

EMMANUELLE DEVOS

NATHALIE BAYE



DILIGENCE FILMS & TABO TABO FILMS PRESENT

MOKA

A FILM BY FRÉDÉRIC MERMOUD

BASED ON THE BEST SELLER BY
TATIANA DE ROSNAY



PIAZZA GRANDE
Festival del film Locarno



SYNOPSIS

Diane Kramer is led by one obsession: to find the driver of the mocha color Mercedes which hit her son and devastated her life. With a few belongings, some money and a gun, she goes to Evian, where she's learned the driver lives. But sometimes, the path of revenge is more tortuous than it seems...Diane will have to face another woman, friendly and mysterious.



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR FRÉDÉRIC MERMOUD

Six years have passed since the release of your first feature film, *Complices (Partners)*. How did the project of making *Moka* come about?

After my first film, I worked on the TV series *Les Revenants (The Returned)* and directed half of the first season. But since *Complices*, I wanted to work again with Emmanuelle Devos, who has a very special and inspiring place in my imagination. I wanted to live a new cinema adventure with her. And I already knew that she would be in every single shot. When I discovered *Moka*, Tatiana de Rosnay's novel, I realised it was the perfect story to bring this project to fruition.

Diane keeps investigating despite all opposition. Why?

As I was telling this story, I realised that Diane was more transgressive than I thought. When an outraged or broken man seeks revenge we just accept it – it is almost a commonplace – but when a woman does, a kind of social super-ego judges her impulse. We tend to describe her as manipulative or disturbed. By the way, there aren't many films or novels that deal with this topic. It is almost taboo, probably because it reassures us to match qualities to functions; and when a mother decides to fight back on her own, through thick and thin, it is seen as a contradiction in terms.

Is Diane driven by vengeance alone?

At first, Diane is convinced that getting revenge is the only way for her to accept the unacceptable. Yet she gradually faces up to the humanity and complexity of the woman who is supposed to have ruined her life, who also has a life, a daughter, dreams... She even ends up being moved by Marlène. Her thirst for revenge becomes yet another step in the process of grief and understanding, a survival impulse that also allows Diane to discover things about herself and her lost son. Then she can keep afloat, progressively find meaning where there was none, start the grieving process and eventually take on a new lease of life. *Moka* revolves around Diane's evolution, from her desire for revenge to a kind of reconciliation with herself.

The quest for truth seems to be Diane's overriding consideration. It was also the subject of your first film. Is it a personal obsession?

Admittedly, the truth is a key issue in *Complices* and in several of my short films as well. Cinematographically speaking, when characters are searching for some truth, they end up facing their own lives, a bright or dark side of their personalities. As a filmmaker I am fascinated by this back and forth movement, because it is a source of emotion and tension. Beyond that, I often wonder what we get to do with the truth once we have found it: do we have to say it loud and clear? Isn't lying an essential part of life too? I have the feeling that ethics precisely play out when we start asking ourselves those questions. And fiction as well...

When did you realise that Nathalie Baye would make a perfect "prey"?

It quickly became obvious that Nathalie Baye would be perfect as Marlène. I wanted *Moka* to be based on the meeting of two actresses and I needed someone whose presence would be as strong as Emmanuelle Devos'. So I needed to find an actress with natural authority, real charisma and who would remain etched in the viewer's mind. Besides, I have always liked to think about casting in terms of contrasts: Emmanuelle is lunar, magnetic

and strong, while Nathalie is rather solar and has a powerful life drive. Nathalie can embody really different characters, she can play a politician or a hairdresser with unbelievable ease, and I just knew that she would be credible as a woman who owns a perfumery in a small town. Finally, Emmanuelle and Nathalie had never played together. And it is always fascinating to make two actresses from different cinema families meet.

How do you direct your actors ?

I always build around the text. But I think that, even though I must be responsible for the story as a whole, the actors know their characters better than I do. They have an inner connection with them, so I must stay in tune with what they have to say. There is a kind of dialogue between what the actor feels about the character and what I imagine. My directing isn't based on psychology. What I am interested in is almost kinetic, I want to know what speed, energy and tone is best for every actor in a scene.

Why did you shoot the film on the Franco-Swiss border?

In the novel the story takes place between Paris and Biarritz, but I found it interesting to transpose this confrontation between two women in a setting that would oppose two cities from two different countries, Lausanne and Evian. Right in the middle, Lake Geneva is like an amphitheatre, an arena in a western, looking quite calm but with unpredictable swirls that bring out strangeness and anxiety.

Did you have particular films in mind when you shot *Moka*?

Once you decide to shoot a film that tries to dive deep into the human soul, bordering on genre cinema, you cannot but think of great filmmakers like Polanski or Hitchcock, who do not shy away from asserting a stylised universe filled with characters more complex than they look. Lodge Kerrigan's *Keane* also inspired me with its energy, even though it draws the portrait of a messed up yet so poignant man. When I worked with Emmanuelle Devos and Nathalie Baye, I couldn't help but think about American actresses like Gena Rowlands or Faye Dunaway. I often told Emmanuelle, who was on every shot for the 35 days of shooting, that I wanted to exhaust her, to track down her every heartbeat and film her like an American actress. It is crazy how Emmanuelle manages to act every single moment, even the finest, with such rare intensity.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 2016** *MOKA*
Locarno 2016 - Piazza Grande
- 2015** *À REBOURS* (short film)
- 2012** *LES REVENANTS / THE RETURNED* (TV Series - saison 1, Ep. 5-8)
International Emmy Award
- 2009** *COMPLICES / PARTNERS*
Locarno 2009 - Official Selection
- 2007** *LE CRÉNEAU* (short film)
- 2006** *RACHEL* (short film)
Cesar 2008 - Nominated for Best short
- 2003** *L'ESCALIER* (short film)
Swiss Film Award 2004 - Best short



CAST

DIANE **Emmanuelle Devos**
MARLÈNE **Nathalie Baye**
MICHEL **David Clavel**
ÉLODIE **Diane Rouxel**
SIMON **Samuel Labarthe**
VINCENT **Olivier Chantreau**
DETECTIVE **Jean-Philippe Ecoffey**
ADRIENNE **Marion Reymond**
LUC **Paulin Jaccoud**

CREW

A film by
Frédéric Mermoud
Screenplay
Frédéric Mermoud and **Antonin Martin-Hilbert**
Based on the novel
MOKA by **Tatiana de Rosnay (French edition Héloïse D'Ormesson)**
Produced by
Damien Couvreur, Julien Rouch and **Tonie Marshall**
Co-produced by
Jean-Stéphane Bron
Cinematography **Irina Lubtchansky**
Editing **Sarah Anderson**
Sound **Michel Casang, Etienne Curchod,**
Franco Piscopo
Casting **Brigitte Moidon**
Production Design **Ivan Niclass**
Costumes **Françoise Nicolet**
Original Soundtrack **Christian Garcia, Grégoire Hetzel**
First Director's Assistant **Jean-Louis Frémont**
Production Manager **Thierry Muscat**
A co-production
Diligence Films / Tabo Tabo Films
In co-production with
Bande à Part Films and **Sampek Productions**
With the participation of
Canal+ and **Ciné+**
In association with
Sofitvciné 3 and **Cofimage 27**
In co-production with **RTS Radio Télévision Suisse**
With the support of **l'Office fédéral de la culture (Switzerland)**
With the participation of
Cinéforum and the support of **Loterie Romande**
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