



LES FILMS DU FLEUVE AND ARCHÈLE 35  
PRESENT

ADÈLE HAENEL



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
COMPETITION  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

# THE UNKOWN GIRL

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

OLIVIER BONNAUD JÉRÉMIE RENIER LOUKA MINNELLA

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# THE UNKNOWN GIRL

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**JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE**

BELGIUM/FRANCE - 106 MIN - DCP - 1.85

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## SYNOPSIS

Jenny, a young general practitioner, feels guilty for not having opened the door of her practice to a girl who is found dead shortly after. On learning from the police that they have no way of identifying her, Jenny has only one goal: to discover the name of the young girl so that she will not be buried anonymously – so that she will not disappear as if she had never lived.

## CAST

Jenny Davin .....	ADÈLE HAENEL
Julien .....	OLIVIER BONNAUD
Bryan's father .....	JÉRÉMIE RENIER
Bryan .....	LOUKA MINNELLA
Bryan's mother .....	CHRISTELLE CORNIL
Cashier at the cybercafé .....	NADÈGE OUEDRAOGO
Lambert Junior .....	OLIVIER GOURMET
Old Lambert .....	PIERRE SUMKAY
Doctor Habran .....	YVES LAREC
Inspector Ben Mahmoud .....	BEN HAMIDOU
Inspector Bercaro .....	LAURENT CARON
Doctor Riga .....	FABRIZIO RONGIONE
Diabetic patient .....	JEAN-MICHEL BALTHAZAR
Lucas .....	THOMAS DORET
Pimp .....	MARC ZINGA
Crane operator .....	MORGAN MARINNE

## A CONVERSATION WITH JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

### How did **THE UNKNOWN GIRL**, the story of a young GP, come about?

**Jean-Pierre Dardenne (JPD):** At the beginning, there was the character of a doctor whom we called Jenny. We talked about this for several years. A doctor who feels responsible for the death of a young, unidentified immigrant girl, and who tries to discover her name so that she will not be buried anonymously... so that she will not disappear as if she had never existed.

**Luc Dardenne (LD):** Jenny feels culpable, responsible. She refuses to do nothing, she refuses to say: *"I didn't see anything, I didn't hear anything..."*.

### Jenny takes care of her patients, she listens to their bodies. How important was it for you to film this?

**LD:** Yes, it was. The characters endure a lot of psychosomatic reactions: dizzy spells, stomach aches, epileptic seizures... The body always responds first: it speaks, expressing things when we cannot put them into words. Jenny is in tune with her patients' suffering. She tries to ease them while investigating the identity of the unknown girl.

**JPD:** We wanted Jenny to be someone who listens to her patients words and bodies and who, thanks to this ability to listen, becomes a midwife to the truth, whose surgery becomes a confessional.

### Did you do any research with actual doctors?

**LD:** A doctor friend whom we've known for years served as a consultant during the writing process. She also came on set to help with the medical scenes. In addition, certain scenes were inspired by stories we heard from doctors we met.

**At the beginning of the film, Jenny tells Julien, her intern, that you always have to “be stronger than your emotions”. What follows partly contradicts that claim.**

**LD:** Like any doctor, Jenny shouldn't trust her emotions when it comes to making a medical diagnosis, but they may come in handy when interacting with her patients and helping them... and even more during her investigation to discover the dead girl's identity.

**In her own way, Jenny is also an “unknown girl”. We don't know anything about her past or her personal life.**

**JPD:** We see her make a life choice, she turns down a profitable career opportunity to remain working as a GP in the *banlieue*, because she believes that's the only way she will be able to discover the girl's name. We felt we didn't need to dwell on it. She leaves her apartment for good to relocate to her practice, she turns down a profitable position to work as a GP in the suburbs. That's all you need to know about her. In earlier drafts of the script, you found out more about her life but these details seemed pointless to tell the story we wanted to tell.

**LD:** Jenny is possessed by the unknown girl, and this is what makes her so determined and so patient in her search for her name. It's not a supernatural possession but a moral possession. That's what interested us.

**To varying degrees, Jenny's patients are victims of contemporary hardships: social insecurity, the destruction of social cohesion...**

**LD:** These characters exist in the here and now. They belong to that part of society that has been brutally excluded. However, we never wanted them to be 'social cases'. They are individuals.

**THE UNKNOWN GIRL takes place in the Province of Liège.**

**JPD:** Ever since *THE PROMISE* back in 1996, we've shot all our films there. Even before writing the script – when we had nothing more than a vague idea of a doctor – we already knew that we'd shoot by the freeway and the Meuse River. The location for *THE UNKNOWN GIRL* somehow came before the script.

**LD:** We were inspired by the freeway. Cars pass endlessly and at great speed on that road, much as the world follows its course, unaware of the significance of what's going on in Jenny's little doctor's practice.

**After working with Cécile de France in *THE KID WITH A BIKE* and Marion Cotillard in *TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT*, now you've directed Adèle Haenel in *THE UNKNOWN GIRL*.**

**LD:** We met Adèle in Paris when she won an award for *SUZANNE*. After exchanging just a few words with her, we wanted to cast her as our doctor. She was able to embody the brightness of youth, as well as a naivety, an innocence capable of opening the hardest hearts.

**JPD:** We rehearsed for four weeks with our actors before the shoot. Not read-throughs, but on location by working on the situations and the movements. Adèle was there every day during this vital process, always asking questions and coming up with ideas. She's at the same time spontaneous, unpredictable and light-hearted. Her creativity brought us solutions we hadn't thought of ourselves.

**You also cast your 'fetish' actors, Olivier Gourmet and Jérémie Renier.**

**LD:** We always enjoy working with them. In *THE UNKNOWN GIRL*, we also cast Thomas Doret who played Cyril in *THE KID WITH A BIKE*, Morgan Marinho who played Francis in *THE SON* and Fabrizio Rongione with whom we've worked several times. We also enjoyed working with Olivier Bonnaud, a young French actor who was a wonderful revelation.



## A CONVERSATION WITH ADELE HAENEL

### What did the Dardenne brothers mean to you before you shot **THE UNKNOWN GIRL**?

They unquestionably occupy an important place in the landscape of contemporary cinema history. I hadn't seen all of their films before we met – and I caught up with those I'd missed afterwards! – but I was familiar with some that had left a deep impression on me, including **THE PROMISE** and **TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT**. Ever since I started out as an actress, I've been in arthouse movies. But considering the Dardennes' status, I was awestruck when they approached me. I didn't think it would ever happen to me.

### What was your reaction when you read the script?

I was struck by the story's simplicity and depth. The Dardennes' work is very precise. They go straight to the point and have no use for window-dressing. You can feel this precision and lack of compromise from the script stage.

### Can you define your character, Jenny?

She's no outstanding heroine – and I like that about her. We know hardly anything about her personal life. For me, the film is about Jenny's being reborn, to life and to herself, by reaching out to others. She is an empathetic listener and never looks down on anyone.

### **How did the Dardennes' directing methods help you portray this character?**

When you have a good shorthand with your director, you don't need to talk so much. The brothers and I understood each other very well. The Dardennes don't load themselves down with psychology – with them, it's all about the body, listening and the characters' actions. I had to focus on what might seem like small details, although they're not – how do you put on medical gloves? How do you give an injection? I was so busy wondering how to actually do things that I didn't have time to think about Jenny's feelings. My performance had to be 'invisible' – anything else would have been completely inappropriate.

### **In THE UNKNOWN GIRL, as in any other film by the Dardennes, the social background is key.**

I like films that evoke today's world. The characters are informed by their social standing and living conditions. This defines how they move on with their lives, how much they have faith in themselves and others, their health... Certain social classes are underrepresented in today's cinema. It's crucial that some directors, with the Dardennes in first place, address this issue.

### **The Dardennes are known to do a lot of rehearsing with their actors. What was your experience of the preparation process and of the shoot?**

Their reputation for exhausting actors with countless takes is a myth. With them it's never about showing off your performance skills. I was constantly under the impression that things were moving fast. We had one month of preparation prior to the shoot, which was extremely important. All the cast members were gathered, which meant that those who didn't have much screen time immediately felt they belonged with us.

### **What else happens at this stage?**

During rehearsals, the brothers focus intensely on how the actors move, on the situations the characters come up against, on the way they move the camera. Basically, that's when the essential directing work actually takes shape. Whenever a problem arises, they can think it over and find

a solution, so they don't have to deal with it on set. The preparation helped me to get rid of my concerns, although of course you still feel a certain pressure...

### **Does playing a doctor demand certain technical skills?**

Throughout the preparation, I had a medical consultant with me – Martine, who's a doctor in real life. She taught me how to perform specific procedures and how to interact with patients – even though there's no magic formula.

### **What do you think you will keep from the experience?**

With the Dardennes, I ventured into 'counterintuitive' territory, which was a crucial experience for me. They saw something in me beyond my anger. This is an integral part of me but it's not the whole story.

### **With THE UNKNOWN GIRL, you have a starring role in a film in competition at the Cannes Film Festival.**

The Cannes Film Festival highlights a certain kind of film and it's important for those films to be screened there. But what makes me the proudest is nothing personal. I'm first and foremost proud of the film. If it wasn't at Cannes, I'd be no less proud.



## ADÈLE HAENEL

### FILMOGRAPHY

- 2002** **THE DEVILS**  
Christophe Ruggia
- 2007** **WATER LILIES**  
Céline Sciamma
- 2011** **IRIS IN BLOOM**  
Valérie Mréjen
- HOUSE OF TOLERANCE**  
Bertrand Bonello
- HEAT WAVE**  
Jean-Jacques Jauffret
- THREE WORLDS**  
Catherine Corsini
- 2012** **ALIYAH**  
Elie Wajeman
- 2013** **SUZANNE**  
Katell Quillévéré  
*César Award for Best Supporting Actress*
- IN THE NAME OF MY DAUGHTER**  
André Téchiné
- 2014** **LOVE AT FIRST FIGHT**  
Thomas Cailley  
*César Award for Best Actress*
- 2016** **LES OGRES**  
Léa Fehner
- DIE BLUMEN VON GESTERN**  
Chris Kraus
- ORPHELINE**  
Arnaud des Pallières
- THE UNKNOWN GIRL**  
Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne



# JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Jean-Pierre Dardenne was born in Engis (Belgium) in April 1951. Luc Dardenne was born in Awirs (Belgium) in March 1954. They have directed numerous documentaries. In 1975, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne founded the production company *Dérives*, which has to date produced more than 80 documentaries, including their own. In 1994, they established the production company *Les Films du Fleuve*.

**1987** **FALSCH**

with Bruno Cremer

**1992** **I THINK ABOUT YOU**

with Fabienne Babe, Robin Renucci

**1996** **THE PROMISE**

with Jérémie Renier, Olivier Gourmet, Assita Ouédraogo

**1999** **ROSETTA**

with Émilie Dequenne, Fabrizio Rongione, Anne Yernaux, Olivier Gourmet  
*Palme d'Or and Best Actress for Emilie Dequenne*  
*Cannes Film Festival 1999*

**2002** **THE SON**

with Olivier Gourmet, Morgan Marinnie, Isabella Soupart  
*Best Actor for Olivier Gourmet - Cannes Film Festival 2002*

**2005** **THE CHILD**

with Jérémie Renier, Déborah François, Jérémie Ségard  
*Palme d'Or - Cannes Film Festival 2005*

**2008** **LORNA'S SILENCE**

with Arta Dobroschi, Jérémie Renier, Fabrizio Rongione  
*Best Screenplay - Cannes Film Festival 2008*  
*Lux Prize - European Parliament 2008*

**2011** **THE KID WITH A BIKE**

with Cécile de France, Thomas Doret, Jérémie Renier  
*Grand Prix - Cannes Film Festival 2011*

**2014** **TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT**

with Marion Cotillard, Fabrizio Rongione  
*European Film Award for Best Actress for Marion Cotillard - 2015*

**2016** **THE UNKNOWN GIRL**

with Adèle Haenel, Olivier Bonnaud





## CREW

Written and Directed by .....	<b>JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Director .....	<b>CAROLINE TAMBOUR</b>
D.P. ....	<b>ALAIN MARCOEN (S.B.C)</b>
Camera Operator .....	<b>BENOÎT DERVAUX</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Camera Assistant .....	<b>AMAURY DUQUENNE</b>
Editor .....	<b>MARIE-HÉLÈNE DOZO</b>
Sound Engineer .....	<b>JEAN-PIERRE DURET</b>
Sound Editor .....	<b>BENOÎT DE CLERCK</b>
Sound Mixer .....	<b>THOMAS GAUDER</b>
Production Designer .....	<b>IGOR GABRIEL</b>
Costume Designer .....	<b>MAÏRA RAMEDHAN-LEVI</b>
Make-up .....	<b>NATALI TABAREAU-VIEUILLE</b>
Location Manager .....	<b>GUILLAUME FERNANDEZ</b>
Production Manager .....	<b>OLIVIER ABRASSART</b>
Stills Photographer .....	<b>CHRISTINE PLENUS</b>
Producers .....	<b>JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE</b>
.....	<b>DENIS FREYD</b>
Executive Producer .....	<b>DELPHINE TOMSON</b>
Coproducers .....	<b>PETER BOUCKAERT</b>
.....	<b>BART VAN LANGENDONCK</b>
Associate Producers .....	<b>PHILIPPE LOGIE</b>
.....	<b>ARLETTE ZYLBERBERG</b>

A Les Films du Fleuve, Archipel 35, Savage Film, France 2 Cinéma, VOO and Be tv, RTBF (Télévision belge) coproduction  
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