TS PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS

SANDRINE BONNAIRE

# catch the wind

OFFICIAL SELECTION
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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2017

A FILM BY GAËL MOREL

# synopsis

Edith, a 45-year-old textile factory worker, sees her life turned upside down by the company's downsizing measures. Estranged from her son and without any other ties, rather than go into unemployment, she decides to leave her life behind and follow her work at the factory which has been relocated in Morocco.

# interview with gael morel

**Where did the idea to make this film come from?**

I wanted to pay tribute to the working class, where I come from, to shoot a film entirely set in their world. There are often characters of modest origin in my films, but they're not necessarily from the working class of my childhood. It was in talking about the textile situation in Villefranche-sur-Saône with my father, who worked in a textile factory there for a long time, that I got the idea for the film about a woman who accepts to be transferred to Morocco. The textile industry in the area is completely disaster-stricken and relocations are numerous. In Tarare, not far from Villefranche, 80% of the factories have been shut down. There are still a few in activity in the region, including the plant for which my father worked. I was fortunate enough to be allowed to shoot all the sequences of the film showing Edith at her place of work in France in this setting, which is so full of meaning for me.

**The character's decision to transfer is almost suicidal: it's a known fact that even the human resource managers who make these transfer offers don't believe in them.**

French labor laws oblige companies to make these offers before firing their employees, and their proposals are obviously a sham. Recently, Whirlpool workers were offered a salary of 400 euros per month if they accepted to be transferred to Poland where their factory is being relocated. It's a joke! But the situation that I've imagined is far from being science fiction: during the crisis in Spain, many people preferred to leave temporarily for Morocco rather than to remain in their country without any work.

**This is what Edith, the heroine of the film played by Sandrine Bonnaire, decides to do.**

For her, like for all workers, work is a fundamental value

on which is based their pride, dignity and social ties. How would it be possible to have a social life with work organized in 3 shifts around the clock if not by forming friendships in the factory? In a society such as ours, it is difficult to lead a dignified life if one doesn't work.
For Edith, there is also an enormous loneliness. She's a widow and her son has left to live his own life. Her decision stems from a never-say-die attitude: either she succumbs, or she bounces back…

**The quarrel she has with Gisèle, the union member, before she leaves, effectively describes the complex relationship that workers have with their unions: "I don't believe in your speeches anymore", she tells Gisèle.**

Workers are completely disenchanted with the unions. And at the same time, it's even worse when there aren't any, as Edith discovers when she starts working in Morocco. Some unions continue to operate like they did twenty or thirty years ago. Instead of being the preferred partners for dialogue, they take one of two positions: they either block the company or try to save their own skin. In reality, Edith simply applies the rules they have set for herself: think about myself first, choose what is the most attractive, and therefore choose to work, even if she has to leave to do this.

**Why did you choose Morocco for the story's setting?**

It's the only country in North Africa where security is not an issue, and it is also a vacation spot. Imagining a French

woman living the life of a worker there, a far cry from the country's picture postcard image, sets the stage for the unusual.

### Why did you transfer her to Tangiers?

Because it's a city undergoing full expansion, with a booming economy. There is an enormous free zone that largely benefits from derogations regarding customs duties. Tangiers is a very attractive city where European industries, including the textile industry, unfortunately have a vested interest in locating, because salaries are far lower and workers are relatively unprotected by social laws.

**Is this the first time that you have worked with Rachid O., who co-signed the script?**

I always look for legitimacy when I locate my projects in a foreign country. For the film's characters, who are soundly anchored in Moroccan reality, I needed the support of someone who knows the country from the inside. Rachid, who lived for nearly thirty years in Morocco, was the perfect accomplice. He and I met around twenty years ago when he published his first novel, *L'Enfant ébloui* (*The Dazzled Child*). We became friends but had never worked together before. This film provided the opportunity. And I also love the Morocco he speaks of in his books: very intimate and far, for example, from the fictionalized accounts of someone like Tahar Ben Jelloun.

**As soon as she arrives at the factory, Edith is stupefied by what she discovers: the archaism of the production chain, the noise nuisances…**

In contrast to the factory that we see in France in the beginning, where one person will soon be able to operate four machines, there isn't much automation in Morocco. Companies that relocate there often decide to relocate the production chain from the existing plant as well. Working conditions are extremely hard.

**Did you have a hard time finding the plant where you did the shooting?**

Nothing is easy in filmmaking and that makes it all the more

exciting! Our line producer in Morocco, Frantz Richard, showed me, among other possibilities for sets, a German factory that had relocated in Tangiers and that corresponded exactly to what I had in mind while writing the script. It was vital for me to show how these factories really operate and to reveal the truth about their day-to-day activity, and namely the almost unbearable noise that can be heard in the workshops, to which must be added the music broadcast in the plant to accelerate the work pace. I had to remove it during the editing because no one in the audience would have been able to stand it. I needed to be grounded in this reality in order to construct my story.

**Despite the ties that she establishes with Karima, the young seamstress, Edith quickly understands that there is no solidarity among the workers.**

Even if she had no particular liking for the famous Gisèle, she nonetheless realizes that Gisèle was, despite everything, a reference to prevent abuses: the absence of a union leaves the door wide open to what resembles a form of barbarism that is not innate in Morocco, but rather in the capitalist world, Moroccan plants being managed by the West, where the headquarters of these companies are located.

**For various reasons, all these women are dominated by fear.**

The fear of authority in Morocco, and even more in the little-protected world of the factory and work produces self-

censorship in the workers and the foremen/women, who are afraid to express themselves because they fear they'll be sanctioned. That's what happens for Najat, the forewoman of the workshop where Edith works. It's because there is no intermediate structure, such as a union, that fear takes over. It's always fear that takes hold of people and keeps them from fighting for their rights.

**Najat's fear verges on the fantasized: no one told her to let the workers electrocute themselves by coming into contact with defective machines. Even her superior criticizes Najat's attitude.**

Her superior wants her factory to work and wants optimal output. For me, capitalism is in the image of this woman and of Najat: cultivated and educated people at the top, often profoundly humanist; exploited people charged with

impossible tasks at the very bottom. Najat, of course, is completely crazy; her fear is transformed into authoritarianism, but there's a reason for this. Her fiancé never came back after he left to work in France. The resentment she feels is simply a metaphor for resentment felt by a part of Moroccan society regarding those who have left the country.

**This explains her antipathy for and distrust of Edith.**

Is she Spanish, French, a tourist, a worker? Her image is completely blurred in the eyes of the factory employees, like it is in the eyes of Mina.

**Mina, the owner of the boarding house, and her son, Ali, are almost the inverse copy of Edith and Jérémie: on one side, a very Mediterranean mother, little disposed to letting her child leave, and on the other a woman who chose to offer her son freedom and who suffers terribly in consequence.**

Edith behaves as would an exemplary parent, but her son, too busy with building his own life without her, doesn't realize this. The Republic has done its work: her son has climbed the social ladder and the difficulty he has in maintaining ties with his mother is probably all the greater for it. The situation is different for Mina: she has succeeded and it's now Ali's turn to think about his future. There's a kind of buddy-movie side to these two women that all would appear to oppose.

**And who become friends. By coming to Morocco,**

**Edith finally finds what she was looking for: friendship, others.**

Two things count for her: work and not being alone. She rediscovers what it's like to be surrounded by others and little by little distances herself from her work. She learns how to build a life outside the plant; she reinvents herself.

**Mina defied a taboo: she got a divorce.**

She owns the street when she walks in the middle of a crowd! The law is on her side: women are no longer repudiated in Morocco. At present the country aspires to complete freedom, like Spain at the time of the Movida. At the Tangiers film library, which is located next to the Mosque, Goth youth groups come to see films that have been forbidden by Islam because they depict homosexuality. The only thing that keeps this freedom from fully blossoming is the very strong presence of Islamic radicalism, and the tremendous security measures taken to contain it.

**Mina's boarding house would appear to be very atypical.**

In Morocco, the boarding house is the obligatory passage for truck drivers, workers and people with little money who come to live in a city. An entire population rubs shoulders in these lodgings. It was when I read *Analphabètes* (*Illiterates*), Rachid O.'s most recent book, that the idea came to me to use a boarding house as a set.

**When she's fired and decides to leave with the migrant workers to the Rif Mountains, Edith hits rock bottom…**

She goes as far as she can both physically and morally. These scenes constitute the climax of the film. For me it's a very important moment.

**And it's when she finally lets go that she finds her son… and a real reason to live.**

I didn't want anyone to think that by going to Morocco, Edith was leaving hell for paradise. In the end she chooses the hell – or the paradise – that suits her best, a kind of utopia with people from another continent.

**Sandrine Bonnaire is in every shot. Did you write the film thinking of her?**

Sandrine is part of my fundamental desire to make films; I grew up with her. With Rachid O., we used her as the "model", we "imagined" Sandrine in the situations of the film without daring to say to ourselves that she would be willing to play the role. She inspired us a great deal for the scenes in the Rif. Sandrine is one of those actresses who gives direction to a script when it is being written.
She's a beautiful actress in the complete sense of this word. Even when she wears the factory coat, she has a certain bearing, and an incredible suppleness, neither of which are incompatible with her character because she herself is from a working class background. I'm so lucky that she accepted to play Edith, just as I was lucky to have been able to direct Catherine Deneeuve in *Après lui* (*After him*) and Béatrice Dalle in *Notre paradis* (*Our paradise*). These three actresses, whose temperaments are incredibly unlike, all have in common the capacity to become one with the film, and the director's accomplices. They have this gift. They are muses!

**How is this manifest in the film?**

In the dinner scene, for example, there were six pages of dialogue. The audience already new what was about to be said and that bothered me. So I came up with this idea: "She's going to sing a nursery rhyme song." I could never have thought up something like that without her; that's

what makes the difference between a good actress and an inspired actress. An inspired actress leads you where you hadn't expected, but where the film should go.

**How did you come to choose Mouna Fettou, who is a very popular actress in Morocco, and Kamal El Amri, who play Mina and Ali respectively?**

I chose them very quickly. For Mina, I wanted an actress who could oppose Sandrine, someone with a different silhouette but capable of playing almost the same music. Mouna Fettou has this: she can be terrible when she's angry and almost childlike when she smiles.
I had met with several young actors for the role of Ali, and I adored Kamal because he's a block of truth. His physique and very slight accent when he speaks French make him the kind of boy one crosses paths with every day in Tangiers. I find him touching because he's in the process of becoming: one sees the child that he is, one imagines the adult he will become; he's between the two.

**How do you work with your actors?**

I meet with them regularly; we often talk about cinema together, but I don't drown them with references. With Sandrine, our discussions were mainly focused on her clothes: they had to reflect the character's development, from being a self-effacing person in the beginning of the film to a woman who has found her femininity again at the end, taking care to avoid clichés.

**Tell us about the editing.**

I like the idea that a shot is sacred, that it composes itself, works on itself, that it's a creation under discussion. Just as much as I dislike rehearsing with the actors, I love spending time on the sets with my technicians to think about the shots. I spent a lot of time, for instance, in organizing the scenes when Edith first arrives to the new plant. She is lost, panicky, and taken aback by what she sees; the viewer must see both this new space into which she enters and the reactions, which are almost physical, that it triggers in her.

**You employ two formats in the film….**

It is often said that the scope format gives more room to breathe because it is wider, but I find, on the contrary, that it suffocates: it shrinks the characters. This is why I only used it at the beginning of the film, to mark the confinement in which Edith lives. As soon as she arrives in Tangiers, David Chambille, my director of photography, and I wanted a more vertical format because it is better suited to this city built on hills, and corresponds to my desire to film people standing, rather than lying down.

**Did you have any references in mind for this film?**

I always have a film in mind when I shoot, a film that I know will resonate with mine, that I'll be able to view every time I want to take a step back, that I find myself questioning a scene, that I have a doubt, or that I'm blocked. The film was

Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* for *Le Clan* (*The Clan*), and Rosellini's *Europe 51* for *Après lui* (*After Him*)

**And for *Catch the Wind*, it was Rossellini's *Stromboli*?**

In this case, the inspiration was very concrete. When shooting the scenes in the Rif, for example, I felt the need to watch the film again. I was sure, almost in a superstitious way, that it was going to provide me with answers. I viewed the scenes again where Ingrid Bergman falls while climbing the volcano, and the discrepancy between her clothes and her descent jumped out at me: she's not dressed for that! It's exactly this kind of disaccord that I wanted for the scenes with Sandrine Bonnaire; the clothes she was going to wear couldn't be those of a migrant worker! That resolved a lot of things.
There are surely other influences in my films that I would probably be incapable of naming. It's the love of cinema that has led me to this work. I don't believe in spontaneous generation!

**What kind of director are you during the film shoot?**

I take possession of the film – the script exists, but it's only a work tool and I know it's going to evolve. I'm not obsessed with control. I know that if my set is suddenly flooded, I'll know how to find a solution, I'll fictionalize the flood. And the images that I'll be able to obtain from this situation will nourish the scenes that come both before and after. I want life to overwhelm me. In fact that's what I wait for every day!

**You have given a very important place in the film to**

**the music composed by Camille Rocailleux.**

Its lyricism helps me project my characters, who are always of modest origin, into a more dramatic, fictionalized dimension. The music is an integral part of the film's esthetic.

***Catch the Wind* is an extraordinarily solar title.**

One always tends to shoot a film to counter the film made before it; I shot this film to contrast with my last film, *Notre paradis* (*Our Paradise*), which is very somber and very masculine. And then, like most of us, as I grow old, I wanted to be more positive. Failing to devise any political solutions in answer to the issues, I have tried to find solutions for my characters. There's something that could be called appeasement, almost "communion" in *Catch The Wind*.

# artistic list

SANDRINE
**BONNAIRE**

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**FETTOU**

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**EL AMRI**

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**DAVID CHAMBILLE**
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**PIERRE MERTENS, FRANÇOIS MEREU, HERVÉ BUIRETTE**
EDITOR
**CATHERINE SCHWARTZ**
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**CAMILLE ROCAILLEUX**
CASTING DIRECTOR
**JACQUES GRANT**
SET DESIGNER
**SOPHIE CHANDOUTIS**
COSTUME DESIGNER
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