



EXCLUSIVE

 Louise Mauroy-Panzani stars
as six-year-old Cléo

LONG GOODBYE

À MA GLORIA A child and her carer take centre stage in this first feature shot in Cape Verde...

As a small child, French director Marie Amachoukeli-Barsacq was raised by the Portuguese caretaker of her building. 'When I was six years old, she had to go back to her country, to her family,' she explains. 'It was such a shock that I refused to say goodbye to her.' They did stay in touch, however, but it was not until five years ago that Amachoukeli-Barsacq began to question the relationship. 'I never asked myself: Who was that woman? Why did she have to come to France?'

The director channelled all these questions and feelings into *À ma Gloria*, a film that boasts a remarkable performance from newcomer Louise Mauroy-Panzani as Cléo, a Parisian child who must contend with the departure of her nanny, Gloria (Ilça Moreno Zego), back to Cape Verde where she's from, to care for her own children. To mitigate her sadness,

Cléo's widower father Arnaud (Arnaud Rebotini) allows her to spend the summer with Gloria in her homeland before they finally part ways.

Watching films such as *Ponette* and *Tomboy* to tutor her in ways of working with young actresses, Amachoukeli-Barsacq could only shoot four hours a day with Mauroy-Panzani. She also

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MARIE
AMACHOUKELI-
BARSACQ


 Ilça Moreno Zego plays the
child's nanny, Gloria

had to contend with working in the Creole language in Cape Verde, off the coast of West Africa – chosen because Moreno Zego came from there. 'You have no industry there,' she says. 'So you don't have any cameras... electricity sometimes doesn't work. It's difficult.'

Remarkably, the film also features beautiful animated sequences, making it very different from a typical naturalistic drama. 'I was like, "How can I go to her mind and make the audience feel what she feels and she cannot express?"' She decided that showing Cléo's thoughts and emotions via images was the right approach. 'It took a year and a half. And I think it's 12 minutes of animation and one third of the budget.' Never again, she laughs. 'That's the last time!'

JAMES MOTTRAM

À MA GLORIA OPENS IN CINEMAS
ON 14 JUNE.