



LES FILMS DU BÉLIER PRESENTS

# LOVE LIKE POISON

A FILM BY KATELL QUILLÉVÉRE

QUINZAINÉ  
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT  
CANNES 2010

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Les Films du Bélier presents

# LOVE LIKE POISON

UN POISON VIOLENT

A film by Katell QUILLÉVÉRÉ

2010 - France - 1h32 - 1.85 - Dolby Digital

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### SYNOPSIS

Anna, a young teenager, comes home from her Catholic boarding school for the spring holidays and discovers her father has left. Her mother is devastated and confined in the company of the local priest, who is also a childhood friend. Anna clings to her beloved grandfather. She also grows close to Pierre, a free-spirited teenager who cares little about God.

Anna is preparing for her confirmation, but her budding desire for Pierre shakes her faith. She longs to give herself over, body and soul but doesn't know if it is to God, or something else?

## INTERVIEW WITH KATELL QUILLÉVÉ

*Why did you choose this title ?*

The french title, "*Un Poison violent*" it's a reference to a Serge Gainsbourg song, which uses this expression to define love. In a more profound way, to me it refers to everything that makes us feel like we're alive, including things that can make us suffer. It's a contradictory impulse that guides our relation to the world. For Anna, the heroine, the "poison" is in relation to the freedom she is going to experience, which is inherently a form of solitude.

*The film is a coming of age story. Did you know from the beginning that this type of journey would anchor the story?*

I always knew that it would be a story about a young girl caught in the contradiction between where she comes from, and where she wants to go. I wanted to accompany the character in an emancipatory movement, set off by budding desire and sexuality. This evolution, for Anna and her loved ones, carries its burden of violence. All the more so because it occurs during a time period when her family is falling apart.

*Did you also wish to speak about a family?*

Yes. *Love Like Poison* is also a family film. That was part of the challenge from the beginning when writing the screenplay: finding the right balance between a coming of age film and an ensemble film.

It's in insisting on mixing these two narrative types that the story rang true, that it could come through without a false note. To understand the path taken by Anna, sometimes Anna's story had to be put on hold to show the transgression of the adults that surround her. Adolescence is a time in our existence when we don't entirely belong to ourselves. Anna lives in a family bubble where, as time is scheduled by adults, hours are not numbered; where everything seems to move ahead slowly, in an almost exaggerated manner. I was looking for a narrative structure that would allow me to rediscover this lost feeling. All the characters are also linked to one another through a learning process. All of them are going to be confronted with a calling into question of their convictions. Jeanne, the mother, is going through a separation. For the grandfather, it is a question of facing death. The priest, troubled by Jeanne's company, is assailed by doubt.

*One of the film's strengths was adding the dimension of the heroine's faith as a parameter to the classic coming of age story.*

Anna has grown up in a predefined milieu, the Catholic, provincial bourgeoisie...As early as the first sequences of the film, we understand that she both believes and has doubts about her faith. She is to be confirmed in the Catholic faith, the last stage in a believer's life. A part of her refuses this commitment. Beyond religion, it is also about her relationship with the world, guilt and suffering that her body, then her mind, rejects. But another side of her still wants to give of herself. Her quest for that which is sacred continues to exist, and she searches for a purpose.

*In the beginning, Anna's relationship with Jesus is steeped in eroticism.*

Yes. There is a scene where, before going to sleep, she takes his photo and squeezes it against her heart...which is also her breast. The film accompanies her in this displacement of desire from an abstract being to a "real" boy whom she can touch, whom she can kiss. Her quest for that which is sacred is embodied by a love story.

*We are made to think at times of pious heroines by Rivette, Bresson, Cavalier, for example. Where you thinking about this type of model?*

The crown of flowers that Anna wears for her confirmation is in homage to *Thérèse* by Cavalier. In fact, these filmmakers count a great deal for me. I have always been fascinated with young mystical characters. But above all, I love Georges Bataille's rebellious heroines. It's through him that I discovered the texts of Saint Teresa of Avila, which are very fervent, and at the same time entirely erotic. They greatly fed my imagination. Finally, Anna is neither a mystic, nor is she decadent, but she carries this double influence within.

*The Catholic religion is a little explored theme in young French cinema.*

For me, this theme simply reveals problems common to us all, but with more intensity. Religion exacerbates the contradiction between one line of conduct that is imposed upon someone, and the pulsions which drive us. This tugging between the two moves me deeply. The heroine's path in relation to this question gives the film its resolutely contemporary flair.



*What idea did you have in mind for the cast?*

I wanted earthy people, not "models." The religious theme called for bodies that personified their character powerfully, otherwise the film's stance would seem redundant. I only chose actors having a body filled with life and sexual energy, for that is precisely what the Catholic religion tries to smother, and something that a camera will immediately capture.

*Did you see many teenage girls for the role?*

We saw almost four hundred girls, between Paris, Brest, and Nantes. The advertisement said we were looking for a young chestnut-haired or brown-haired girl. And one day, this red-haired girl showed up...She had a face that was changing, at the borderline between childhood and adolescence, and a strong personality that mixed great maturity with a lovely innocence. I realized that she would be fascinating to film.

*Was Lio an obvious choice?*

I was attracted to Lio in a very instinctive manner. It isn't necessarily obvious to imagine her in the role of a provincial catholic. And yet, for me it was obvious. I sensed that the themes that run through the film struck a chord with her. She very quickly accepted the role, in an equally instinctive manner, and she brought all of her density to it. I also learned a great deal thanks to her, about when elaborating a character, the importance a piece of clothing can take, a hairstyle, or a piece of jewelry. These choices are as decisive as dialogue can be.

*And Galabru's performance as a blasphemous granddad is striking...*

To play this old grandfather, nearing death, I was looking for a bon vivant, a body that reflects the pleasure of having lived a life to the fullest. Behind the choice of Galabru, there was also the wish to break away from the film's solemn side by inviting a comic actor seen in very popular films. I told myself: it will be like an intrusion that ruffles some feathers in this household, and in the film...He read the screenplay very quickly, and told me he would accept the role with the following condition: "I'm all right with lying down in the coffin, but don't close the cover on me!". He really trusted me on the set. He's a very audacious and extremely generous actor.



*Was Stefano Cassetti, whom we discovered in Roberto Succo in 2001, at ease in his young priest's clothing.*

He's undoubtedly the one who had the most perilous role. Exercising this type of function requires an immediate credibility, from the first sequence in the film. In Italy as in France, Stefano often plays the roles of gangsters, drug addicts, bad fathers. He was thrilled to finally be offered a "positive" role! We worked a great deal before shooting. Stefano was "trained" by a priest in Paris to learn the rituals and ceremonies. I was obsessed with the idea that this character had to be believable... When the camera was on him, I never stopped repeating to myself: I'm filming a documentary about Stefano Cassetti, who stopped his career as an actor to become a priest. And that showed me the direction to take.

*Wasn't it complicated to shoot in a church?*

In a church, everything converges towards the sky. Everything is vertical. While in cinema, everything is horizontal. Basically there is a discrepancy between the two that is rich with meaning. With Tom Harari, the chief cameraman, we were looking for the right way to express the powerful feelings we ourselves had when we were in these places, all the while keeping in mind the constraints of the 1.85 frame. Once the directions were set, we just had to let ourselves be guided by the ceremonial aspect. After all, the direction has already been thought out by men who were greatly inspired!

*It is said that the family home tells things about a character's interiority: a dark, closed-in place where light filters through...What ideas did you have in mind for the lighting?*

In fact, this large, well-to-do, but slightly dilapidated house was supposed to be the expression of what is found inside the characters, especially when night comes: something archaic, something dark can emerge. The colors were meant to be bold, very expressive. We wanted to plunge some scenes into an almost complete darkness. Sirk's Hollywoodian melodramas guided our work, but also certain horror films by Dario Argento.





*There are interior landscapes, and then what we discover in the outside scenes...*

These scenes correspond greatly to moments of liberty for the characters. They were the opportunity to break away from the sophistication of the interiors, and to go towards something more real. Some moments are filmed with a hand-held camera, others with a camera dolly, when more fluidity was called for. In the end, in its form as well as its content, the film rests upon an oscillation, which is that of life itself, and antagonistic feelings: dryness and lyricism, solemn and trivial, rational and the unexplainable...

*Love Like Poison is filled with a number of musical sequences. What value do you give to music in a film?*

In a very natural, almost unconscious way, music occupied a very large place in the making of the film. Perhaps because singing has always been linked to faith.

Also I found that the tonality of the American religious folk music, both melancholic and luminous, truly reflected the film's.

*What do you think about the idea that a filmmaker's first film is the most autobiographical?*

Yes, it is indeed often the case. *Love Like Poison* is a very personal film. Yet, from the moment one decides to tell something personal, different inextricable aspects come into play: what one has lived, what one wanted to live, and what one is afraid to live. And the autobiographical dimension distances itself. The more the film moves forward in the filmmaking process, the more it opens up to other things, and the more place it has for others.



## KATELL QUILLEVERE

Born in Abidjan in 1980,  
Katell Quillevere studied cinema and philosophy at the University of Paris 8.  
In 2004, she and Sébastien Bailly created and organized the three first editions of  
Rencontres du Moyen-Metragé de Brive (European Medium Length Film Meetings).

At the same time, she directed *A bras le corps*, her first short film discovered at  
the Cannes Director's Fortnight and nominated for the 2007 Césars.

Since then she's directed two other short films, *L'imprudence* and *L'Echappée*,  
chosen for a number of festivals.  
*Love Like Poison* is her first feature film.

Screenwriter-Director

2010 **UN POISON VIOLENT** 92 min / 35 mm / 1.85  
2009 **L'ÉCHAPPÉE (Escape)** 17 min / 35 mm / 1, 66  
2007 **L'IMPRUDENCE (Careless)** 13 min / 35 mm / 1.85  
2005 **A BRAS LE CORPS** 19 min / 35mm / 1.66  
Nominated for 2007 Césars

## LIO

Selective filmography

2010 **LOVE LIKE POISON** a film by Katell QUILLEVERE  
2009 **THE EVENING DRESS** a film by Myriam AZIZA  
2008 **LE PRINCE DE CE MONDE** a film by Manuel GOMEZ  
2007 **THE LAST MISTRESS** a film by Catherine BREILLAT  
**A PARTING SHOT** a film by Jeanne WALTZ  
2005 **LES INVISIBLES** a film by Thierry JOUSSE  
2004 **MARIAGES !** a film by Valérie GUIGNABODET  
2001 **CARNAGES** a film by Delphine GLEIZE  
1995 **GOD, MY MOTHER'S LOVER AND THE BUTCHER'S SON**  
a film by Aline ISSERMAN  
1993 **NOBODY LOVES ME** a film by Marion VERNOUX  
**THE DEAD MOTHER** a film by Juan EMMANUEL BAJO ULLOA  
1991 **SANS UN CRI** a film by Jeanne LABRUNE  
**JEALOUSY** a film by Kathleen FONMARTY  
**AFTER LOVE** a film by Diane KURYS  
1989 **SEPARATE BEDROOMS** a film by Jacky CUKIER  
1988 **ITINÉRAIRE D'UN ENFANT GÂTÉ** a film by Claude LELOUCH  
1986 **GOLDEN EIGHTIES** a film by Chantal ACKERMAN  
1985 **ELSA, ELSA** a film by Didier HAUDEPIN



## MICHEL GALABRU

### Selective filmography

- 2010 **LOVE LIKE POISON** a film by Katell QUILLEVERE
- 2007 **WELCOME TO THE STICKS** a film by Dany BOON
- 1990 **URANUS** a film by Claude BERRI
- 1986 **I HATE ACTORS** a film by Gérard KRAWCZYCK
- 1984 **SUBWAY** a film by Luc BESSON
- 1983 **GRAMPS IS IN THE RESISTANCE** a film by Jean-Marie POIRE
- 1982 **ONE DEADLY SUMMER** a film by Jean BECKER
- 1978 **COP OR HOOD** a film by Georges LAUTNER
- 1978 **BIRDS OF A FEATHER** a film by Edouard MOLINARO
- 1975 **THE JUDGE ET THE ASSASSIN** a film by Bertrand TAVERNIER
- 1971 **THE ANNUITY** a film by Pierre TCHERNIA
- 1964 **THE GENDARME OF SAINT-TROPEZ** a film by Jean GIRAULT

## STEFANO CASSETTI

### Selective filmography

- 2010 **LOVE LIKE POISON** a film by Katell QUILLEVERE
- NOI CREDEVAMO** a film by Mario MARTONE
- 2008 **THE REST OF THE NIGHT** a film by Francesco MUNZI  
Cannes Film Festival
- 2004 **NEMMENO IL DESTINO** a film by Daniele GAGLIANONE
- 2003 **UPON MY SKIN** a film by Valerio JALONGO
- 2001 **ROBERTO SUCCO** a film by Cédric KAHN  
Cannes Film Festival

## THIERRY NEUVIC

### Selective filmography

- 2010 **LOVE LIKE POISON** a film by Katell QUILLEVERE
- SUERTE** a film by Jacques SECHAUD
- HEREAFTER** a film by Clint EASTWOOD
- 2008 **OSCAR AND THE LADY IN PINK** a film by Eric-Emmanuel SCHMITT
- 2007 **STELLA** a film by Sylvie VERHEYDE
- DON'T LOOK BACK** a film by Marina de VAN
- 2006 **TELL NO ONE** a film by Guillaume CANET
- 2005 **HEY GOOD LOOKING!** a film by Lisa AZUELOS
- 2004 **TOUT POUR PLAIRE** a film by Cécile TELERMAN
- 1999 **CODE UNKNOWN: INCOMPLETE TALES OF SEVERAL JOURNEYS**  
a film by Michael HANEKE:
- 1998 **GOD IS GREAT, I'M NOT** a film by Pascale BAILLY



## MUSIC

*Laisse tes yeux* (Tom Harari) sung by YOUEN LEBOULANGER-GOURVIL  
*T'approcher Seigneur* (Didier Rimaud / Jacques Berthier)  
 sung by L'ENSEMBLE CHORAL DU BOUT DU MONDE  
*Greensleeves* sung by BARBARA DANE Traditional  
*Embrasse-moi vite* sung by JEAN BRETONNIERE  
*Cricket* sung by COLLIE RYAN  
*Toi mon démon* (Bonifay / Magenta) sung by GLORIA LASSO  
*Bless the lord* sung by MARANATHA  
*Malio'o* (A.Lovo / R.Bells) sung by THE ROICOCO  
*When I was a young girl* sung by BARBARA DANE Traditional  
*Ouvre* (Edmond Haraucourt / Leonce Laurent) sung by CLARA AUGARDE  
*Creep* (T.Yorke / E.O'Brien / C.Greenwood / P.Selway / A.Hammond / M.Hazelwood)  
 sung by SCALA

## CAST LIST

ANNA	CLARA AUGARDE
JEANNE	LIO
JEAN	MICHEL GALABRU
PÈRE FRANCOIS	STEFANO CASSETTI
PAUL	THIERRY NEUVIC
PIERRE	YOUEN LEBOULANGER-GOURVIL

## CREDITS

Story and dialogue	KATELL QULLÉVÉRE / MARIETTE DÉSSERT
Producer	JUSTIN TAURAND
Production Director	MATHIEU VERHAEGHE
Casting	SARAH TEPER / LEÏLA FOURNIER / FRANCOIS GUIGNARD
First Assistant Director	NICOLAS GUILLEMINOT
Script	ANNICK REIPERT
Cinematographer	TOM HARARI
Sound	FLORENT KLOCKENBRING
Original music	OLIVIER MELLANO
Set design	ANNA FALGUÈRES
Costume design	MAHEMITI DEREIGNAUCOURT
Make-up	MAYTÉ ALONSO
Editing	THOMAS MARCHAND
Sound mixer	EMMANUEL CROSET
Music consultant	FRANK BEAUVAIS
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