



MANDARIN PRODUCTION PRESENTS

**KARIN VIARD**

# JEALOUS

A FILM BY DAVID AND STÉPHANE FOENKINOS

RUNTIME: 102 min

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## SYNOPSIS

Nathalie, a middle-aged divorced University Professor, changes from being an affectionate woman to being irrepressibly jealous of everyone close to her. Her best friend, her new colleague, her ex-husband... everyone finds themselves at the mercy of her eccentric behavior. Even her beautiful 18-year old daughter Mathilde! Entangled by her sarcastic nature and conflicted emotions, Nathalie navigates through this unexpected mid-life crisis in a funny, touching... and politically incorrect way.

# INTERVIEW

## DAVID AND STÉPHANE FOENKINOS

### Where did the idea for the film come from?

After *DELICACY*, we wanted to make another portrait of a woman, built on the encounter with an actress, and a character who we would follow from the moment she becomes stricken with many doubts. A “woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown” was pretty much our starting point. She sees nothing but happiness and success all around her. Other people’s happiness “staring me in the face”, as she tells her doctor. To begin with, we mainly concentrated on the mother-daughter relationship. It’s tough seeing beauty and grace emerge, with all that promise for the future, just as your life seems to be in decline. We gradually decided to extend the subject to everyone else in Nathalie’s life. Her malaise becomes all-encompassing.

### What attracted you to this theme?

It’s ultimately quite taboo to envy others, to not be able to stand them because their lives seem better, more fulfilled. And it’s even more off-limits if that involves your own children. We were very drawn to that scandalous aspect. And beyond the social or psychological aspect, we also saw the comic potential in that. Laughing while covering your eyes, saying: “I can’t believe it! She’s not going to do that!” – that’s also a pleasure for a writer and director.

### How did you structure the narrative?

We imagined the film in three parts. The first was the emergence of the crisis, with a succession of ever-more-awful acts and increasingly unpredictable reactions. Then, the central drama; a final, violent act going right off the rails. Then in the third phase, we follow Nathalie as she tries to rebuild. It’s anything but a redemption – more like acceptance.

### How did you create Nathalie’s character, this jealous mother?

Nathalie exhibits fearsome inventiveness when it comes to rejecting others. The first scene with the neighbors is one example. To us, she embodies meanness with a smile. But she does it without premeditation. As she says herself: “I act on impulse and regret it afterwards.” One of the main reasons is down to her genuine suffering, which makes her a whole person. Whole in her meanness, as well as in her desire to be forgiven. One thing is for sure, she doesn’t like half-measures!

### How did you work together during the preparation phase?

We talked a lot, we asked ourselves questions about the psychology of the various protagonists, including those who only appear fleetingly. We thought about how they’d act, or react. It takes time to develop the characters.

**How would you describe the tone of the film? Is it a comedy? A drama?**

Let's say it's about a woman in crisis, with some totally hilarious situations, and others that are serious or desperate. We wanted the tone to continually switch between comedy and intimate portrait. The key thing is psychological authenticity, even in the most deranged moments. The tone is somewhere between AUNTIE DANIELLE and A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE. It's quite a wide spectrum.

**When did you think of Karin Viard for the role of Nathalie?**

The film was written with Karin in mind. We were obviously afraid that she'd turn it down, given the character's extreme personality. The fact that she immediately agreed, and was enthusiastic about the role, was very encouraging. Right from the start, she told us not to hold back.

**How did you find the amazing Dara Tombroff, who plays Mathilde?**

The real challenge, once Karin was on board, was finding the rare pearl to play her daughter: A classical dancer of a very high level, who had to be not only beautiful, but who could also play comedy. It was a long casting process through France and beyond. We saw nearly 300 girls. Dara was a dancer at the Bordeaux Opera and she went for the role without really expecting to get it. As soon as we saw her, it was clear. What is amazing in terms of this story is that she'd decided to stop dancing and was subconsciously seeking to reinvent herself. Whatever she decides to do, a new career is opening up to her.

**The best friend played by Anne Dorval offers an interesting counterpoint for Karin Viard's character. What did you think of the actresses when you saw them perform together?**

She's not necessarily a counterpoint. She's more of a collateral victim of Nathalie's behavior. We wanted to avoid at all costs the "nice girlfriend" syndrome, which is often used to show the heroine in a good light. On the contrary, we were looking to position her opposite a friend who's having a hard time. And worse than that, a friend who's becoming spiteful. It's a complex issue. Do you run away? Do you stick around and try and help them? The character of Sophie asks herself all these questions, and ends up deciding to help Nathalie, despite all the attacks she is subjected to. She stays true to her whatever happens, even in the worst moments, and that is perhaps the real definition of friendship. In that respect, she is the rock to which the spectator can cling and thereby identify with the story. We were big fans of Anne Dorval, so it was a great that she agreed to play the role. She injected a terrific intensity into the character.

**What about the other roles?**

Thibault de Montalembert appeared in our first short film, and Bruno Todeschini played a mistreated guy in DELICACY, so they both have links with our previous films. Their renewed faith in us and their generosity of spirit warmed our hearts, and it was a pleasure working

with them again. Anaïs Demoustier was a dream as Mélanie. It needed a great actress to make her mark opposite Karin in only a very few scenes. We were so frustrated that we're planning a spin-off based on Mélanie Pick! We really liked Corentin Fila in Téchiné's film BEING 17, and he didn't disappoint. He's a subtle and precise actor, one of the most promising of his generation. And the role of Isabelle was written for Marie-Julie Baup, who we already really liked on stage, and who was wonderful as the mother-in-law who acts dumb.

**How do you operate on set? What do each of you bring to the other?**

The most important thing when there are two directors is to have the same vision. We worked a lot on that ahead of the shoot, especially with the director of photography, Guillaume Deffontaines, whose work we admired on the Larrieu brothers' films, and more recently on SLACK BAY. On set, we draw on this preparatory work and we have the same approach. We look at each take, and we see how we could refine things or improve them to obtain what we want. We're lucky that we are complementary, since we don't see the same things.

**What did you learn from your first filmmaking experience and how did it influence this shoot?**

A first feature-length film is very difficult, even though we'd already made a short and were well prepared. We enjoyed making this second film more. First off, because we didn't rush into it. The six years between JEALOUS and DELICACY allowed us to blossom in our respective careers before coming back together stronger. We also found some choice partners in Éric and Nicolas Altmayer, our producers (and also brothers). As such, we arrived on set with a great appetite to shoot together again. The experience of our first film was decisive in terms of understanding the rhythm of scenes and thinking about the film in its entirety. And perhaps taking the time to seek out what we really needed so we wouldn't have any regrets. JEALOUS is very close to the film we had in mind.

**Of all the things you set out to achieve, what did you most want to succeed?**

We wanted the heroine to be likeable, despite everything. In that respect, we can't thank Karin enough for her investment. She is one of the few actresses who has so much range, to go from one emotion to another within the same scene without it looking contrived. Above all, she possesses a unique quality: She can allow herself to do and say all kinds of horrible things, but the spectator always forgives her.

## INTERVIEW WITH **KARIN VIARD**

### **What was your reaction on first reading the script?**

I was immediately drawn to the role of Nathalie. We are often told stories about women approaching their fifties who want to sleep with younger men, or others who are quite simply at the end of their tether. Here, we're dealing with a complex character, the way I like them; someone who has various facets. I thought the script was very well written, with very rounded secondary roles and an overall theme that isn't often tackled. I also like the title JEALOUS, which is pretty punchy and defines the character right away.

### **What does mother-daughter rivalry evoke for you?**

I've noticed that both parts often contribute to this type of relationship. When you raise daughters, you discover one day that they want you to give them their own place. Sometimes they even go on a rather fierce attack to get it. That's not the case with Mathilde in the film, since Nathalie has no control over her. She is never in competition and doesn't understand her mother's unfair attitude towards her.

### **How would you describe the character you play?**

A woman who is jealous, not only of her daughter, but of everyone. A woman facing choices and situations that are beyond her, who can be awful, but we still like her because she is funny and human. She's an intellectual who operates in a world she doesn't understand, and which doesn't understand her. She feels overwhelmed. Nathalie has convictions and thinks it's natural to express them. But she has no filter, and is never held back by social considerations. She's the only person who isn't shocked by some of things she comes out with. When she tells her best friend that she's lucky her daughter is ungrateful, she expresses it as an observation and doesn't understand that it can be hurtful. At least, not at first.

### **What sort of a relationship does she have with her daughter?**

You can tell they were once very close. But Mathilde has reached an age where she's happier outside of the relationship. She'd rather be with her guy. Nathalie experiences this as a sort of abandonment. I think the jealousy she feels towards her daughter is tinged with disappointment, which is all the greater because she really has a huge love and admiration for her. Mothers who are disappointed by their children do exist. I know some. Nathalie would have liked her daughter to have shined at school, like some of her students. Whereas she put her body before the intellect, opting for dance. Nathalie should allow her to express herself, and support her development. From her point of view, her daughter's father thinks it's all great because he doesn't see her much and doesn't get very involved. Whereas she, as the mother, wants the best for her daughter. There isn't just meanness in Nathalie.

**What did you want to explore through this role?**

I wanted to portray something other than just jealousy, probing elsewhere to understand the pre-existing feelings. Jealousy is complex, so deep that it renders us fragile. It's maybe linked to childhood. But I thought it was too simplistic to put it all down to that. Especially since the character has wider issues.

**How did you construct the character?**

My approach was to study the situations, scene after scene, to find the truth of what she's going through, and what she says. For example, she no longer loves her husband, and yet she's jealous of his new partner. In general, I avoided making any moral judgement on my character. While I definitely would in real life, on set, never. For the film PARIS, in which I played a racist baker, Cédric Klapisch told me one day: "The best way to play a role like this is to fully embrace it." That's what I did with Nathalie. I didn't want to over-do or ridicule her. But I have no problem playing jealous or mean women, or being provocative. Especially because as a spectator, I like to hate certain characters.

**Tell us about your encounter with David and Stéphane Foenkinos.**

I already knew Stéphane and his penchant for fantasy. David and he are very different. But they are both very pleasant and open. They collaborate. We talked about the character in advance. I acted the scenes independently from each other. David and Stéphane helped me, acting as conductors. They would remind me where the character was at in the previous scene and the one which followed. That allowed me to modulate the performance and find the right balance.

**For Dara Tombroff, who plays your daughter, it was her first movie. How did you approach the scenes with her?**

I made sure she was at ease. But I sometimes found myself in the role of mother. Dara always knew her lines, but was sometimes worried and that manifested itself in her closing in. So I shook her up to help her. She understood what I was up to. I increasingly enjoy working with young actors. They have real spark.

**How did the shoot go with Anne Dorval, who plays your best friend?**

The admiration I have for her as an actress was not diminished upon meeting her. She is both very dark and funny. That brought us together. You have to have some common ground if you don't want to act as friends in a contrived manner. I can play an amorous relationship with someone I don't like. But I find it hard to portray friendship with a woman whom I don't have any affinity. With Anne, it was easy.



**What will you take away from your scenes with your other co-stars, Anaïs Demoustier, Thibault de Montalembert, and Bruno Todeschini?**

The casting was particularly well done. The actors are all good. Thibault de Montalembert and I both appeared in Michel Hazanavicius's first film, *MES AMIS*, in 1999. We had a blast. I was really pleased to be back on set with him. He's a charming man. Bruno Todeschini and I are from the same generation, but until now, we'd always passed each other by. Bruno is totally liberated in his masculinity. He's not afraid of his femininity, and that makes him permeable. A lot of actors want to affirm: I am a man. Not him, which is rare. As for Anaïs Demoustier, I find her amusing, I love her face, I adore her way of acting, which is smart and precise. I think she's going to have a great career.

**You say that acting often reveals the intimate.**

Exactly! Portraying drama and despair allows you to flush it all out. You set the monster free.



**CAST**

<b>KARIN VIARD</b>	<b>NATHALIE</b>
<b>DARA TOMBROFF</b>	<b>MATHILDE</b>
<b>ANNE DORVAL</b>	<b>SOPHIE</b>
<b>THIBAUT DE MONTALEMBERT</b>	<b>JEAN-PIERRE</b>
<b>BRUNO TODESCHINI</b>	<b>SÉBASTIEN</b>
<b>MARIE-JULIE BAUP</b>	<b>ISABELLE</b>
<b>CORENTIN FILA</b>	<b>FÉLIX</b>
<b>ANAÏS DEMOUSTIER</b>	<b>MÉLANIE</b>

## CREW

PRODUCED BY	<b>ÉRIC and NICOLAS ALTMAYER</b>
DIRECTED and WRITTEN BY	<b>DAVID and STÉPHANE FOENKINOS</b>
CINEMATOGRAPHER	<b>GUILLAUME DEFFONTAINES</b>
SET DESIGNER	<b>MARIE CHEMINAL</b>
EDITOR	<b>VIRGINIE BRUANT</b>
COSTUME DESIGNER	<b>EMMANUELLE YOUCHNOVSKI</b>
CASTING	<b>DAVID BERTRAND</b>
ORIGINAL MUSIC	<b>PAUL-MARIE BARBIER and JULIEN GRUNBERG</b>
SOUND	<b>CYRIL MOISSON, GUILLAUME D'HAM and CYRIL HOLTZ</b>
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	<b>LUC BRICAULT</b>
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	<b>DIANE BRASSEUR</b>
PRODUCTION MANAGER	<b>PASCAL ROUSSEL CASAS</b>
DIRECTOR OF POST-PRODUCTION	<b>PATRICIA COLOMBAT</b>
A COPRODUCTION	<b>MANDARIN PRODUCTION STUDIOCANAL FRANCE 2 CINÉMA</b>
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF	<b>CANAL + CINÉ + FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS</b>

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## **JEALOUS – PRESS KIT 10**