



RADICAL FILMS presents

# APRIL IN FRANCE

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A film by DAVID BOARETTO

2023 | FRANCE | DOCUMENTARY  
77 MIN | COLOR | FRENCH, ENGLISH  
1:85.1 | SOUND 5.1

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As of June 2024:

## FESTIVAL SELECTIONS

- **St Louis International Film Festival** (Official selection and student screening), November 2023
- **DocUtah International Film Festival** (International film competition), February 2024
- **Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival** (Open Horizons and Next Gen sections), March 2024
- **The Robert Classic French Film Festival, St Louis** (Opening night film), April 2024
- **ZagrebDox** (Happy Dox), April 2024
- **Docaviv** (Panorama) May 2024
- **ZagrebDox on tour** (part of 3 films selected by the festival to screen in cinemas across Croatia), June 2024
- **The Transilvania International Film Festival** (What's up doc? competition), June 2024
- **The Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival** (International film competition), July 2024
- **European Film Festival PALIĆ** (New European Documentary selection), July 2024

## AWARDS

- **DocUtah International Film Festival** (jury presided by Frederick Marx)
  - Best International Film
  - Best Cinematography

# LOGLINE

A 5-year-old girl is confronted to the world for the first time, only armed with the codes of her childhood kingdom.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

April, a 5-year-old English girl, is unhappy to move to France. From Paris, she relocates to the small medieval village where her great-grandfather lived in the South-West of France. There, she is convinced that he is only sleeping in

the cemetery and that he will come back to be with her. While waiting for him she meets his old friends. With them she will open to the world, discover her inner self and in turn she will transform the adults around her forever.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

April, a 5-year-old English girl, moves to Paris just before the first lockdown. She feels miserable, isolated in her Parisian flat and desperately wants to go back to London. However, when the restrictions ease, her father drives her to Labastide d'Armagnac, a small medieval village where her great-grandfather bequeathed them his house. April is not much happier at first in the deserted village but slowly discovers it. She visits the cemetery where she thinks people are just asleep. On her great-grandfather's

grave she brings flowers, talks to him and strongly believes that he might eventually come back to be with her. She will make several wishes for this purpose, in church and also in the Pyrenees mountains, waiting for a falling star, as she has seen in Pinocchio. In the meantime, she meets some of her great-grandfather's friends. With them she will open to the world, discover her inner self and in turn she will transform the adults around her forever.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Despite being shot as a documentary, *April in France* takes the form of a philosophical tale.

Following April on her way to maturity we are confronted, through symbolic scenes and not without humor, to today's great subjects. For example preserving nature: April brings her garden back to life, watering it of course, but also touching the plants, talking to them and naming them.

The film also highlights the importance of intergenerational transmission, which is surprisingly not limited to a one way gift - as many people think - but functions also from children to adults.

In fact April shares her magical beliefs with her new friends and they enter her child world whole-heartedly, never challenging it. It is the double-movement of the construction of human beings: leaving this magical kingdom to confront real life and then looking for solace in the "beautiful colored world" of a long lost childhood.

Finally at a time when theaters, cinemas, museums and operas were shutting down, the film endeavors to show

through the child's discovery of music, photography and literature that culture and sharing it as part of a common experience results in a fundamental contribution to our personal development and happiness.

Opening up to others and sharing is at the heart of April's entire journey and the film reminds us that in today's world, children and adults can't blossom online and that the future of humanity is not in a computer generated Metaverse...

Conceived at a time of angst for the future of our children (the pandemic, the rise of populism, climate change, etc.), the film ended up, through the child's energy and relentlessness, breathing of optimism. It felt at the end of that summer that like every generation, April's will need to overcome serious obstacles, but that if they stuck together and believed in their own power, they could pull through and prevail. This is the meaning of the end of summer lunch she organizes in her garden with all her friends. Children and adults come together, we can't hear what they say but nothing more needs saying then.

# INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BOARETTO

**The film has a very particular tone. Can you talk more about it?**

*April in France* has a unique tone, at the crossroads of a documentary, a philosophical tale and even a fairy tale. Like Alice [in Wonderland] tumbling down the rabbit hole, April's arrival in the medieval village of Labastide d'Armagnac transports her into a parallel world.

Many elements of the film are reminiscent of a fairy tale. The passage to this "other world », the « rabbit hole » for example is psychological: when April stops complaining and starts laughing and playing in the rain, she enters a magical universe, where the sun suddenly appears and nature flourishes. It's reminiscent of the scene in Vincente Minnelli's *Brigadoon* where the village comes to life every hundred years; a ray of light passes through it, awakening its inhabitants who come out of their houses to dance. Similarly, in Labastide d'Armagnac, cats, chickens, and villagers suddenly appear out of

nowhere!

**The film's music goes in this direction as well?**

Absolutely. Sacha [Lounis]'s score plays a vital role in creating the film's unique atmosphere. Some of his compositions, like the one from the garden watering scene, could come out of the soundtrack of one of Miyazaki's films. The same goes for the music in the end-of-summer-lunch scene.

His music evokes both the enchantment of early childhood and its magic, sometimes a certain melancholy. It takes the viewer into April's poetic and dreamlike universe, and gives the story an extra emotional dimension.

**Can you tell us where April's parents are, because we don't see them on screen?**

In order to focus solely on the child, April's parents are



intentionally left out of the film. I think that if a parent appears on screen and interacts with the child, even once, you end up with a very different film. She has to feel totally in control in order to open up like she does on screen.

Very early on, in Paris, she destroyed the flat, drawing and painting all over the walls while the camera was rolling and I didn't say anything to stop her. From then on I think she knew she could do and say anything she wanted in front of the camera. It was my way of disappearing, behind the camera too.

In retrospect, we were very lucky to have those weeks in Paris alone, where we could build a trust and she could free herself.

### Can you tell us more about the filming?

Filming took place over six months. Given the constraints related to the presence of a young child, only 25 hours of footage were recorded, which is

relatively little for a documentary.

### And then you edited the film yourself?

Yes. It took me a while at first to understand how the material could be edited.

April's young age (she is four and a half years old at the start of filming) also presented unforeseen challenges. Her mind would jump from one subject to another very quickly, which made editing particularly difficult. For example, she could interrupt her train of thought in the middle of a sentence and suddenly focus on another element completely unrelated with the conversation at hand, then return to the initial conversation a week later in a completely different setting.

I eventually understood how it could be done while watching the first half of *My Neighbor Totoro* by Hayao Miyazaki, in which two young sisters move to the countryside with their dad – a similar story to April's...



I noticed that the film was edited with very fast cuts which contributed to give a sense of that early childhood feel where everything is quicker.

I had to do the same. You'll notice how at the beginning of the film very short moments are edited together and how as April matures and comes of age, the scenes become longer... The editing reflects entirely how April's mind functions at each stage of filming.

### **Did April enjoy the filming?**

As she understood that she could do what she wanted during filming, she quickly started to complain when the camera wasn't rolling... (laughs)

### **What does she think of the film?**

She hasn't seen the film yet. I try to keep her away from the film industry as much as possible at her young age.

### **How old is April now?**

She just turned 9.

### **Can you tell us more about the quote at the end of the film? Why quote Paul Eluard? It suddenly gives the film a more... "intellectual" connotation?**

The quote from Paul Eluard is not intended to give a more intellectual connotation, but rather to reflect deep convictions. Paul Eluard is my great-grandfather and his ideas greatly influenced the way I see the world and the messages I wanted to convey in the film.

The parallel between April arriving in the village and Alice in Wonderland for example is certainly the result of the influences I received growing up. Paul Eluard and the surrealists loved Alice and I very much grew up reading the book.

During the editing I also found a letter he wrote to his daughter, my grandmother, during the Second World War which helped me understand what film I wanted



to make. In it he writes to Cécile [his daughter] while they are separated : *“To all the torments and doubts that assail you, to your nightmares, oppose the gentle certainty that you love, that you are loved (...) Have confidence, everything is there. In a man, a woman, an animal, a book (...), you will delve into the depths of your life and not be disappointed, you will not encounter emptiness. Of course, there are difficult moments, but react, turn your back on them, and your inner spring will regain its promises. Even old age is not always bent in the cold night. We never lose everything, perhaps we never lose anything.”*

It's a father telling his daughter that in a time of crisis one needs to open up to the world and not close oneself on oneself. In today's world, it felt highly relevant still.

### **Did April eventually return to London?**

How can I put it... Let's just say that she didn't just stay

in Labastide d'Armagnac that summer. She went all around France and discovered the Calanques near Marseille, Provence and its lavender fields just before they were harvested [when the sky reflects the purple color of the lavender!] She also went looking for Marcel Pagnol's childhood home - and found it; she went to Alsace and harvested the grapes, to Nancy where she discovered Rubens, to Normandy, where the Impressionists painted and to Houlgate to run on the beaches.

I couldn't include all of these elements in the film, but let's just say that April at the end of that summer was willing to extend her stay in France and to see how things would turn out...

### **Does she still live in Labastide d'Armagnac?**

She lives in Paris but she goes back to Labastide d'Armagnac every six weeks during the school holidays.







**Does she still believe that her great-grandfather will come back?**

We haven't addressed the question. However, she continues to visit him at the cemetery and to bring him flowers, which suggests that she, like most of us, has found a way to make him a part of her life.

**Did you learn anything yourself while filming April?**

From her, you mean?

**Yes.**

April's superpower as a child is her belief that anything is possible... And everything thus becomes possible.

When she presses the piano keys for the first time, she plays; when she wishes to climb a mountain, she does so for more than 8 hours straight; when she wants to change the world around her, she changes it...

Spending time with her reminded me of the importance of believing in one's own abilities, and I hope that the audience will be inspired by this belief as well! Imagine what we could accomplish altogether if we all shared the belief that anything is possible...



## “WHEN FRENCH WOMEN COOK”

This book in her kitchen has persuaded April that in order to be French she needs to know how to cook. It was written by Madeleine Kamman.

The first few lines of its opening page dedication says it all:

*“This book, in its own way a feminist manifesto, is dedicated to the millions of women who have spent millennia in kitchens creating unrecognized masterpieces...”*

It cheekily pursues: *“with a very special thought to Paul Bocuse’s grandmother and mother”*...

Indeed, a year earlier, in 1975, Paul Bocuse had stated that a woman’s place is in bed and not in a professional kitchen. Following this statement, Madeleine had turned Bocuse’s photo upside down in her restaurant for diners to see.

Madeleine goes on to lament:

*“Where are you, my France, where women cooked, where stars in cooking did not go to men anxious for publicity but to women with worn hands stained by vegetables peeled, parched by work in the house?”*

Born and raised in France, Madeleine moved to the United States in the 60s where she opened her own restaurant, near Boston.

A strong and inspiring woman for a little English speaking girl arriving in France...





## APRIL'S GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Gérard Vulliamy is a painter who joins the "Abstraction-Creation" group in 1932 before rallying the surrealist movement in 1934. In 1948 he returns to abstract painting.

Before the war he is exhibited by the most prestigious galleries: Pierre Loeb, Jeanne Bucher and Denise René. In 1978, the Picasso Museum in Antibes holds a major retrospective of his work and numerous exhibitions are organized abroad: notably at the Kunsthalle in Bern and Basel, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. His masterpiece dates from his Surrealist period. It represents a hallucinatory vision of the Trojan Horse.

His wife, Odette, whom Alain talks to April about in the film, was the model of the sculptor Charles Despiau, a pupil of Rodin.



*1936-37. The Trojan Horse. Oil on panel.*



# LABASTIDE D'ARMAGNAC

The village where the majority of the film takes place, Labastide d'Armagnac, is located a one and a half hour drive South-East of Bordeaux, in the Landes district and the Gascony region, 50 kilometers away from D'Artagnan's birthplace.

Labastide was founded in 1291 by Count Bernard IV d'Armagnac. In a twist of history, Labastide d'Armagnac, like April, was once under English rule (following the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry Plantagenet) before becoming French.

This beautifully preserved medieval village is the only complete "Bastide" in the region. Its rectangular *Place Royale* (50m x 40m) is still intact, surrounded by its arcades on all four sides, forming covered passageways, with its period houses sitting above. The church was integrated into one of the sides in the 15th century.

Today, like in many French villages, young people leave

Labastide in search for work in nearby cities, thus all the "For Sale" signs April sees when she arrives. However the village continues to fight to live on and organizes a number of cultural events, mainly during the summer, such as the music festival "*L'Oreille en Place*".





## DAVID BOARETTO

French and Swiss, David graduated from Law School and ESSEC Business School in Paris before working in investment banking. After a few years, he left that career to pursue his passion for cinema and worked in a number of capacities, mainly in development, business affairs and production, at companies such as Vertigo Films, Ruby Films and Revolution Films. He also worked independently as an executive in charge of production on *The Salvation* (starring Mads Mikkelsen and Eva Green, Cannes Film Festival - Out of Competition) and as an executive producer on *The Disunited States of America* (Sky Italia). In 2020, David founded Radical Films in Paris. *April in France* is his first film as a director.

## CREW

Directing, editing, sound	David Boaretto
Produced by	David Boaretto
Sound Editing	Edouard Morin
	Virgil van Ginneken
	Noé Cousso
Mix	Édouard Morin
Color Grading	Julia Mingo
Music	Sacha Lounis
	Abélia Nordmann

## FEATURING

April, Alain, Abélia, Delphine, Chow Ming



