

Interview: Félix de Givry, Sven Hansen-Løve Take the Journey to ‘Eden’

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CHICAGO – When it comes to how dance music evolved in the last thirty years, there was a ground zero that was launched right here in Chicago. House music, or Garage House, were inspired beats that were mixed from a DJ source in front of the dancers, creating a brand new club scene. The late DJ Frankie Knuckles was one of the pioneers, and his legacy eventually reached Paris, where it was discovered and re-invented in fresh and different forms. A new film called “Eden” explores that phenomenon, and it features Félix de Givry as a Paris DJ in the 1990s and 2000s, based on the life of the co-writer of the film, Sven Hansen-Løve.

The other writer, and director, was Sven’s sister Mia Hansen-Løve, who came up with the story as a warts-and-all tribute to what her brother – and DJ practitioners like Daft Punk – were doing to make that scene happen. Actor Félix de Givry, in what is essentially a debut role, portrays Sven’s fictional representative Paul, and goes through a multitude of emotions, personalities and ultra-beats in a surprising story regarding his coming of age. “Eden” is both a huge entertainment and a poignant ride.



Félix de Givry as Paul Spins to Win in “Eden”

Photo credit: Broad Green Pictures

HollywoodChicago.com interviewed Félix de Givry and Sven Hansen-Løve when they came through their magic roots town of Chicago to promote the film. Both men were brilliantly insightful as to what “Eden” means to them.

HollywoodChicago.com: Félix, what is the key to getting the look of being a DJ right, and how did Sven help you?

Félix de Givry: I actually took some DJ spinning classes, because it was important for me to look the part. There were two scenes in the club

where I was doing it for real, because of the sequence of the shot, so it was important to get it just right. I also studied the footage and videos of that era.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sven, tell me how the Chicago garage house movement inspired you to create what you and the other French DJs did?

Sven Hansen-Løve: When I discovered House music, it grabbed me by the beats. And I also discovered a sub genre of House, called Garage, and it all came from Chicago. I came upon the label, Vibe Music, it was a weird approach to House music, a mixture of gospel, electronic and with a very original sound. I felt I was the only one who knew about it, and had found gold. It inspired me a lot, and I came to Chicago just to shake the hand of a real Garage DJ. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: Félix, what do you think an actor has in common with a top level DJ, and how did you put that common thread into your performance?

de Givry: Actors and DJs connect with the audience, and the way you do it is in the way you mix it up. Sven always told me that a good DJ is a good selector, you select music and you select what has a personal connection. You bring in all these different selections, you mix then and connect to the audience, and it creates the feelings for the moment. I think actors do the same thing, sort of dig inside themselves to find emotions and features from within, and give it to an audience to make a connection. It's about something personal you give to the audience.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sven, for those of us not as well informed about the House and Garage sound, where would you place its influence in the history of popular music in the last 25 years?

Hansen-Løve: To me, the two most influential forms of music happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and that was Hip Hop and House. Hip Hop is the most major of the two, but House was the music of the clubs, and became bigger over the years. To put it into historical perspective, it was a rebirth of black music. Black music keeps getting reborn, and always gets fresher in the process. Even now, the freshest music comes from the black culture, it's a culture that always seems to have a feeling for it. We can add House to Blues, Soul, Jazz, Rap and Hip Hop – the list goes on and on.

HollywoodChicago.com: Félix, what was the process for landing this role, in which you had so many emotions, since you'd only done one other film previously?

de Givry: This was the first real film that I consider I've done, and there were two steps. The first step was the time I spent in pre-production with Mia [Hansen-Løve, the co-writer/director] and Sven documenting the role. And then the shooting itself, it was an adventure. I grew as an actor within the film, since I'd never taken any acting classes. Even though we didn't shoot it in order, the character still has to progress, and he reaches a sort of adulthood, that is much later in life than most people, but he gets there. For me that process was a parallel, and by the end I felt like an actor.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sven, what element of your personality did you think Felix captured best in his semi-autobiographical portrayal of you?



Sven Hansen-Løve & Félix de Givry in Chicago

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Hansen-Løve: Probably the passion for the music, and its a very strange passion, because it's a bit passive. The character isn't doing much, except having a love affair, but that affair was with music. This love affair almost destroys him, and Félix captured that well. When we did the casting, Mia wanted someone who had a feeling for that music, and Félix was it. We couldn't have done it without that feeling, because he had to express my love for it, and the way that passion eventually devoured me.

HollywoodChicago.com: Félix, what is the best advice you've ever received as an actor, and how do you honor that advice in your portrayal of Paul?

de Givry: Mia told me something – don't finish a sentence with your voice going up, but speak with the voice going down. There is a French actor that I know that speaks very directly, never going up at the end of a sentence, and I wanted to articulate that for Paul in the same way.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sven, when you and your sister were formulating this story, what points of honesty did you want to make sure was in the film, beyond the glamor of being a DJ, the club scene and House?

Hansen-Løve: My sister made all the choices for the story, and 'being broke,' the financial difficulties of the career, was very important. She hates it in films what that is avoided, and in any artist's development it's an important part of what motivates them, whether you have money or not. It was very precise.

HollywoodChicago.com: Félix, since you're just starting out, which film – of all you've seen in your life – would you have liked to have the chance to play the lead role, and why? And how would have you changed it?

de Givry: I'm going to give you a few. The first is 'Running on Empty,' with River Phoenix. I really think it's a great film, I would have loved to have taken on that character. The second is 'Barry Lyndon,' and the third is any James Bond film.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sven, when you're working constantly with music and beats, as you have and that Paul is doing in the film, is there a point where the beats in your head simply do not stop?

Hansen-Løve: In a concrete way, yes definitely. After spinning for hours, and then going home, I cannot make it stop sometimes. One of the problems that a DJ faces, is that the adrenalin rush is too much, and you can't sleep. Then what do you do? You go out to a lot of after parties and do drugs. There were many times that happened to me.

HollywoodChicago.com: One final question to you, Sven. If you could go back in time and stand in the Warehouse during its peak, what would you say to the pioneer Frankie Knuckles, in a way to honor what he did for you, and the music he inspired?

Hansen-Løve: I would say, 'you will have no idea how much your music will inspire people and artists, it will someday as big as mainstream music.' There were so many people who were inspired, and became entranced, because of him.

"Eden" continues its limited release in Chicago on June 26th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Félix de Givry, Pauline Etienne, Vincent Macaigne, Arnaud Azoulay and Greta Gerwig. Written by Mia and Sven Hansen-Løve. Directed by Mia Hansen-Løve. Rated "R"



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