

*Fanny Ardant Louis Garrel Dylan Robert Marine Vacth Caroline Chaniolleau
Alain Françon Florent Lacger Henri-Noël Tabary Omar Marwan and Maïwenn*



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2020

DNA

a film by Maïwenn

WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS & LES FILMS DE BATNA present



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a film by Maiwenn

*with Fanny Ardant, Louis Garrel, Dylan Robert, Marine Vacth, Caroline Chaniolleau,
Alain Françon, Florent Lacger, Henri-Noël Tabary, Omar Marwan and Maiwenn*

90 min. - France - 2020 - Scope - 5.1

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SYNOPSIS

Neige, a divorced mother of three, regularly visits her Algerian grandfather in the nursing home where he lives. She loves and respects this pillar of the family who raised her and, above all, protected her from toxic parents. Relationships between the various family members are difficult, rife with bitterness and resentment... Luckily, Neige can count on the good-humoured support of her ex, François.

The death of the grandfather unleashes a family storm and triggers a profound identity crisis in Neige. From now on, she will want to know and understand her DNA.

INTERVIEW WITH MAÏWENN

When did you first know you wanted to make DNA?

I've been writing a film about Madame du Barry, Louis XV's mistress, since 2016. It's a long project to write and a complicated one to finance. In 2019, my producer Pascal Caucheteux told me: "We can't make this film this year but, in the meantime, if you want to make another, cheaper, let's go." So, I gathered notes I've had for several years and put them together for DNA.

Why did you write it with Mathieu Demy?

Mathieu Demy and I are friends. He had just lost his mother. I told him I wanted to make a film about grief. I had written a first draft on my own and he joined me. I felt he wanted to express himself on the subject and I liked his ideas, I found them relevant and funny. We shared this subject of loss: how to manage grief from an emotional point of view but also the logistics of it all, which is the funny part of the film - the undertakers, the funeral directors, the retirement home care assistants, the schedules that have to be respected, choosing a coffin, which kind of ceremony, who to invite...

We laughed and cried; we weren't embarrassed to get emotional in front of each other. His eye was precious to me. I decided to shoot DNA in a light way, like my first film: three weeks, with a small crew, like a short. In fact, it wasn't particularly easy to recapture that feeling after POLISSE and MON ROI: the eye of the crew can never be quite the same, and I wasn't the same director either. So, the desire to regain the feeling of my beginnings vanished in about 30 seconds from day one.

You gave the actors a lot of freedom...

Yes, to regain the freedom I enjoyed on my first film. I didn't want a classic script. The text Mathieu and I wrote was about forty pages long. The scenes were summarized, with fragments of dialogue. I wanted the actors to own them, for each take to be improvised freely, as much for the cast as for the crew. I managed to film in chronological order, which was indispensable, but sometimes I re-wrote a little according to the scenes from the previous day: things that had already been said allowed to lighten the scenes that followed and avoid repetitions.





Doesn't this freedom carry a risk that each take will be very different, that the narrative will take unexpected directions?

Actually, no. Typically we did three takes and very often reached the emotional peak on the second, but continued for reasons of ambience and light. When the camera's rolling, I avoid cutting, I want everyone to stay focused, I don't want to stop and lose the tension. It's difficult to reproduce great emotional intensity once it has been interrupted... And when you don't cut, after a while the actors forget the camera, forget the filming, I can feel it in their performance. Even their voices change, they're truer, freer, more beautiful. But of course, it depends. Dylan Robert is real, right away, he has grace, Fanny Ardant as well, she wants things to go quickly... while others gain momentum gradually. Of course, takes are blended during the editing, when the film is rewritten. It is like lacemaking. During this process I experienced a big moment of doubt. Laure Gardette, who has edited all my films except MON ROI, thought I was too negative, and it's true that I'd lost all self-confidence. I was putting enormous pressure on myself. We finished shooting at the end of August and began editing early October. In early December Laure told me: "I'd rather you went on vacation and let me work for a few weeks." She texted me every evening to keep me up to date, and these texts often ended with: "I'm confident,

I really feel there's a film, trust me." When I returned to discover a very accomplished rough cut I was very happy, we worked the material for months and she reconciled me with my film. Thanks to my editor, once again.

The grandfather's death triggers the narrative. How did you envisage this character?

The character of the grandfather resembles my own, I'm not going to lie... Just like the character I play, and the film for that matter. But the fact remains that I reject the term "autobiographical", I find it reductive and inadequate. Before making this film, I was obsessed with questions of identity, of where I came from, what Algeria represented for me. On a daily basis but also in my inner soul, these questions obsessed me to the point of keeping me awake at night. I studied my origins compulsively; I was never satisfied. Then I went back to Algeria and I felt Algerian. Something physical happened: as soon I set foot in Algiers, I felt I was in my mother's womb... or at least in a place where I felt better perhaps than I ever had before. These questions about our origins had become obsessional, so at that point that I decided to make a film, as I believe fundamentally that the right time to express oneself is when one is obsessed. For the character of the grandfather I wanted both someone who unifies this family, a sort of pillar, and also a character

tormented by his past, as a committed communist. He couldn't exist only in his patriarchal aspect, he needed an intense and turbulent past. In order to understand my character's quest for identity the grandfather had to exist completely, since she identifies with him.

Are the questions that stir the family after the death of the grandfather the same for all families?

I don't know! In any case, in the family of the film, Neige draws on the last years of her grandfather's life to organise the ceremony, while her brother draws on his youth. Both say they want to organise a funeral that "resembles" their grandfather, but they're also seeking to say things about themselves... In other words, they're both right: one is relying on the 93-year-old grandfather, the other on the same man at 20, and I wanted to film this question because I think it's a critical stage of mourning: what do we show of the deceased to the world?

How did you choose the actors?

I wanted Fanny Ardant from the start. Physically, she looked like the character I imagined, and I also wanted to meet her as a woman. I'd heard a podcast that mesmerised me, and I wasn't disappointed. The father is played by Alain Françon, whom I'd seen in just one scene in *ME, MYSELF*

AND MUM; I had memorised his name without knowing he was one of the truly great theatre directors. He was surprised that I offered him the role and insisted that he wasn't an actor, but I wanted him, I love his gaze. He plays an unsympathetic character and I wanted to humanize him through Alain's gaze. I wanted a family that suffocates as soon as the father is present because he is a castrator and emotionally crippled, hence the dream with the snakes that allows the audience to get into my character's head.

And the other roles?

I've wanted to work with Marine Vauth for a long time. People told me she looked like me, but it wasn't about that. As soon as I saw her in *YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL*, I felt we were on the same planet, as if I understood her wildness, and her 'moral hygiene': remaining on the sidelines, standing apart from social events and social media. Since the shoot we've grown close. Louis Garrel I've always wanted to film, he's a muse to me! I knew he would bring a comic counterpoint to the general mood, so the film wouldn't be too much of a tearjerker. People don't know it but he's like that in real life. Really funny. I wanted to reap the benefit of his humour, his intelligence and benevolence. I had loved Dylan Robert in *SHEHEREZADE*, he came and did some tests, and he simply shone. I gave him the part of the cousin, the son of the third sister who disappeared.





For Neige's brothers, I wanted actors who we haven't yet been seeing much on screen: I chose Henri-Noël Tabary whom I loved in *A VIOLENT LIFE*. Florent Lacger I didn't know. I met him and we talked for a long time; he is also reserved and I like to work with people who don't chase parts, who have a rich life outside cinema, who are interested in a lot of other things. It gives them a healthy distance with me and the film, and I like to film people who don't give a damn about cinema. It's as simple as that. As for Caroline Chaniolleau, she is the discovery of Julie Aslione, the casting director, with whom I loved working. Caroline did some tests and she astonished me, she brings a real counterpoint to Fanny that I love. She portrays the reasonable sister, straight, always on time. Fanny Ardant plays the crazy sister, always on edge, ready to blow a fuse at any moment.

What would you like the audience to take from DNA?

I'd like them to ask themselves: what have my parents, what have my grandparents passed on to me? And what do I want to pass on? How does the story of our origins emerge in our daily lives? What does it mean to be of this or that country's origin? How does it express itself? Through what? A knowledge of history? The practice of a language? These are all things that interest me and that I wanted to question in the film. In truth, and simply, I think I wanted to make a film *AGAINST* racism and *FOR* immigrants, whatever generation or geographic origin. That's of no importance. I wanted to make a film that would make us ask ourselves: but where do I actually come from? When you experience the sorrow of bereavement, anything goes to relieve that sorrow, you have to reach a kind of metamorphosis to give meaning to the absence and almost manage to exist under the gaze of the departed so he or she can exist even more.

LAURE GARDETTE,

Editor

Laure Gardette has edited four of Maïwenn's five features. In 2012, she won the César for Best Editing, shared with Yann Dedet, for *POLISSE*, and was nominated twice for her work on *FRANTZ* and *BY THE GRACE OF GOD* by François Ozon.

FINDING ONESELF

I edited Maïwenn's very first short film, *I'M AN ACTRICE*. It was pretty funny. We'd arranged to meet to see if she wanted to work with me. She was in prep and didn't have much time. She asked what I thought of the script, and I told her it was good, but that perhaps she didn't place enough trust in cinema, that she was too much into the dialogue. "Can you repeat that?" she replied. So I did. And she answered: "I don't understand." She stood up and shook my hand. I really didn't think I'd be working on her film but in fact she liked my honesty.

I realised later that Maïwenn is instinctive, intuitive, she doesn't overanalyse. If you're too analytical, too theoretical,





you break something. She had understood very well what I'd told her, but in fact, she wasn't interested. I noticed that, on DNA, which examines the question of her origins, she also returned to her origins as a filmmaker. She had a desire to revisit her first impulses as director, to make a film in the same way she made her first feature, PARDONNEZ-MOI. A funny connection, but out of the question to mention it to her!

MATURING

Usually, when I edit a film, I receive 60 hours of rushes. For DNA, I had 150. A little less than for POLISSE. The first rough cut, which Maïwenn didn't see, was five and a half hours long. I think the one I agreed to show her was two hours and 45 minutes. It's clear that digital suits her best, it's the tool that has allowed her to find herself as filmmaker. But since PARDONNEZ-MOI, which could only have existed in digital, Maïwenn has matured greatly and worked a great deal: she has seen a vast number of films and read a lot. I'd be curious to see her make a film on film, with all its constraints. That doesn't seem impossible to me.

In fact, the editing of DNA was more fluid, quite smooth. She was more confident, less attached to the material for its own sake. We took out entire scenes and she was less anxious about these cuts. She understood that even if it's cut

it can always be put back later. And even though she acts in her films, she has no ego as regards her image. She looks at herself the same way as she looks at the others, which shows a great maturity.

TAMING

On Maïwenn's films, when I'm confronted with the material, I feel like I'm trying to tame a wild animal. You have to take it slow. The beast has sharp claws. We tame each other, sniff each other, and at some point, the wild animal responds. You ask it to stand up, and it stands up; to sit, and it sits. It's physical work: I move all the time in front of my screen, I'm with the actors, I speak with them and like them. To be in sync with this strange beast, I have to play the same game. The work begins sequence by sequence, and the game is to question yourself constantly in front of the abundant material: what should this sequence specifically convey? The originality, the singularity of a scene can come from its angle. Finding the right angle is fantastic. For example, deciding to hear the voice of Neige's mother before she appears on screen - everyone knows Fanny Ardant's voice.

PRESERVING

I knew that it was important that Maïwenn and I watch the significant sequences together. The rushes are my compass. I know what she wants according to her reactions. She lives

the sequences, talks to me, we never stop, sometimes she smiles, and sometimes seems distressed. I get emotionally what she likes and what she doesn't. Once we'd finished watching I told her: "You can go." It was a way of protecting her eye: it's essential during editing not to wear out the director's gaze. When she saw the first rough cut she was reassured, she knew the film was there.

We knew the scene of the argument with Fanny Ardant was an important sequence, but perhaps not quite how important, we didn't imagine it would be quite so powerful for the audience. There were three takes, all with slightly different aims. In one, the aim was reconciliation. But it had to remain tense, particularly because of the following scene, at the consulate, where Neige has to say, believably: "I don't speak to my mother anymore". It became clear for one take, and it really was a joint effort. At times like these, Maïwenn is totally inside the characters, those that inspired her no longer exist. This shows her true maturity, which allows her to serve her fictional characters rather than wanting to stick to the reality of situations she has lived through. It was more complicated with PARDONNEZ-MOI.

ENHANCING

Maïwenn gives the keys without giving them; the unconscious is truly at work. For example, the end of the film, in Algeria:

she shot these sequences twice, on her iPhone as a more obvious shoot could have got her into trouble. At first, I wasn't too sure what the sequence was supposed to convey. Rather than date the film in relation to the protests, I thought we needed music. But what? I asked my assistant to look but what he found didn't work.

So, I went back to basics: Neige goes to Algeria to find her grandfather. The grandfather's favourite music, as is written in the script, is by Idir, the Kabyle singer who died recently. I didn't know his songs, so I looked him up on the internet and I noticed a title, "Letter to my Daughter", and thought, let's try. When I watched it, it moved me to tears. Same thing for Maïwenn, who said: "It's my grandfather talking to me." For the record, it turns out that the lyrics of this song are by Grand Corps Malade, whose films I have edited. Our two unconscious minds had spoken...

Maïwenn has the keys, I'm just the developing agent. She captures talent. Her great strength is to set things up, to allow everyone the opportunity to be free, to have fun, and to make sure that everyone's work is magnified. It's true when she's shooting, where she will ensure that the actors are right up there. And it's the same for me in my technical role. If you're able to give her something, she feels it and will ensure you can express yourself freely.



MAÏWENN, *Director*

BIOGRAPHY

Maïwenn was a child actress and directed her first short film in 2004, *I'm an Actrice*, followed two years later by her first feature, *Pardonnez-moi*, both of which were a continuation of her one-woman show *Le Pois Chiche*.

After *All About Actresses* in 2009, she directed *Polisse* in 2011 (Jury Prize, Cannes FF) and *Mon Roi* in 2015, (Best Actress Award, Cannes FF).

FILMOGRAPHY

Director/writer

- 2020 DNA
- 2015 MON ROI
Cannes Film Festival 2015 - Best Actress
- 2011 POLISSE
Cannes Film Festival 2011 - Jury Prize
- 2009 ALL ABOUT ACTRESSES
- 2006 PARDONNEZ-MOI (also producer)
- 2004 I'M AN ACTRICE

Actor

- 2020 DNA - MAÏWENN
- 2016 THE PRICE OF SUCCESS - Teddy LUSSI
MODESTE

- 2013 LOVE IS THE PERFECT CRIME- Arnaud and Jean-Marie LARRIEU
- 2012 PIRATE TV - Michel LECLERC
- 2011 POLISSE - MAÏWENN
- 2008 ALL ABOUT ACTRESSES - MAÏWENN
- 2006 PARDONNEZ-MOI - MAÏWENN
- 2005 LE COURAGE D'AIMER - Claude LELOUCH
STAR STUFF - Gregory HERVELIN
- 2004 OSMOSIS - Raphaël FEJTO
HIGH TENSION - Alexandre AJA
- 2003 LES PARISIENS - Claude LELOUCH
- 2001 8 RUE CHARLOT - Bruno GARCIA
- 2000 THE MECHANICS OF WOMEN- Jérôme DE
MISSOLZ
- 1997 THE FIFTH ELEMENT- Luc BESSON
- 1994 LEON - Luc BESSON
- 1992 LA GAMINE - Hervé PALUD
- 1990 LACENAIRE - Francis GIROD
- 1988 L'AUTRE NUIT - Jean-Pierre LIMOSIN
- 1987 CINEMATON n° 994 - Gérard COURANT
- 1986 L'ETAT DE GRACE - Jacques ROUFFIO
- 1983 ONE DEADLY SUMMER- Jean BECKER





FANNY ARDANT

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

Director

2016 STALIN'S COUCH
2012 OBSESSIVE RHYTHMS
2009 ASHES AND BLOOD

Actor

2020 DNA - MAÏWENN
2019 THE BARE NECESSITY - Erwan LE DUC
LA BELLE EPOQUE - Nicolas BEDOS
2018 MY MOTHER IS CRAZY - Diane KURYS
2017 LOLA PATER - Nadir MOKNECHE
2013 BRIGHT DAYS AHEAD - Marion VERNOUX
2009 FACE - TSAI Ming-Liang
2008 IL DIVO - Paolo SORRENTINO
2007 ROMAN DE GARE - Claude LELOUCH
2004 THE SMELL OF BLOOD - Mario MARTONE
2003 NATHALIE... - Anne FONTAINE
2002 8 WOMEN - François OZON
CALLAS FOREVER - Franco ZEFFIRELLI
1999 HARD OFF - Claude BERRI
1998 THE DINNER - Ettore SCOLA
1996 RIDICULE - Patrice LECONTE

1995 PEDALE DOUCE - Gabriel AGHION
BEYOND THE CLOUDS - Michelangelo
ANTONIONI and Wim WENDERS
SABRINA - Sydney POLLACK
1994 COLONEL CHABERT - Yves ANGELO
1989 DO NOT CRY MY LOVE - Tony GATLIFF
1988 THREE SISTERS - Margarethe VON TROTTA
1987 THE FAMILY - Ettore SCOLA
1986 PALTOQUET - Michel DEVILLE
FAMILY COUNCIL - Costa GAVRAS
MELO - Alain RESNAIS
1985 L'ETE PROCHAIN - Nadine TRINTIGNANT
LES ENRAGES - Pierre-William GLENN
1984 LOVE UNTO DEATH - Alain RESNAIS
SWANN IN LOVE - Volker SCHLÖNDORFF
DESIRE - Anna Maria TATO
1983 FINALLY, SUNDAY! - François TRUFFAUT
LIFE IS A BED OF ROSES - Alain RESNAIS
1981 THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR - François TRUFFAUT
BOLERO - Claude LELOUCH

LOUIS GARREL

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2020 DNA - MAÏWENN
2019 THE STORY OF MY WIFE - Ildiko ENYEDI
A FAITHFUL MAN - Louis GARREL
AN OFFICER AND A SPY - Roman POLANSKI
LITTLE WOMEN - Greta GERWIG
2018 ONE NATION, ONE KING - Pierre SCHOELLER
2017 REDOUBTABLE - Michel HAZANAVICIUS
ISMAEL'S GHOSTS - Arnaud DESPLECHIN
2016 THE SUMMONING - Rebecca ZLOTOWSKI
FROM THE LAND OF THE MOON - Nicole
GARCIA
2015 TWO FRIENDS - Louis GARREL
IN THE SHADOW OF WOMEN - Philippe
GARREL
MON ROI - MAÏWENN

2014 SAINT LAURENT - Bertrand BONELLO
JEALOUSY - Philippe GARREL
A CASTLE IN ITALY - Valeria BRUNI-TEDESCHI
2011 A BURNING HOT SUMMER - Philippe GARREL
BELOVED - Christophe HONORE
2009 MAKING PLANS FOR LENA - Christophe
HONORE
2008 FRONTIER OF THE DAWN - Philippe GARREL
2007 LES CHANSONS D'AMOUR - Christophe
HONORE
2006 DANS PARIS - Christophe HONORE
2005 REGULAR LOVERS - Philippe GARREL
2004 MA MERE - Christophe HONORE
2003 THE DREAMERS - Bernardo BERTOLUCCI

MARINE VACTH

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2020 DNA - MAÏWENN
- 2019 PINOCCHIO - Matteo GARRONE
- 2017 L'AMANT DOUBLE - François OZON
IF YOU SAW HIS HEART - Joan CHEMLA
- 2016 THE CONFESSION - Nicolas BOUKHRIEF
- 2015 FAMILIES - Jean-Paul RAPPENEAU
- 2013 YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL - François OZON
- 2012 WHAT THE DAY OWES THE NIGHT - Alexandre ARCADY
- 2011 MY PIECE OF THE PIE - Cédric KLAPISH

DYLAN ROBERT

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2020 DNA - MAÏWENN
- 2018 SHEHERAZADE - Jean-Bernard MARLIN
César 2019: Most Promising Actor

CAST

Fanny Ardant Caroline
Louis Garrel François
Dylan Robert Kevin
Marine Vacth Lilah
Caroline Chaniolleau Françoise
Alain Françon Pierre
Florent Lacger Ali
Henri-Noël Tabary Matteo
Omar Marwan Emir Fellah
Maiwenn Neige

CREW

Screenplay Maiwenn, Mathieu Demy
Editor Laure Gardette
Original Music Stephen Warbeck
Image Sylvestre Dedise, Benjamin Groussain
Continuity Marion Pin
Casting Julie Allione
Sound Nicolas Provost
Sound Editors Julien Roig, Anne Gibourg
Mix Emmanuel Croset
Production Designer Angelo Zamparutti
Make-up Mina Matsumura
Hair Farès Haned
Assistant Directors Sonia Tahallah, Hugo Le Gourrierec
Production Managers Delphine Bellonet, Monica Taverna
Post-production Managers Béatrice Mauduit
Executive Producers Mélissa Malinbaum, Martine Cassinelli

Production WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS, ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA
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NOTES

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