

ARCHIPEL 35 PRESENTS



SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2011

17 GIRLS

A FILM BY DELPHINE & MURIEL COULIN



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50TH INTERNATIONAL CRITICS' WEEK



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A FILM BY DELPHINE & MURIEL COULIN

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SYNOPSIS

17 teenage girls make an unexpected decision together that will change their peaceful small town lives while causing great misunderstandings with the boys and adults around them: they decide to all get pregnant at the same time. This is based on a true story that occurred in 2008.

DIRECTORS' NOTES

LORIENT

The moment we heard about this news item, we realized it was both intriguing and very telling about today's society. Indeed, this is something that could have happened in our hometown, Lorient: a working class city almost entirely destroyed during the second world war, which in the fifties people believed would become a city of the future. Sixty years later, the port and the arsenal are in a crisis, and all hope has vanished. Lorient remains stuck in its past: back when it was called L'Orient, the trading post, where ships left from its port to explore the globe, or later, the city of the resistance, praiseworthy during the last war, whose traces can still be found everywhere. The choices available here for the future are few for teenagers, who turn in circles before this horizon that is much contemplated as a promise of what is possible, but offers little perspective - aside from dispelling boredom. Parents, teachers, none of society has found a way to offer another outlook on life to these girls whose future is already mapped out for them in advance: a high school diploma, a job, marriage, kids - in that order. But they are going to upset everything: they want it all, all at once.



FRIENDSHIP

They are going to rely upon one another to get what they want. Friendship is so strong at that age that it allows you to surmount obstacles and overcome your fears – even if it can also push you to make risky decisions, ones that wouldn't have been taken if you had been alone. We grew up in Lorient, and we know by heart what life is about in this small town, where friendship and the desire for something and somewhere else are of major importance; this narrow existence faced with the Ocean's immensity, which is both a reassuring and worrisome presence: the promise of a horizon.



YOUTH

Camille and her friends are at an age when you are both too big and too little. An age when you have wonderful dreams, but you are still too young to do anything about them; and when you become an adult, when you should finally be able to make these dreams come true, you are often obliged to leave them behind, one after the other. Our girls are aware that the adults' lives in their little town aren't very enviable, and they don't see how to make their own existences more thrilling. As a result, when one of them, their "leader" Camille, gets pregnant and all of a sudden has the impression that her life finally has meaning, she leads the others into doing the same. They share dreams both common and uncommon: they build a utopia. Nothing can stop these idealistic girls who decide to launch themselves into a great adventure, despite all opposition.

We decided to put the adults (parents, teachers, and even the school nurse, although she is right in the thick of what is happening) in the background: we wanted to have the film narrate the story through the teenager's point of view. We didn't want to explain, rather we wanted to observe these girls, watch them dream together, or doubt in the silence of their (actual) rooms.



THE BODY

Their illusions and disillusion allowed us to develop themes upon which we have worked for the short films we directed together: the body, femininity, age, time. Camille and her friends are at an age when life seems natural and infinite, an age when you start to think about the future, an age when also a certain relationship with the body starts to emerge... Their bodies are doubly altered: by time, and by pregnancy. They are not at ease with their bodies, which have begun to resemble adult bodies. At the same time they are prevented from entering adulthood, so they accelerate time and jump into the deep end of the pool: they take the step that will make grownups out of them. Their bodies give them power faced with adults and faced with boys. Their bodies are what allows them to attract attention, be noticed, grow up, define themselves, and even sometimes to belong to one clan or another. Camille discovers her identity, her otherness, and equally experiences separation: from others, from another. For

pregnancy is also this: learning about fusion, and then separation. Inventing a new connection with others. But there is also the risk that their bodies, their only weapon, may turn against them in the end. The film is somewhat organic, in that it films the skin very closely, while showing an intuitive and necessarily abstract idea of life. Something escapes them: the ocean's presence, or that of the sky, haunting and mysterious, is sometimes there to remind them. These girls, in this landscape, are caught right in the middle of minutiae and immensity.

THE CAST

We were present for each and every casting call, and we saw close to six hundred girls in order to choose seventeen of them. Louise Grinberg had a few lines of dialogue in "The Class" by Laurent Cantet, Roxane Duran a memorable role in "The White Ribbon" by Michael Haneke, and Esther Garrel has a role in Bertrand Bonello's "House of Tolerance" in official competition at Cannes this year. But the majority of the girls had never set foot on a movie set. Yara Pilartz and Juliette Darche had never acted before. Their freshness, their will to grow suddenly, their confidence and the bond they built during the course of the film are perceptible. The film was shot in chronological order: we watch them grow.

THE CREW

Jean-Louis Vialard, the cinematographer (who worked among others with Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Baltasar Kormakur and Christophe Honoré) lit our 17 girls in such a way that we pass from a dull and gray universe at the beginning of the film to a more contrasted image, with clear-cut colors, bringing us closer to a fairytale-like universe. The light equipment (shot in Canon 1D camera) allowed us, among other things, to be discreet around the girls, and to use a second camera, operated by Muriel.

Sound, which was recorded by Olivier Mauvezin (who has also worked on films by Laurent Cantet, Mathieu Amalric, Cédric Kahn...) and mixed by Jean-Pierre Laforce (Michael Haneke, Bruno Dumont, Laurent Cantet...) ended up being essential, although difficult at times to handle: recording seventeen teenagers, making do with the ocean (often noisy in Brittany, and which rises between takes...) The sea's haunting presence, these feminine atmospheres, the silence of recesses, or their singing at the top of their lungs, define every moment of their teenage universe.

The music was also chosen as very specific to their world: we wanted the soundtrack to be more rock (Blood Red Shoes, Tricky), close to the girls (Izia, Keren Elson) and to be varied according to their moods (DJ Chloé, Devendra Banhart).

Finally, all of this was made possible by our producer, Denis Freyd, who has produced the new films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, the film of Pierre Schöeller which will be in Cannes this year and also films by Ursula Meier, Mariana Otero, Patricia Mazuy.

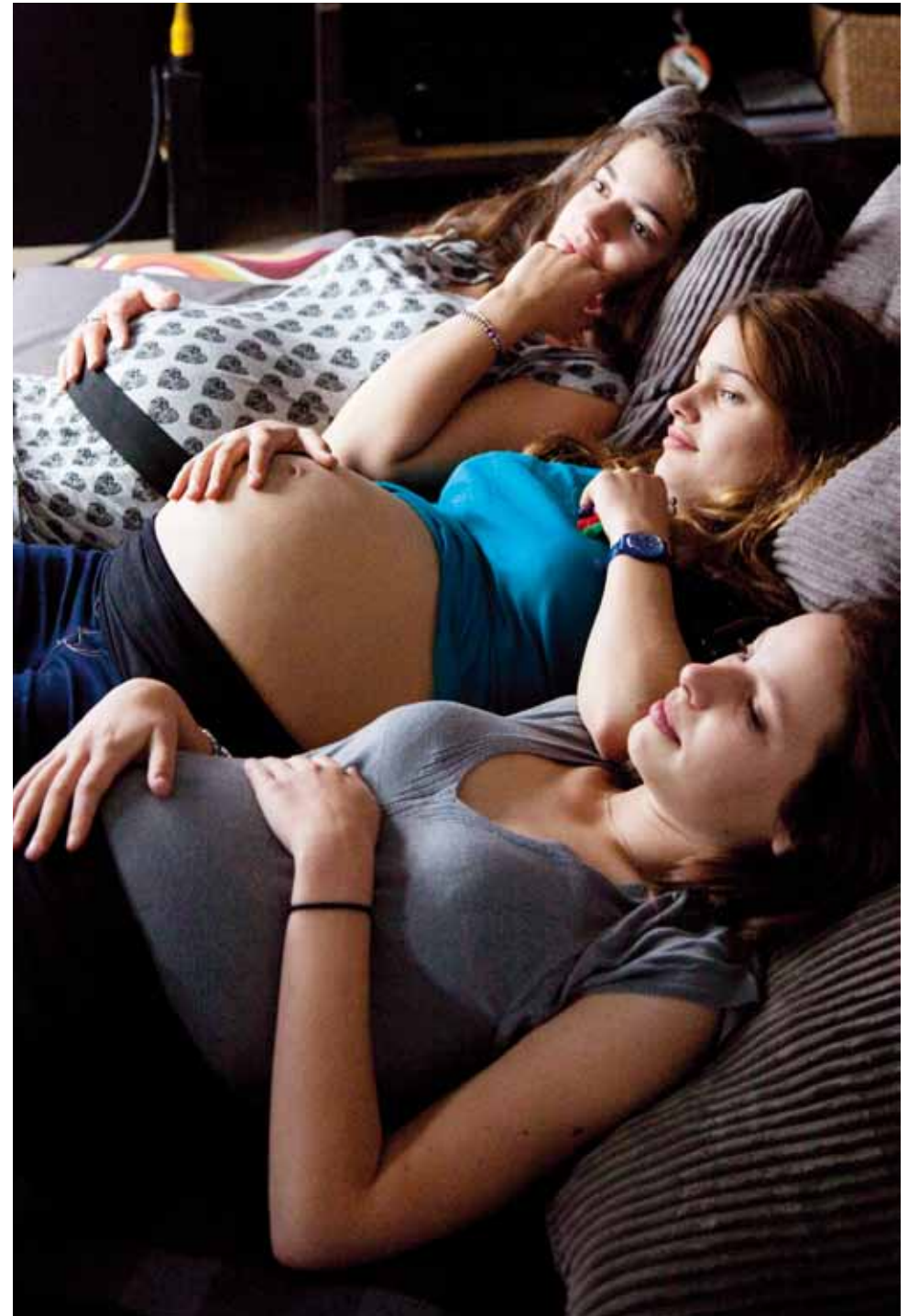
THE LINK BETWEEN COMEDY AND DRAMA

We wanted to tell this story of friendship and femininity in a tone that was both serious (for the way we look at these girls and their dreams, which are greater than they are, remains melancholy) and funny, because the adolescent years are also like that: going from desperation to bursting out in laughter in just a few seconds, as long as one of your friends is by your side.



THE DIRECTORS : DELPHINE & MURIEL COULIN

Delphine and Muriel Coulin have directed five short films, including "Sisyphé" (Best Drama award Los Angeles Film Festival), "Souffle" (Critics prize, selected for Cannes Critic's Week). Delphine also writes novels while Muriel directs documentaries.



CAST

Camille

Julia

Florence

Flavie

Clémentine

Mathilde

School Nurse

Camille's mother

Head of the school

Florian

Tom

LOUISE GRINBERG

JULIETTE DARCHE

ROXANNE DURAN

ESTHER GARREL

YARA PILARTZ

SOLÈNE RIGOT

NOÉMIE LVOVSKY

FLORENCE THOMASSIN

CARLO BRANDT

FRÉDÉRIC NOAILLE

ARTHUR VERRET



CREDITS

Screenplay	Delphine & Muriel Coulin
Cinematographer	Jean-Louis Vialard (a.f.c.)
Sound Design	Olivier Mauvezin
Set Design	Benoît Pfauwadel
Editor	Guy Lecorne
Sound Editing	Vincent Montrobert Julien Bourdeau
Sound Mix	Jean-Pierre Laforce
Costume	Dorothée Guiraud
Make-up	Sylvie Aïd-Denisot
Hair	Fouzia Harleman
Casting	Alexandre Nazarian Agathe Hassenforder (a.r.d.a.)
First Assistant Director	Guillaume Huin
Continuity	Élodie Van Beuren
Location Manager	Michaël Ermogeni
Line Producer	André Bouvard
Producer	Denis Freyd
a Production	Archipel 35
Co-produced with	ARTE France Cinéma
with the participation of	CANAL+, CINÉCINÉMA & ARTE France
with the support of	Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée & Région Bretagne in partnership with CNC
In association with	Banque Populaire Images 11, Cinéimage 5, Uni Étoile 8 & Soficinéma 7
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