

WINDY PRODUCTION and MOANA FILMS
PRESENT



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

MARION
COTILLARD

AYLINE
AKSOY-ETAIX

Angel Face

A FILM BY
VANESSA FILHO

ALBAN LENOIR

WRITTEN BY VANESSA FILHO ADAPTATION & DIALOGUES VANESSA FILHO & DIASTÈME

avec AMÉLIE BAUDRE, STÉPHANE BUDAUD, CAROLLE LAMBERT, MARC MISSONNIER, ANNEKE BLOK, LAURENCE VIDOT, SAMUEL AMAR, SOPHIE BEYNE, ANDRÉY CHANAL, OLIVIER CHOPPER, NICOLAS MIGNOT, ARIANE BARRAT, KATHIE DREYFUS, CLAUDE LANTIER, DOMINIQUE GARDONNEAU, BÉNÉDICTE CHINO

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SYNOPSIS

8-year-old Elli and her mother, Marlène, live in a small town by the French Riviera where they act out to relieve boredom and hide from social services. When Marlène caves in to yet another night of excess, she chooses to leave Elli behind for a man she just met. The young child must confront her mother's demons in order to get her back.



INTERVIEW WITH

VANESSA FILHO

How did you become a filmmaker?

I have a rather eclectic background, but I've always wanted to be a filmmaker. From childhood on, I constantly had a video camera or camera with me to take pictures and stage scenes. The first movie that really shook me to the core was Kieslowski's *BLUE*, which I discovered when I was 13: this feminine heroine played by Juliette Binoche literally overwhelmed me with emotion. I stayed shut up in my bedroom for days on end, listening to Zbigniew Preisner's *Requiem* (which is integral to the film) because I was unable to shed the waves of emotions washing over me caused by this oeuvre. That is when I decided that I would write and become a director. I fell in love with cinema, and other films even more deeply anchored my desire to direct. Films like *A Woman Under The Influence*, *Opening Night* by Cassavetes, *The Woman Next Door* by François Truffaut, *Family Life*, and *Lady Bird* by Ken Loach, *Intentions of Murder* by Shohei Imamura, *Cléo from 5 to 7* by Agnès Varda.

And after?

I got my high school Baccalaureate with a specialty in cinema, then I gravitated towards theater to learn staging and try to understand as much as possible about acting. When I was 19, I directed a medium-length film, *Primitifs* [*Primitives*]. After this first film, I worked in the music business: I directed music videos, documentaries, live shows, and I was a member of a music duo called Smoking Smoking. I'm also a photographer, and during the same time period I worked with a number of artists. I've been practicing photography as a personal endeavor for twenty years now. But beyond these various creative achievements and artistic endeavors, the desire – the obsession – to make films never left me. This project was so essential that I had to keep on course despite the obstacles and difficulties I came up against, which were so extreme at times that they almost shattered me. I persevered because in my mind there was no other alternative. I had to tell this story that troubled and touched me deeply, for it spoke to me on a very personal and profoundly emotional level – even though it is fiction.

In this adventure, during the years it took to see this project though, I was unfailingly supported and helped by Carole Lambert, and also Marc Missonnier – Antoine Lafon being the one who introduced us. My producers' commitment was decisive in this project's coming to fruition.

What was the starting point for ANGEL FACE?

It was the pressing need I had to recount dependency, a lack of love and feelings of insecurity. I wanted to depict and film Elli's solitude, the fact that she has no points of reference whatsoever and her encounter with alcohol, much too early in her life.

It's a film that speaks about love and all the feelings that affect it, make it absent, and make my heroine dependent. But it is also a film about renewal. Because despite this terrible ordeal she's going through, which puts her in the greatest insecurity, she proves to be able to resist, be resourceful, and find resilience.

What touches me with Elli is her ability to simultaneously reconcile her pain with her tremendous desire to live. And what moves me deeply about Marlène is her helplessness, her fragility, her lack of bearings and hope. She's a human being overcome with chaos and pain, who can't find her place in this world and doesn't love herself enough to be open to happiness and loving her daughter better. It was thus necessary to make these emotions palpable. As I already said, this story is above all fictitious, but the emotions are very real to me: I had to struggle against an irrational fear of being abandoned for a very long time.

It's a film about the formative years, about rites of passage, and a film that speaks about destiny, because Elli may only be eight years old, but she's going to free herself, let go of the person she loves the most in the world, her mother, to rebuild her own references and bearings, have a hand in her own destiny, provoking it by choosing Julio.

How did the writing process go?

When these characters and this story came to me, it all became absolutely essential in my mind. I had a feeling of urgency. I dropped everything, upended my life and shut myself away with these characters during several weeks to write the first version of the treatment. My writing is visual; I see my characters before hearing their voices. In a certain way, I've never let them out of my sight.

I asked Diastème to read my story, which interested and touched him. We then decided to develop the screenplay together, adapting and writing the dialogue as a team. As Diastème had a sharp and comprehensive grasp of the characters, we were able to delve deeper both into their characterizations as well into the dramatic strength of the narrative.

Then, since it took several years to work on the writing, I had the chance of working with François Pirot, who came on as a consultant for the last part of the film. Our exchanges as a group had much to do with depicting the emotions in an even more palpable way, notably for Marlène's depression, without ever having to comment upon it.

Screenwriting is a long-winded process that requires a constant dialogue in order to keep the characters alive. A screenplay is like a body that you constantly have to keep in motion, and I'm very grateful for these working collaborations.

Did you conduct research on alcoholic children?

The story doesn't come from a specific news item. Once I'd written the first treatment for the movie, I wanted to flesh out my story with other experiences: I met people who worked in health care, psychologists and former alcoholics, AA members, who told me fragments of their stories. And yet, I felt it was important not to make a film that would be a medico-social investigation: above all, *Angel Face* is a fictitious story. Unfortunately there are indeed true life stories close to what is depicted in the film, but this is about Elli. And Elli is unique; she's one of a kind. I wanted to treat her addiction to alcohol as a symptom of her distress and her emotional neglect.

You avoid all types of psychologization in favor of raw emotion, happy accidents and lucky encounters.

It probably comes from the fact that I didn't want to over explain, underscore, anticipate, comment or lecture. I was especially attached to the idea of affect and emotion, and the way the characters look at a world they're not properly armed to understand. From that perspective, it's not the causes of the problem that interest me, but the way their emotions guide their actions. I built the characters on what strikes a chord emotionally, their feelings, rather than on an explicit causality that would distance the audience from this place where thinking is no longer what governs people. Generally, I'm interested in these "borderline" states, the time just before an act is committed, and in the "carrying out" of the act itself.

How were you able to keep the "right distance" from the characters, neither overly empathetic, nor distancing yourself too much?

I strived to be as much as possible in tune with my characters, whom I love deeply. What interested me was to translate their point of view. As a result, it's their perspective that guides mine, and the right distance came about naturally.

I wanted to be in "real time" with the emotions felt by my characters. It's their emotional rhythm that drove the film and established my initial intention in the staging and filming. The editor Sophie Reine, who was completely invested in the film, and I always kept this notion, this intent in mind.

We are constantly with Marlène or Elli – it seems as though the rest of the world has faded away.

This world does exist, but it is brutal. Marlène and Elli are two solitary people who are trying to figure out how and where they fit in this world; their distress also contributes to their isolation. That is probably the reason why it feels like we only see the rest of the world through their perception of it. It's also a world for which they don't have the codes, a world both real and virtual, as depicted in the reality TV shows that Marlène ceaselessly immerses herself in. The outside world isn't aware of Elli's distress. No one has ever been able to face her suffering, until Julio.

There's a strange parallel between Elli and Julio: they both seem to be abandoned and on a quest for a father.

The first time that Elli glimpses Julio by the spyhole in the door, she hears him yell "Papa." What happens is that she instinctively recognizes him. The young man's pain echoes hers. It's not an accident that she is attracted to him afterwards. And it's for the same reason that Julio, despite himself, is going to become attached to her. They are two lonely souls who understand each other. Elli has a very strong survival instinct: by choosing Julio, by giving him this place in her life, she's forcing her destiny. Julio will know how to give her the proof of love she's been waiting for.

The seaside resort where you made the film seems almost like a ghost town.

I had intended to shoot in a seaside resort off season. These places associated with summer holidays have an entirely different feeling about them when high season is over. The vacationers disappear. The beaches empty out, the neon lights are turned off, the boardwalk activities close down. Half-deserted, still bathed in persistent sunshine, these places become unhindered playgrounds for children. The landscapes are steeped in another type of poetry and melancholy that inspire and touch me deeply.

The summer hustle and bustle gives way to another reality, befalling all the film's characters, main and supporting, who stay after everyone has gone. I wanted to capture the tipping point between the end of summer vacation and the beginning of the new school year, which directly and intimately echoes Marlène and Elli's characters. In a way, this seaside resort is an "abandoned" landscape, and in any case, it emerges as a full-fledged character. While the scenery is very much in tune with the characters, there is also the feeling of being on "stand-by" that I wanted to convey in the story and which reveals and reinforces the changes to come.

The absence of time markers, with the exception of one Saturday evening, adds to the feeling of being adrift while also refocusing the action around Marlène and Elli.

I think it coincides with the characters' own absence of reference points, and their deep malaise which distracts them from paying attention to the precise passing of time, and to a certain extent, social temporalities. They live from day to day and they are incapable of envisioning their future. When we build something, we project ourselves ahead in time, but these two characters live in immediacy, and this intensifies the loss of time markers.

What was it like to meet with Marion Cotillard?

Marion is a tremendous actress whom I've always admired. Very honestly, I would have never dared hope that she read the project. I was lucky that she wanted to meet me as soon as she had read it. My first meeting with her was extremely moving for me. Time was suspended. She spoke to me about Marlène with such love and understanding with regard to the character, with such a deep empathy, that I was overwhelmed: she has an emotional intelligence, a humanity, a strength and instinct that are very rare. She's a woman who goes straight to the truth, to what is most important; someone with whom you can't help but be plainly honest and frank.

The portrayal of the character then quickly took shape?

What is fantastic is that we quite quickly found the right form of expression based on feelings, correspondences, her body language, in order to better tackle Marlène's character. And Marion doesn't set boundaries: from the moment she commits to a project, and she committed with all her heart, she establishes a relationship of trust thanks to which we can embrace emotions in a thorough and direct way. A map of emotions, feelings, anxieties, doubts and abandonment took shape with Marion's body. It was a challenge for me to figure out how I was going to see and capture each place where these emotions had settled, whether out of instinct or reflex. Marion is exceptionally tuned in. When she arrives on a set, the space is transformed. Her presence imposes a physical concentration and tension. I'm very much in debt to her because she invited me to direct her in a very simple and natural fashion, without posing or attitude.

Finally, it is also important to highlight the meticulous research work done on Marlène's character, whom I wanted to appear as a timeless heroine while also being firmly rooted in her time era. Along with my entire HMC (hair-makeup-costume) team, Ariane Daurat, who designed the costumes, Stéphanie Guillon, make-up, and Linda Hydra, hair, we developed every last detail, from the shade of her blond hair to her tattoos, that she's accumulated over the years, to her wardrobe, including the neckline of her dresses: everything that could tell Marlène's story, her hopes and dreams, her private perception of the world, in order to embody my expectations of what the character should be.

How did you choose Elli?

I had a very personal mental image of this character and it was very difficult to describe this little girl I was looking for. Casting took several months. When Ayline appeared, I had the feeling that I recognized Elli in her. Except that she put her very own mark on the character, something more: strength, independence, a sense of liberty that came directly from her. This little "Angel Face," which is what everyone on the set called her, was obviously "a miracle." She played the role with a remarkably precocious sensitivity and intelligence. She wasn't even 8 years old when we shot the film and she knew how to interpret and embrace Elli's feelings. In real life, she's a little girl who couldn't be further from her character – she has a loving family around her, she is a joyful and very funny child – but she had a rare and brave generosity, and was able to cultivate a true empathy with regard to Elli.

She completely became her character.

There was something she said that always comes back to me, proving that she understood the effort of concentration necessary for acting: she would ask me if she could have a few extra seconds after hearing "Action" to be certain that she had enough time to "bring her feelings up to the surface." She asked me every time she had a difficult scene: "Vanessa? Are these the right emotions?" She was aware what was necessary to best play the scene, and she understood what was playing out. It was incredibly touching. I started off with the assumption that working with such a young child, I was going to learn a great deal, and that turned out to be largely true.



And your choices for the supporting roles?

Alban Lenoir is incredibly generous and precise in his work. He's an ideal partner. I wanted Julio to be at once taciturn, solitary, and enigmatic in his own way. He has a palpable sensitivity mixed with something childish. I think that Alban can have this sternness thanks to his physical appearance and at the same time has something childlike in his eyes. He gives Julio's character truth and depth: his relationship with Elli was even more moving than I ever could have imagined.

Amélie Daure, who plays Chiara, touched me deeply from her first screen tests. I didn't know her. It was Bénédicte Guiho, my casting director, who introduced her to me. She offers something that is very unique. I wanted to make sure that Chiara, who also mirrors Marlène, not be treated in a caricatural, stereotypical way. Amélie has a way of working that is very intuitive, a very particular way of tackling a character: she gave her an atypical body, gestures and presence that she rightly established and insisted upon.

As for Stéphane Rideau, he's an actor that I've always liked and who reminds me of my first strong cinematographic emotions. It was complicated to find an actor to play Jean because we had to like him straightaway, so that we could imagine the extent of happiness that Marlène was missing out on. Stéphane is one of the most authentic and sincere persons that I have ever met. He inspires all these projections that the audience needs to make. He is able to leave us with a constant reminder of his absence, like an echo. Although he disappears very early in the story, he left his mark on the film. Generally speaking, all the actors were fabulous work partners. Those who committed to this project did it with enormous generosity.

Are you open to improvisation or "accidents" that can happen which add a dash of life and spontaneity?

It's rather paradoxical. I believe myself to be a very precise person, because I'm filled with such strong fantasies and obsessions that I need to appease them in the directing process and so no detail is left to chance. I like to prepare as much as I can in pre-production so that during the actual shoot I can lose a bit of control and welcome happy accidents and occurrences. And they do happen and so much the better! In the urgency and immediacy that are inherent to a film shoot, I could count on César Chabrol, my assistant director and sidekick. Next, I'm very attached to the text, but when the dialogue comes alive, I'm in favor of giving it room to change. During the film shoot, I forced myself to be very attentive to random accidents that could fuel the image in real time and reorient the direction.

What do you aim for in your staging approach?

All of the staging had the same goal: get as close as possible to my characters' emotions, expressed through and on their bodies. This is the reasoning for the shots that are close up and carnal, or on the other hand the use of wide shots that isolate the characters in the scenery and in framing that underscores their loneliness, their fragility and for Marlène, her deluded behavior and choices. It had to do with capturing the pivotal moment they're

going through in the way we shot the scenes as well as the staging, so the audience could feel and experience, physically as well, the deeply rooted impetus that drives the characters.

You often opt for the little girl's perspective.

Indeed, the film's main point of view is the child's, Elli, whose perspective progressively changes. This perspective and the emotions that define it played a decisive role in my first strategy for directing the film. This "intimate" approach was organic, in harmony most often with this childlike perspective, at once carefree and serious, then increasingly serious. It was about showing "her" world, through her eyes and feelings.

She finds her mother prettier and happier when she drinks and doesn't make the connection between the difficult mornings after and the consequences of alcohol on her life. Elli is fascinated by her mother, as she is by the universe that inspires her, the one which Marlène in her own way personifies in a mirror effect: an artificial world of naïve sparkles and glitter, the empty world of reality television in which the candidates struggle and fight, until they hurt themselves and each other, in answer to fabricated emotions that they experience as true emotions solely because they have convinced themselves to live within this parallel world where they lack any points of reference. A world of garish and *glittery colors*, beautifully brought to life by Nicolas Migot, my set designer, colors that are in a way out of sync with the image and environment that could be associated with the film's central theme.

You look very kindly upon Marlène.

Beyond the way Elli sees her mother, I wanted the audience to see, know and understand that Marlène does what she can. I would like them to feel her profound distress, the depression she is sinking into. Her actions are neither intentional nor premeditated with regard to Elli. Her behavior can be accounted for by an absolute lack of bearings and references. When the camera doesn't directly adopt Elli's POV, when Marlène is filmed independently, for the audience, the sequence shines a new light on Elli herself as well, on her situation, her isolation, on what is playing out despite her and what is determining her future, her destiny, while also focusing on the film's intricacies and introducing the possibility of a parallel between the two characters, mother and daughter. This mimetism progressively takes effect as the film unfolds.

What palette of colors did you want to emphasize?

In a way, I chose my color palette very simply, with my characters. On one hand, it's Marlène who lives in a universe whose colors form a harmony in which she fits perfectly. It's a singular world, on the margins of society that Marlène has fashioned herself, which doesn't resemble anything else. There's poetry that emanates from this universe – hers, theirs – that naturally defined the contrasts, the glow and the color accents that characterize the visual expression of their world.

Of course the child's point of view also contributed to the film, because it most often favors playful and fanciful tones. But Elli changes during the course of the movie. Her "framing" of the world, her child's vision, progressively encompasses the reality she is forced to endure. The stuffed animals at the fairgrounds resemble mangled puppets, the neons and sparkles lose their luster, the costume is torn, the scenery is infused with another poetry of melancholy and realism, without modifying the power of Elli's perspective, which is maturing, despite herself, too quickly and differently than the others...until she accomplishes her final act.

I was very lucky to work with the cinematographer Guillaume Schiffman, who was a wonderful partner on the film, invested, concerned about and respectful of the narrative, and the poetry, which nevertheless didn't hinder its realism. I knew from the first moments of our encounter that I wanted to work with him because there was a rare, sensitive light in his eyes, that of people who are driven by their passion for and love of images.

How did you work on the sound? The snatches of dialogue from other characters – school mothers, acquaintances, people around them – that we grasp from afar, like a tapestry of background noise that gives the feeling of a disapproving or judgmental look cast by others upon Marlène and her daughter.

From the onset of the film as well as from the start of the shoot, I wanted the sound to come from my characters' perspective. The sound had to contribute to the sensorial, physical dimension that was necessary for the film's emotional poetry. We confirmed this intention in post-production. While placing emphasis on what Elli hears, amplifying it, we also stressed her subjectivity. Although I was attached to the film's poetic dimension, I also made sure not to stray too far from real sensations – that the sound shouldn't become a "special" effect. If you have the impression that there is a tapestry of background noises, woven with snatches of dialogue from exterior characters, it's only because the sound was treated from the point of view of the heroines, who don't feel that they belong.

And for the music?

Audrey Ismaël and Olivier Coursier composed all the original music for the film. They immediately grasped the direction they needed to take in order to combine intimacy and lyricism. The music is essentially written for the piano and cello, entirely composed for the image. I wanted them to aim for timelessness, and contrast with the film's very contemporary aspect. The music they created shrouds or mirrors the characters' inner emotional swaying, without ever seeking to expound or precede it. The musical approach is also unique, tinged with melancholy and warmth.

I've known Audrey and Olivier for years. Audrey is my musical partner in the band Smoking Smoking; Olivier, is a co-member of A.a.R.O.N, whose first visuals I created along with the music videos I directed for them, and with whom we once toured and played music, a long time ago. I knew their musical sensitivity, and I thought it was marvelous to put together this unusual duo for the first time, in the service of *Angel Face*'s original soundtrack.

The diegetic music also had its importance. In opposition to the original music, I wanted it to be directly linked to and consistent with the reality and the era that make up the film's, the protagonists' and the intention's backdrop. A more "popular" music, present in the environment and integral to the story, to which Marlène likes to dance when she parties. Today's "hits" during the wedding sequence, for example, not only signify the temporality, but also the environment that characterizes the mother's character.

Recent hits, but also a few older hits – Marlène named her daughter Elli in "homage" to the singer Elli Médeiros, "Toi mon toit" [*You're my home*] also resonates in the film because it links the heroine to her mother.

Finally, I set my heart on closing the film with the song "Sans toi" [*Without you*], composed by Michel Legrand and interpreted by Corinne Marchand in Agnès Varda's film *Cleo from 5 to 7*. It's a song I discovered a long time ago which has haunted me ever since. It correlates with the film's end and is also a tribute to the cinema I love.





INTERVIEW WITH

MARION COTILLARD

What aroused your interest in this first feature film project?

I was going through a period when I didn't want to read screenplays, or even work. Still, my agent called to tell me that I absolutely had to read this project because it was sublimely written, simple, powerful, and clearly one of the most beautiful screenplays he'd read these past few years: I was thus tempted and I did indeed find it wonderful. So, I asked if I could meet Vanessa, a poetic angel haunted by her subject, with the vital need to make films shining in her eyes. This is exactly what I look for in a director.

So you agreed to take part in the film.

The dates of the film shoot didn't work for me, as they really were incompatible with already-scheduled family projects. However, Vanessa couldn't change them. I was taking some time to make up my mind, so my agent called again to tell me that the production team needed an answer from me in order to move ahead and find financing for the film. I then decided to reread the screenplay, hoping that I would find my answer there. I opened my computer and realized that in the email to which the script was attached, there was also a mood-board, with reels of children, carnivals, and southern France, filmed by Vanessa. I saw a form of grace and something so powerful that I snapped my computer shut and called back to say yes.

How did you approach this character who ends up abandoning her daughter?

Although it seems inconceivable, I can understand that life's turmoils, that both external and inner unrest, may prompt a woman to leave, and therefore abandon her child. What is harder for me to understand, on the other hand, is that one can leave and *not come back*. Life is literally turned upside down by the arrival of a child – the responsibilities are so enormous – and one senses that freedom takes on another meaning; I can understand that a mother can snap and feel the need to escape.

Marlène is not fully aware of what she's doing...

When she leaves, she believes her daughter is big enough to manage on her own... She doesn't realize that in her thirst for self-fulfillment, freedom and the profound wish to achieve something for herself, she's abandoning a child who isn't old enough to grow, develop and construct herself on her own, even though she is able to survive and function autonomously in her daily activities. When you're 8, you need guidance and love – you need to be told to go to bed at night and be cuddled. Marlène isn't aware of the fact that she is hurting or damaging her child – for she does love her daughter: she loves her in her own strange way.

Did you imagine her past, her personal life story?

I always need to do that. A character is the outcome of a childhood and that is always where I start; it's my way of fleshing out the character. What was fantastic with this project was that Vanessa knew part of this woman's life: she'd made it up and told me about it. Based on what she'd said, I added things, imagined scenes that I used at specific moments to give substance to the character. I needed to know where her mother was and, once again, what kind of childhood she'd had, for I figured that she was probably repeating a pattern, following in the footsteps of women in her family who'd gone astray. I had to dig into what had happened earlier on in her life. And when you know just a little about a character, it's always very exciting to invent her life.

She is both radiant and dark, profoundly attached to her daughter and at the same time swallowed by an irrepressible need to escape...

She's very immature, with no emotional anchoring besides her daughter. Because of that, she's extremely lonely and destroys everything that has any beauty around her. I think she's the classic pattern of a woman who thinks she doesn't deserve the love that others have for her: she throws away her loving relationship with a wonderful man, though not fully consciously. There's always this compelling force inside her making her feel she doesn't deserve happiness. I told myself that, as a child, she must have been belittled at a young age and thus became convinced once she was an adult that she wasn't worthy of love and beauty. It becomes really complicated, when this is your foundation, to be a guide and a source of infinite love for your child. This is the reason why we can't pass judgement: her lack of love and her disregard for others find their origin quite far back in her past. If she had the ability to look, and actually see people, she would see that her daughter needs her. When she puts her in the car, she would hear her daughter cry and call out that she needs her. But she is unable to see herself this way and therefore unable to cast this kind of look on others. It's the logic of abandonment.

She seems to have this need to seek refuge in parallel worlds, like reality TV.

While I was preparing for the film, I forced myself to watch these shows and they made me ill: we're in realms of evasiveness and dodging, pure obscenity seeking to trigger the most violent and disconnected impulses in human beings by forcing them into situations that make no sense whatsoever. Marlène seeks refuge in this parallel universe that requires no thinking on her part: she derives an unhealthy and fleeting pleasure from it that is also extremely toxic and addictive.

She stands out from the other mothers who take their kids to school: you can't miss her. How did you put her together, physically?

Vanessa knew quite precisely what she wanted. I just followed her guidance because we were on the same wavelength. Vanessa is someone whose world is very powerful, yet this never takes precedence over the story. And this is where the magic happens. It's particularly remarkable as this is a first feature-length film, which is when a director can fall prey to the pitfalls of stylistic effects. But Vanessa always found the right place for her narrative while infusing it with her poetry.

How did your working with the little Aylene go?

I was confident that Vanessa would find the rare gem. Nevertheless, it's difficult to find an 8-year-old child able to play such a role in a powerful yet natural manner. I first met Aylene when we did screen tests and I saw that look in her eyes, an intensity, a silent strength. I felt that she liked acting and that she enjoyed embodying this character. She really impressed me. She has a truly engaging personality; she is smart, and she has the soul of an artist.

What is Vanessa's directing style?

As I said earlier, Vanessa is haunted and possessed by her characters and the story she needs to tell. She knows exactly who her characters are and therefore gives wonderful guidance. Vanessa exudes a combination of gentleness, strength and great determination. When I saw how she directed Aylene, I was mesmerized. Between them, there was an intense and intimate connection that is akin to what you'd see between a coach and a boxer, eyes locked together before hitting the ring – though replacing the violence with gentleness. Vanessa would create a sort of invisible bubble on the set, in which the two of them would be isolated, alone in the world; and then, just in the way she spoke to her, she literally entered her head and her body, and gave her instructions. It was impressive to watch. On top of having a powerful world and a wonderful sense of storytelling and photography, she is exceptional when directing her actors.

When we see you, we often think of Gena Rowlands, directed by Cassavetes. Was she a reference for you?

No, Vanessa and I never really discussed inspirations or models. Personally, my references often come from people around me. The characters I play are a mix of my friends, and people I know more or less intimately. For Marlène, I took my inspiration from three girls I know and two others I don't personally know. This said, the women portrayed by Gena Rowlands are great figures in a realistic genre that is at the same time extremely poetic, exuding feelings that are transcended by cinema. It is true that there is a similar intensity in Vanessa's world.

What will you take away with you from this experience?

The first steps of a wonderful director. I am lucky enough to have worked with many inspired directors and that's what makes me tick, what makes me want to reorganize my plans and give my all to help an artist express him or herself. As a performer, this is what I love about my craft.



CAST

MARION COTILLARD
AYLINE AKSOY-ETAIX
ALBAN LENOIR
AMÉLIE DAURE
STÉPHANE RIDEAU

MARLÈNE
ELLI
JULIO
CHIARA
JEAN



CREW

Director
Screenwriter
Adaptation and dialogues

Producers

Director of Photography
Editor
Original Music

Set Designer
Costume Designer
Sound
Sound Editing
Mix
Casting
1st Assistant Director
Location Managers

Post-production Manager
Production Manager
Coproducers

Associate Producer
In co-production with

With the participation of

With the participation of
With the support of

In partnership with
In association with

French Distributor
World Sales

VANESSA FILHO
VANESSA FILHO
VANESSA FILHO
DIASTÈME
CAROLE LAMBERT
MARC MISSONNIER
GUILLAUME SCHIFFMAN AFC
SOPHIE REINE
AUDREY ISMAËL
OLIVIER COURSIER
NICOLAS MIGOT
ARIANE DAURAT
XAVIER DREYFUSS
OLIVIER WALCZAK
DOMINIQUE GABORIEAU
BÉNÉDICTE GUIHO
CÉSAR CHABROL
ARNAUD FOELLER
OLIVIER COQUILLON
LAURENCE VIDOT
SAMUEL AMAR ADP
STÉPHANE CÉLÉRIER
VALÉRIE GARCIA
LY NHA KY
ANTOINE LAFON
WINDY PRODUCTION
MOANA FILMS
MARS FILMS
VAN VUONG GROUP
MY UNITY PRODUCTION
CANAL+
CINÉ+
CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE
RÉGION PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR
DÉPARTEMENT DES ALPES MARITIMES
CNC
MANON 8
INDÉFILMS 6
A PLUS IMAGE 8
MARS FILMS
PLAYTIME