

FABRICE GOLDSTEIN & ANTOINE REIN
PRESENT

AGNÈS JAOUI
**FIFTY
SPRINGTIMES**

A FILM BY BLANDINE LENOIR

THIBAUT DE MONTALEMBERT

PASCALE ARBILLOT

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SCREENPLAY JEAN-LUC GAGET & BLANDINE LENOIR

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL IDEA OF BLANDINE LENOIR

ADAPTATION AND DIALOGUES BY BLANDINE LENOIR & OCÉANE ROSE MARIE

Length : 90'

SYNOPSIS

Aurore, separated from her husband, has just lost her job and been told that she is going to be a grandmother. She is slowly being pushed to the outskirts of society, but when she accidentally runs into the great love of her youth, she puts her foot down and refuses to be relegated to the scrap yard. What if now was the time to start over ?

INTERVIEW WITH BLANDINE LENOIR

TELL US HOW THIS FILM CAME TO BE.

As it often happens, the subject arose from personal experience. I was extremely anxious about turning forty, yet without understanding why I was so afraid to grow old while my male friends didn't share this concern at all. I quickly realized that women in their fifties weren't represented in cinema. How can you possibly feel like reaching an age that tends to be invisible? I saw many women around me ending up in a terrible loveless solitude; incredible, beautiful and talented women whose exes had been able to make new lives for themselves. I wanted to pay homage to these women, give them - and give myself - the desire to grow old. FIFTY SPRINGTIMES is also a way of healing my own anxieties [laughter].

THE HEROINE, AURORE, ACCUMULATES DIFFICULTIES: SHE LIVES ALONE IN A FINANCIALLY PRECARIOUS SITUATION AND IS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF MENOPAUSE...

But she takes her life in hand. She's a strong character who, when confronted with discrimination, discovers solidarity from the women around her, which makes her realize that anything is still possible. As always, I wanted to tell this story with humor, trying to laugh about things that aren't really funny - there's so much there to say.

FROM THE VERY FIRST IMAGES, YOU TACKLE MENOPAUSE HEAD ON WHEN AURORE HAS A CONVERSATION WITH LUCY, HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER.

I like tackling taboo subjects. The bond between generations, which I already broached in

ZOUZOU, my first feature film, is very important to me. It's important to remember the way our mothers and grandmothers were raised. Many things have changed, of course, women vote, work, use contraception, but all the same glaring inequalities still prevail today, indeed there is even a sense of backlash in certain instances.

INDEED, LUCIE, THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, WAITS ON HER BOYFRIEND HAND AND FOOT AND THE ELDEST DAUGHTER TELLS HER MOTHER THAT BEING PREGNANT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL THING THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED TO HER. THE LEAST ONCE COULD SAY IS THAT THEY AREN'T EXACTLY EXTOLLING FEMINISM...

I thought it would be funny to see women like Aurore and her girlfriend appalled at seeing their own mothers' behaviors replicated by this younger generation. I haven't made anything up. Take the anti-abortion movement: the majority of people in the street are 19 or 20 years old. However, I don't judge these young women. Lucie is learning about life, and we can sense that Marina, the eldest, doesn't have a strong sense of self-esteem. Besides, the argument between Marina and her mother for me is more about hormones acting up: Marina cries because she's pregnant and Aurore because she's in menopause. This scene was important to me: I deeply wanted to show that it isn't easy to say that you love someone and sometimes you have to have a horrible argument to get to that place. And also it is difficult for Aurore to come to terms with the idea of becoming a grandmother; it makes her feel like she's that much older.

AT FIRST SHE DOESN'T INVEST A LOT OF EMOTION INTO THIS PREGNANCY, UNTIL THE MOMENT AT THE MATERNITY CLINIC WHEN SHE RUNS INTO TOTOUCHE (THIBAUT DE MONTALEMBERT), WHO WAS HER CHILDHOOD LOVE...

She falls back in love with him and suddenly, she feels like she's fifteen again. I find it extremely moving that love can stay intact over time, even if one has been involved in a long relationship in the meantime.

AUORE IS REALLY IN A PERIOD OF PERSONAL DECONSTRUCTION/RECONSTRUCTION. SHE LOVES WITHOUT KNOWING IF IT'S REQUIRED; HER YOUNGEST DAUGHTER LEAVES HOME...

The period she's going through reminds me of a sort of counterpart of adolescence. She discovers a newfound freedom to which she isn't accustomed and which manifests itself at first as a feeling of loss. Movies often show parents relieved to see their adult children finally leave home, but what I see around me is much more often friends who are upset over their children leaving home. Before feeling once again that they have time for themselves and new things to pursue, these women have to face a very delicate transition.

IT'S LIKE ANOTHER FORM OF EMANCIPATION

Absolutely. I'm convinced that the roles we play shift quite a bit during the course of a lifetime, particularly those between mothers and daughters who need to distance themselves at a certain period before finding each other again. That's exactly what happens between Aurore and her daughters, who come together again once each of them has taken on a new status.

AUORE IS ALSO GIVEN A VERY ROUGH TIME PROFESSIONALLY : THERE'S THAT NEW BOSS WHO HAS CHOSEN A NICKNAME FOR HER AGAINST HER WILL...

How can you show humiliation at work in just a few scenes? Stripping someone of their identity seemed to me the worst thing you could force someone to be subjected to. If you have even the slightest bit of dignity or self-esteem, it's unbearable. Workplace suffering is a terrible reality. But Aurore is a fighter. She's never a victim.

SHE ALSO HAS TO FACE THIS UNEMPLOYMENT

OFFICE EMPLOYEE WHO NEVER FINISHES HER SENTENCES.

The more I tackle serious things, the more I need the situation to be funny. I always try to be a bit quirky in reference to reality. I imagined this person, played by Florence Muller, who never, ever finishes her sentences, keeping them as if suspended, to denounce the system's inefficiency. We understand very well what she is getting at. These are the little skits I just love to put into a screenplay.

SKITS THAT ARE ALWAYS VERY POWERFUL, LIKE THE ONE WHERE NOW THAT SHE IS A "CLEANING OPERATIVE," AUORE HAS A CONVERSATION WITH A COLLEAGUE WHO BRINGS UP THE NOTION OF DISCRIMINATION.

It wasn't an easy text to say. For this scene to exist, the character had to immediately be whole and present. I called upon a non-professional - a Tunisian beautician who had told me once that she dreamed of being in a film. She's a very sharp woman with a strong accent. I knew that she could easily embody the character and deliver this text.

ARE THERE OTHER NON-PROFESSIONALS LIKE HER IN THE FILM ?

Four or five. I'm very fond of this type of set up : it makes the professional actors more vulnerable, stirring up something that is very human, a sense of solidarity. The old woman in the retirement home is one of them. The role was written for Thérèse Clerc, who sadly passed away just before the shoot. So I offered the role to her best friend, Iro. I was fascinated by her charisma, her voice and personality. One had to believe her capable of running this incredible place. And then unfortunately Iro passed away before she saw the finished film.

YOU MAKE THE NARRATIVE SYSTEMATICALLY BLOW HOT AND COLD BY ALTERNATING HIGHLY MOVING SCENES WITH EMINENTLY COMIC ONES, LIKE THE SCENE WHERE PASCALE ARBILLOT STARTS BICKERING WITH A STRANGER ON THE STREET, OR THE OTHER QUARREL IN THE CHILDREN'S STORE...

I like to alternate emotions. It's very important to me because that is exactly what happens in our daily lives. It calls for a great deal of humility when editing, all the more so since in my films the story

is always less important than the characters. It's a very delicate balance to strike. I have to cut a great deal, accept to part with certain scenes and even with certain roles.

WE CAN SENSE AN UNBELIEVABLE SOLIDARITY BETWEEN ALL THE WOMEN IN THE FILM.

I have great faith in feminine solidarity: A solidarity that unfailingly carries me throughout all of life's stages. Indeed, in my mind it was of the utmost importance that every age be represented in the film.

IN REFERENCE TO LIFE STAGES, YOU INTEGRATE EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGIST AND ETHNOLOGIST FRANÇOISE HÉRITIER, WHO EXPLAINS THAT NOT SUCH A LONG TIME AGO, ONCE IN MENOPAUSE, A WOMAN'S EXISTENCE STOPPED SHORT.

Just as I had quoted Christine Delphy in *ZOUZOU*, I absolutely wanted to pay homage to Françoise Héritier in *FIFTY SPRINGTIMES*. This was made possible thanks to footage that Patric Jean agreed to give me, excerpts from his DVD, *Conversations with Françoise Héritier*. Like Thérèse Clerc, Maya Surduts, and Benoite Groult, all recently deceased, these women belong to a generation which contributed enormously to the advancement of political thought and feminism.

DID YOU IMMEDIATELY HAVE AGNÈS JAOUÏ IN MIND FOR THE ROLE OF AUREORE ?

I wanted an actress whose face had been long familiar to the public and one who was comfortable with her age and enjoyed all the advantages that it implies. Agnès is extremely feminine and attractive while having matured. It was important for my heroine not to resemble an eternal adolescent. Agnès immediately took a liking to the Aureore character – she agreed after two days.

HOW DID SHE PREPARE FOR THE ROLE ?

The costume department spent a lot of time on her appearance. Agnès isn't dressed in the film the way she dresses in real life. I wanted to make the most out of her body with tight-fitting outfits. A woman with hips, bosom and a backside is magnificent – we rarely see full-figured women in movies. Although as a personal style she tends to wear roomy dresses, Agnès understood what I wanted to convey. I constantly repeated during

our conversations: "You are a woman who stands tall and is in touch with others. Aureore may not be a great feminist, but as she starts to meet women who show solidarity to one another, she realizes that her personal experience is indeed a collective experience." It's not falling in love that saves her, but firstly that she is able to find her dignity again, which allows her to fall in love again.

TELL US ABOUT PASCALE ARBILLOT WHO PLAYS MANO, HER BEST FRIEND.

I've known her for a long while. I love her intelligence and imagination. I like to be surrounded by actors with whom I've already worked: Marc Citti, Nanou Garcia, Philippe Rebbot, Laure Calamy, Florence Muller... This pushes me to multiply the roles in each new film for each new encounter I've made. In this one there are fifty! It's so much easier to work with people you know; I'm convinced that trust and confidence gives wings to creation. Similarly, I try to surround myself with the same crew – this is something all directors tend to do. Everybody understands each other quickly. That's important.

YOU WERE AN ACTRESS FOR A LONG TIME BEFORE BECOMING A DIRECTOR.

I became a director by accident. In fact, I'd always wanted to be a director but I didn't think it would be possible. And then, at 12, I chanced upon Agnès Varda's film *VAGABOND*. It was the mid-1980s and it was the first time I had seen a film about a woman directed by a woman. This opened a door for me. Three years later, I noticed a casting announcement for Gaspar Noé's *CARNE*. I went there with the sole intention of meeting the director. Gaspar chose me and my acting career began. I developed a taste for the profession all the while continuing my studies and learning as much as I could about directing. At 25, I took the plunge and wrote *AVEC MARINETTE*, my first short film. It took me another ten years to feel bold enough to make my first feature film.

HOW DO YOU WORK ?

I rehearse with the actors. I need to hear them say their lines: exciting things happen that I hadn't foreseen, others on the contrary, don't work the way I thought they would. Sometimes I realize that a gesture says more than a spoken line. I delete some dialogue, change others. It's also a way of

grasping the energy that circulates between my actors and building the indispensable trust that is needed for us all to work together.

HOW DO YOU DIRECT YOUR ACTORS?

I always start off with my actors' personalities. I choose them for who they are, they have to appear somehow in their characters. Then I look for a way for them to enjoy themselves. I don't pile up takes and I try and keep the pleasure of acting fresh and alive; if I sense there is no more enjoyment, I stop.

BERTRAND BELIN WROTE THE MUSIC...

He's written the music for all of my films. Bertrand and I have known each other since we were teenagers. We grew up together. His music is an indispensable narrative element in my cinema. What he writes for me is very different from his usual universe. Bertrand is there in pre-production, but he is especially present for the editing process. The work we do together is invaluable to me. Together with Stéphanie Araud, my editor, we make a real team. In my mind they are veritable co-screenwriters.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO SHOOT IN THE CITY OF LA ROCHELLE?

I wanted to be able to see the sky and for my heroine to have a relatively pleasant quality of life. Impossible to have that in the greater Paris area when one earns minimum wage and everything from housing to entertainment is so expensive. And also I like to shoot in the provinces, be free to have dinner in the evening with my actors, observe details that I may use the next day.

FILMOGRAPHY

BLANDINE LENOIR

SHORTS

- 2000** AVEC MARINETTE
- 2002** PAS DE PITIÉ
- 2004** DANS TES RÊVES
- 2005** ROSA
- 2006** MA CULOTTE
- 2008** BIEN DANS MA PEAU (CURE BIEN-ÊTRE)
- 2008** POUR DE VRAI
- 2009** L'HONNEUR DE ROBERT
- 2010** MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ
- 2014** L'AMÉRIQUE DE LA FEMME

FEATURES

- 2014** ZOUZOU
- 2017** FIFTY SPRINGTIMES

CAST

Aurore **Agnès JAOUI**
Totoche **Thibault DE MONTALEMBERT**
Mano **Pascale ARBILLOT**
Marina **Sarah SUCO**
Lucie **Lou ROY-LECOLLINET**

CREW

Director	Blandine LENOIR
Screenplay	Blandine LENOIR Jean-Luc GAGET
Based on the original idea of	Blandine LENOIR
Adaptation and dialogues	Blandine LENOIR Océane ROSE MARIE
Photography	Pierre MILON, A.F.C.
Editing	Stéphanie ARAUD
Music	Bertrand BELIN
Sound	Dimitri HAULET Xavier THIBAULT Emmanuel CROSET
Casting director	Aurélie GUICHARD
Set design	Éric BOURGES
Costume design	Marie LE GARREC
1st Assistant	Amandine ESCOFFIER
Production manager	Christophe GRANDIERE
Post Production manager	Chiara GIRARDI
Production	KARÉ PRODUCTIONS
In coproduction with	FRANCE 3 CINÉMA
With the support of	LA RÉGION NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE LE DÉPARTEMENT DE LA CHARENTE MARITIME
In partnership with	LE CNC
In cooperation with	LA BANQUE POSTALE IMAGE 9 CINEVENTURE 2 COFIMAGE 28 A PLUS IMAGE 8
With the participations of	CANAL + FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS OCS
International sales	BE FOR FILMS
Associated producer	Antoine GANDAUBERT
Produced by	Fabrice GOLDSTEIN Antoine REIN



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