



26. Settimana
Internazionale
della Critica

Zadig Films presents

WITH CORINNE MASIERO

LOUISE WIMMER

A FILM BY CYRIL MENNEGUN

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France / 80 minutes / color / Digital HD 1.85 / Dolby SRD

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SYNOPSIS

Louise Wimmer goes from one small job to another. Despite her loud speech and tall height she'd rather stay alone to avoid any conflict. Her past life is now far behind her and everything she owns is in her car. At the dawn of her fifties, she lost everything when separating from her husband, but she wants to make it by herself. Nonetheless it is only if she accepts to open herself to others that she will be able to start her life again.





DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Louise Wimmer is my first feature film and my first work of fiction. With this film, I am proposing an encounter with a singular heroin, sharing a few weeks of this woman's life, her struggles, and her promises. My only watchword when directing this film was for Louise to grasp our attention and never let go. I wanted her photographic image, her rhythm, her inner music to make her an omnipresent figure. I wanted her insignificance in the eyes of others, the ordinary violence of today's society of winners to be thrown in our faces. I wanted images and sounds to transport Louise's silent tenderness deep into our hearts, slowly and surely. Louise Wimmer, with her strength, her rebellion, her fragility: an

elliptic approach with sparse dialogues to convey this character's psyche, her high level of incommunicability, incomprehension, and indifference. The frames are at times resolutely composed and at others seemingly torn by doubt. Though we don't follow someone's entire existence from beginning to end, what I am proposing are shreds from her life between editing cuts. The true Louise appears between photograms, shedding her raincoat and her cigarettes. She becomes an emblematic figure embodying a fragility that we all know. It is her turn, now, to invite you into her world, this somewhere that is hers, for a song, a dance, a liberation.

Cyril Mennegun

INTERVIEW WITH **CYRIL MENNEGUN**

How did you become interested in cinema, and so much so that you further desired to make your own film?

In my native town, Belfort, I entirely rejected the life that was laid out for me, wondering, since I had a taste for defiance, what would be the most interesting and the most improbable thing for me. Filmmaking imposed itself; what else could possibly be less accessible? I saw this world as reserved for a social milieu other than mine, although I later changed that judgment. I made my first film short in 1998: I wrote the script, raised money and looked for a team. The story was about a love rendezvous. This film was also marked by my meeting Thomas Letellier, who is the director of photography for Louise Wimmer.

I wasn't much of a moviegoer at the time. I come from a background where going to the movies wasn't a usual thing or a habit but a luxury. My first connection with cinema and film sets was the Cinéma Cinémas TV show. I remember being fascinated by a segment on Maurice Pialat, in which we could see him at work, and another one with John Cassavetes and Gena Rowlands. The Belfort Film festival played a large role as well. I saw countless films I didn't understand because

I wasn't ready for them and I was only 15 at the time. I didn't give up, though, and I was right, for there is some of that left in me today. One day, I met this man at the local public library and I asked for his autograph without knowing who he was. It was Samuel Fuller!

The word 'precariousness' is seen and heard quite often in the press, the news on TV, politicians' speeches, and in Louise Wimmer, through fiction, which allows us to envision it differently. How would you explain this?

Maybe because television, with its profusion of images, has taken meaning away from what is real. Television documentaries are often watched with great suspicion, and rightfully so, for the methods in making them aren't always honest, concerning the staging of the people who are filmed as well as the horrid commentaries and the judgments made on people but also because of the type of reality in which they are shown, without a filter. They film people in situations one wouldn't accept for oneself, and once the document has been broadcasted, it is an additional suffering for the person who has become a character. Fiction seemed a better way to see beyond the archetypes and the clichés of poverty.

We understand that the Louise Wimmer character, when seeing the type of goods she sells (dishes, designer brand scarves) or when her former husband visits her, led a comfortable life before. Is this a script choice?

Half a choice, really. If there was initially a woman that I met for a documentary, there is also bits from my mother and my aunt, who both were at some point somebody's wife, had money and lost everything overnight when their husband left them. In their late forties, they found themselves without social status, without money without any options to bounce back. Today, poverty isn't limited to one minority of the population or to the fact that it can immediately be seen; that would be too simple. Many people fight fiercely and do all they can to keep up appearances while they are living in situations that are extremely serious, and without any help because they are invisible. Just like Louise Wimmer, they find it impossible to say that they need help. This I got from the women I grew up with. They had this overblown pride. A pride that could become a trap for them because at some point, when you need to ask for help and you don't, you have to be unbelievably strong to hang on. I spent my childhood and my teenage years building an immense admiration for them, although I also have to admit that they frightened me.

There is this beautiful scene in Louise Wimmer, where she is cleaning someone's house; she puts on a black dress and puts makeup on. We then get a glimpse of the person she once was.

I wanted this woman's character to be like a full-blown movie heroin, with her multiple facets: that of a person destroyed by her life's experience, and that of the woman she is deep down, able to stir desire, love, and fight for herself. This ease with which women wear masks, put up appearances or transform themselves has always fascinated me. This is the reason why I chose Corinne Masiero, because she can portray all these facets. As I became a movie connoisseur, I found the same obsessions in other filmmakers, be it Hitchcock, Cassavetes or Almodovar; it is something you can find in Marilyn Monroe too.

The actress is fantastic, but at the same time, she doesn't call for sympathy. She holds her head up high, she fights back. Was this a choice on your part?

This is what I liked right away about Corinne Masiero. With the very first frame of the film, when you see her face appear, you think that there aren't many faces like hers in film.

In working my way towards this feature film, with everything you need to go through to make your first film, I first had to find the actress for whom I was writing...

I wanted her to be tall, a redhead, in her late forties. I looked everywhere until one day, while watching a TV film, I stumbled upon a woman who burst into laughter in a car. I recorded the rest in order to have the end credits and find her name. Then I got in touch with her agent and the following day, I went to Roubaix to meet her. As I watched her walk towards me from afar, I knew with immediate certainty that it was her and no one else. Corinne has a singular physical presence, a singular voice, she doesn't look like anyone.

In the film the main character spends his days in his car. The car is your film's supporting actor.

A car allows you to escape, to go to work, and in her case, to have a place to live. Louise Wimmer's vehicle is an extension of her. It is indeed a shelter, a symbol of her struggle but also a representation of who she really is: big, long, solid, not so new, not so pretty. It was important to convey the character's energy, to inject it into the film in the most efficient manner possible.

Louise Wimmer confronts people by looking them directly in the eyes. She faces them without shying away. Her eyes say: "Fuck you." That comes from Corinne, from the magnificent violence she bears inside, from her own life experiences, and from a will, on my part, to

follow a character who won't give in. She looks people up and down; she confronts them because if you look down, you can't see what's coming at you.

When she starts her car, it always starts the same song, which ends up working like a running gag. Where did this idea come from?

I already had the idea from the very beginning of the project. Simply because I used to know someone who had a CD stuck in the car player, which started every time he started the engine. It would drive me crazy and crack me up at the same time. I didn't want an original soundtrack yet I didn't want a film entirely without music, and since I wanted to bring music in against the character's will, the stuck CD story was the ideal solution. When she's fed up with it, there won't be any more music in the film. As for Nina Simone, she also was present in the film very early on. She is the example of a woman who never looked down or bowed down, both sublime and monstrous, a mean woman, a strange voice, with all this suffering in her. So it's not surprising that Louise likes it. It worked with the night. It's Thomas Letellier, my director of photography, who suggested the song, Sinner Man.

We share her joy while realizing it's no paradise either, with what the music suggests and the low income housing towers in the frame, in a low-angle shot.

For a whole section of the population, having decent housing is a dream, with the certainty of no longer being alone. What's still beautiful in these neighborhoods are the people who live there. These concrete blocks tell many a story and are, for Louise, the promise of a fresh start. From being glued to the ground, on four wheels, she is going to live on the 15th floor and see life differently.

After Louise Wimmer, in which direction would you like to go?

I am working on the final touches in the screenplay of my next film, Insight. I am writing for Tahar Rahim and for Alexandre Guansé, who is going to be this film's discovered talent. I filmed Tahar in a documentary, Tahar l'étudiant (2005), and in the meantime he has become a fantastic actor. He wanted to become an actor and I wanted to become a filmmaker. I started thinking of this project long before Louise Wimmer. Tahar was cast to play Malick in Jacques Audiard's film when I received the financial advance on mine. There are beautiful and powerful stories in real life too.





CYRIL MENNEGUN

DIRECTOR

Born in Belfort in 1975, Cyril Mennegun directed his first film short in 1998. In 2002 he began his first real cinematographic adventure in documentary film with *Quel Travail*, selected for the Entrevues de Belfort film festival. Since, he has directed several documentaries including *Tahar l'étudiant* in 2005, a portrait of Tahar Rahim inspired by the young actor's life. The film was selected for a number of festivals where it received several awards (Lussas, Clermont, etc.). In 2007 he directed *Le journal de Dominique* for ARTE, a documentary about a low income housing building superintendent, who keeps a journal of memories and daily toils endured by the building's residents. Louise Wimmer is his first fiction feature film. A new feature film project is already in the writing stage: *INSIGHT*.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2011 **LOUISE WIMMER**
- 1998 **LE PREMIER DES DEUX QUI RIRA** (short, 35mm)

DOCUMENTARIES

- 2009 **20 ANS LE MONDE ET NOUS**
(Broadcast on Canal+)
- 2006 **UNE VIE D'ENFANT** (Broadcast on France 2)
- 2006 **LE JOURNAL DE DOMINIQUE** (Broadcast on ARTE)
- 2005 **TAHAR L'ETUDIANT**, with TAHAR RAHIM
(Broadcast on France 5)
Awarded Lauréat des étoiles de la SCAM prize
Sélection Les rencontres de Tunis
LUSSAS 2006 Etats généraux du film documentaire
Clermont Ferrand 2006
Selected for the Grenoble international film festival
International contest Japan Prize
(international competition)
Selected for 6^{ème} escalas de la Rochelle
(international competition)
Selected for Amiens International film festival
- 2004 **JOURS PRECAIRES**
(Broadcast on France 5 and France 3)
- 2003 **NOUS LES APPRENTIS** (Broadcast on France 5)
- 2002 **QUEL TRAVAIL** (Broadcast on France 5)
Official selection Entrevue de Belfort film festival

CAST

Corinne Masiero	LOUISE WIMMER
Jérôme Kircher	DIDIER
Anne Benoît	NICOLE
Marie Kremer	SEVERINE
Jean-Marc Roulot	PAUL
Frédéric Gorny	HOTEL MANAGER
Cécile Rebboah	MISS REBIHI
Annie-France Poli	MRS. CHARRIERE
Maud Wyler	JESSICA
Nicolas Woirion	ERIC WIMMER

CREW

Director & Screenplay	Cyril Mennegun
Director of photography	Thomas Letellier
Editor	Valérie Brégaint
Sound	Martin Boissau
	Alexandre Widmer
Assistant director	Eva Denis
Sound editor and mixer	Alexandre Widmer
Producer	Bruno Nahon, <i>Zadig films</i>



