



Berlinale

61^e Internationale
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Opening

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Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Generation

tomboy

A FILM BY CÉLINE SCIAMMA

Hold Up Films & Productions presents



tomboy

A FILM BY CÉLINE SCIAMMA

France • 82 minutes • 1.85 • color

PRODUCER:
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Synopsis

Laure is 10 years old. Laure is a tomboy. On her arrival in a new neighborhood, she lets Lisa and her crowd believe that she is a boy. Truth or dare ? Dare. Summer becomes a big playground and Laure pretends to be Michael, a boy like the others... different enough to get the attention of Lisa who falls in love with him. Laure takes advantage of her new identity as if the end of the summer would never reveal her unsettling secret.

Director's notes

TOMBOY was made incredibly fast. I started writing the script at the end of March 2010 and we were shooting in August. It was shot in 20 days with an initial budget of 500 000 euros and a crew of 15 people. Those figures reflect the movie's state of mind. This is both the radicalism and the dynamic we longed for. We wanted to believe it was possible to work in a different energy than the long journey of writing and financing for years. The project was designed this way. It was a philosophy.

Since my first film WATERLILIES (2007), I had been working as a screenwriter mostly, writing TV series and co-writing with directors for their films. I already had the idea for Tomboy but I had only written a quick outline. At the time I didn't think it would be my second feature film. It was just a story I had in mind. In March 2010 I went to see Benedicte Couvreur the producer of Waterlilies. I told her I had an idea for a film that would be quick to produce and that I wanted to shoot during summer, only 3 months later. She was enthusiastic, even though the timing was crazy. We both were excited by the story and also by the challenge.

I wrote the script in three weeks. I designed it so that the film would be easy and simple to prepare in such a short time frame. Two main sets, 50 sequences. I built it around a very simple and strong argument, the story of a lie, an undercover character, so that it would produce a powerful narrative with suspense and empathy. The character has a strong goal in a double play dynamic. This efficient story allowed me to take the time to relate a vivid chronicle about childhood, with documentary aspects, and unpredictable accidents. I was also very committed to the subject surrounding identity and the question of gender. Childhood is often referred to as the age of innocence. But I think it's a time of life full of sensuality and ambiguous emotions. I wanted to portray that.





Our very first concern was the casting because the main part was such a difficult challenge. We had to find a little girl who would be convincing as a boy and who could perform. Furthermore we had a very short amount of time to complete the cast and only three weeks before the legal deadline for the administration to allow a child to shoot during summer. The casting director accepted the challenge knowing it was ambitious and that we didn't have the time to go hunting in front of schools or public gardens. So we met children who were already registered in agencies.

I know it's going to look like those romantic stories people tell about casting but this one is true. The very first day of casting we met with Zoé Héran and she got the part. She came in, with her boyish attitudes, her true love of football and her very long hair. We filmed her and she had what it took: a strong natural feeling and a very photogenic face. So from the very first day of casting, we had our main character. We didn't have the money yet, but when I met her, I knew I would do the movie, whatever it took, because of her.

We then met with 6-year-old girls for the little sister's part. They were all tremendously cute but it was hard to tell whether they could truly commit... Moreover there had to be a chemistry between Zoé and her little sister and a feeling of trust between them. We quickly set our minds on Malonn Lévana. I liked her face and the way she spoke. She could sound very mature and she was very bright. We had a strong connection from the first time we met. She touched me. The sisterhood in the film is very much inspired from my own experience and I had strong expectations about the relationship between these two characters.

Jeanne Disson who plays Lisa, is the only one from the cast we went searching for outside the agencies' network. I wasn't convinced by the girls we saw. They were too conscious about how pretty they were. I wanted an awkward little girl, not a princess. The casting director knew her from real life. I met her and two days later she was on board.

For the rest of the kids, we decided to cast Zoé's real friends. We met a bunch of them but we didn't make a selection. I was still in the process of writing the script so the little league characters weren't totally outlined yet. By taking them all, we bet on their true friendship and their long time chemistry. I felt something cool could happen from that choice. In the end the whole casting process went really fast: we completed it in three weeks.

As the film would not be expensive to produce, I really wanted to make sure it didn't look cheap. I was even more concerned with the artistic direction. We worked with the director of photography and the decorator on simple and strong color choices. We had to shoot two to three sequences a day with a very small time frame regarding the concentration of the children. It would normally call for the choice of a shoulder camera, but I decided to do otherwise: staging the sequences, designing frames. I didn't want to give up on stylization. Even though it was a simple and discreet one. That principle lead me to the canon 7D. I really liked its small depth of field and its treatment of colors. Of course, I must mention that it's cheaper and lighter so it fitted our philosophy. I also liked the fact that shooting a feature film with a photo camera would be very 2010 and that it would seem so outdated in two years' time. It's an aesthetic of here and now.

There's a lot of pressure surrounding a second feature film. They say it's the hardest one to make. I could definitely feel that pressure. I was kind of anxious that the classical path leads you to a bigger budget and casting issues. As if things must get heavier. I liked the idea of a second film that was less expensive than the first one, lighter, that in the process of making films you gain in autonomy, in liberty, in alternatives, that you are able to experiment new ways of producing and directing.



Céline Sciamma

DIRECTOR

Céline Sciamma is born in 1978 and grew up in the Paris suburbs. After a master's degree in French literature, she followed screenwriting courses at the French film school La Femis. She shares her work between collaborations with directors and writing feature and television projects.

WATER LILIES, her first feature film has been selected in Cannes / Un certain Regard (2007) and in more than 30 festivals worldwide (Toronto, London, New York, Tokyo, Rotterdam...). Acclaimed by the film critics, the film won the prestigious french Louis-Delluc award. TOMBOY is her second feature film.





Cast

ZOÉ HERAN	Laure & Michael
MALONN LÉVANA	Jeanne
JEANNE DISSON	Lisa
SOPHIE CATTANI	Laure's mother
MATHIEU DEMY	Laure's father
YOHAN VÉRO	Vince
NOAH VÉRO	Noah
CHEYENNE LAINÉ	Cheyenne
RYAN BOUBEKRI	Ryan

Crew

Director **CÉLINE SCIAMMA**
Screenplay **CÉLINE SCIAMMA**
Image **CRYSTEL FOURNIER**
Sound **BENJAMIN LAURENT**

Editing **SÉBASTIEN SAVINE**
Producer **DANIEL SOBRINO**
JULIEN LACHERAY
BÉNÉDICTE COUVREUR,
HOLD UP FILMS & PRODUCTIONS

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and the participation of **CANAL PLUS**
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