

NOLITA AND DEADLY VALENTINE
PRESENT



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES PREMIERE
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

*Jane
by Charlotte*

A FILM BY
CHARLOTTE GAINSBORG



NOLITA AND DEADLY VALENTINE
PRESENT



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES PREMIERE
2021 OFFICIAL SELECTION

by Jane
Charlotte

A FILM BY
CHARLOTTE GAINSBORG

90' • FRANCE • 2021

INTERNATIONAL SALES
THE PARTY FILM SALES

9, rue Ambroise Thomas
75009 Paris
+33 1 40 22 92 15
sales@thepartysales.com
www.thepartysales.com



INTERNATIONAL PRESS
CLAIRE VORGER
COMMUNICATION

+33 6 20 10 40 56
clairevorger@gmail.com

Synopsis



With the tremor of time passing by, **Charlotte Gainsbourg** started to look at her mother **Jane Birkin** in a way she never did, both overcoming a shared sense of reserve.

Through the camera lens, they expose themselves to one another, begin to step back, leaving space for a mother-daughter relationship to unfold.

Jane by Charlotte

You said you wanted to make this film to see your mother, Jane Birkin, in a different way.

Charlotte Gainsbourg – I'd taken refuge in New York for quite a long time, which created a distance between us. We'd been through some rough times with Kate's death. I realized that we clearly loved each other but we'd never been able to say it. There was a reticence between us that I wanted to explore; I needed a reason to get closer to her. Actually, at the beginning of the film, I don't know what I was looking for. It was just, "I'll get a camera and see". Then, when I hired a crew and it became more professional, I wondered how I should go about it: *should I do an interview? And if so, what questions should I ask?* At that point, the film became a more precise exercise, and that also scared me a little. Interviewing your mother is a strange situation, isn't it?

How did you start filming?

We started in Japan, and I did it very officially. She was giving a concert there, so it was a good opportunity to follow her and film her. Japan is incredible and Kate loved the country. One of Kate's friends, Kasumiko Murakami, helped me by looking for some evocative locations... And it became a real little shoot to organize whereas I'd started off with a very undecided project.

In the film, you actually say that you're making it up as you go along.

Yes. I watched documentaries about family – one in particular by Griffin Dunne about his aunt that's very beautiful, very tender, where his aunt really opens up. So, I started by filming my mother's concert in Japan, we did a fairly long interview in the Chigasaki-Kan Hotel, a very Zen, old world place where Ozu wrote his films.

That place is meaningful in terms of your film since Ozu made films about family.

Yes, there were all kinds of little unplanned signs in the film. We say "I love you" twice without the other looking; there's another moment when I put my camera down in the kitchen, we put the meat in the oven, and there's this enormous artichoke in the foreground that recalls l'Homme à la tête de chou! I love those happy coincidences. So, Ozu, yes, welcome!

How did Jane react to your project?

At first, I think she was a bit anxious about my approach. She was terrified by the idea of me digging around in areas that were too personal. I wanted to get into the mother-daughter topic and that really hit her. After Japan, we met up back in Paris and I asked her about how we were going to proceed.

I'd planned on filming her in New York, and she said, "no, this has to stop!". She was shocked by the Japan sequence – I don't know why. And so, I was a little shocked myself, but I accepted her refusal. I told my producer, "Sorry, we're pulling the plug, Jane doesn't want to continue". We shelved the project and two years went by. It didn't tarnish my relationship with my mother, but it took the wind out of my sails in the flow of the film. I couldn't even watch the rushes from Japan again and told myself I must have done something wrong. Then, she came to see me in New York, and I suggested we watch the rushes together to see what the problem was. After watching them, we realized there was nothing uncomfortable; the interview was very sweet, very respectful, nicely shot, and she couldn't even understand why she'd reacted so negatively. She agreed to continue with the film.

So, you picked up the project again two years later?

Yes, with strong encouragement from one of my friends, Nathalie Canguilhem, who encouraged me to work harder, better prepare, and come up with more questions and places. I had no idea how to make the film – so I moved forward empirically, as a novice, with room for mistakes. My film editor, Tianès Montasser, was also an enormous help to me. I allowed myself to drift and move forward instinctively while she dissected the material in a very organized way.

And at a certain point, while I was still searching for the film, she urged me to do the shooting myself, on the spot, without any preparation. So, I bought a camera and a tripod, and my youngest daughter, Jo, helped me with the equipment I hadn't mastered. Jo also made it possible for me to approach my mother in a very informal way: it was my mother, Jo, and me at her house in Brittany. Three generations of women, together as a family.

Jo's presence relaxed the atmosphere and downplayed the filming situation. Then, the crew returned, and we re-shot the Brittany segment more professionally with better sound and beautiful locations.

The film also looks at the way in which Jane sees you, like when she tells you that you were the most mysterious of her daughters.

She'd already told me that and I took it as a harsh remark because what I'd understood was, "you're a stranger". There was something about me that intimidated her. I feel the same thing with my eldest daughter, Alice. Now I understand, through transmission and experience, that mothers and daughters don't necessarily hug, don't necessarily say "I love you" – it depends on the personalities, the upbringing, and the relationship that's forged. When I was younger, I struggled with the slightly distant relationship I had with my mother; I saw that it wasn't the same with Kate or Lou. They could argue with her and had a closeness that I didn't. Of course, my mother is always there when I need her, but there's a lot of tact between us.

Tact, discretion, and secrecy don't mean a lack of love.

Well, my father never said “I love you” either, but he showed me his love with songs and films, so I know there are a lot of ways to express your love to your children, obviously. But maybe, being the second in a tribe of three girls, I was jealous; I wanted to be closer to my mother, I wanted an overabundance of emotions and more fighting. The eldest bears the brunt, and that creates a stronger if not more explosive relationship with the parents – but also maybe easier, too, because it's hands-on.

Your mother says that she embraces her age, and in the film, we clearly see that she appears without makeup. Is that peace of mind with respect to “appearance” something you admire or a quality that inspires you?

Yes, for me, she's an example. I wanted her to be beautiful in the film in the sense that I wanted to see what I perceive of her. But I can't be like her; I don't have her grace, and, for a long time, I suffered from not having her beauty. I can't tell myself that I'm going to age like her – we didn't start at the same level. I didn't want to use archive footage of her in the film – I didn't want to make it hard for her that way. I'm grateful to her for having agreed to be filmed without makeup, and in her role



as a grandmother, which she embraces perfectly. But she doesn't show up in just anything either. She's like my father – she has a sloppy side, but it's a carefully studied sloppy!

She also admits to having stage fright before going on stage. Is that something you've inherited from her?

Yes, absolutely. I grew up seeing both of my parents devoured by stage fright. But despite my mother's chronic stage fright, I saw the magic of her shows on stage. She gave me that fear of losing my words and forgetting my lines. She was imbued by my father's lyrics and considered it her mission continue transmitting them – and so, she was terrified of doing it badly. It was very important to her to get the words in those fairly complicated lyrics just right. As for me, I'm afraid of getting it wrong with much simpler texts. So, she clearly passed that on to me. But it brings us closer, we understand each other very well when it comes to apprehension and the fear of losing control.

There's a very beautiful sequence where you visit rue de Verneuil. We're astonished to find out that Jane had never gone back there and was waiting for your permission.

She hadn't returned for thirty years. During that whole time, I'd often talked to her about my hesitation about turning the place into a museum. That house was my personal mission, but I was having a hard time doing anything with it; deep down, I think I wanted to keep the house as the last secret thing about my father. During that whole time, I hadn't invited anyone to visit the place; it was too painful for me, and I thought it would be just as painful for loved ones like my mother. Going to rue de Verneuil was a masochistic pleasure for me, and I didn't want to inflict that on others.

In the film, we get the impression that you and your mother are relatively serene and calm in that meaningful place.

It's funny, though, because I know I'm suffering in that sequence, which corresponds to my period of depression. To the extent that I wasn't doing well, my mother supported me and was extremely generous and available – she helped me get through it. When we shot that sequence, I was just starting the process of turning the house into a museum. Now, the project has taken real shape.

The place itself is beautifully unique and has the magic of those places where time seems to have stood still. You mother compares rue de Verneuil to Pompeii, which isn't so far-fetched.

Yes. I think that place is currently hard for me because it eludes me. For my mother, it's far more distant. Twelve years went by between the moment she left my dad and rue de Verneuil and the moment he died. In total, that makes forty-one years that went by. But it's strange for me to hear that she'd have liked to have gone; I never would've thought

that. She always told me that it made sense to turn it into a museum; then, she didn't say anything more to me about it because she could see that it was a complex subject for me.

Another very beautiful, very moving sequence is when your mother is talking about Kate as home movies featuring Kate as a child are being projected behind her and even on her face. She neither wants nor can watch those images.

Each of us has our limits when it comes to tragedy. Personally, I couldn't look at pictures or listen to my father's music for thirty years. I rejected it all, I didn't look at any archives. Strangely, with Kate, I sought out pictures, I wanted to talk about her every chance I got. Maybe because in my father's case, everyone talked about it; whereas Kate wasn't as well-known, and I clearly needed to talk about her. As for the archives, I didn't want to hurt my mother in any way. Projecting those images of Kate was the limit of what I could do; and by the way, I don't fully deal with it in the film. At a certain point, I say, "stop". I didn't want to trigger emotion too easily. At a certain point, some lines that I wrote appear on my mother's face and I found that awkward, but it was done in the live part of the shoot and that's what makes the documentary beautiful – there are no second takes. I told my mother about it, and she said, "No, on the contrary, I like it, it hides me a little".

In the film, we see Jo, your youngest, but not your other children or Lou. Did you want to make a film that belongs to your mother and you, like a kind of unconscious response to your childhood jealousy?

Ultimately, yes, you could see it that way. But initially, I wanted to make a Japan part devoted to Kate, a New York part devoted to me because I lived there, and Brittany part devoted to Lou. I wanted it to be a film about my mother and her three daughters. I thought that over the Christmas holidays in Brittany, I'd film the whole family – my children, Yvan, Lou, her kids, Roman, Kate's son... And then Lou told me that it was my project, my thing; she didn't feel right being in it. She told me, "This film is about you and mom". At the time, I didn't take that well, but she was actually right. I also wanted my eldest daughter Alice to be in it for the aspect involving transmission between the women in the family. Finally, she exists in the film because we talk about her. I found the film through a series of circumstances that ultimately has its own logic. If I were to sum up the film in the simplest way possible, it's a desire for intimacy with my mother and that's all.

The final sequence sums up the film and your desire for it. It's moving in both its content - a declaration of love made to your mother - and in its form: the long sequence shot of your mother in the distance, moving closer and closer, and your hushed voice-over, partially covered by the sound of waves and the music. You simultaneously show your desire to be closer, your filial love, and the difficulty in talking about that love.

Thank you, but all of that is purely accidental. When we were shooting, I didn't know what the final shot would be. I made this film on instinct, with my feelings and my experience as a director. My editor was much more into the analysis, the understanding. When we watched the rough cuts, I reacted spontaneously, but I wasn't able to say, "we need to put this shot there".

If Jane has seen the film, what was her reaction?

She did see it - that was very important for me. I was very afraid of her reaction, and I think she was really touched. She saw that the film meant something, and that it was a loving object.

In hindsight, does this film satisfy your uncertain quest at the outset of the project? Have you seen your mother in a different way?

This film is a statement I'm making to her – there's no doubt that she understood that. Nevertheless, there's still that same reticence between us. This didn't make us more expansive, but the nature of our relationship is made clear. And it was an excellent excuse for clarifying it. If the object is ultimately beautiful, then great; but that was secondary to the experience I was able to have being by her side. In fact, we'd have liked to continue the shooting. It was really hard to accept that the shoot was finished, that we had what we needed. We didn't want this filmic excuse to see each other, talk to each other, and get closer to each other to end.

What was your reaction when Charlotte presented this project to you?

Jane Birkin – I found it exciting; I was flattered that she'd want to spend time with me and thought that the topic could be interesting. But at the very beginning of the project, I imagined a classic documentary.

Charlotte says that after your first interview filmed in Japan, you didn't want to continue with the project. Why was that?

The interview in Japan threw me off a bit. I saw that Charlotte had a notebook full of questions and that scared me. I didn't know where the film was going, and I was afraid that Charlotte's notebook would be a list of grievances. For a year, I didn't want to continue. Then, we were in New York for another project, and she thought it would be a shame not to film. So, we started shooting again to see where it could go. And in New York, the filming experience was pleasant, fun, charming, and being with Charlotte was a real pleasure. So, I got used to her questions and understood that her film would be very personal - that it would look something like Bergman's *Autumn Sonata*. That seemed a lot more interesting to me than a classic documentary. Charlotte needed to hear certain things that are never said. It's important to note that when we started filming again in New York, she'd been living there for six years; I hadn't really seen her youngest daughter grow up - after Kate died, they left. In New York, we experienced the joy of reuniting. I also think that Charlotte's questions are as interesting as my answers. This film is as much about her as it is me.

More importantly, it's also a film about your relationship.

Absolutely. But it's very focused on Charlotte's request: to know where she fits into our family history, to understand her very special role. From the age of 13 onward, with her film roles, Charlotte led a very separate life; she became somewhat of a mysterious person to me. During the shoot, knowing that she was so accessible and so tender was a side of her that I hadn't seen in a long time.

In the film, you even say that Charlotte was the most mysterious of your daughters.

You never know someone completely - there's always some element of mystery. But I felt like I knew Kate better because, when she was a teenager, we had the classic head-on fights of a girl rebelling against her mother. Then, when Kate had her son, Roman, she was very present in my life. As for Lou, she is what Jo is for Charlotte, my youngest. Lou was open and funny. When her father left, I had Lou all to myself and it was a real laugh. But in becoming an adult, Lou also developed her

own share of mystery. In others, including those you love most, there is always something elusive in what we think we know about them. Since Charlotte was absent from our family life fairly early on, I think it was necessary for her to gauge her importance.

Psychiatrists say that when there are three children, the second child's place is the most difficult. In the film, Charlotte talks about how she was jealous of the relationship between you and her sisters.

With your first child, you have very a close-knit, if not contentious, relationship - with the third, too, because they're the youngest. The second holds a very special place. Charlotte was a professional at the age of 12 and was independent at 14 or 15. That life had nothing to do with me and took place out of my sight. It was very different from Kate and Lou. Charlotte had her private life, and she was very secretive with me. When Serge died, I realized that Charlotte was his daughter alone. Then, Charlotte had a wonderful life with Yvan, a rich life with travel and children, and without me. So, it's only now that we've had deep conversations. Charlotte needed reassurance and so did I because, in all the interviews that Charlotte's given throughout her life, I got the impression that her father was the only one who mattered.



The sequence with your return to rue de Verneuil is really beautiful. How did you feel shooting there after thirty years?

I hadn't gone back because the house belongs to Charlotte, and I'd understood that she wanted Serge for herself. But deep down, did I really want to? I think I was afraid to go back. After all, my last days in that house were associated with the desire to leave that place. For fifteen years, living there was wonderful, then a lot less so. I felt like I was living in an art gallery instead of a family home. That was one of the reasons for wanting a place of my own where I could live with my own mess. I loved and hated Rue de Verneuil. When I returned, I was initially surprised by the dollhouse aspect: everything was small and narrow. Then, I was struck by the charm, the beauty, the originality of the place: it was a work of art. Each object, each piece of furniture, each lamp, each painting was carefully chosen. I already knew it while living there, but in going back, I was able to fully gauge the interest that house could have for others. The place hasn't changed in thirty years, like in *Sleeping Beauty*. Charlotte has kept it in good condition without any help, that's also her work. And that house is also associated with death in my memory. One rainy Sunday, I went back there with Philippe Lerichomme to find Serge dead, Charlotte and Kate clinging to his body, and Bambou next to them. It was horrible, infinitely sad... All of that casts a dark shadow over the beauty of the house...

There's a very moving sequence in the film where you talk about Kate with your back to a family movie showing Kate as a child. Is it impossible for you to look at those images?

I think Charlotte has the same difficulty watching films where we see Serge. I can look at family photos where we see Kate, her radiance, I'm moved by her face, and I can remember how life was back then. When I see her in a film, I'm only starting to get used to it because of the shows where they show my Super 8 films; but I wouldn't be able to sit and watch them for long. I've never watched our Christmas movies again, which is sad because Charlotte and Lou are also in them. The lives of loved ones are so important that they can't be overlooked; you have to seize every moment with them. You have to try not to miss out on precious moments spent with the ones you love.

The film ends with a long, superb sequence shot wherein we hear a declaration of filial love made by Charlotte to you. How did you feel when you saw the sequence?

I was devastated and continued to be for days afterward. I wasn't expecting it, and it came like a wave. A wave of pure emotion.

Did making this film help bring you closer to Charlotte, and to see her as less mysterious?

Mystery is a beautiful thing because there are always things left to be discovered in each of us, you never learn everything about another person, not even your own daughter. We want to understand everything, express all of our love, and we never got the chance to do it out of excessive discretion. Charlotte and I are both discretion itself! Still, she's impressed me throughout her life and continues to do so. Making this film was a life-changing experience, and the beauty of it is that other mothers and daughters will be able to understand it.

Did this film remind you of your experience as a daughter and your relationship with your mother?

In Jacques Doillon's *La Fille prodigue*, Piccoli, who plays my father, sleeps with me and it's a way of proving that I'm his favorite daughter. I was forty when the film was made and afterward, I took a flight to London and went to my parents' home. My father was sleeping, and I took my mother to the top of the house. I took off all my clothes and asked her: do you like me? Have I become the person you hoped I would? Do you think I'm pretty? My mother said yes to everything and had barely answered when I left again for Paris. I'd gotten what I wanted to know. Because I'd felt like my little sister was my mother's favorite and that she admired my brother, her son. I'm saying this to show that it isn't uncommon for a daughter to seek out confirmation of her mother's love.

Ultimately, Charlotte has done the same thing that you did but in another way by making this film.

Yes. We're not only seeking out our mother's love, but also her admiration, her pride - something exclusive. Afterwards, I thought that I'd been selfish to have shocked my mother so much and then left her like that. It shows the demand for filial love that we feel towards our parents. I think that, with this film, Charlotte has said what she wanted to say, and I think that's given her peace.

Has this film given you peace, too?

The gift of this film is to have discovered just how necessary I was in Charlotte's adult life. I had absolutely no idea. Charlotte has a husband and a huge professional life; I didn't realize that I was important to her, too. That's why this film will remain a jewel that I'll keep for the rest of my life. Especially coming from this mysterious child around whom I didn't exactly know where I fit in either.



by Jane Charlotte

A film by
CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG

With
JANE BIRKIN
CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG
JO ATTAL

Produced by
MATHIEU AGERON
MAXIME DELAUNEY
ROMAIN ROUSSEAU
CHARLOTTE GAINSBOURG

Artistic Director
NATHALIE CANGUILHEM

Editing
TIANÈS MONTASSER

Additional Editing
ANNE PERSON

Photography
ADRIEN BERTOLLE

Post Production Manager
FLAMINGOZ - AURÉLIEN ADJEDJ

First Assistant Director
GENA DESANTI

Set Designer
GUILLAUME LANDRON

Sound
JEAN-LUC AUDY
MARTIN LANOT
SAMUEL DELORME
MARC DOISNE

Location Manager
SYLVINE SALVAGNIAC DE SAINT-CYR

Production
NOLITA
DEADLY VALENTINE

In Coproduction with
JOUR2FÊTE

With the participation of
CANAL+
CINÉ+
TV5MONDE

Associate Production
UNIVERSAL MUSIC FRANCE
BECAUSE MUSIC / BECAUSE ÉDITIONS

In Association with
INDÉFILMS 9

With the support of
LA SACEM

Internationales Sales
THE PARTY FILM SALES

