

DIANE IN THE LOOP

A FILM BY
ANN SIROT AND RAPHAËL BALBONI



LES FILMS DU FLEUVE AND MARIANNE PRODUCTIONS
PRESENT



DIANE IN THE LOOP

A FILM BY
ANN SIROT AND RAPHAËL BALBONI

INTERNATIONAL SALES

PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL
(+33) 1 42 96 02 20

AGATHE MAURUC: amauruc@pyramidefilms.com
MARINE DORVILLE: mdorville@pyramidefilms.com
SÉBASTIEN FOUQUE: sfouque@pyramidefilms.com

BELGIUM, FRANCE | 2026 | 92 MIN | DCP | 5.1 | SCOPE | COLOUR

PRESS RELATIONS

THE PR FACTORY
BARBARA VAN LOMBEEK
barbara@theprefactory.com | +32 486 54 64 80
MARIE-FRANCE DUPAGNE
mariefrance@theprefactory.com | +32 477 62 67 70

PHOTOS AND PRESS KIT DOWNLOADABLE ON WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM

Diane despises men as much as she desires them.

Her mother was raped three years before giving birth to Diane.

As Diane finds out, she has only one goal: avenging her mother.

But Mom has one thing on her mind: finally becoming the woman she should have been.

Between the one who wants to remember and the one who wants to forget, tensions run high.



INTERVIEW WITH ANN SIROT AND RAPHAËL BALBONI

How did the idea for the film come about?

ANN SIROT: Many of us, and women in particular, have to come to terms with rapes suffered by members of our families, whether close relatives or more distant ones, and this is not without consequences. I myself learned only later that one of my parents had been raped and, all of a sudden, I felt as though I understood everything, as though, deep down, I had already known. What Diane says in the film — "I didn't know, but actually, I did" — is the starting point for the story. It is dizzying to think that an event that lasted only a few minutes can have such devastating consequences. It is tragic and painful, but we have to try to turn it into a force for justice and resistance. How do you deal with the burden of this inherited anger, and make it constructive? That is the question the film asks.

How do you build a story out of this anger, which is both autobiographical and societal?

RAPHAËL BALBONI: We had had this project in mind for almost ten years. In the meantime, we did other things, but it was always there, and we thought it would be our first feature film. Ann started writing the screenplay before #MeToo, which emerged right in the middle of the writing process. Suddenly, a whole body of literature on the subject appeared, notably Camille Kouchner's *La Famiglia Grande*, which told the story of incest from the perspective of a witness. We also wanted to tell the story from the point of view of a third person. In our case, the one who inherited the trauma.

AS: The film is not autobiographical, but the core feeling is. That is what the film tries to grapple with. We experienced #MeToo as a form of societal introspection, but there has also been an attempt to silence it, a very strong backlash. So, the challenge is to keep this anger alive without allowing it to crush us. If we simply say, "Being a woman means living with this burden," that really frustrates me.

How did you work on the character of Diane? She adopts behaviours traditionally associated with men, particularly by not holding back her annoyance, or even her aggression.

RB: The character was there from the very first versions, very strong and very quickly. We did a lot of work on her afterward, but the essential elements were already there. Some of our first readers found Diane unbearable. We could feel the weight of misogyny. It was a real journey, in terms of the writing, to legitimize this female character who is not particularly likeable at first glance. We did not encounter this problem with our first audiences, thanks in part to Ninon Borsei's performance and what she brings to the character: a subtle mix of grit and gentleness.

AS: Diane is tender; she loves her mother, her grandmother, and her father. Her anger also comes from this love for others, from a thirst for justice. We wanted to show that you can be angry because you care.

But at first, it paralyzes her...

RB: It seemed important to us that Diane, who has "only" experienced the various forms of harassment and aggression that are the lot of all women, should initially feel swallowed up by her anger. She herself was not raped, but this inheritance is overwhelming.

AS: For women, you either express that anger and suffer the consequences of expressing it, or you suppress it and suffer too. Either way, it costs energy. And I find it disgusting that we should have to spend so much of it managing this boiling rage. I try to tell myself that maybe this is what being a woman means: dealing with the accumulated resentment of all the women who came before us.

It is the mother who was raped, but it is the daughter who carries her revolt.

AS: Where does this revolt come from? From the secrecy, above all. It is too heavy a burden to carry. The arc of the film is for the mother to eventually speak to the people of her generation, so that it is the one which carries this burden, rather than the next. This anger that is passed down insidiously between the mother, whose rape seems to have damaged part of her defense system and her self-esteem, and this daughter, who has not been damaged in the same way and has the privilege of being able to rebel — it is an underwater inheritance.

RB: There is a scene in the clothing store where the daughter goes to speak to the sales assistant on behalf of her mother, who does not dare to. Diane takes care of the problem for her, acting as an intermediary. It is a way of defining their relationship.

The mother goes back to school, starts a love affair with a woman... How did you work on her transformation?

AS: Diane wants justice, whereas her mother simply wants to move on. We tell these two opposing trajectories in the form of a fairy tale, so they had to be symbolic. The rapist's death, struck by lightning, takes the film into the realm of fable. It is also an accelerator: in real life, you generally don't have the "luck" of seeing your rapist die. But here, this event allows the mother to say to herself: "That's it, this guy is no longer on the planet. I can live again."

She seems to have experienced her heterosexuality as a default choice.

AS: To me, she has always been a lesbian, but after trauma, you immediately look for a form of social camouflage. You put yourself in the most discreet position possible so as not to get into trouble. It is a survival instinct. She was already in love with her best friend before she was raped, but the rape completely destroyed the possibility of asserting herself as she was.

Is the Best Friend what Mom might have been without the rape?

RB: Yes, that is what Mom could have become. She also brings a lot of humor. We wanted to create a kind of comic duo with the father. We are always looking to create a comic contrast, especially when dealing with dramatic subjects.

AS: It was important that they look physically alike, to construct this parallel trajectory: one who was not atomized by a tragedy in her life, and the other who was.

In the film, the women evolve, but the men still seem to be on the threshold of change. Was that intentional?

AS: We wanted a father who was both caricatural and touching. The cyclist is different: he conducts his own investigation, asks questions, and begins to take an interest in what is happening. But to me, he has not yet begun his journey, much like all those men confronted with this feminist revolution who have not yet found their way into it. The ending of the film is an invitation, a way of saying to them: "You can get on the train."

The meeting between the daughter of a rape victim and the son of a rapist seems unlikely, but doesn't it also express the idea that everyone inherits something?

AS: It may seem unlikely, but that is actually the case with all heterosexual couples: we all inherit a history of violence and struggle with it. Men also inherit, through their family lineage, a capacity for violence. It is the elephant in the room: we have to become aware of this inheritance and learn to live with it. Patriarchy still seeps into contemporary heterosexual relationships, even the most progressive ones. We cannot assume that a single generation will be enough to erase this inheritance.

RB: We liked this dual questioning: the cyclist also has some introspection to do; he thinks, "I, too, have always known." In a way, they have a common struggle to wage, which may not be unrelated to their mutual desire.



What is the role of the father, who is a likeable pain in the neck, but is not the rapist?

AS: "Dad" is charismatic and funny. He also embodies masculine lightness: men can live alongside enormous pain without necessarily feeling concerned by it, because they are unaware of what is happening around them. It is a kind of ease with which they move through life.

RB: In fact, he doesn't understand anything at all. Diane tells him that she has learned something enormous, but that she cannot tell him about it because he will react completely inappropriately. But it was important that Diane nevertheless had an affectionate relationship with him. She is not tender with him, but she has a strong bond with her father. And when, on the boat, he finally understands everything, he puts his back out and everyone starts taking care of him. In short... he's a man.

AS: It is also about the idea that the women in a family always spare the men the pain they themselves carry. And in this case, when Dad discovers it, the weight is literally too much for him. He doesn't know what to do with it.

Why did you choose to play with the conventions of the Western?

AS: Stories about rape are often told as intimate dramas. For us, by contrast, rebuilding one's life after rape is an epic battle, a fight for life and death. We wanted to restore the nobility of these battles, to give them the setting of a Western rather than hiding them away in the confines of intimacy.

RB: And the Western is a very masculine genre, so we wanted to play with its conventions, almost as a provocation. It was a playground for us, just as the romantic comedy was in our previous film, *The (Ex)perience of Love*. With composer Julie Roué, we sought to create music combining the viola da gamba with guitar, in order to evoke the sounds of the Western while also introducing a sense of dissonance and strangeness. And with costume designer Frédéric Denis, we carried out a long preparatory process to bring the feathers and cowboy accessories to life as markers of the genre.

In our film, as in the real world, men and women more or less emphasize the markers of their gender, playing up their femininity or masculinity through the way they dress. That is what we sought to convey here.

You also explore the question of revenge, which is central to the Western.

AS: How do you take revenge for an act that no longer really has a place before the law, since so few cases ever reach a conclusion? What do you do with all these unpunished rapes so that they do not become a cancer within society? It was important to us that the two characters who oppose each other should not be the rapist and his victim, but two women grappling with a violence from the past that they have not yet managed to free themselves from.

If the rapist had not died, would the film have told a different story? A demand for reparation, or a desire to make him acknowledge his crime...

AS: What interested us was understanding how and when rape stops being passed down, and how to ensure that what is transmitted is passed on calmly and openly, rather than in an underwater, haunted way.

Does Diane understand that revenge is endless? Does her moral journey lead toward some form of peace?

RB: Until the boat scene, she feels very alone with her desire for revenge and her thirst for justice. When her mother starts talking, it calms her. I hope the audience will feel, as she does, the profound relief that speaking out can bring. As for the rest, she will remain the woman she is.

AS: She can finally share the weight of her anger and take it somewhere where it will no longer be self-destructive. She is less burdened, so she can move forward. I hope the audience does not think that she has "calmed down". I hope they think: she has sailed toward a place where reinventing relationships is possible.

Did you have any influences, any films in mind?

AS: For the Western, the main one was *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952). We thought about it in relation to Diane's character because resignation is a constant throughout the film, while one person remains convinced all the way through that good can prevail. In the feminist struggle, there are plenty of reasons to become discouraged, so that really spoke to us.

RB: When we told Jean-Pierre Dardenne about our project, he advised us to watch it when he welcomed us to Les Films du Fleuve, our Belgian production company.

AS: And I later learned that it was my mother's favorite Western. So, in the end, it was a film that kept coming back to us.

And the books?

AS: *Sad Tiger* by Neige Sinno was very important to us. What encouraged us was her reflection on how to tell stories of violence through a third party, a brother or sister. And *La Familia Grande* by Camille Kouchner, which we have already mentioned. A confrontation between perpetrator and victim can be difficult to portray, whereas the witness provides a point of entry. It reinforced our desire to tell this story from Diane's perspective.

The topography and the journeys through space also reflect a moral trajectory. It is almost a road movie.

AS: Belgium is a small country, and we liked the idea of stretching it out to create a vast space, almost like a Western landscape. We also made extensive use of the North Sea landscapes in winter: the dunes, the wide-open spaces. And then we wanted to gradually isolate the characters: at the beginning, they are surrounded by the community in Brussels, and then Diane and her mother find themselves alone together, facing that vast beach at De Haan.

How did you approach the depiction of the rape? Was there ever any question of showing it?

RB: There was never any question of showing it, but it nevertheless raised a lot of questions and was difficult to stage. We had to find the right voice, work out how this man speaks and behaves, and where to end the scene... If we removed all the ambient sounds, the scene would have felt like a dream; it would have been too disembodied. So, we needed to add a few very concrete elements: the sound of gravel crunching, rubbing, a zipper... tangible sounds. We spent an enormous amount of time in the editing and mixing stages on those few seconds. The work of sound editor Josefina Rodriguez and re-recording mixer Laure Arto was crucial. We tend to say that there are no villains in our films, but there is one here, in this flashback.

Is this question of equality also an issue within your writing partnership?

AS: Of course. For us, working as a man-and-woman team is a form of resistance. We try to create a bubble of equality, where we are on an equal footing, recognized and paid equally.

RB: When we write, we are less exposed. It is more during the directing process that we encounter misogyny, when certain people sometimes instinctively address only me, consciously or otherwise. On this shoot, we had almost exclusively women heading departments, which makes a big difference. Women know this kind of unconscious bias from their own experience, and that intimate understanding makes them intuitively more sensitive and inclusive.

In your films, we are always introduced to new faces; you rarely work with very recognizable actors.

RB: It has always been a difficult choice to defend, and it is becoming even more so. In the past, without a star, you made a low-budget film. Now, it is almost like making a punk film.

What does the title, *Diane In The Loop*, mean?

AS: For us, it refers to the time that rape takes away... It throws women off their trajectory and forces them to make decisions dictated by the management of trauma. That is the loop : the trail you are on when you've been sidetracked by rape, and whatever this trail is made of, family, career, relationships, the birth of a daughter. I think of this woman who said, during the #MeToo movement in sports: "I'm only just beginning to become the woman I should have been." That resonates with me enormously. Rape can completely derail your life. For previous generations, who were crushed by shame and had fewer opportunities to get help, it could lead to enormous detours: marrying the wrong person, having children you did not necessarily want, not pursuing the career you would have chosen. We wanted to dramatize this idea of a loop of lost time. Thirty years — the amount of time it takes Mom to free herself — is huge in a lifetime... how can we make sure that this detour, this loop, is as short as possible?





Ann Sirot and Raphaël Balboni have been a writing-directing duo since 2007. Based in Belgium, they have directed eight short films and three feature films, through which they have built a quirky and strange universe—a hybrid and atypical cinematic style, a delirious and joyful dreamlike world.

With the short films *Lucha Libre* and *With Thelma*, they established their working method: free and spontaneous acting, a sustained jump-cut rhythm, and a flexible narrative structure where unexpected events become part of the story. *Madly In Life*, their first feature film, is a bittersweet comedy that follows a couple grappling with a parent suffering from an Alzheimer's-like disease. This was followed by *The (Ex)perience of Love*, a romantic comedy that explores—through a couple's exes—how we think about love, desire, experience, and the prospect of having children. Presented at the 2026 Venice Film Festival, *Diane In The Loop* is their third feature film.

CAST

Ninon Borsei

Sandrine Blancke

Lucas Meister

Peter Van Den Begin

Naidra Ayadi

Jo Deseure

DIANE

MUM

THE CYCLIST

DAD

THE BEST FRIEND

MIMOUN



CREW

Directed by

Written by

Produced by

Image

Colour grading

Sound

Sets

Costumes

Choreography

Make-up

Composer

Editing

Production Manager

Post-production Manager

Executive Producer

First Assistant Director

Ann Sirot & Raphaël Balboni

Ann Sirot & Raphaël Balboni

Delphine Tomson, Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne (Les Films du Fleuve - Belgique)

Alice Bloch (Marianne Productions - France)

Fiona Braillon (s.b.c. / a.f.c.)

Evy Roselet

Aline Huber, Josefina Rodriguez, Laure Arto

Špela Tušar

Frédéric Denis

Denis Robert

Siem Pascaud Mijmer

Julie Roué

Sophie Vercruysse & Raphaël Balboni

Caroline Tambour

Delphine Passant

Philippe Toussaint

Marie Christiaens

A Belgium-France coproduction

Les Films du Fleuve and Marianne Productions

Co-produced with

Produced with the support of

With the essential support of

With the support of

Archipel 35, Révérence, Be Tv & Orange, Proximus, RTBF (Télévision belge), L'Œil-Tambour

Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles

Ciné+ OCS

Eurimages

Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée

Tax Shelter du Gouvernement Fédéral Belge

Casa Kafka Pictures

Belgian distribution

French distribution

International sales

Imagine Film Distribution

Pyramide Distribution

Pyramide International



