



## SHALL WE KISS? Prelude To A Kiss



**Directed by Emmanuel Mouret**  
**Starring Virginie Ledoyen, Emmanuel Mouret,**  
**Julie Gayet, Michaël Cohen, Frédérique Bel,**  
**Stefano Accorsi, Mélanie Maudran**

Following up on his utterly charming 2006 romantic comedy, *Change Of Address*, writer/director/actor Emmanuel Mouret delivers another cute and keenly observed comedy of manners that resonates strongly with many of Woody Allen's earlier, much lighter films.

A chance meeting one day between two strangers, Gabriel (*Cohen*) and Emilie (*Gayet*), gradually morphs into an evening spent together as the pair – whether they are aware of it or not – go through the standard courtship ritual of wining, dining and stimulating conversation. An overnight guest at a cheap hotel, interior furnishings designer Emilie is only in town until the next day when she must return to Paris.

Gabriel drives her back to her hotel, and quickly leans over to kiss Emilie goodnight and good luck. She's clearly enjoyed his company as well, but balks at the idea of the kiss, no matter how inconsequential Gabriel intends it to be. Emilie chooses to explain her reticence by way of a story that involves mutual friends of hers, Nicolas (*Mouret*) and Judith (*Ledoyen*).

In the story within a story, Nicolas and Judith are best friends who have no secrets between them, happily relating every detail of their sometimes complicated personal lives to each other. Nicolas haltingly confesses to Judith one day that he is desperate for affection and intimacy, and that the simplest solution – no strings sex with a prostitute – is no solution at all.

If he can't kiss his partner with a real passion, then he just can't get in the mood.

Being the good friend that she is, Judith suggests that maybe they could have sex and just pretend that it's something deeper, for Nicolas' sake if nothing else. Of course nothing could be less simple; and from their first tentative kiss onwards, both are unwittingly swept up into an emotional maelstrom that continues to impact upon both of their lives – as well as those of their respective partners, Claudio (*Accorsi*) and Celine (*Bel*).

With a sure hand and a lightness of touch, Mouret delights in exploring the bittersweet awkwardness and often hidden complexity of human relationships, in much the same way as he did in *Change Of Address*. None of the main characters seem to have the slightest clue what they really want, or what they already have for that matter.

Most commonly associated with *Casablanca*, the Humphrey Bogart/Ingrid Bergman romantic classic, Herman Hupfield's Broadway tune *As Time Goes By* contains the immortal lyric, 'a kiss is just a kiss.' Emmanuel Mouret knows better, even if his characters never quite get it.

**TIM STEWART**

***Shall We Kiss?* screens at UWA's Somerville Auditorium from Monday, February 9, until Sunday, February 15, and at Joondalup Pines from Monday, February 16, until Sunday, March 1, as part of the Lotterywest Festival Films season.**