

## A PAIN IN THE ASS Farce About

Directed by Francis Veber  
Starring Richard Berry, Patrick Timsit,  
Pascal Elbé, Virginie Ledoyen, Laurent  
Paolini, Michel Aumont, Cédric Chevalme

In the tradition of past gems such as *The Dinner Game*, *The Closet* and *The Valet*, Francis Veber revisits his 1973 play of the same name with this latest side-splitting comedic masterpiece.

In fact American maestro Billy Wilder had already made an English language version in 1981 (starring Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon, and somewhat unimaginatively titled *Buddy Buddy*) but for the record Veber doesn't need to plagiarise anybody to have an audience in stitches.

*A Pain In The Ass*, as a title for a film alone, pretty much sums up Francis Veber's trademark character: a well-intentioned loser named Françoise Pignon, whose bumbling mis-steps invariably create havoc with other characters' well laid plans. In this case Pignon (*Timsit*) is a suicidally-depressed husband, whose wife Louise (*Ledoyen*) has run off with his shrink, Dr Edgar Wolf (*Elbé*). He books himself into a hotel room to do himself in.

Meanwhile Raif Milan (*Berry*), a ruthless professional hitman, is setting himself up for a very high risk assignment in the next room. His hotel room window has the best position overlooking the courthouse across the road where Randoni (*Aumont*), a federal witness in a very public organised crime court case, is due to appear very shortly.

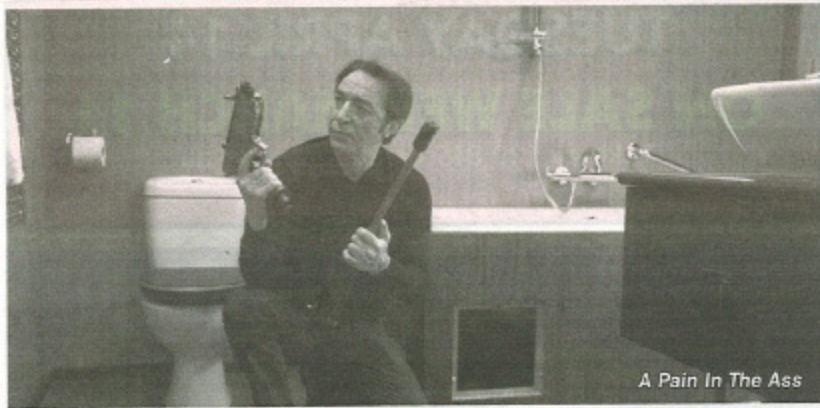
Naturally, Pignon has other plans, and his and Milan's paths collide after a bungled suicide attempt brings half of Pignon's bathroom ceiling crashing down onto him in his bathtub. A terrified porter (*Paolini*) bursts in on Milan and starts babbling about calling the police, and so suddenly Milan has to pose as a warm and caring humanitarian in order to calm the panicky porter.

In no time at all, Pignon's wife and her new boyfriend become ensnared in the plot when a comedy of errors sees Dr Wolf storming off to the same hotel to confront Pignon. Randoni's trip to the courthouse - under heavily armed Police guard of course - also becomes

something of a misadventure by itself; and to the continued chagrin of the Police SWAT team escorting him, they keep getting later and later for Randoni's appearance at the trial. There's also a hilarious little running gag involving a would-be petty shoplifter and his young girlfriend.

It doesn't really come much better than this. Veber clearly has a sure hand (and a lot of fun) with this material, and *A Pain In The Ass* will most probably rank as one of this year's festival audience favourites.

—TIM STEWART



A Pain In The Ass