A close-up portrait of Pierre Niney, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has a microphone clipped to his ear. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and deep shadows. Overlaid on the image is large, semi-transparent text in a bold, sans-serif font.

BEWARE
OF YOUR
IDOLS

PIERRE NINEY

GURU

WY PRODUCTIONS AND NINETY FILMS
PRESENT

PIERRE NINEY

GURU

A FILM BY YANN GOZLAN

MARION BARBEAU

ANTHONY BAJON

CHRISTOPHE MONTENEZ

FROM THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

RUNTIME : 2H07

COMING SOON TO CINEMAS

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY

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STUDIOCANAL
A CANAL+ COMPANY

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt, stands with his back to the camera and arms raised in a gesture of address or encouragement. He is facing a large, dense crowd of people who are also raising their hands and clapping. The scene is lit with a strong, warm light from above, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones like orange, yellow, and red, with some cooler blue and purple hues in the shadows.

SYNOPSIS

Matt Vasseur is the man of the hour. Once a high-school dropout, he is now a successful and charismatic life coach. At a time when people are moving away from religion and politics, Coach Matt leads inspirational self-affirmation events immersing his crowds of followers in an electric atmosphere. With his impressive job, supportive girlfriend, and countless devoted fans, he is the person everyone aspires to be. But when a Senator starts to threaten his business and some of his followers begin to exhibit intense, even dangerous levels of obsession, Matt's world begins to unravel, revealing the hidden darkness behind his seemingly perfect life.



YANN GOZLAN

DIRECTOR AND CO-WRITER

HOW DID PIERRE NINEY APPROACH YOU WITH THE IDEA OF GURU?

Shortly after the release of **BLACK BOX**, Pierre told me about an idea he'd been developing for some time. He wanted to make a film centered on a life coach. I was immediately drawn to the idea, for several reasons. First, coaching struck me as

an original subject and more relevant today than ever. There's been a surge in coaches of all kinds, boosted by social media. How can we explain this phenomenon? Is it loss of direction? The pervasive idea that happiness comes from career success? The cult of performance? In any case, I saw the popularity of coaching, rightly or wrongly, as a symptom of a society that's

« THE IDEA OF PORTRAYING THIS PHENOMENON IN A FILM INSTANTLY GRABBED ME. »

in crisis, with people desperately searching for meaning. The idea of portraying this phenomenon in a film instantly grabbed me. The second thing was that this project offered me the opportunity to immerse the audience in a specific world: the world of coaching. It's an environment that's rarely depicted on screen. I wanted to explore its codes and inner workings. As a viewer, I particularly enjoy films that take you behind-the-scenes of a unique and little-known world. I started by compulsively browsing online, watching countless videos of coaches giving all sorts of advice on how to succeed, feel better, push beyond limits, become the best version of oneself, and so on. Some of these videos are so simplistic in their teachings that they were almost laughable. But as I continued my research, I discovered coaches running highly successful small businesses, some with dozens of employees. I realized that this world, which might seem easy to mock at first glance, is in fact a thriving industry. That convinced me there was really something here.

Finally, another aspect of coaching immediately fascinated me: seminars. I learned that in France there are large gatherings where hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people come together to follow the advice and teachings of coaches. I signed up for several seminars to see what they were like. I immediately saw the cinematic potential in them.

They're highly visual, almost like grand masses where words dominate and become performative. I knew they'd be thrilling to capture on film. I wanted to convey on screen the energetic, electric, cathartic dimension I experienced. All the more so

because I had never tackled anything similar before. In the films I've made so far, I've leaned toward an intimate, pared-down approach, focusing mainly on two or three characters. With **GURU**, there was a real challenge for me, and a strong visual attraction to these crowd scenes. Jean-Baptiste Delafon, the screenwriter, and I were very excited about these sequences. From the start, we wanted the story to hinge on several seminar scenes; dense sequences that would form the DNA of the film. I thought these seminars in **GURU** should play the same role and have the same impact as the fight scenes in a boxing movie.

ARE THERE LIFE COACHES IN FRANCE WHO COULD BE COMPARED TO MATTHIEU VASSEUR? OR DID THE INSPIRATION COME FROM ELSEWHERE?

Several coaches in France have the entrepreneurial scale and level of influence of Matthieu Vasseur, but I felt that by reproducing them as they are, or by drawing too directly from them, we wouldn't be making the character as interesting as he could be. We looked more at coaches from other countries, particularly the most famous American coach: Tony Robbins. This man shares the same methods, tricks, and proactive approach to life as other coaches, but with an exceptional charisma that sets him apart. While writing the script, I needed to feel that if I were in the room facing Matt, I wouldn't be laughing at him. I'd be unsettled, disturbed, and maybe even under his influence. Would I fall for it? I don't know, but I wanted to avoid having the audience taking a mocking, resistant position.

A small note: Tony Robbins was also a source of inspiration for



creating the other coach character in the film: Peter Conrad. Coming back to Matt, it was crucial that we could be seduced, or at least intrigued and disquieted, by him. What he shares with other coaches is his ideology, the cult of performance, this obsession with positive thinking – “If you want it, you can do it” – and placing responsibility and discipline at the center of everything. As the keys to success. There is, of course, some truth in this teaching, but at that level of simplification, it’s no longer truth, it’s a scam.

During the writing process, I often found myself saying to Jean-Baptiste, “Actually, I criticize Matt, but I also have my little Tony Robbins-style disciplines in my own life.” The difference is that I accept a degree of complexity, mystery, and difficulty. I believe depression exists. I believe social violence exists too. Everything cannot be reduced to ‘get off your butt.’ The problem lies in the extreme simplification of certain coaches who’ve created a method that supposedly applies to everyone, in all circumstances, regardless of social context. And that’s what makes this type of coaching so successful. They give you a key, a magic formula that’s supposed to solve all your problems.

For characterization purposes, we also wanted to give Matt a specific rhetorical trait. We wanted him to use certain scientific notions related to the brain, as if to lend weight and authority to his words, even though it’s really pseudo-science.



THE FILM IS SET IN FRANCE, BUT YOU SHOW MATT'S FASCINATION WITH THE UNITED STATES THROUGH THE CHARACTER OF PETER CONRAD. IS THERE A SPECIFIC STYLE TO FRENCH COACHING?

Coaching was born and structured in the United States. In a country of excess and extremes, anyone can become a prophet. Coaching is completely organic to American culture.

In a country like France, historically secular and rationalist, with a centralized, highly hierarchical tradition, it's the opposite. We're wary of self-proclaimed prophets. In theory, there's greater resistance in France to this kind of practice. Yet, even if this mistrust exists, it's becoming less true when you look at the deeper sociology of the country. The success of coaching proves it. While most of the followers I met had modest incomes, the majority were willing to spend more than three thousand euros for two or three days of seminars! To me, the success of coaching in France is part of the Americanization of French society. That said, Jean-Baptiste and I didn't want to treat the subject of **GURU** in an American way. We wanted to tell a story that could only take place in France. Hence the narrative element of the bill aiming to regulate the coaching profession, as happened a few years ago with psychologists, by requiring a state diploma to practice. This law, which threatens Matt's business and sends him into a spiral, associates a certain form of coaching with sectarian drift. I wanted to clarify that among the 15,000 professional coaches active in France, there aren't 15,000 gurus, thankfully! For obvious dramatic reasons, I'm interested in only a fraction of them – the most extreme ones, those who are toxic.

Coming back to the French specificity of the film, it was important that in this coaching universe Matt had a model, a distinctly American reference, through the legendary, mythical figure of Peter Conrad. This also gave the story greater scope.

AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE FILM, BEFORE MATTHIEU IS SUMMONED TO THE SENATE, HE SEEMS TO BE DOING HIS JOB QUITE HONESTLY AND SINCERELY. HOW DID YOU WORK ON BUILDING EMPATHY FOR HIM AND THEN GRADUALLY SHIFTING TO A SENSE OF DISILLUSIONMENT TOWARD THIS CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE?

We started from the idea that Matt was, above all, a naïve man, truly sincere in his approach and in his belief that he is helping others. We absolutely didn't want a cynic. On the contrary, I wanted the audience to feel empathy for Matt, at least at the beginning, before gradually detaching and questioning his actions as he radicalizes. My goal was for the viewer's perception of the character, and their opinion of him, to constantly change throughout the story; for the audience to move from empathy to distrust, then change their mind again. Even when Matt becomes brutal and toxic, I wanted to ensure there was still a kernel of truth in his words.

What's troubling about this character is that he is genuinely convinced he's serving the greater good. Matt isn't someone primarily motivated by money or seducing women. We set that aside to focus on what seemed most interesting: the immense narcissistic satisfaction that comes from doing good, or believing you're doing good, for others. In his desire to change people's lives, Matt cannot handle the frustration of failing, so



he becomes increasingly aggressive. That dynamic fascinated me. If I had to sum up the character's arc, I'd say Matt is a naïve man who becomes a fanatic.

MATTHIEU'S PSYCHE IS COMPLEX. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE STRUGGLED TO GET WHERE HE IS, THAT HIS RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS DURING CHILDHOOD WEREN'T EASY. BUT YOU DON'T ABSOLVE HIM OF HIS CHOICES...

From the outset, the idea was to immerse ourselves in Matt's perspective, to make a first-person film. But even though we're in his point of view, I don't think we let him off the hook for his actions or choices. Quite the opposite. Yes, Matt had a tough time as a child and teenager, but did he suffer as much as he claims? In my view, he's initially someone desperate to succeed at all costs. In this society, and this coaching world, which glorifies survivors and those who overcome trauma, Matt,

lacking real trauma, invents some and perhaps even convinces himself he's experienced it.

THE FILM'S FINAL LINE POSITIONS PETER CONRAD AND MATTHIEU VASSEUR AS MIRRORS OF SOCIETY. ARE THEY SERVING THEIR OWN INSECURITIES, OR ARE THEY THERE TO STIR UP PEOPLE'S BASEST INSTINCTS?

A bit of both, I think. Matt is devoted to the cult of easy answers and quick results. Life, in his view, operates simplistically based on goals and hitting targets. Everyone manages their own life like a business. It's a very 1980s ideology, but one that's making a strong comeback today. Just look at social media and the number of coaches promising you'll earn your first million euros in three months. In my opinion, Matt and Peter Conrad are above all symptoms of a need for success, a search for shortcuts to achievement, that is deeply problematic.

*Coach
Matt*

EXPAND SESSIONS

NO LIMIT

TRANSFORMEZ VOS OBSTACLES
EN RÉUSSITES DURABLES



WHY PROBLEMATIC?

Because in reality success depends on multiple factors and usually requires a lot of time and work. This way of dangling short-term success if you 'get off your butt' creates massive frustration, disappointment, and even addictions to coaching itself. The feeling that a coach is driving your life somewhere better delivers jolts of adrenaline and dopamine. But it's not addressing his followers' core issues, so it makes them increasingly hooked, looking for the next short-term hit. I saw this at the seminars I attended. Like any addiction, the dose has to keep increasing. People return to these seminars without having truly solved their problems. They sign up for ever more extensive and expensive programs. Eventually, a Ponzi-like pyramid system emerges, where attendees want to become coaches themselves. We end up with a model where everyone wants to – or thinks they can – become a coach.

DOES THAT EXPLAIN WHY PARTICIPANTS KEEP COMING BACK TO THESE SEMINARS, LIKE JULIEN IN THE FILM?

Partly, yes. More broadly, I think people often return to these large gatherings to relive moments of intense collective communion. The type of coaching I describe in the film, the kind Matt practices, is a response to the epidemic of loneliness. It serves as a substitute for mass, for religious rituals. By attending these big seminars, followers, like Julien in the film, share powerful, communal experiences of catharsis and adrenaline. They feel alive. The problem is when they go home and face their problems again. Then the crash can be brutal, leading to depression or even greater distress. This drives followers to re-enroll. They're desperate, like addicts in withdrawal, to recapture that feeling.

MATTHIEU ENDS UP DESPISING "THE KNOWERS," THE EXPERTS. WORLDWIDE, THERE SEEMS TO BE A GROWING DISTRUST OF EXPERTISE AND A KIND OF LEVELING OF COMPETENCE, WHERE EVERY OPINION HAS THE SAME VALUE...

I was interested in reflecting that evolution. France is being shaken by the general 'Uberization' of society. The value of expertise and education is being undermined. There's this emerging idea that anyone can be a self-employed entrepreneur, an expert in their business and in their own life. Through Matt's character, the film addresses this social tension within the country, between an institutional, hierarchical society and one that aspires to be more fluid, where you no longer need qualifications to succeed.

THE CHARACTER IS ONCE AGAIN NAMED MATTHIEU VASSEUR, AS IN A PERFECT MAN AND BLACK BOX. WAS THAT YOUR IDEA? WHAT'S THE REASON?

GURU and the two films you mention do share some common points. They can be seen as thrillers that question notions of truth and lies, each time with a character under pressure, on the brink, caught in a downward spiral. But at the same time, the three movies are very different in their narratives and tones. For example, **GURU** has a touch of dark comedy, a sometimes satirical and biting tone that didn't exist in the other films. The fact that the main character is once again called Matthieu Vasseur was an idea Pierre and I had together. It was meant as a nod to the two films we made together. Above all, it's an expression of our complicity.



THE FILM STARTS OUT LIKE A MOVIE ANALYZING THE ZEITGEIST, ALMOST A SOCIOLOGICAL FILM, BUT BECOMES VERY MUCH A THRILLER. WAS IT IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE A GENRE-FILM DNA?

Not really. For *GURU*, I wasn't thinking in terms of genre. I was thinking in terms of the scope of the character's arc. Since I was telling the story of a naïve man who becomes a fanatic, I naturally moved toward increasingly dramatic situations. That meant I ended up using genre tools. But genre wasn't a goal in itself. In fact, the film is a combination of lots of genres. It has social, political, thriller elements, and even dark comedy. In my view, *GURU* is much less anchored in any genre than some of my previous films. The tone evolves throughout the story. It becomes something psychological and nightmarish. That gradual transition from one universe to another appealed to me.

PETER CONRAD NEEDS MATT TO PROVE THAT HIS METHOD IS SPREADING WORLDWIDE. DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PETER CONRAD AND MATTHIEU VASSEUR SERVE AS A WARNING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE POPULIST DRIFT SEEN IN THE UNITED STATES COULD HAPPEN HERE?

Since Trump's re-election, we can feel the wind of populism blowing in France. In this context, I see that public speech no longer serves to express truth or lies. No, the purpose of public speech now is to generate energy. It's meant to electrify, to brutalize. In that sense, as the story unfolds, Matt becomes a Trumpist figure. Not in the sense of political affiliation with Trump, but in the sense of a certain relationship to language and the world. He's no longer in pursuit of truth but looking to attract people through shock and awe.

WERE THERE ANY FILMS THAT INSPIRED YOU OR SERVED AS REFERENCES?

We weren't looking to imitate other films that tackle coaching, like **MAGNOLIA**, which is an unsurpassable masterpiece. Our starting point was to ask whether we could do something different. For Matt's characterization, we immediately ruled out the seduction-coach angle – the virile, masculine figure we saw in Tom Cruise in **MAGNOLIA**. The real source of inspiration for Jean-Baptiste and me was the research we gathered, the various interviews with people in our circle who had been coached, and the experiences I drew from the seminars I attended.

But if I think about it, there's one film that was a distant inspiration for GURU. From the very beginning of writing, I wanted to immerse the audience in the life of a troubling character whose limits we don't know. On that front, **NIGHTCRAWLER** by Dan Gilroy was a reference. It's an absolutely great film.

YOUR FILMS OFTEN EVOKE THE NEED FOR SAFEGUARDS, FOR RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTIONS TO COUNTER THE EXCESSES OF OUR SOCIETY OR TECHNOLOGY. DOES EXPLORING THESE THEMES REASSURE YOU?

I make films partly because the world makes me anxious. I prefer to face unsettling situations rather than flee from them. Working with this anxiety-inducing material is a way of managing anxiety. When you write a story and make a film, it seems natural to me to put your finger, and even your hand, where it hurts.

MATTHIEU ENDS UP HIDING, LYING, PLAYING GAMES TO ACHIEVE HIS GOALS. BUT EVEN AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS MANIPULATIONS, THERE SEEM TO BE MOMENTS OF TRUTH. THE AUDIENCE REALLY QUESTIONS HIS HONESTY. WHEN DIRECTING PIERRE, HOW DID YOU DISCUSS WHEN MATTHIEU IS BEING HONEST AND WHEN HE'S PERFORMING?

Depending on the scene, I would sometimes ask Pierre to play it very sincerely, and on the next take I'd ask him to appear

more ambiguous. These different shades of performance gave me a certain freedom in editing. I could decide how truthful the character would seem in different situations. Generally, I wanted Matt to impress us with his ability to talk his way out of corners. Matt had to be convincing even when lying, so during shooting I often asked Pierre to play the scenes as honestly as possible. But we fine-tuned the degree of sincerity depending on the sequence. In the script, there were two main types of situations. On one hand, the seminar scenes, the sequences I called 'hot situations,' where Matt is in the boiling energy of the group, immersed in the seminar's fervor, where we see him physically almost possessed. There, he is totally invested and sincere.

On the other hand, there are the 'cold' situations: confrontations with people who challenge him with precise facts, where Matt is forced to improvise in a much more complicated but equally frightening way. But even in these situations where he's challenged on his lies, Matt is always convinced he's doing what he does for the good of others. From his point of view, the truth of the facts is secondary. His driving force, what animates him above all, is changing people's lives for the better. That's his drug. And any behavior is justified in pursuit of that, even if it means bending the truth. For Matt, that's secondary compared to the ultimate goal: giving people energy, sparking the desire to fight and not give up.



YANN GOZLAN

BIOGRAPHY

YANN GOZLAN is a French writer and director. He is best known for his films **CAGED** from 2010 and **A PERFECT MAN** in 2015. After directing short films **PELLIS**(2004) and **ECHO**(2007), Yann Gozlan wrote and directed his first feature film in 2009, the psychological thriller **CAGED** with Zoé Félix, Eric Savin and Arié Elmaleh. Based on a true story, the film tells the story of three members of a humanitarian team on a mission in the Balkans, kidnapped by criminals with unknown motives. For his second feature film in 2014, Yann Gozlan directed **A PERFECT MAN**, starring Pierre Niney. In **A PERFECT MAN**, the young actor plays Mathieu, whose fate changes the day he decides to sign his name on a manuscript, that he finds at a lonely, old, dead man's place. In 2018, Yann Gozlan directed the film **BURN OUT** starring Francois Civil and Olivier Rabourdin. In 2020, he collaborated with Pierre Niney again for his thriller **BLACK BOX**, which also stars Lou de Laâge and Andre Dussollier.

GOZLAN DEEPENED HIS EXPLORATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TENSION WITH VISIONS, RELEASED IN 2023, STARRING DIANE KRUGER AND MATHIEU KASSOVITZ. BUILDING ON THESE THEMES OF SUSPENSE AND MENTAL UNRAVELING, HE THEN RETURNED IN 2025 WITH THE RESIDENCE, WHICH PREMIERED AT CANNES'S MIDNIGHT SCREENINGS.

ULTIMATELY, GOZLAN REUNITED ONCE AGAIN WITH PIERRE NINEY IN GURU, SET FOR 2026. TOGETHER, GOZLAN AND NINEY CRAFT A GRIPPING STUDY OF INFLUENCE, DELIVERING A POTENT MIX OF CONTROL, POWER, AND MORAL AMBIGUITY AT ITS CORE.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2026 GURU
- 2025 THE RESIDENCE
- 2023 VISIONS
- 2021 BLACK BOX
- 2017 BURN OUT
- 2015 A PERFECT MAN
- 2010 CAPTIFS





PIERRE NINEY

MATTHIEU

THIS IDEA ORIGINATED WITH YOU. HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

For years, I've been fascinated by public figures whose words can be seductive, almost magical, yet at the same time poisonous. The power that words have over us, and especially over crowds, is a major theme in human history. The way personal growth and the concept of coaching have been amplified by social media inspired this idea. I obviously wasn't trying to condemn all life coaches. I wanted to explore the ambiguities and potential dangers of these modern 'gurus.'

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU TURN TO YANN GOZLAN TO WRITE AND DIRECT THIS PROJECT?

I went to see Yann very early on. I was sure he'd be intrigued by exploring this area that you don't see in a lot of movies. He

saw the opportunity to create something entertaining and tense, like **BLACK BOX**, but this time with a more societal, more ambiguous, and sometimes darker narrative.

Yann is a huge cinephile. He works really hard and he's an extremely inspired director, especially when it comes to portraying psychological conflict in his characters. I love working with him. We really clicked. We share a passion for directors like Hitchcock and Fincher.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO PLAY MATT?

He's a character I find fascinating and extremely cathartic to play. The rather theatrical idea of a show within the show, of Matt giving his own performance, really spoke to me. Matt goes on a very complex journey. He's initially honest in his behaviour,

« **THE RATHER THEATRICAL IDEA OF A SHOW WITHIN THE SHOW, OF MATT GIVING HIS OWN PERFORMANCE, REALLY SPOKE TO ME. »**

but that becomes more ambiguous. We explore the corners of the human soul, in its best and worst aspects.

Some situations in this film were completely new to me. Like those seminar scenes. After four days of shooting with 400 people in the same space, without windows, the energy in the room was insane. I was on stage but the show was everywhere! And the longer we were there, and the more tired everyone got, people became increasingly uninhibited, free. They were shouting, crying, playing along to the fullest. We were almost touching that trance-like state the film talks about. Acting with 400 people at once was a first! I still thank them for playing along so intensely. We were so impressed, the whole team.

THE CHARACTER IS ONCE AGAIN NAMED MATTHIEU VASSEUR, AS IN A PERFECT MAN AND BLACK BOX. WAS THAT YOUR IDEA? WHAT'S THE REASON?

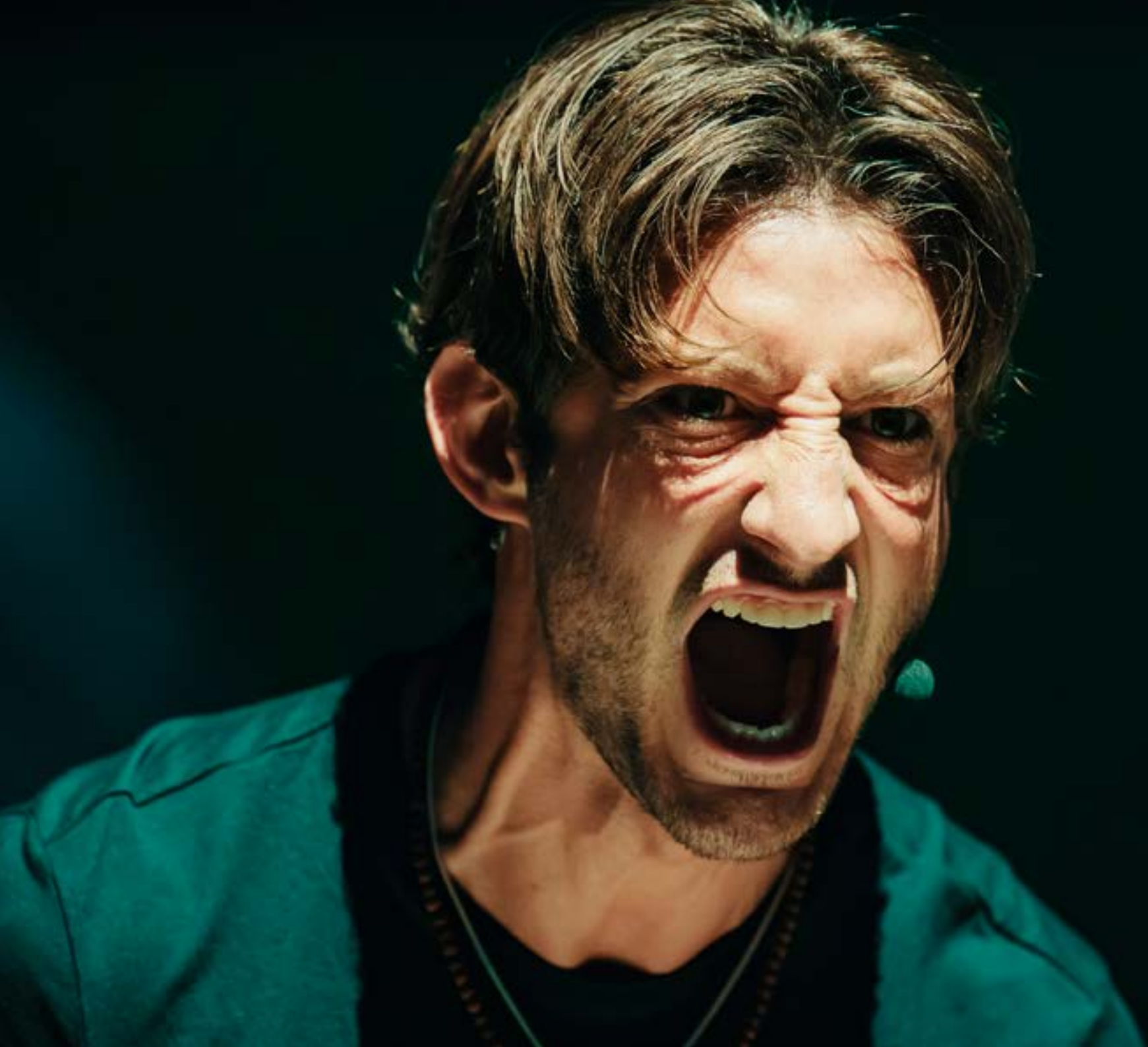
When I received the script for **BLACK BOX**, I froze... My character had the same name as in **A PERFECT MAN**. Yann gave a rather enigmatic answer. I think I like the mystery and the almost mystical aspect of the choice. I don't necessarily want to explain it further. The multiple lives of this Matt fascinate me. His quests for truth...

DID YOU LOOK TO ANY OTHER PERFORMANCES OR MOVIES FOR INSPIRATION?

I didn't look at one specific film, mainly because there haven't really been any other films or series dedicated to these life coaches and their business. We were excited by that originality. But when it comes to speakers capable of inspiring total dedication in their 'followers,' I thought of DiCaprio in **THE WOLF OF WALL STREET** or Paul Dano in **THERE WILL BE BLOOD**. Beyond that, the most relevant preparation for the film came from testimonies of former clients (who sometimes paid up to 4,000 euros for a three-day seminar), current coaches, and from documentaries and podcasts, like Meta de Choc, which examines some of these controversial beliefs.

WHAT'S IMPRESSIVE ABOUT YOUR PERFORMANCE IS THAT WE INEVITABLY END UP QUESTIONING MATTHIEU'S HONESTY, ESPECIALLY WITH JULIEN. AS AN ACTOR, HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHEN MATT IS BEING TRUTHFUL WITH HIMSELF AND WHEN HE'S LYING?

I believe in the character's initial sincerity. He's not a cynic doing this for money or power. He believes in his methods. He genuinely helps some people. He's good at what he does. But his hubris catches up with him. The question of Matt's degree of honesty was a daily topic of discussion on set with Yann. We



tested different versions. We fine-tuned reactions down to the slightest smirk. We knew the right balance would ultimately be found in the editing process. We wanted to avoid condemning Matt and to play with the audience's shifting perspectives.

WHEN HE GETS ANGRY AT RUDY, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THEN APOLOGIZES, DO YOU THINK HE'S TRULY SORRY?

Yes. He's an intelligent, sensitive person. That's also why he's so successful at what he does. Today's star coaches are often skilled at reading people, understanding them, knowing when to listen and when to push a little harder.

MATTHIEU MANIPULATES PUBLIC OPINION ACCORDING TO HIS NEEDS, GENERATING EMPATHY WHEN NECESSARY AND FLIRTING WITH POPULISM. WAS YOUR INSPIRATION DRAWN MORE FROM POLITICS OR ENTERTAINMENT?

Both. They tend to overlap a lot nowadays. There's a political resonance to this character, at a time when neo-populism is making a strong comeback worldwide. The film aims to show how this era of post-truth, where emotions and opinions replace facts, has created an environment for monsters like Coach Matt to rise. People are searching for meaning. They no longer trust politicians, they turn away from religion, there's a loss of collective identity... And that's where coaches step in, with ready-made solutions, step-by-step guides that seem to simplify everything in a chaotic world.



MATTHIEU ENDS UP DESPISING “THE KNOWERS,” THE EXPERTS. THERE’S A GROWING DISTRUST OF EXPERTISE. EVERY OPINION IS TREATED AS EQUAL. DOES THAT SCARE YOU?

Yes, it’s quite dizzying. Specialists and scientists are labeled as ‘elites’ in the narrative of demagogues. Rumors are amplified by social media. We’ll need to equip ourselves, and our children and teenagers, with solid tools to teach them to question, to interrogate, and to understand nuance. Nuance isn’t trendy, but it should make a comeback...

WHEN MATTHIEU IS ON STAGE, YOUR PERFORMANCE IS VERY PHYSICAL. WAS THIS A DEMANDING ROLE IN THAT WAY?

Yes. When I saw the energy some coaches expend during their seminars, I immediately understood the physical dimension of this role and prepared by going to the gym 4–5 times a week, just as Coach Matt would. Also, the body of a personal development coach like Matt is his showcase. It’s part of the package, the promise, the dream... So I had to work on that.

UNLIKE PETER CONRAD, MATTHIEU ISN’T YET A FULL-FLEDGED SHOWMAN. WHEN FACING HOLT MCCALLANY, WHO PLAYS PETER, DID YOU HAVE TO EMPHASIZE YOUR VULNERABILITY?

I loved the face-off with Holt. He’s an actor I’ve admired in projects like *FIGHT CLUB* and *MINDHUNTER*. He’s a true David Fincher regular. Peter Conrad is Matt’s idol. He’s passionate

about him. He has posters of him at home. There’s a form of adulation there. Holt played this charismatic, overpowering American coach so well that honestly, I didn’t have much to do. He was perfect.

We reworked our scene quite a bit on the day – along with Yann – because we were having so much fun. It became a real test, almost an audition for Matt in front of his mentor, which wasn’t necessarily the script’s original intention.

MATTHIEU’S PSYCHOLOGY, ESPECIALLY REGARDING HIS CHILDHOOD AND FRUSTRATIONS, IS QUITE COMPLICATED. DID YOU DO MUCH RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND HOW HE OPERATES?

I spoke a lot with Yann. We didn’t want to overexplain the character’s psychology. Flashbacks and explanations can be hard to do well. But we wanted to bring in that sense of family discomfort with his brother, an enormous unspoken tension and unhealthy competition. Matt didn’t go to college, unlike Christophe. And that’s an important ingredient in their dysfunctional relationship. It’s symbolic of a society that’s increasingly polarized and judgmental.



PIERRE NINEY

BIOGRAPHY

PIERRE NINEY started his acting career at the age of 11, in the theater. He quickly demonstrated his acting skills and was admitted to the Cours Florent in 2008. Two years later, he joined the Comedie Française in 2010 and became the youngest member of the company.

In 2007, after playing a small role in the comedy **NOS 18 ANS**, and appearing alongside Sophie Marceau in **LOL**, Niney went on to star in auteur films such as **LA CONSOLATION** by Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval and **THE ARMY OF CRIME** by Robert Guédiguian, whom he worked with again in 2010 for **THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO**.

After appearing opposite Benoît Poelvoorde and Isabelle Carré in the comedy **ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS**, Pierre Niney got his first major role in Frédéric Louf's drama **18 YEARS OLD AND RISING**, where he first met Lou de Laâge.

Following the movie, he was nominated twice for the Best Promising Actor César Award for **18 YEARS OLD AND RISING** and **JUST LIKE BROTHERS**, in which he starred alongside François-Xavier Demaison, Mélanie Thierry and Nicolas Duvauchelle in 2012.

He then gained further recognition from the cinema industry and starred in **20 YEARS APART**, in which he starred alongside Virginie Effira. In 2013 he took a break from the big screen and returned to the stage, taking on the role of Hyppolite in **PHEDRE**.

His career fully took off with his performance as **YVES SAINT LAURENT**, in the eponymous biography directed by Jalil Lespert, leading him to win the Best Actor César Award in 2015.

Niney then starred in François Ozon's **FRANTZ**, portrayed Commander Cousteau in **THE ODDYSSEY** and was casted as Romain Gary in Eric Barbier's **PROMISE AT DAWN** alongside Charlotte Gainsbourg.



His international career was further cemented when he appeared in Hugh Hudson's **ALTAMIRA** in 2016 starring opposite Rupert Everett, Antonio Banderas and Golshifteh Farahani. In 2020, Pierre Niney appeared in the hit series **LA FLAMME** where he portrayed the eccentric Doctor Juiphe.

Five years after **A PERFECT MAN**, Pierre Niney and Yann Gozlan collaborated again with **BLACK BOX** in 2021. Starring opposite Lou de Laâge, **BLACK BOX** is also a reunion for the two actors, ten years after their first collaboration

In 2021, he also appeared in **OSS 117: FROM AFRICA WITH LOVE**, directed by Nicolas Bedos, where he played the role of OSS 1001 alongside Jean Dujardin. That same year, he starred in Nicole Garcia's romantic thriller **LOVERS**, opposite Stacy Martin and Benoît Magimel, and in Frédéric Tellier's drama **GOLIATH**, alongside Gilles Lellouche and Emmanuelle Bercot. In 2022, he reunited with Nicolas Bedos for **MASCARADE**, playing Adrien Saillard opposite Isabelle Adjani and François Cluzet, and also brought once again his comedic talent to television in **LE FLAMBEAU, LES AVENTURIERS DE CHUPACABRA**, where he portrayed one more time Doctor Juiphe.

In 2023, Niney collaborated with Michel Gondry on **THE BOOK OF SOLUTIONS**, taking on the role of Marc in this inventive drama. The following year, he co-created and starred in the Netflix series **FIASCO**, playing Raphaël Valande, and delivered a powerful performance as Edmond Dantès in Alexandre de La Patellière and Mathieu Delaporte's epic adaptation of **THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO**. In 2025, he joined forces with acclaimed director Asghar Farhadi for **HISTOIRES PARALLÈLES**, sharing the screen with Virginie Efira, Isabelle Huppert, Vincent Cassel and Catherine Deneuve.

In 2026, five years after **BLACK BOX**, Pierre Niney reunited with Yann Gozlan for the psychological thriller **GURU**, where he plays Mathieu Vasseur, a charismatic superstar life coach who leads inspirational self-affirmation events immersing his crowds of followers in an electric atmosphere.

FILMOGRAPHY

2026	GURU	Yann GOZLAN
2024	THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO	Alexandre de La Patellière, Mathieu Delaporte
2022	MASQUERADE	Nicolas Bedos
2021	OSS 117: FROM AFRICA WITH LOVE	Nicolas Bedos
2021	BLACK BOX	Yann Gozlan
2018	THROUGH THE FIRE	Frédéric Tellier
2017	PROMISE AT DAWN	Éric Barbier
2016	THE ODYSSEY	Jérôme Salle
2016	FIVE	Igor Gotesman
2015	A PERFECT MAN	Yann Gozlan
2014	YVES SAINT LAURENT	Jalil Lespert

CAST

MATT	Pierre Niney
ADELE	Marion Barbeau
JULIEN	Anthony Bajon
CHRISTOPHE	Christophe Montenez
RUDY	Jonathan Turnbull
SAM	Raphaëlle Simon
HELENE	Tracy Gotoas
PETER CONRAD	Holt McCallany
KARLA DEMAISON	Léonie Simaga
SOPHIE	Manon Kneusé
LAURENT	Paul Scarfoglio

TECHNICAL LIST

Screenplay	Jean-Baptiste Delafon et Yann Gozlan
Dialogues	Jean-Baptiste Delafon
Cinematographer	Antoine Sanier
Original Music	Chloé Thévenin
Editing	Grégoire Sivan
First Assistant Director	Natalie Engelstein, A.F.A.R
Casting	Constance Demontoy
Script Supervisor	Christine Richard-Sivan
Production Design	Stéphane Rozenbaum
Costumes	Olivier Ligen
Makeup	Laura Ozier
Hairstyling	Sophie Asse
Sound	David Rit, Guadalupe Cassius, Nicolas Bouvet-Levrard, Marc Doisne
Production Manager	Karine Petite
Post-production Supervisor	Gaëlle Godard-Blossier
Unit production Manager	Raphaël Richard