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EVOLUTION

A film by Lucile Hadžihalilović

Max Brebant, Roxane Duran, Julie-Marie Parmentier

81 min - France - 2015 - Scope - 5.1

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SYNOPSIS

10-year-old Nicolas lives with his mother on a remote island, in a village inhabited solely by women and young boys. In a hospital overlooking the ocean, all the boys are subjected to a strange medical treatment. Only Nicolas questions what is happening around him. He senses that his mother is lying to him, and is determined to find out what she does with the other women at night, on the beach. What he discovers is the beginning of a nightmare into which he is helplessly drawn. But in Stella, a young nurse at the hospital, Nicolas finds an unexpected ally.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

EVOLUTION was born from a fascination with both the depths of the ocean – mysterious and evocative realm that fires the imagination and evokes primordial fears and desires – and the hospital, at first glance a more ordinary, even reassuring place, but a place nonetheless where the body is given over to an all-powerful staff and can be subjected to a variety of bizarre practices. **The juxtaposition of these two worlds provides the perfect backdrop for the major themes of the film: relationships to childbirth and the journey through puberty, seen here through the dark lens of a fantastic tale.**

The film is above all the nightmare of a 10-year-old child unable to tear himself free of the ‘maternal waters’, who suffers a deeply disturbed relationship to his own birth and imminent physical changes. **“What will happen to me when I grow up?”** The question asked by the little girls in my previous film **INNOCENCE** also troubles Nicolas, the protagonist of **EVOLUTION**.

The film is a sensory voyage, an exploration of mysterious and ambiguous territory: atmosphere and details are as important as narrative, and organic matter forms the film’s heart. This is a world Nicolas must touch, sense and feel if he is to understand, move forward and grow...

The universe of **EVOLUTION** is enclosed, located in a parallel reality with its own laws, a world reached only by slow degrees. It exists outside all time and geography, both physical and mental, like the worlds depicted in the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. I hope the audience, losing their bearings little by little, will find themselves in the same uncertain but exciting place as the young protagonist, who never knows what will happen and suspects everything he sees. Indeed, reality is not what it seems, and the true nature of things animate and inanimate reveals itself only gradually, beneath the surface.

EVOLUTION leaves itself very much open to interpretation, compelling the viewer to invest in its world and its characters, to make them his or her own. I hope this will allow the film’s mysteries to remain longer with the audience.

On this isolated island, bound by the sea, with no men, populated by troubling women and sick children subjected to strange medical procedures, fear of death mixes with an underlying eroticism. And over everything hangs a strange melancholy, the ever-present melancholy of a lost paradise.

Water could recall an amniotic innocence and provide an opportunity for games, but from the start, the children's relationship to this element is more complex. Nicolas and his companions are never just children playing, even in the first part of the film - never carefree, they possess a sort of seriousness that gives them a greater depth.

Finally, what awaits Nicolas at the end of his experiences is not the comfort of the real world but a new stage, perhaps a new ordeal during which his fears will take on new forms - no one is ever wholly cured of nightmares.

The volcanic landscapes and desolate villages of Lanzarote, the island in the Canaries where the film was shot, confer a harsh beauty and a unique dramatic atmosphere.

As for the hospital in which the film's second half takes place, through careful work on the decor, lighting and sound, it gradually transforms into a wholly phantasmagorical realm.

The film aims to retain a powerfully subjective, mental aspect throughout, in particular through the sound design with its sparse use of words and effects, and in which music and noise are sometimes combined.

Despite its dreamlike nature, EVOLUTION is steeped in elements from my childhood. The arid and barren seaside landscapes, the rough sea, the 1960s-style hospital refer - albeit in a stylized and distorted fashion - to the places I knew as child, where my parents, both doctors, lived and worked.

LUCILE HADŽIHALILOVIC

Lucile Hadžihalilović passed her childhood and adolescence in Morocco, before moving to Paris where she studied first art history, then film at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (now la Fémis). Her graduation film was **LA PREMIÈRE MORT DE NONO**. In the early 1990s she founded the production company LES CINEMAS DE LA ZONE with Gaspar Noé, with whom she worked on *Carne* and *Seul contre tous (I Stand Alone)*. Their collaboration continued with her contribution to the screenplay of Noé's *Enter the Void*.

In 1996 Hadžihalilović produced, wrote, edited and directed **LA BOUCHE DE JEAN-PIERRE (MIMI)**, a 52-minute film that screened in Un Certain Regard, at Cannes, and won the Prix SACD at Avignon Film Festival, the Best Screenplay Award at Angers European First Film Festival, the Special Jury Prize at Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival and the OCIC Award (Honorable Mention) at Amiens International Film Festival.

In 2004, she directed the feature film **INNOCENCE**, produced by Agat Films. The film won the Best New Director Prize at San Sebastian International Film Festival, the Bronze Horse for Best Film and the Best Cinematography Prize (for Benoit Debie) at the Stockholm Film Festival, the FIPRESCI Prize and People's Choice Award at Istanbul International Film Festival, the Best Film Award at Neuchâtel International Fantasy Film Festival, and the Special Jury Prize at the Yubari Festival, Japan.

She has also directed two short films **GOOD BOYS USE CONDOMS** (1998) and **NECTAR** (2014) selected in numerous festivals.

In 2015, she directed **EVOLUTION**, co-written with Alanté Kavaïté and in collaboration Geoff Cox, and produced by Les films du Worso, Noodles Production, Volcano Films, Scope Pictures and Left Field Ventures. The screenplay was awarded the NHK / Sundance Prize in 2009.

FILMOGRAPHY

2015 **EVOLUTION**

2014 **NECTAR** (Short)

2004 **INNOCENCE** (Best New Director Award – San Sebastian Film Festival;
Bronze Horse – Stockholm Film Festival)

1998 **GOOD BOYS USE CONDOMS** (Short)

1996 **MIMI** (Un Certain Regard – Cannes Film Festival)

CAST

NICOLAS Max Brebant

STELLA Roxane Duran

THE MOTHER Julie-Marie Parmentier

CREW

DIRECTED BY Lucile Hadžihalilović

SCREENPLAY Lucile Hadžihalilović & Alanté Kavaïté
in collaboration with Geoff Cox

DP Manu Dacosse

PRODUCTION DESIGNER Laia Colet

EDITOR Nassim Gordji-Tehrani

PRODUCERS

Sylvie Pialat & Benoît Quainon for Les Films du Worso
Jérôme Vidal for Noodles Production
Sebastián Álvarez for Volcano Films
Geneviève Lemal for Scope Pictures
John Engel for Left Field Ventures

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