

## L'Origine de la tendresse and Other Tales (2008)

### Movie review

#### From Time Out New York

Shorts programs require a gambler's mentality—roll the dice, take your chances—and thankfully, this collection of French snippets has two that offset a sense of *comme ci, comme ça* curating. Alain-Paul Mallard's 32-minute featurette, *L'Origine de la tendresse*, is the longest and strongest selection, turning the mundane routines of a frumpy museum attendant into a free-associative portrait of middle-aged malaise. Mallard and his star, Isabelle Nanty, give equal significance to a soul-crushing sexual encounter and the checking of a bank balance; the manner in which throwaway moments and major turns are detailed so attentively only makes this cryptic slice-of-life more compelling. The other highlight, Olivier Bourbeillon's "The Last Day," records the final pounding at the Schneider & Co. smithery, imbuing both the men and their machine with gritty dignity.

The rest falls somewhere between being pleasant filler and testing your patience. Guillaume Martinez's "Penpusher" delivers the requisite romantic whimsy, Felipe Canales's "Ma mère" dutifully chronicles the life of an Algerian mother, Jeanne Paturle and Cécile Rousset's "One Voice, One Vote" attempts to enliven didactic blathering with animation (nice try), and Alice Winocour's "Kitchen" aims for humorous yet unsettling Euro angst and misses by a kilometer. All take place in the same country, yet quality-wise, they're all over the map.

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