

# AUTUMN & THE BLACK JAGUAR

Directed by Gilles de Maistre

## PRODUCTION NOTES



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## SYNOPSIS

Growing up in the Amazon rainforest gave Autumn the rarest of friendships – a lost jaguar cub she discovers named Hope. When a tragic event forces Autumn to leave Hope for the unknowns of New York City, she dreams for years of going back to the rainforest and her friend. Aged 14, and having grown accustomed to city life, Autumn discovers her childhood village is under threat from animal traffickers and decides she must return to the Amazon to her beloved jaguar. Anja – Autumn’s endearingly clumsy biology teacher – unsuccessfully tries to dissuade her from this reckless plan. Joined by Anja, Autumn embarks on a journey to reunite with Hope and save her from those who seek to destroy the rainforest and its wildlife.



## **INTERVIEW WITH GILLES DE MAISTRE (Director & Producer)**

### **How would you define your films?**

I'd say my work is a new kind of cinema; my films have always spoken out against injustice, inequalities, oppression and crime. And for a decade now, my wife Prune (who writes all our films) and I have wanted to fight for, not against. We came to realise it was more efficient to get a message across this way encompassing animal protection, forest and water safeguarding, defending planet Earth in a more general way, mankind's place in nature, the importance of bonding, of knowledge and of communication, family study and more. I address all these subject matters in my films but I want to do it poetically. I don't want or wish to condemn. I want to be heard. To fulfil that ambition, I start from complex matters and try to reach for simplicity and that's extremely hard. I don't want my films to lecture experts; they are already aware of the problems I address. I don't want to lecture or blame those who aren't interested either. What I really want is for my films to talk to families. Through animals and young characters, we mirror and question our society. I'm driven and optimistic. My goal is to approach serious matters in a positive way, to defend various causes through stories of love and friendship, to move people. I hope my films can be seen by kids and their parents, families together, and that audiences of all ages can enjoy them, learn from them, be touched by their messages and want to talk about them afterwards.

### **What was the inspiration for AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR?**

AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR is indirectly related to MIA AND THE WHITE LION: which was a success all over the world with people often asking us for a sequel. But it was impossible to make one; the relationship between our actress and the lion was real. Once the shoot was over, their relationship ended and we could not "reignite" it. It made me wonder, though, and I began to think about another project that would be in the same essence, a story that would approach the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and animal trafficking and would be focused on an incredible friendship between Man and Animal. Hence jaguars, a mythic predator from the Amazon rainforest, they're still a mystery for people and they've not been on screen that much. As with MIA AND THE WHITE LION, the idea was to build a real relationship. That's how AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR was born.

### **In the film, you address the destruction of the Amazon Forest and animal trafficking, could you touch further upon this?**

It's nothing new. Deforestation in the Amazon is huge and out of control. There is also animal trafficking like almost nowhere else in the world. Our films often come from a message we want to get across. AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR demonstrates that we are digging our own grave. MIA AND THE WHITE LION talked about the horrible trend of lion hunting. THE WOLF AND THE LION spoke against using animals for entertainment – in the circus, for instance. AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR deals with one of the biggest problems mankind must face today and I think it will speak equally to children from France, Colombia, China or Morocco. This film is destined to travel all over the world, so our storytelling had to be universal.

### **Why is it more effective to address these important subject matters through a child, in your opinion?**

Children are the future, so it was obvious. If they understand what is at stake and want to take a better path, everyone wins! Who better to talk to other children than a child? In my documentaries, I've dealt with childhood for 40 years, and especially child suffering. Now, I really want to film those who

are aware of the world they live in. Those who want to fight. In my documentary TOMORROW IS OURS, I focused on children who were changing the world. That's the word I want to spread; adults always say we are heading for disaster, we are doomed and we are all going to die...that's not true! Children can build a new world. In AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR a young girl saves a jaguar and protects the rainforest. Some might say it's a tiny drop in the ocean. But there is the butterfly effect: her actions can inspire other children. A teenage character speaks very directly to viewers between 5 and 15.

**Has it been hard to find the right actress? What drew you to Lumi Pollack?**

We absolutely needed an English-speaking actress and we ran auditions worldwide. It's a complex process because we need to understand the cultural differences between Canadians, English and Americans for example; they're more unionised than we are in France. And rather than spending millions of dollars on CGI I'm seeking a different emotion, another kind of storytelling, another kind of performance, something that can't be faked with special effects. I was lucky because my two previous films spoke for me, especially since I worked with an American actress on one of them. It helped tell everyone it's possible. This authentic storytelling is possible.

During the casting process, I picked several girls I thought had a real personality and seemed to be very gifted. Step two was testing them carefully with real animals, to see if they were afraid and to choose the one who was the most comfortable. Lumi stood out; she was spontaneous, and she naturally went to the animals, she never waited for the animals to come to her. I loved that. In this process, there's another important factor – the parents. A project like this is a real-life adventure and they must be able to accept this given their child will spend months and months with two jaguars in order to prepare and animals which will get stronger and stronger, bigger and bigger every day. Jaguars are lonely and powerful predators and, in the wild, they don't listen to man. A jaguar is able to kill a 4-meter-long crocodile, in the water, in a few seconds. So, our actress' parents had to trust us implicitly, they had to be open and able to learn things along the way. Lumi's parents were very motivated.

**What kind of experience did Lumi have?**

Acting was her dream, and she did a few projects before AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR. She's really gifted, she's determined, and she understands her craft well. In our film, she's supposed to play a 15-year-old girl, but she was only 13. She was strong-willed and put a lot of energy into the film. We loved that.

**You've said there were two jaguars on set. But the baby is also the adult we see on screen, could you expand on this?**

There were two jaguars indeed. They grew up together. But the baby jaguar you see in the first scene is a stand-in called Gem. At first, we thought we were going to shoot most of the film with her but the other jaguar, named Hope, turned out to be easier. She was more comfortable with the camera, and she was very good at acting!

A year before shooting we started the imprinting phase with Airam, who plays a young Autumn. She played with Hope and Gem until both were four months old, after that they'd be too big and Airam too little. So, during this phase we shot the first sequences of the film. At the very same time, Lumi was also imprinting with Hope and Gem, playing with them all the time, for a full year. Then we shot all the scenes of Autumn returning to the jungle.

**Where did the jaguars come from?**

Mexico, where we shot the film. It's harder to find black jaguars than spotted ones. On all our films we use the same method; we take animals from potentially abusive environments and give them a

better life. We retrieved two baby jaguars from Mexican breeders (animal trade is legal there) and our animal coordinators immediately took care of them and their well-being.

Jaguars are on the verge of extinction, mainly due to deforestation. In the Amazon rainforest and in all South America, there are something like 15000 jaguars left in the wild, it's very little. Prune and I feel it's a vital cause to fight for and to bring to a broad – worldwide - audience.

### **So, Hope and Gem live in a sanctuary now?**

Yes. They rehabilitate animals they rescue from police foreclosures, from traffickers or circuses for example. After production, we kept the jaguars, and we will finance optimal living conditions for the rest of their lives and in a sanctuary where they will be protected. These animals must live naturally in the wild but when they are born in captivity like Hope and Gem it's impossible to release them, but we can protect them.

### **Are there specific things jaguars can't do?**

You can't make jaguars do anything. The only thing you can do is try to get things from them through food, toys, playing, favourite places etc because they are not trained. Two animal coordinators, Jean-Philippe Magnone and Kurtis Bayford took very good care of them. Lumi spent a year living with Hope, cuddling, climbing on trees, doing all sorts of things. But this is a learning curve. Not training. I'm very careful with whom I chose to handle the animals because I don't want a trainer. And this is always hard to find but it's possible. I work with animals for a message, but I never want to go too far. It means that we rarely obtain what was on the page but that is OK; I seek spontaneity and unexpected things and that's what lights up the screen. We plant a seed, build the relationship between the animal and the actress and as this grows unexpected things happen. Safety comes from this relationship; once man and animal are friends there is no risk anymore because, in the wild, animals will attack a prey, they won't attack a friend. What we need to do is make sure a friend never becomes a prey and that's a very calculated risk that we are very aware of and we know how to take seriously. Everything is secure. Once there's a bond between the animal and the actress, everything is easy on set; the animal will do whatever the actress does very naturally. If Lumi climbs on a tree, Hope will happily follow, and she does things we don't even ask her to do.

### **Is there a time of day more suitable for work?**

For jaguars to be energetic, you need to work early in the morning when it's still fresh. If you need to get a shot of the jaguar going asleep on the top of a tree, you must shoot around noon when it's warmer. Everything must be thought of, considered and organised in a strategic way. You can't make animals work for very long given they tend to tire quickly. We respect animals; they're at the very centre and heart of our films and they are the stars. So, we all move around them. For instance, there is a scene where Hope had to go into a small lake with Lumi. On the first day of shooting that scene, she refused to enter the water. Even if it was a place she knew and loved. We waited all day, hidden silently behind trees, but she never entered the water. So, we decided to stop – we'd rather lose a day of work than to force an animal to do something - the next day we returned and for an hour, nothing happened. But then, she slowly entered the water and met Lumi. What a magical moment! That's exactly what I'm working for.

### **Lumi was the only one to go through an imprinting phase. Does it mean no other actor could interact with Hope?**

Exactly. We had a stand-in for Lumi though: if she got nervous or tired it would have been wrong to make her work anyway. So, we hired another actress, Lucrecia Pini, who also went through the

imprinting phase and created the same kind of bond with the jaguars as Lumi. She's in the film, in the end: she plays Celya. It seemed fair she had a part.

**Could you explain when special effects were involved?**

We shot in populated areas. You can't just move jaguars here and there. You can't put them in just any river. We had to fake things and build set-ups where we were. So, we built a fake river, a fake canopy. We used green screens when we needed more scope and given we shot in a small area. That's pretty much it. The relationship between the child and the animal is authentic and real. Shooting in a fake location is not a problem to me as long as I can have a real jaguar jumping on Lumi when their characters meet again. That's the essence of my work. You can't fool the audience. When that's faked, it shows and it lacks emotion, tension, suspense. I make films I'd like to see. People know me now. That's what they want to see me do, and that's what I want to give them. The more the audience is moved, the more they'll connect to the jaguar and to the bond with Lumi, the more our message will get across. AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR is a fable told from an animal's perspective and in order to talk about the human condition. Showing the bond between a child and an animal is a universal way to talk about friendship. What animals can teach us about human nature is deep.

**Anja, the biology teacher, is a symbol of transmission and education. Was it important for you to include this dimension?**

For me, Anja injects comedy into the film. She conveys the "fish out of water" trope. She's the dead weight Autumn must carry around through the film. But you're right: we also wanted to pay homage to teachers with this character. She confronts her fears to save her student. Lumi and Anja represent nature and culture colliding. For Autumn, our model was Mowgli; a child who lived in the jungle and does not fit into an urban setting. On the other hand, Anja is urban at heart and even if she seems afraid of everything, her inner world is rich. Our intention was not to say nature is the only way to live. We also have our culture. But mankind needs to understand we're nothing without nature.

**In that regard, you show squirrels and pigeons in New York. Nature is everywhere, even in cities...**

Anja is ambivalent; she saves a hedgehog but at the same time, she dissects frogs for education. It is human; we may love animals, but we will order a steak. That's also what this character conveys: how adults can be inconsistent.

## **INTERVIEW WITH JEAN PHILIPPE MAGNONE (Imprinting specialist & Animal Coordinator)**

### **How did you get involved in AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR?**

The production team contacted me very early on because I'm in charge of a rehabilitation center for wild animals in Guyana and I have worked with jaguars for many years. Before AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR I took part in various works of fiction and many wildlife documentaries as a consultant, especially when those films focused on reptiles and big cats. I've been in animal protection for 25 years. At our rehabilitation center, we take wounded or sick animals, animals from foreclosures, all kinds of animals in bad shape. We have many monkeys that have never seen a tree in their whole life and we teach them how to climb and to feed themselves in order to release them later, either where they grew up or in protected areas where there is less poaching.

### **What was your role on the film?**

I wasn't supposed to be on set at first. I was primarily hired for the imprinting phase with the actors. I had to show them how to behave near the animals. But eventually, I was on set, collaborating with Kurtis Bayford, who was the on set animal coordinator. We have similar working methods, so it was great working with him on the production. We were both making sure the animals were not put under any pressure or constraint of any kind. For them, it has to be playful all the time. You manage to do that only if you have built a trust with them since they were babies.

### **What was your reaction when you understood real jaguars would be involved on set?**

I was surprised such a project could exist today because working with real animals requires time. With special effects, things would be easier. And jaguars are difficult. They're loners, they have very few interactions with other animals let alone humans. When directors want to shoot with real big cats we usually work with black panthers if the story is set in South America because it's a more compliant animal. Working with a jaguar on a film is a real challenge.

### **How did you take care of the animals during the shoot?**

The thing is jaguars sleep a lot, between 20 and 22 hours a day. They can be active for very little time so when they were awake, we stimulated them through playing. They prefer the fresher hours of the day which are in the morning and in the evening. When it's very hot, they're basically asleep in the shade. And we let them do so. There was a lot of swimming, climbing and patience.

### **Can you explain the imprinting phase with the actors?**

The actors had to spend two hours a day, every day, with the jaguars to interact with them, speak to them, get familiar with them and be part of their environment. There was a real complicity between Lumi Pollack (who plays Autumn) and the female jaguar we see in the film. They got along very well. Airam (who plays young Autumn) spent four months with the baby jaguars to prepare for the early sequences. You know, when kids and animals grow old together, they don't really see themselves change. They think they're still the same size. That's the reason why our actors were not afraid at all.

### **How did you work with the crew, especially with the Steadicam operator?**

We managed to have an imprinting phase with the operator and the key grip too. So, they were able to get close to the animals with us. It made things easier. The shoot could be more mobile, and, in the end, we put more images in the can than we initially thought.

**Are the female jaguars more compliant than males?**

Young males are nicer than females. But when they're adults, males become more aggressive and a little bit more territorial. Females get nicer as they age.

**How would you describe your relationship with the director of the film, Gilles de Maistre?**

Usually, directors tend to be too bossy with animals. Gilles doesn't. He adapts to the animals; he never asks the animal to adapt to him. Of course, we always try to get what Gilles needs for a given scene. But we always use playing, never constraint. For example, jaguars love water, so they enjoyed themselves quite a bit when we shot the aquatic scenes. They were the most fun scenes to shoot, and it shows: the images are beautiful and graceful, in my opinion.



## INTERVIEW WITH LUMI POLLACK (Autumn)

### **Can you briefly explain what the film is about?**

The film is about a girl named Autumn, and she finds out that her childhood best friend who happens to be a black jaguar is in danger. So, she goes by herself to the Amazon. But as she's going through her plan, her little journey, she finds out that her biology teacher, Miss Shimmer, has tagged along. The film follows their journey through the Amazon, all their crazy adventures and most importantly trying to save this jaguar.

### **Can you tell us about your character?**

Autumn is a passionate, fearless, determined, wise, stubborn girl, and she's very sensitive with nature. She has this love for animals, and she expresses her love with Hope in a way that she cannot really express with any human language.

### **What attracted you when you first read the script?**

When I got the script, it said at the bottom "are you comfortable working with animals"? I'm like, oh, yeah, dogs, cats. Animals are the best. Gilles then explained to me how I was going to be working with a real jaguar! And I'm actually working with two jaguars! And even though it's kind of a little bit scary sometimes, it's just something that I couldn't pass up. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, literally.

### **How did you prepare for this role?**

I was working with Hope, the female jaguar, for ten months prior to the shoot. I guess having the script in my mind for so long I could easily envision the character. As I got to know Hope, I could incorporate our real-life relationship into the script, into the story and onto the screen. I also had an amazing acting coach a few weeks prior and she helped me combine all of my ideas so they would better come across in my performance.

### **How did you work on this preparation with Gilles?**

It was really great to work with him because I knew him for a year and a half before. It's kind of rare that you get to know somebody that long before going into a shoot with them. So seeing him switch into director mode when we actually got on set was really cool. His beautiful wife, Prune, wrote the story, so they had a vision and helped me portray that on screen and with every scene. It's nice to get their insight before doing it.

### **How would you define Gilles as a director?**

Gilles definitely has a vision he works on with Prune and he let me know that it's okay if Hope doesn't do exactly what they envisioned. If Hope is doing something unplanned, he's like: 'Okay, do this. Follow along what she's doing over here, over here, over here'. He can quickly redirect where he wants. I appreciate that.

### **What was your favorite scene to shoot?**

I think it was the day I was swimming with Hope. It was just great to film because the day before, we had planned to shoot that scene, but Hope would not go in the water. She just didn't want to. We had done nothing that day. But the next day when we did it, Hope did everything perfectly. It was just a perfect picture of what a real relationship Hope and I had. It was special to me because it was just us. And I don't want to let Emily out of this! I loved filming with Emily in every single scene. But I think the

one where we're coming out of the water and the snake starts to chase us is special to me. It was really fun because there was a lot of physical action.

**Is it more stimulating to play in a real environment like this jungle in Mexico?**

It's great because it's just real. It's cool to have an actual environment to work with and it's just so much easier as an actor to be present in the moment. It's more real and it's beautiful there.

**Are you sensitive to the protection of nature and animals?**

I just love animals. Anybody who knows me knows it and as soon as I got the script, I was like *this* is what I want to be representing. This is what I want people to know about me. And I love how this is one of my first films that I get to work on, and it's just who I am. I love the environment, and I'm happy that I get to represent that in such a big way.

**Did you know Gilles' previous films before working on this one?**

When I got one of the callbacks, my family and I watched MIA AND THE WHITE LION first. I was just like: this can't be real! It's so beautiful. And it was just an amazing film. I also saw THE WOLF AND THE LION and it's just incredible. And as soon as I saw those two movies, I was so excited to do this. It's just so amazing.

## INTERVIEW WITH EMILY BETT RICKARDS (Anja)

### **Can you briefly explain what the film is about?**

The film is about a little young woman, Autumn, who is going to teach us pessimistic and jaded adults how to still have the magic of a child and to take care of our planet in the way that we should.

### **How would you define Autumn and Anja's relationship in the film?**

Anja is Autumn's biology teacher who suffers from self-described agoraphobia and OCD and ends up on a journey that breaks her out of these norms that she has built herself into. Following Autumn on the adventure of her lifetime and our lifetime.

### **How did the project come to you?**

My team called me and said "we have this really unique script. Would you like to read it?" Yes, of course I read it. It is incredibly unique. I hadn't read a script like this ever. And then I talked to Gilles. That was almost two years before we started shooting. And then I just started working on Anja and falling in love with her.

### **What was your reaction when Gilles told you that you would shoot with a jaguar?**

I had a lot of questions about the respect we will show to the jaguars. I have never shot with animals before. Besides my dog, which is very different! I mostly had concerns about that, really and I was reassured. I've always been fascinated with the jungle and the animals that live in it. To be welcomed into this world in my thirties, the eight-year-old me was just going wild. So yes, I was excited. I don't personally get to work with Hope because I'm not imprinted, but when the movie had first come to me, I was interested in what was possible and what wasn't. And I did get to see Hope and hang out with her, at a distance, though.

### **Are you committed to ecology?**

This movie taught me more than I knew. Yes, I would consider myself better educated and on my path to get involved more heavily and to be more of an activist.

### **How would you define Gilles De Maistre as a director?**

At first, I thought he was very youthful. He's very energetic. But he's also very grounded. On a set it's almost imperative. A director must lead and direct, not only the film but a crew and an energy. It's an orchestra. And he holds that space incredibly well. I'm so grateful that we clicked. On a project, there's not a lot of time to get to know someone. To have that off the bat is just a magic of pairing. Gilles is inspiring, he brings that lightness to set. He keeps it happy. I overheard him talking to somebody; he was basically saying "we can have happiness on set as we make films" and I thought: yes, of course. But not all sets are like that. So, as I said, I find him inspiring and he has become a true friend.

### **Is it special for you to have worked with a French director?**

Of course, it is. When you have more than one culture on a set, it only brings added experience. I just feel so honored to be here and a part of this that makes me want to work in French films.

### **How did you prepare for the role?**

I was given the script very early on, so I was able to study and understand my character Anja from a page perspective. Every actor has their process and I've been working with my coach, Andrew McIlroy,

since I was 17. He brings delight to any project I touch. I like to be a certain type of ready for a table read. I also want to come on set with a lot of ideas.

**Did filming in a real environment help you?**

This has been incredibly helpful for this character. In Mexico, you're hot, your clothes are wet. But that's helpful for this journey. That tactile sensation helps an actor believe their moment even more.

**What was your favorite scene to shoot?**

Certain scenes in the forest. They're my favorite because Anja's alone in the forest, and it's such a contrast with her alone in her apartment. Anja's also a comedic relief, and that's my life. So that's why I feel most energetic. There're those scenes in the forest when she's sort of panicking and trying to find her inner power but is obviously still uncomfortable. There are many emotions going on inside of her.

## INTERVIEW WITH PAUL GREENE (Saul)

### **Can you explain what the film is about?**

AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR is a wild adventure. We follow Autumn, who fell in love with the jungle because she was raised there by her father Saul, my character, and her mother. We were living with the indigenous people and learning their plants and medicine. But poachers killed my wife. In order to protect my daughter, I took her away from everything she loved, which was the people, the jaguar, the jungle, everything. This movie is just an incredible adventure and a love story between a girl and her jaguar. But also, this really unlikely but gorgeous relationship between Autumn and her teacher Anja. Where it starts and where it ends is just amazing.

### **What attracted you to this project?**

I saw MIA AND THE WHITE LION, Gilles' previous movie, and I'm really a big fan of some of the actors in it. I loved how close you felt as a viewer to the animals, it was just incredible. I'd never seen that before. I met with Gilles and spoke with him – of course, in the middle of the pandemic, we spoke on Zoom. He and his wife had seen some of my previous movies and they offered me this role. I really loved it when I read it. It was so unique. I've never done anything like this. It was interesting to me that it would be taking place over time, like over a year or two years, as this baby jaguar grows up. And I was excited to have this chance, I've never shot anything quite like this.

### **Can you tell us about your character?**

My character Saul is a doctor, in New York. But his heart still belongs to the Amazon and he keeps his eye on it the whole time. Channel 31 is always on in his study! A lot of my work as an actor is done in Montreal, which is a stand-in for New York in the film. The flashbacks in the jungle (it's been like eight years since my character has been in the jungle) got me the chance to shoot in Mexico. Saul decided he's no longer going to risk his family in the jungle, so he's become a city guy. He just loves his family, loves his work, and really feels like medicine can help people. But a combination of Western medicine and the indigenous traditions of thousands of years.

### **Do you regret not having a scene with the jaguar?**

Do I wish I had a scene with the jaguar? Yes. What an amazing animal coordination team they had. They're so close to each other. It's so unique.

### **Are you sensitive to the protection of nature and animals?**

I have a ten-month-old baby and a 19-year-old. What happens to our forests really matters to me. That's another reason I'm so thrilled to work with Gilles; his love of animals and nature and raising awareness around preserving our environment, in a storyteller's way. Not every person responds to protests very well, especially if you're on the other side of the protest, but if you see a film about it, you're more likely to have your heart moved a little bit than if somebody protests on your yard. Filmmaking can be really special that way, to help preserve the things that are important. What's more important than Mother Earth? Gilles is really passionate about this. He communicates it in a way where you don't feel like you have to oppose him, which is unique.

### **Did you know Emilie before working on Gilles' film?**

I've never met Emily before, no. Our first day working together was that last scene of the movie, which happens all the time.

**What can the audience expect from the film?**

So much adventure! A wild ride like a roller coaster with both Anja and Autumn and an animal. Prune De Maistre wrote a gorgeous script. People are going to be able to escape for a couple of hours into this adventure and come out the other side with this bit of awareness around ecology and the environment.

**How will this film resonate with an international audience, in your opinion?**

I think that's what's so special about Gilles and his movies; they resonate in every country. THE WOLF AND THE LION and MIA AND THE WHITE LION did so well internationally. I think that's what people are going to expect from Gilles now - a story that everybody can relate to. It doesn't matter what country you live in; you're going to fall in love with this hero's journey that you get taken on.

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

<b>Autumn</b>	Autumn is a New York teenager who, against her will, drags her agoraphobic biology teacher into the Amazon rainforest to save the black jaguar she grew up with.
<b>Anja</b>	Anja is Autumn's biology teacher. A woman in her thirties, agoraphobic, she initially confronts Autumn at school before being drawn into her adventure.
<b>Oré</b>	Oré is the great chief of an indigenous village living in the Amazon rainforest. He has known Autumn since she was a little girl and maintains contact with her father. As soon as she arrives in the Amazon, he will try to reason with Autumn.
<b>Saul Edison</b>	Saul is Autumn's father. After the tragic death of his wife at the hands of poachers, he and Autumn moved to New York. He's a doctor and strives to conceal the events in the Amazon to protect his daughter.
<b>Doria Dargnan</b>	Doria, a local political figure, is the leader of an illegal network involved in poaching and illicit animal trade. She and her henchmen are determined to capture the last jaguar.
<b>Celya</b>	Celya is Oré's daughter and childhood friend of Autumn.
<b>Elie Edison</b>	Elie is Autumn's mother, fighting against poaching in the Amazon alongside her husband (Saul). She was killed, but her presence remains deeply etched in the memories of her daughter, Autumn.

## BIOGRAPHY OF GILLES DE MAISTRE (Director & Producer)

Gilles de Maistre was born on May 8, 1960. After a degree in philosophy in 1983, he graduated in 1985 from the CFJ (Journalists Formation Center) where he studied to be a video journalist. He then began to direct reports and documentaries for television. Wars, famines, guerillas, homelessness, violence, natural disasters: he travelled the world with his camera to inform, condemn and raise awareness.

In 1990 he created his own production company, Tetra Media, and began to work as a director-producer. His documentary *J'AI 12 ANS et JE FAIS LA GUERRE* won the Albert-Londres Prize for Audio-visual in 1990, the Best Documentary at the International Emmy Awards, the 7 d'Or (the French Emmys) for Best Report, and about ten other awards around the world. Between 1991 and 1994, followed *INTERDIT D'ENFANCE*, a collection of documentaries where he captures a disturbing truth: how childhood is torn apart everywhere in the world.

In 1999, two of his documentaries, *SANS DOMICILE FIXE* and *BANLIEUE*, which he co-directed with Hervé Chabalier, are chosen by the French documentary channel Planète among the 20 best reports of that decade.

In 1994, he directed his first feature film, *KILLER KID*, which won the Audience Award and the Cannes Junior Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. On the production side, he worked on two Jérôme Cornuau films, *BOUGE!* (1997) and *DISSONANCES* (2003). He also produced films for television – *LE CHANT DE L'HOMME MORT* (1998) and *PREMIÈRES NEIGES* (1999), directed by Gaël Morel – and a few series, including *LE LYCÉE* and *BRIGADE DES MINEURS*, both directed by Miguel Courtois.

His second feature film, *FÉROCE* (2001), which stars Samy Naceri and François Berléand, became the target of the French far-right politician Jean-Marie Le Pen, who sued – and lost.

At that time, Gilles de Maistre kept on producing and directing documentaries, especially mini-series for television, such as *ET PLUS SI AFFINITÉS FOR ARTE* (20x26'), *À LA MATERNITÉ* for France 3 (10x26') or *L'HÔPITAL DES ENFANTS* for M6 (20x52')

After selling Tetra Média, he launched his new production company in 2004, Mai Juin Productions. He directed his third feature, *LE PREMIER CRI* (2007), a documentary about birth around the world, which was nominated at the César (French Academy Awards).

In 2009, his television feature *Grands Reporters* (for Arte) won the Jury Special Prize at the Fiction Festival of La Rochelle. In this film, shot in Tchad during the war, he anchors fiction in reality.

Since then, he focuses on this method he calls « real fiction » and uses it to explore a large spectrum of universes. He went to North Korea for *VOIR LE PAYS DU MATIN CALME* (Arte), to the Amazon rainforest for *JUSQU'AU BOUT DU MONDE* (France 2, 2012) and to Israel for *3 MARIAGES ET UN COUP DE Foudre* (2014).

Between 2009 and 2012 he worked both on intimate portraits of celebrities such as Jane Birkin, French comedian Stéphane Guillon and businessman Bernard Arnault and portraits of children – whether there are orphaned, lost or adopted – in documentaries *PETITS PRINCES*, *ALERTE ENFANTS DISPARUS* and *ADOpte-MOI*.



His fourth feature film, a documentary, was released in 2017: LA QUÊTE D'ALAIN DUCASSE focuses on the career of one of the most Michelin-starred chefs in the world. He then directed L'HOMME QUI MURMURAIT À L'OREILLE DES LIONS, a TV documentary about Kevin Richardson, famed animal behaviour specialist. This documentary led him to think of a new feature fiction film, MIA AND THE WHITE LION, which gathered 1,4 million of moviegoers in French theaters, and 6 million people around the world – the biggest French film internationally in 2019, ahead of blockbusters such as TAXI 5 and ASTERIX.

In 2019, Gilles de Maistre and Mai Juin Productions signed a deal with Mediawan, the audio-visual company led by Pierre-Antoine Capton. They developed a collection of family productions focused on environmental matters and social justice around the world.

DEMAIN EST À NOUS is the first project born from this collaboration: this feature documentary, produced in association with Echo Studio, follows child activists from all over the world.

THE WOLF AND THE LION was released in 2020. It tells the story of a friendship between two animals and a woman in Canada's Far North. THE WOLF AND THE LION was sold to many territories worldwide. AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR has done the very same.

Shot in Mexico and Montreal, AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR uses the same method as his previous films; create a real bond between the animal at the center of the story and the main actress.

His new project, MOON THE PANDA, which was shot in China and produced by Gaumont, is in post-production.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF PRUNE DE MAISTRE (Writer)**

Prune de Maistre is a French writer and novelist. She's married and a mother of four. After being an investigative journalist for various TV broadcasts, documentary series and documentary features, she wrote her first film script, MIA AND THE WHITE LION.

Since then, she wrote a few more features, such as THE WOLF AND THE LION, AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR and MOON THE PANDA. They all have in common to stand up for children, animals and nature.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF JEAN PHILIPPE MAGNONE (Imprinting specialist & Animal Coordinator)**

Jean-Philippe Magnone is a long-standing impassioned wild animal lover. He worked for almost twelve years at the Guyana Zoo. He first began as a herpetologist (reptile specialist) but, over time, his missions became more varied, and he took care of all sorts of orphaned animals retrieved by the zoo in the wild Guyana fauna, from small monkeys to jaguars.

His love for big cats developed then. Over time, he took five jaguars in and took care of them for many years. His bond with Boulie, a baby jaguar, has been told in a documentary for the French channel Canal+, PASSION SAUVAGE GUYANE.

Being a zookeeper, Jean-Philippe knows many more species and looked after howler monkeys, anteaters, kinkajous, spider monkeys, tamanduas, margay cats, caimans, squirrel monkeys, otters, oncillas, coendous, white-faced sakis, grisons, jaguarundis, tamarinds, coatis, tayras, and more.

His experience led him to take part in many audio-visual projects shot in Guyana, such as French TV drama series GUYANE AND MARONI, or the documentary series LES CHRONIQUES D'AMAZONIE SAUVAGE.

Jean-Philippe Magnone now owns a rehabilitation and care center (ONCA) he created in 2010, peak of 20 years looking after Guyana's wild fauna. Located in a remote area, far from any disturbance, ONCA is a real-life Noa's ark and is one of the three centers that work to protect Guyana's biodiversity. ONCA, an approved center, has all the permits required. Since 2016 it shelters wounded wild animals, animals in distress, animals orphaned because of hunting or animals retrieved in foreclosures.

When ONCA is taking an animal in, the goal is always to release it in its natural habitat and ensure the species' sustainability. To facilitate this release Jean-Philippe Magnone works on the animals' social links: he creates groups that will be able to survive in the wild and he teaches them to connect to their environment. That's why he tries to limit his interactions with the animals and just feed them if that's what's required. Once they're rehabilitated, animals can be safely released in their habitat.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF KURTIS BAYFORD (Animal coordinator)**

Kurtis Bayford has been training animals for cinema for a little more than ten years, especially North-American and exotic species, but he also works to raise awareness concerning the protection of the wild.

He is specialized in working with wolves, bears and big cats. He's also a trained stuntman for sequences involving animal attacks.

Set in Ontario, Canada, he worked on more than 50 feature films and television shows in North America such as THE HANDMAID'S TALE, MAYOR OF KINGSTOWN, SEE, OUT COME THE WOLVES.

Gilles de Maistre and Bayford met for the first time on THE WOLF AND THE LION.

Bayford owns and manages an animal reservation which is a member of the AZA (Association of Zoos & Aquariums). This association helps maintain norms of excellence regarding animal care. AZA also guarantees its members follow higher norms than what is required by American law.

In his film and TV work, Kurtis Bayford follows the rules established by the American Humane Association, a certification program whose motto is "No Animals Were Harmed". This association thinks all animals should be treated respectfully and wants to honor the part animals play in our family's daily lives.

## BIOGRAPHY OF LUMI POLLACK (Autumn)

Lumi Pollack is a young American actress of Japanese and Colombian descent. She has appeared in a variety of feature films, television shows, stage plays and commercials.

Her work on Gilles de Maistre's *AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR* began in December 2021 and lasted for a year. She plays the main protagonist, Autumn, a part that required her to spend ten months in the Mexican jungle for an imprinting process with a jaguar she had to bond with. Shooting occurred in various locations in Mexico and ended in Montreal in December 2022. The film's French release is set for February 7, 2024.

In 2023, Lumi had a leading role in *ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY*, an independent production to be released in 2024.

In 2021 she lent her voice to Westyn, the kind Witch of the West, in a whole new animation series for Netflix, *FRIENDS OF OZ* (set to be released in 2024). Lumi recorded an original song for each episode. That same year, she shot one episode of the Disney TV show *SYDNEY TO THE MAX*.

Lumi's career began in 2020 at the age of 11, playing Jenna Ortega's sister in the critically acclaimed film *THE FALLOUT*. Launched on Netflix in 2022, this film tells the story of a teenager traumatised by a school shooting.

She also proved herself to be gifted as a singer, a dancer, a piano and guitar player.

When she's not on a film set, she works on her acting skills but she also likes to sing, read, write, hike, go cycling, swim, bake or play with her two dogs.

## BIOGRAPHY OF EMILY BETT RICKARDS (Anja)

Emily Bett Rickards made a name for herself with endearing yet different characters. Among them, Felicity Smoak, the quick-witted computer expert/hacker in the hit series *Arrow*. Set to be a guest at the beginning of the first season in 2012, Felicity became one of the most beloved characters of this eight-season show and was part of the 50 favorite female characters of all time as established by *The Hollywood Reporter*. For this role, Emily Bett Rickards was nominated for several awards, such as the Teen Choice Awards. She was also nominated as best actress in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 at the renowned Leo Awards (for film and TV productions set in British Columbia, Canada).

She played this funny, intelligent and inspiring character in other series parts of The CW's DC shared universe, such as *THE FLASH*, *SUPERGIRL* and *DC: LEGENDS OF TOMORROW*. During its run, *ARROW* became a global hit, broadcast in more than 70 countries.

Emily Bett Rickards recently embodied real-life wrestler Mildred Burke in *QUEEN OF THE RING*, an independent production directed by Ash Avildsen. Adapted from a book written by Jeff Leen, this feature tells the story of Mildred Burke, pioneer of women's wrestling and world champion for 16 years – from 1937 to 1954. She shares the screen with Josh Lucas, Walton Goggins and Gavin Casalegno.

She's now in *AUTUMN AND THE BLACK JAGUAR*, directed by Gilles de Maistre. This family adventure set in the Amazon rainforest focuses on a teenager in her quest to save the jaguar she grew up with. Her biology teacher reluctantly follows her in her journey.

In 2024, she'll be Calamity Jane in a film *Calamity Jane* for Tubi Movie.

On her resume we can also find the independent dramedy *FUNNY STORY*, written and directed by Michael Gallagher (*INTERNET FAMOUS*, *THE THINNING*), and the Academy Award Nominated film *BROOKLYN*, led by Saoirse Ronan and directed by John Crowley.

Emily Bett Rickards successfully attended the Vancouver Film School Acting Essentials Program whose alumni are Neil Blomkamp, Neil Kopp and Kevin Smith. When she's not shooting a film or a TV series, she feeds her creativity by reading books, scripts and stage plays. She's also writing various projects.

She divides her time between Los Angeles and Vancouver.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL GREENE (Saul)**

Paul Greene was born in a small town in Alberta, Canada. He got his first taste of the stage in school. After a series of fortunate events led him to watch the movie BLOODSPORT, life would never be the same.

The following year, 16-year-old Paul drove himself to acting school in Edmonton. Then while at Red Deer College, Paul was discovered and enjoyed an international career that lasted 15 years. Along the way, Paul studied acting with some of the greats in New York City and starred in 100 television commercials.

Shortly after Paul's first son was born in New York City, he decided it was time to move to Los Angeles and follow his persistent, relentless dream to act in film and television. As he has become very well-versed in mastering the ART OF REJECTION, Paul's career has spanned many genres and decades. Paul's specialty lies in romantic comedies and Christmas movies. After completing five years on the hit show WHEN CALLS THE HEART, Paul has more time to be home with his young family and do more movies and TV shows while maintaining a very busy livestream music schedule. Paul's passion for music has landed him a number-one song on the Canadian country charts, the chance to play at Carnegie Hall and the Troubadour, and play 500 plus livestreams.

Paul is also an integrative nutrition coach and helps to run a wellness, vitality, and strategic lifestyle program online with his love and partner, Kate, The Freedom Alchemist.

Paul is a new dad again and lives in LA with his growing family.

## CREDITS LIST

Anja

Autumn Edison

Oré

Saul Edison

Doria Dargan

Celya

Autumn Edison child

The jaguars

Emily BETT RICKARDS

Lumi POLLACK

Wayne BAKER

Paul GREENE

Kelly HOPE TAYLOR

Lucrezia PINI

Airam CAMACHO

Hope & Gem

## TECHNICAL LIST

Director	Gilles de MAISTRE
Scriptwriter	Prune de MAISTRE
Producers	Gilles de MAISTRE & Catherine CAMBORDE
Coproducers	Jonathan VANGER, Sylvain PROULX, Marco COLOMBO & Mattia DELLA PUPPA
Line producer	Carole VAILLANCOURT, Nicole SORIANO & Mark SLONE
1st assistant director	David LEMAIRE
Director of photography	Olivier LABERGE
Sound engineer	Stéphane ROY
Scripts	Elizabeth TREMBLAY & Fanny BELLAVANCE
Casting Canada	Rosina BUCCI - Elite Casting
Casting USA	Leeba ZAKHAROV
General directors	Rocco SAINT-MLEUX (Mexique) & Laurent COMMUNAUX (Canada)
Animal coordinators	Kurtis BAYFORD & Jean-Philippe MAGNONE
Costume designer	Julia PATKOS & Elisabeth MORAD
Chief make-up artist	Fanny VACHON
Art director / Production designer	Raymond DUPUIS
Production designer	Patrick PASQUIER
Chief stagehand	Jeff NICHOL
Chief electrician	François LEGRIS & Jean-Nicolas BARON
Aquatic special effects	Gauthier FLAUDER
Photographers	Christopher POWER, Lexi STEEL & Emmanuel GUIONET
Postproduction supervisor	Georges JARDON
Chief film editor	Julien REY
Chief sound editor	Jean-Philippe SAVARD
Sound editor	Raymond LEGAULT
Mixer	Stéphane BERGERON
Visual effects supervisor	Emilien LAZARON
Visual effects	ALCHEMY 24
Original music	Armand AMAR

Filming took place in January 2022, then from September to early December 2022, in Playa del Carmen, Mexico and Montreal, Canada.