



FRANÇOIS  
CLUZET

NICOLAS  
DUVAUCHELLE

SOPHIE  
VERBEECK

THE **RED**  
COLLAR

A FILM BY JEAN BECKER

© 2011 ICE 3 - PARIS 10 MAR 2011



# The Red Collar

A film by JEAN BECKER

Adapted from JEAN-CHRISTOPHE RUFIN's novel

WITH  
FRANÇOIS **CLUZET**  
NICOLAS **DUVAUCHELLE**  
SOPHIE **VERBEECK**

2018 / DRAMA / FRANCE / COLORS / FEATURE FILM



france•tvdistribution



## FILM SPECS

**Genre:** Drama

**Budget:** 6.7 millions EUR

**Year of production:** 2017

**Director:** Jean Becker

Adapted from Jean-Christophe Rufin's best-selling novel of the same name.

**Production company:** ICE 3

**Co-producers:** France 3 Cinema, Apollo films, Umedia, New Aquitaine Region, The department of Charente

**French distributor:** Apollo films

**Nationality:** French

**Main cast:** François Cluzet, Nicolas Duvauchelle

**French release date:** March 21st 2018

## SYNOPSIS

In 1919, in a small town under the crushing heat of summer, a war hero is held prisoner in an abandoned barracks. Outside, his mangy dog barks night and day. Not far off in the countryside, an extraordinarily intelligent young woman works the land, waiting and hoping. A judge whose principles have been sorely shaken by the war is coming to sort out this case of which it is better not to speak.

Three characters. In their midst, a dog that holds the key to their destinies and this intriguing plot.

## MAIN CAST

### François CLUZET

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2018 – *The Red Collar* by Jean Becker

2016 – *The Eavesdropper* by Thomas Kruithof

2016 – *Irreplaceable* by Thomas Lilti

2015 – *One Wild Moment* by Jean-François Richet

2011 – *The Intouchables* by Olivier Nakache, Eric Toledano

2010 – *Little White Lies* by Guillaume Canet

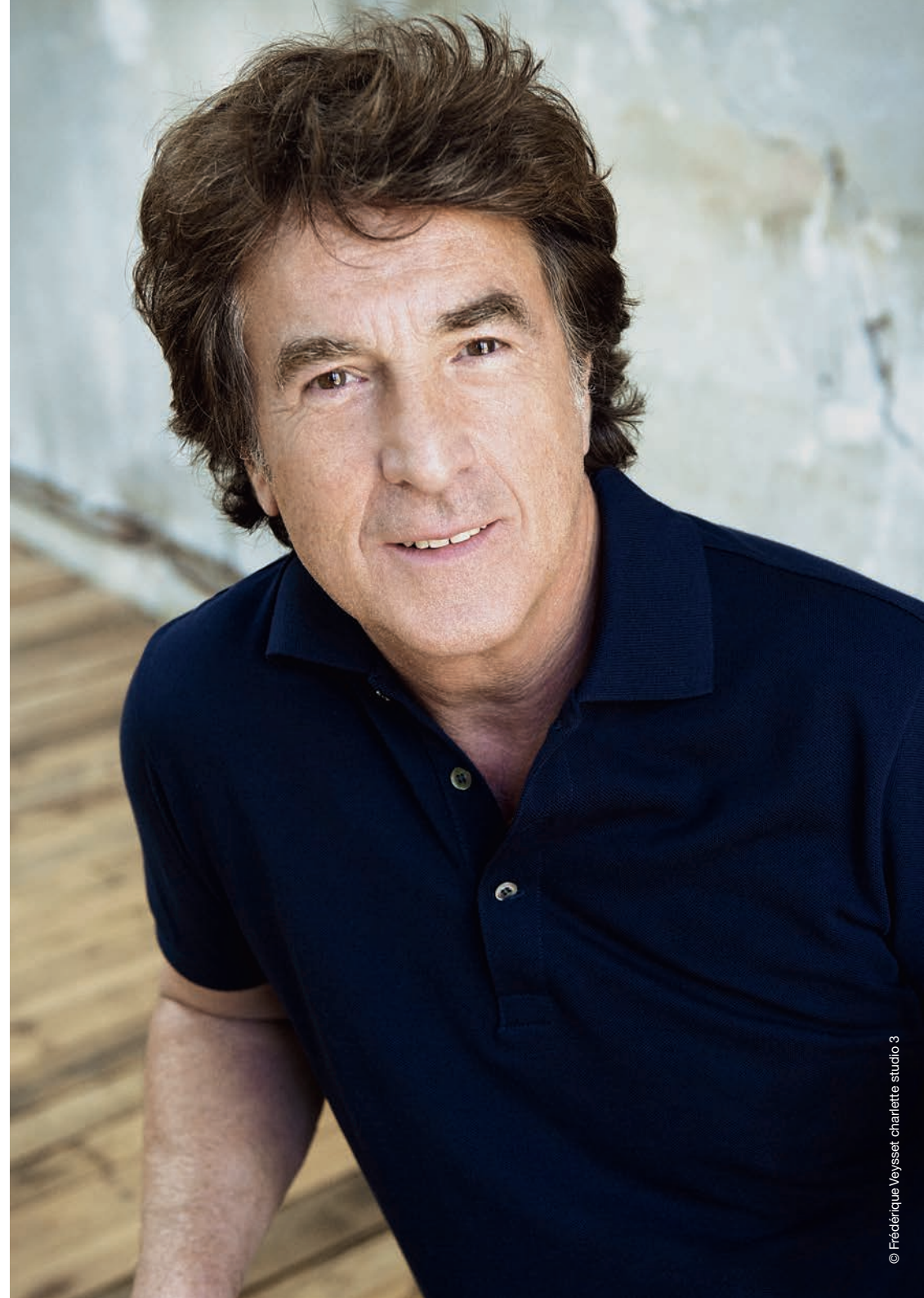
2008 – *Paris* by Cédric Klapisch

2006 – *Tell No One* by Guillaume Canet

2002 – *The Adversary* by Nicole Garcia

1995 – *The Horseman* by Jean-Paul Rappeneau

1983 – *One Deadly Summer* by Jean Becker





## Nicolas DUVAUCHELLE

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2018 – *The Red Collar* by Jean Becker

2017 – *Dalida* by Lisa Azuelos

2013 – *For A Woman* by Diane Kurys

2012 – *Just Like Brothers* by Hugo Gélin

2012 – *On Air* by Pierre Pinaud

2011 – *Polisse* by Maïwenn

2011 – *The Well-Digger's Daughter* by Daniel Auteuil

2009 – *Braquo* (TV series) by Olivier Marchal

2008 – *Secret Defense* by Philippe Haim

## **Jean** BECKER

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2018 – *The Red Collar*

2013 – *Get Well Soon*

2011 – *Welcome Aboard*

2010 – *My Afternoons With Margueritte*

2008 – *Love Me No More*

2007 – *Conversations With My Gardener*

2002 – *Strange Gardens*

2000 – *A Crime In Paradise*

1999 – *The Children Of The Marshland*

1995 – *Elisa*

1983 – *One Deadly Summer*

1966 – *Tender Scoundrel*

1965 – *No Caviar For Aunt Olga*

1964 – *Backfire*

1961 – *A Man Named Rocca*



# STATEMENT OF INTENT

## Why make this film?

Three key elements went into the decision to make this movie: my filmmaking and the rather "classical" way I treat "singular" subjects; the availableness of **Jean-Christophe Rufin's** marvelous novel; and the fact that I adapted the book myself along with the author and **François d'Epenoux** (whom I'd already worked with for my film based on his novel, **Love Me No More** with **Albert Dupontel**).

So it's not hard to see that the screenplay is the result of many combined talents and several worlds being brought together: classical, modern, poetic and funny.

## My vision of filmmaking

I like movies that have something to say. Their form must appear light in order to easily reach our souls.

Incidentally, I like it when people say my filmmaking is classical and fluid; it makes me feel like an illusionist who has pulled off a magic trick.

I like the fact people can't tell I always shoot with two or even three cameras, and with two boom mics for perfect sound and to avoid dubbing as much as I can. I like how no one notices the actors perform for twelve minutes straight in a sequence shot, meaning they have to know their lines perfectly and deliver them at their best.

## Putting the story on-screen

From the book, we might assume the film would be set in an enclosed space, but this isn't the case for half the film. The book opens in a cell where a prisoner, who refuses to speak at first, winds up talking with a military judge who is, like himself, a veteran and hero, yet from a very different social class. From their conversation, we learn about the prisoner's experience in the war though not why he's been imprisoned. How did this decorated war hero wind up here in jail? Why does he keep refusing the judge's help, who keeps asking him to apologize for the "outrage" he committed toward the State and military? Why is this dog barking to death outside the prison? To answer these questions, I use flashbacks of the prisoner Morlac's war story.

Also, to make the movie more attractive, less monotonous and more poetic, I chose to begin the film chronologically, following the protagonist when he meets his future wife, Valentine, from whom he gets a political conscience and... his dog.

Next I show him heading off to war along with the dog, which plays such an important role in the story.

It's only after this that we get to 1919, in the enclosed space of the cell where the judge tries to convince Morlac to present his apologies and walk free.

Thus I hope to give this powerful and difficult story a narrative form that's much more cinematic than theatrical, both in its action, scenery and historic reconstruction.

## Telling the personal through the historical

*I like telling personal stories within historical narratives: stories of simple, unassuming people, the folks one forgets. I already worked in this register for **Strange Gardens**, but the war and context in that film were completely different.*

*We enter what I like to call "poetic realism", which portrays truth from a human angle in part thanks to comedy. Today as ever, Italian cinema is the master of this style.*

## The international dimension of the movie

*I wanted to enlist strong personalities: **François Cluzet** and **Nicolas Duvauchelle**, who also have international renown.*

*The release is strategically planned: the film obviously needs to be ready for 2018, a WWI centennial commemorative year.*

*Although it's true the film is not very respectful toward the governing bodies of the era, who nowadays could support the causes of these past wars?*

*Men were sent to the front like "cannon fodder" without a second thought. The incredible archival footage from the series **Apocalypse** is an edifying illustration of this. My protagonist tries to hold his head high before the hierarchy, and in so doing, his actions are eminently courageous.*

*Although I'm making a film where the Legion of Honour is demeaned, it's ironic to note that I myself belong to the order, luckily for something other than "feats of arms"... Even though on the whole, making films is also a political act.*

*This movie does not aspire to be a historical film even if it respects the form; it is above all a humanistic film whose scenes of comedy help us endure its more painful moments.*

*The movie ends on a positive note; my hero will make the right choice.*

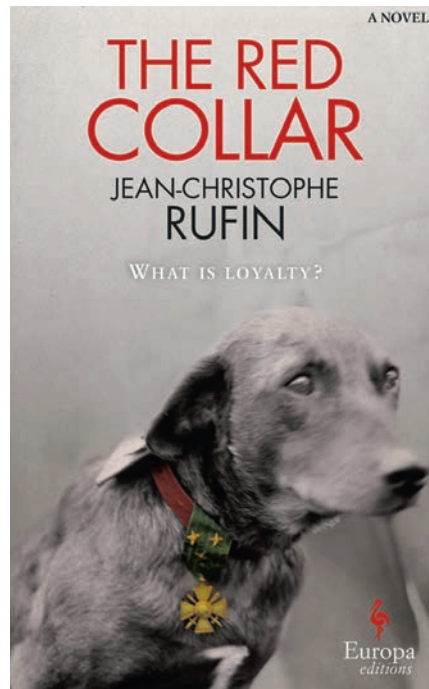
**Jean Becker**





## ADAPTED FROM AN INTERNATIONAL BEST-SELLER

**Jean-Christophe Rufin** was born in 1952. Rufin is a doctor, historian, novelist, diplomat and member of the Académie française since 2008. He has written over ten novels, including *The Abyssinian* in 1997 and *Brazil Red* which won the Prix Goncourt in 2001. *The Red Collar* (2014) was written to commemorate the centenary of WWI. **This award-winning novel has been translated into 12 languages and has sold 500,000 copies throughout the world.**



## THE RED COLLAR BY JEAN-CHRISTOPHE RUFIN. INTERVIEW

### What is the "red collar" in the title?

*It's both a dog collar – because one of the main characters is a dog – and the Legion of Honour ribbon. The two come together in the story with the actual pseudo-decoration of a dog at the end of WWI, with all the scandal that implies at the time.*

### Is the book based on a true fact?

*Two, actually. First the little known fact that many animals were involved in WWI, particularly dogs. There were hundreds of thousands of them in the trenches. Some were used by the army for specific mine-clearing or assault operations, but most of them had followed their masters when they were mobilized and stayed at the front. The dogs were tolerated because they were useful: they would kill rats, growl warnings and keep the soldiers company.*

*Then there was a family story a friend shared with me about how his grandfather had been decorated with the Legion of Honour for outstanding feats in the war, and came back believing his dog was more worthy of the distinction than himself.*

**Each of the characters seems enclosed in their own mental space...**

*What we see is a confrontation of the characters' inner worlds. The characters are both revealed and transformed by the war, but they're also locked up inside themselves. They've become incapable of communicating, particularly Morlac, the prisoner, who hasn't been able to talk to the woman he loves even though she's nearby. In the book, the war is broached only through its interiority, through what it's capable of producing in the characters' consciences.*

**Is it more of a post-war novel than a war novel?**

*It's more of a taking-stock-of-war novel. After four years, the end result appears to be victory, but in reality it's mainly the idea that true victory is not going to war at all. That's why the book mentions the fraternisation and mutinies of 1917, the moment when a different end to the war seemed possible; in other words, a war without victory. In fact, it was probably this solution that imposed itself surreptitiously. While institutions were busy proclaiming victory, the idea of no longer seeing the other guy as the enemy was gaining ground. It would take time, and another war, for that idea to materialize, but the idea of European fraternity had already taken root.*

**You also evoke the ambiguity of certain values?**

*We have a human part and an animal part inside us, and some essentially animal properties have been humanized into loyalty, courage, etc., which are precisely the militaristic, combative properties that were called into question at the end of this war. Which perhaps cast a shadow over attitudes during the next war, when many said they no longer wanted to be a part of it. Loyalty, commitment, faithfulness... It's all very ambiguous. The book doesn't discredit this: when the hero's loyal and faithful to a woman, it's obviously a quality. But sometimes you have to be able to overcome these, which plainly a dog isn't able to do.*

**Can we call this an optimistic book, in the sense that humanity wins out in the end?**

*I like there to be hope in my books! My heroes grower closer by defining the part of them that's human. Deep down it's their animal part that divides them and makes them irreconcilable. By reflecting on their humanity, they manage to overcome opposition and finally find each other.*



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