



62<sup>e</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Competition

LES FILMS HATARI PRESENTS

AGATHE BONITZER REDA KATEB

# COMING HOME

( À MOI SEULE )

A FILM BY FRÉDÉRIC VIDEAU





***Gaëlle is suddenly released by her kidnapper Vincent, after eight years of captivity during which they had been “everything” to each other. Just as she had to earn her freedom day-by-day against him, she has to do so again, now facing her parents and a world she is only just discovering.***

## IN CONVERSATION WITH FRÉDÉRIC VIDEAU

**Before your film even begins, an insert deliberately establishes COMING HOME as a work of fiction. Despite that, it’s impossible not to think about the Natascha Kampusch story.**

Of course, but the insert makes it clear: my film is pure fiction. I know where it comes from and I’m not hiding it. But I’m not telling the story of Natascha Kampusch. If I had wanted to tell that story, I would have. I would have gone to Austria, I would have tried to meet her. But I felt that the perspective of her kidnapper, Wolfgang Priklopil, was just as important. And because he was dead, making a film about Natascha’s story became impossible. Inevitably, it would be incomplete.

This project originated as I was working on a film that was going through some problems and never ended up being made. My producer, Laetitia Fèvre, advised me to start thinking about what was coming up next

for me. It was at that time that I saw the first interview Natascha Kampusch granted to Austrian television, three or four weeks after she had escaped. What immediately struck me about her was her lucidity and the vital strength radiating from this smiling young woman, despite the fact that she had just emerged from eight years of confinement. Where does that come from, who is she, what’s driving her? How can she be so alive after being subjected to that? She has never had a single word of anger or hate for Priklopil. And this means that Priklopil continues to remain hers and “hers alone”, which is the inspiration for À moi seule, the original French title. She deals with what happened on her own, and whatever the outside world says, it’s her story and only hers.

Someone said to me about COMING HOME: it’s a movie in which all the characters express a moral point of view about what happens to Gaëlle, except for her. That’s exactly right. I’m starting to realize

that in the last few years, on a personal level, I have stopped searching for the ‘moral’ course of action. I’m looking for what feels right and ethical to me. And if I think it’s right, then I’m going to do it. In this film, Gaëlle does what’s right for her. One night for example she goes so far as to apologize to her kidnapper for having slapped him in the face. She knows that she’s going to have to face him again the next day and she’s thinking about saving her skin. But more importantly, given the relationship they have, it feels like the right thing to do. I understand why she does it, I think that she’s right to do it, and I’m convinced that she’s sincere.

**Was starting the film with Gaëlle’s release a necessity for you?**

It was the best way to make clear from the very beginning that I wasn’t interested in the news item in itself. Because I’m giving away the end right at the beginning. I’m telling the audience: let’s get the sensational story out of the way and now I can get to the story I have to tell. So it was essential to the project from the very beginning.

to succeed in escaping. What makes this girl tick? She’s alive because she wants to live, and that’s what I’m really interested in.

**This kind of case usually involves a sexual component. But not here, with Vincent claiming from the start that he’s going to keep his hands off Gaëlle.**

I don’t agree. That aspect is never actually ruled out. However moral, open or fair we may be as an audience, we’re still going to be asking ourselves the question: “Did they make love?” I know it’s there in the back of our minds. And as a filmmaker, I would be a coward if I didn’t answer it. So I know I have to deal with it, but on my terms and at a time I decide.

Vincent has a project that’s bigger than himself: he wants to raise someone, he wants to be a sort of absolute father. He makes that very clear immediately when he tells her: “I won’t kill you, I won’t rape you, you’re not going to be an object for me.” As long as Gaëlle conforms to that idea, everything is fine. But when she tells him “Now, we’re going to make love,”



**There’s a thin line separating imprisonment and freedom. Gaëlle is just as much a prisoner outside, as inside.**

Absolutely. I was already somewhat conscious of that during the writing stage. I was thinking to myself that this young woman has a very strong vital energy, but that what awaits her outside is horrible. I wanted her to come to a point where she tells herself: in the end I’m almost better off “inside.” In one scene, she admits that she doesn’t know what to do with her newfound liberty, but also that it doesn’t mean anything to her.

**We learn fairly quickly that Vincent is going to die. From that point on, the notion of suspense is removed, and to a certain extent so is judgment.**

I’m not removing or omitting anything. It’s simply that the suspense doesn’t depend on a dramatic sequence of situations, but instead on the inner journey of each character. That’s where the real suspense lies, in finding out what each of them has left inside after facing off with each other for eight years. It’s not about knowing whether she’s going

she begins to take control. She realizes that she has to reverse the balance of power by forcing him to act against his will. In that moment, she gives herself a chance to escape. If she had remained the little girl he wanted her to be, she would never have made it out of that house alive. She wants to escape; she tries at least three times. Also, she has no one but him. When I tried to put myself in her place, I asked myself: “What would I do? Am I going to spend my whole life in here? I’ll never experience love, but I have him. I’m going to take away what he has over me.” He took her, and that’s what she takes from him. And from then on, one way or another, it’s over for him. He knows that he’s going to die.

**When Gaëlle learns that he is dead, it doesn’t seem to bring her any satisfaction.**

Before I wrote the script, I didn’t know that Gaëlle wouldn’t have a moral perspective on herself and her situation. That was something I discovered as I wrote and shot the film. And indeed it’s loathsome that the victim doesn’t judge her tormenter. But it’s got nothing to do with the Stockholm Syndrome, it’s just the story of an absolute bond, it’s a family story.





GAËLLE **AGATHE BONITZER** VINCENT **REDA KATEB** ANNE **HÉLÈNE FILLIÈRES** YVES **JACQUES BONNAFFÉ**  
GAËLLE (at 10) **MARGOT COUTURE** FRANK **GRÉGORY GADEBOIS** JULIETTE **MARIE PAYEN** THIMOTHÉE **MAKITA SAMBA**  
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF **NOÉMIE LVOVSKY**

SCREENPLAY **FRÉDÉRIC VIDEAU** PRODUCED BY **LAETITIA FÈVRE** ASSOCIATED PRODUCER **MICHEL KLEIN** COPRODUCER **PHILIPPE GRIVEL**  
ORIGINAL SCORE **FLORENT MARCHET** CASTING DIRECTOR **STÉPHANE BATUT** ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **RENO EPELBOIN** SCRIPT **SANDRINE CAYRON**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **MARC TÉVANIAN** EDITING **FRANÇOIS QUIQUERÉ** SOUND **FRANÇOIS MÉREU** EMMANUEL CROSET PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **RAOUL PERUZZI**  
COSTUMES **LAURENCE STRUZ** SET **CATHERINE MAÑANES** MAKE-UP & HAIR DRESSING **NADINE LACAM** UNIT MANAGER **NATHALIE AUBARET**  
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Gordon Spragg, Laurin Dietrich & Michael Arnon [hello@wolf-con.com](mailto:hello@wolf-con.com) • +49 157 74 74 97 24 • [www.wolf-con.com](http://www.wolf-con.com)

world sales **PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL**

5, rue du chevalier de saint george, 75008 paris • T. 33(0) 1 42 96 02 20 • F. 33(0) 1 40 20 05 51  
[yoann@pyramidefilms.com](mailto:yoann@pyramidefilms.com) • [lgarzon@pyramidefilms.com](mailto:lgarzon@pyramidefilms.com) • [WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM](http://WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM)