

QUINZAINÉ

DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT

CANNES 2024

OPENING FILM

THIS LIFE OF MINE

A FILM BY SOPHIE FILLIÈRES





CHRISTMAS IN JULY presents

THIS LIFE OF MINE

A FILM BY SOPHIE FILLIÈRES

FRANCE / FICTION / 2024 / 99' FORMAT: 1.85 / SOUND 5.1

INTERNATIONAL SALES
THE PARTY FILM SALES
sales@thepartysales.com
+33176215177

INTERNATIONAL PUBLICIST

MAKNA PRESSE
Chloé Lorenzi
Marie-Lou Duvauchelle
01 42 77 00 16
info@maknapr.com

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue jacket over a white top, is looking upwards with a contemplative expression. The background is dark with some green foliage visible on the right side.

synopsis

Barberie Bichette, known to her biggest despair as Barbie, may have been beautiful, a good mother, a reliable colleague, a great lover, yes, perhaps... but that was before she predictably and inevitably turned 55 (and much more to come!). Now, things are getting darker, sometimes violent and often absurd. How then will she deal with her own self, others, and simply life in general?



A few notes from Sophie Fillières

« You can't even talk about truth.
That's part of the general distress »

Samuel Beckett

With my previous films, I have the feeling that I had, in a way, actively dreamt my life, or at least given a twist to what life had in store for me in terms of storytelling, along with a form: that of cinema. A certain, somewhat centrifugal force emanated from me to make situations, images, dialogue and stories explode in my imagination and imaginary world, to make them - in the strictest sense of the word too - part of reality.

It's true that in both *Nice Girl* and *When Margaux meets Margaux*, for example, I wrestle with the question of self-awareness, the quest for a form of identity and how to inscribe oneself in the world (through my characters). Comedy, or simply a form of humour, and the poetic force of what I feel to be the absurdity of our passage through the world, seem to me to be my irrepressible style. It's undoubtedly by default, of course, that I take existence seriously and head-on.

But, with *This Life of Mine*, we're dealing with the effect of a totally head-on introspection taken to its limit, to my very limit even, along with what it means in terms of comedy and violence, a form of self-dread you might say! Comical and violent, because of course the essential condition for acceptance/rejection is self-mockery, sometimes to the point of a certain blackness.

And how do you defuse a form of self-shame? I'm not really, or at least not only, talking of 'complexes', but of a deep, dramatic, tragic embarrassment about believing in this life that, when it comes down to it, is all we have, like it or not!

Of course, for me, with this film, there is a sort of transference, or even a transfusion. But Barbie is not me, she is just the person through whom I get as close as possible to a truth, an individual's truth, which has nothing to do with reality, unreality or accuracy. It's Barbie's feelings, her emotions, and her own quest to reintegrate herself into a kind of narrative about herself that matter.

And, for me as a filmmaker, it's about inviting the audience to look at themselves in the world, to better unders-

tand it, this world whose unintelligibility sometimes overwhelms us, crushes us, frightens us (yes, right up to Barbie's hospitalisation, dealt with here head-on, but with hope, I insist), and sometimes lifts us up when we least expect it.

I should like to try to deal head-on, whack, wham, yippee! with how to manage and get by with the enigma of the self. Because each and every one of us is an enigma. How do we accept ourselves as a character, which will finally make us part of a story that is our own? How will Barberie Bichette, her real name, rediscover the impetus of what drives and motivates her? I should like to show her struggling as best she can, on a tightrope that's barely taut enough, as an acrobat cheating death, cheating distress, cheating breaking down...

But isn't it also funny and comical, after a certain age and having acquired a certain distance from ourselves and the world around us, to still want to be (and be able to be) part of it? It takes courage and tenacity - and that's exactly what Barbie has - to heroically tackle this steep slope of life.

At first, we are on the edge: there, fragile and robust at the same time, Barbie fights with constancy and lightness. At least she strives to remain supple and elastic in the face of the bitter ups and downs of her age, of solitude, of weakness, of time that is not necessarily cruel but harsh. Until she is pushed over the edge by a chance meeting with a man who unwittingly drives her into a corner and makes her snap. And not in a loving way... She even believes for a brief moment... that he is Death incarnate.

Then, wham..., she finds herself in a psychiatric clinic, with her hospitalisation first told from the point of view of her two children. This change of point of view interests me and seems to me to be the gamble to be made with Barbie the Absentee, who is indeed absent. They want to find her again, and I hope that we do too. The maternal bond with children and, in return, the filial bond, are not clear lines, they are continuous and broken lines at the same time. I am trying to explore that too, in a subterranean way. At the clinic, Barbie leads her life, absent from the world but not from herself. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, she is

certainly not entirely abandoned, but perhaps she has to be... and to her sad fate, as they say. So that she is able to know, identify and experience this fate. Her fate.

With Yippee!, the last part, I aim to move her, far away but not too far, for the highly relative notion of far away - everyone has their own far away - amuses me. Her far-off place is close, on the other side of the English Channel. And something intimate will impose itself, and perhaps finally strike a chord. In any case, it will be a matter of being returned to oneself, and thus of being fulfilled... but better still, of something one could never have suspected one wanted, let alone desired.

This frontal, head-on approach, and this wariness in relation to anything too general, or even to the perimeter of my own personal zone, are something that I wish to shatter, exposing myself to them, even stripping myself bare.

But I am thinking of Barberie and only of Barberie, and of the actress who will play her. I offered the role of Barbie to Agnès Jaoui who accepted, pointing out that she was thinking not only of the role, she felt that it

could be important for her, those are her words, but also, and these too are her words, of all the characters inhabiting the film. That touched me a great deal. What I love about Agnès Jaoui is her steadfastness, her «normality», which appears as a true strength, to avoid giving in to fragility, instability or imbalance. But I aim nonetheless to flush out something of her great sensitivity. I want the audience to be able to imagine themselves as her, and also to look inwards, so that, like Barbie, everyone, for the time and space of the film, has access, momentarily or more permanently, to their own story, their own character. A (different) vision of themselves.

With *This Life of Mine*, I'd like to conjure up an endearing figure with whom we can identify in our aspirations and fears, our joy and courage in being able to live and the curse of having to die one day, the two sides of our existence. So that we can say, for a moment at least, like her: I exist. Here I am.



*A few notes from
Agathe et Adam Bonitzer*

When we learned, at the same time as she did, that our mother would not be able to finish her film, which she had just completed shooting, she asked us, her children - in agreement with her producer, Julie Salvador - to supervise post-production, starting with the editing alongside François Quiqueré, who was about to work with her for the first time.

We therefore respected her wishes, setting off for the cutting room almost a month after her passing, and the three of us found ourselves faced with the rushes of a film that we hadn't made, although we did have a number of notes and invaluable indications that we had collected at the hospital. The choice of François Quiqueré was undoubtedly beneficial for us in this adventure: his acuity, perseverance, tenderness and deep friendship carried us through those fifteen weeks of editing. Communication with the other contributors was also essential at every stage, whether in sound editing (Sébastien Noiré), colour grading (Emmanuelle Collinot) or mixing (Jean-Pierre Laforce).

Finally, we certainly could not have seen everything through without the constant presence of Julie Salvador, her unfailing enthusiasm and her boundless generosity.



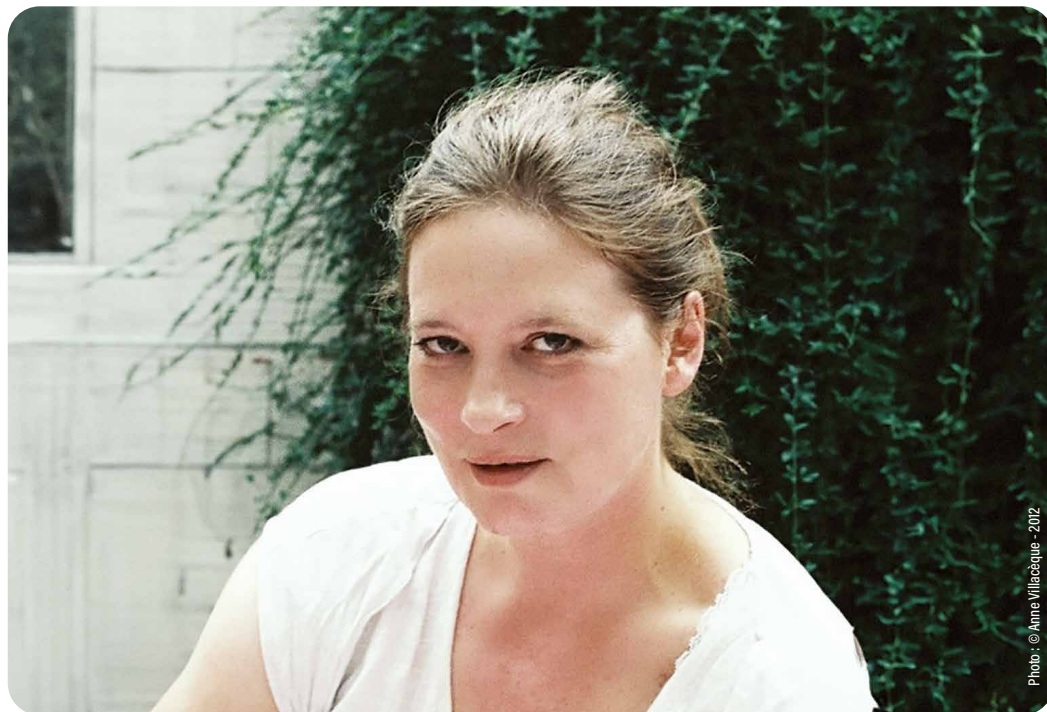
A few notes from Agnès Jaoui

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2023 **THIS LIFE OF MINE** by Sophie FILLIÈRES
Opening Film - Directors' Fortnight
- 2022 **THIS IS MY MOTHER** by Julien CARPENTIER
- 2022 **A GOOD JEWISH BOY** by Noé DEBRÉ
- 2017 **PLACE PUBLIQUE** by Agnès JAOUÏ
- 2016 **FIFTY SPRINGTIMES** by Blandine LENOIR
- 2014 **THE SWEET ESCAPE** by Bruno PODALYDÈS
Nomination Best Supporting Actress - César 2016
- 2012 **UNDER THE RAINBOW** by Agnès JAOUÏ
- 2011 **THE DANDELIONS** by Carine TARDIEU
- 2007 **LET IT RAIN** by Agnès JAOUÏ
- 2004 **LOOK AT ME** by Agnès JAOUÏ
- 2004 **THE ROLE OF HER LIFE** by François FAVRAT
- 2000 **IT TAKES ALL KINDS** by Agnès JAOUÏ
- 2000 **AN OUTGOING WOMAN** by Christophe BLANC
- 1997 **SAME OLD SONG** by Alain RESNAIS
Best Supporting Actress - César 1998
- 1996 **FAMILY RESEMBLANCES** by Cédric KLAPISCH

We embarked upon an unusual sort of adventure with this film. I remember the smile of restrained joy on the face of my agent, Jean-François Gabard, when he gave me the screenplay in Nantes where I was filming at the time: «I won't tell you anything, but I really, really like it.» And then I saw the title, *Ma Vie Ma Gueule*, and that's when I fell in love, thinking that if I liked the film as much as the title, it was going to be quite something. I think I read it that very evening and that I wrote to Sophie the next morning to tell her how enthusiastic I felt. It was the first time that I wanted to give a screenplay to my friends to read, the way you share a book that you love. Because the screenplay was like no other; all of Sophie's poetry, singularity, humour and distress were contained within it, and the screenplay was more like a literary work, with each scene indication marked by grace, and the briefest appearance of the slightest character in the plot had its importance and depth.

I didn't know Sophie at all before reading her and, I'm ashamed to say, I wasn't very familiar with her films, but as soon as I read this screenplay, our friendship was sealed and we would go from one affinity to the next until the end, with her crew, her wonderful crew, her producer and friend, her children, each and every one determined to complete the film.



Sophie Fillières Filmography

A graduate of the Fémis directing school, Sophie Fillières made a name for herself with her first short film, *Des filles et des Chiens* (awarded the Prix Jean Vigo in 1992). She went on to write and direct 7 feature films, selected at Berlin, Locarno and Toronto. Sophie Fillières passed away in July 2023 shortly after shooting her final film *This Life of Mine*, and asked her children Agathe and Adam Bonitzer to complete it with her close collaborators. *This Life of Mine* will have its world premiere at the 2024 Directors' Fortnight.

DIRECTOR

- 2023 THIS LIFE OF MINE**
With Agnès Jaoui, Angelina Woreth, Edouard Sulpice, Valérie Donzelli, Philippe Katerine, Laurent Capelluto.
Feature film produced by Christmas In July.
- 2018 WHEN MARGAUX MEETS MARGAUX** Released March 14, 2018
With Sandrine Kiberlain, Agathe Bonitzer and Melvil Poupaud
Feature film produced by Christmas In July
- 2014 IF YOU DON'T, I WILL** Released March 5, 2014
Starring Emmanuelle Devos and Mathieu Amalric
Feature film produced by Pierre Grise Productions
- 2009 PARDON MY FRENCH** Released March 25, 2009
Starring Chiara Mastroianni, Agathe Bonitzer and Malik Zidi
Feature film produced by Pierre Grise Productions
- 2005 NICE GIRL** Released December 14, 2005
Starring Emmanuelle Devos, Lambert Wilson and Bruno Todeschini
Feature film produced by Pierre Grise Productions
- 1999 OUCH** Released September 6, 2000
Starring André Dussollier, Hélène Fillières and Emmanuelle Devos
Feature film produced by Pierre Grise Productions
- 1994 THE TALL LITTLE ONE** Released March 30, 1994
With Judith Godrèche, Hugues Quester and Emmanuel Salinger
Feature film produced by Paris New-York Productions
- 1992 DES FILLES ET DES CHIENS**
With Sandrine Kiberlain and Hélène Fillières
Short drama produced by La Fémis and Paris New-York Productions

SCREENWRITER

- 2018** **SIDONIE IN JAPAN**
by Élise Girard
JOURS DE CHANCE
by Siegrid Alnoy
L'AMOUR DU PROCHAIN
by Siegrid Alnoy
CLAIRE DARLING
by Julie Bertuccelli
- 2020** **MY BEST PART**
by Nicolas Maury
- 2013** **WEEKENDS IN NORMANDY**
by Anne Villacèque
- 2011** **E-LOVE**
by Anne Villacèque
- 2011** **EARLY ONE MORNING**
by Jean-Marc Moutout
- 2012** **NOUTS**
by Yann Coridian
- 2009** **THE SECRET OF THE ANT CHILDREN**
by Christine François
- 2001/02** **VARIÉTÉ FRANCAISE**
by Frédéric Videau
- 2003** **A REAL MAN**
by Arnaud and Jean Marie Larrieu
- 1995** **SOMBRE**
by Philippe Grandrieux
- 1993** **FORGET ME**
by Noémie Lvovsky
- 1992** **EMMA ZUNZ**
by Benoît Jacquot
- 1990** **NORTH**
by Xavier Beauvois



Artistic and technical lists

Barberie Bichette **Agnès Jaoui**
Rose **Angelina Woreth**
Junior **Édouard Suplice**

With the friendly participation of

Barbie's sister **Valérie Donzelli**
Bertrand **Laurent Capelluto**
Doctor Radjabov **Emmanuel Salinger**
Friend on the telephone **Isabelle Candelier**
Katerine Philippe **Philippe Katerine**

a film by Sophie Fillières

With the precious collaboration of Agathe and Adam Bonitzer

Producer Julie Salvador
Director of Photography Emmanuelle Collinot
Editor François Quiqueré
Mixing Jean-Pierre Laforce
Music Philippe Katerine
Sound recording Damien Luquet
Sound editor Sébastien Noiré
Costumes Élise Vilain-Gosselin
Production design David Faivre
Camille Arthuis
Casting Director Constance Demontoy
Assistant director Benoît Seillier
Unit Manager Margaux Bez
Production Manager Ludovic Leiba
Post-Production Pierre Huot
Production Christmas in July
In association with Jour2fête & The Party Film Sales
With the support of The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée
and Région Île-de-France in partnership with CNC





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