/Director – Segment “Artaud Double Bill”)
- 2006 – **Citadel** (Writer/Director/Editor/Producer/Cinematographer) Documentary
- 2005 – **Where The Truth Lies** (Writer/Director/Executive Producer)
- 2002 – **Ararat** (Writer/Director/Producer)
- 2001 – **Diaspora** (Director) Short
- 2000 – **The Line** (Writer/Director) Short
- 2000 – **Krapp’s Last Tape** (Director) TV
- 1999 – **Felicia’s Journey** (Writer/Director)
- 1997 – **The Sweet Hereafter** (Writer/Director/Producer)
- 1997 – **Sarabande** (Director) TV
- 1995 – **A Portrait of Arshile** (Writer/Director) Short
- 1994 – **Exotica** (Writer/Director/Producer)
- 1993 – **Calendar** (Writer/Director/Producer/Editor/Actor)
- 1993 – **Gross Misconduct** (TV)
- 1991 – **The Adjuster** (Writer/Director)
- 1991 – **Montreal vu par...**(Writer/Director – Segment “En Passant”)
- 1989 – **Speaking Parts** (Writer/Director/Producer)
- 1987 – **Family Viewing** (Writer/Director/Producer/Editor)
- 1985 – **Men: A Passion Playground** (Director/Cinematographer) Short

1984 – **Next of Kin** (Writer/Director/Producer/Editor)

1982 – **Open House** (Writer/Director/Editor) Short, 25 min

1981 – **Peep Show** (Writer/Director/Editor, Cinematographer) Short

1980 – **After Grad with Dad** (Writer/Director/Editor/Cinematographer) Short,

1979 – **Howard in Particular** (Writer/Director/Editor/Cinematographer) Short

1977 – **Lust of a Eunuch** (Director)



ARSINÉE KHANJIAN - Sabine

An actor with an international career on stage and screen, Arsinée Khanjian starred in Catherine Breillat's critically acclaimed feature, *À Ma Soeur!* (Fat Girl). Khanjian is best known for her ongoing collaboration with filmmaker Atom Egoyan. She has had starring roles in his features *Ararat*, which earned her a Genie Award, *Exotica*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and *Felicia's Journey*. She also co-produced as well as starred with Egoyan in the award-winning *Calendar*, written and directed by Egoyan. For her role in Ruba Nadda's feature film *Sabah*, Khanjian received a Genie nomination. She also recently collaborated on the writing and editing of *Stone Time Touch*, a film by Gariné Torossian that won the Best Documentary Award at the Warsaw Film Festival.



SCOTT SPEEDMAN - Tom

Rising actor Scott Speedman has just completed work on three new films: *The Strangers*, starring opposite Liv Tyler for director Bryan Bertino; the Magnolia release *Weirdsville*, opposite Wes Bentley and Taryn Manning for director Allan Moyle; and *Anamorph*, starring opposite Willem Dafoe for director Henry Miller.

His other film credits include Len Wiseman's *Underworld* and *Underworld: Evolution* starring opposite Kate Beckinsale; Ron Shelton's *Dark Blue*, opposite Kurt Russell; Isabel Coixet's *My Life Without Me*, opposite Sarah Polley, for which he won Best Actor at the Bordeaux International Film Festival; Tony Piccirillo's *The 24th Day*, opposite James Marsden; Bruce Paltrow's *Duets*, co-starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Maria Bello; Lee Tamahori's *xxX: State of the Union*; and Gary Burns' *Kitchen Party*.



RACHEL BLANCHARD - Rachel

Rachel Blanchard has become one of the most sought-after young actresses in Hollywood. Last year Rachel was seen in two starring roles in New Line's *Snakes on a Plane*, opposite Samuel L. Jackson, and *Comeback Season*, opposite Ray Liotta. She was also seen as one of the female leads opposite Kevin Bacon and Colin Firth in Atom Egoyan's *Where The Truth Lies*.

Rachel burst onto the U.S. scene with her groundbreaking portrayal of Cher Horowitz in the television adaptation of the big-screen blockbuster, *Clueless*. Rachel also appeared in the top-rated British comedy series "Peep Show".

NOAM JENKINS - Sami

Noam Jenkins has been a professional actor for the past fifteen years. In the last eighteen months Jenkins co-starred along Jason Isaacs in the BBC mini-series "The State Within" and starred in, *All Hat* and *This Beautiful City* which both premiered at the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival.

DEVON BOSTICK - Simon

As a young actor, Devon Bostick has amassed an impressive resumé of film and television roles. He recently appeared in the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival opening feature *Fugitive Pieces*, directed by Jeremy Podeswa.



KENNETH WELSH – Morris

Welsh's many film credits include *Four Brothers*, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, *The Aviator*, *Miracle*, *Absolute Power*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Perfectly Normal*, *The Freshman*, *Crocodile Dundee II*, *The House on Carroll Street*, *Loyalties* and *Margaret's Museum*, for which he won a Genie Award for Best Supporting Actor.

PAUL SAROSSY - Cinematographer

Adoration is the latest project in the longtime collaboration of director Atom Egoyan and award-winning cinematographer Paul Sarossy. The two filmmakers have worked together on the films *Where the Truth Lies*, *Ararat*, *Felicia's Journey*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, *Exotica*, *The Adjuster*, *Speaking Parts*, as well as the television production of *Krapp's Last Tape*.

