



ON THE PULSE

VIVANTS

A film by Alix Delaporte



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2023
Official Selection

TRÉSOR FILMS
PRESENTS

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Runtime : 1h23

▷ *INTERNATIONAL PRESS*

THE PR FACTORY

BARBARA VAN LOMBEEK
barbara@theprefactory.com
+32 486 54 64 80

MARIE-FRANCE DUPAGNE
mariefrance@theprefactory.com

▷ *INTERNATIONAL SALES*

PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL
32 rue de l'Échiquier, 75010 Paris
+33 1 42 96 01 01
sales@pyramidefilms.com



Gabrielle has just joined a prestigious news program. With no formal training, she must prove herself and find her place among an experienced team of special correspondents. In the heat of the action, she will learn the language and the code of these reporters, who are always passionate, often funny, and sometimes scarred by life and their profession. And then there's Vincent, the program's editor-in-chief, who she can't help challenging to.

INTERVIEW WITH ALIX DELAPORTE

What connection do you make between *ON THE PULSE* and your previous films?

Family. In my first film, Angèle creates a family for herself with Tony, and in *The Last Hammer Blow*, a teenager goes in search of his father. *ON THE PULSE* is about the family we build at work. Inspired by the early days of my professional life at the Capa agency, from a distance but with my attachment intact, I tell the story of a 'troupe' of reporters who try to resist the upheavals in their profession.

How close to you is the character of Gabrielle?

Like me, she observes. She is a mountain guide who changes her career path, and who finds herself working on an editorial board with its own language and reflexes. The film doesn't say what she will do next, but personally, I started out as an intern at the Capa press agency, but I was just passing through really. I stayed there for just over a year, and it was there that I met *24H* journalists and discovered journalism. I learnt how to film and I became a camera operator. But I never worked on combat zones. I have never been through what the journalists in *ON THE PULSE* have been through, but I have met and observed them. After that, I left the agency, I filmed many different programmes, I followed Zinédine Zinade for three years for Canal+, and at the same time I joined the screenwriting workshop at the Fémis film school. When I shot my first short film, I felt that I had found my own place. This is what I'm saying with the character of Gabrielle: regardless of the detours, our experiences are almost as important as the goal we achieve or wish to achieve.

Why did you choose to shine a light on international reporting?

I cannot comment on news items, I don't have the skills and it isn't part of my remit. However, I can draw the viewer's attention on the necessity to preserve the role of journalists, which is to seek out the truth. And in order to get to the truth, you need to work in the field and to put yourself in danger sometimes. But to limit the risks, you need time. To paraphrase international correspondent Florian Le Moal: "the longer we stay, the more we get to know the people. The more they know us, the closer we can get to a certain truth." Today, that time is being called into question.

When I was preparing for the film, I met many journalists, either young or seasoned, from news channels or news programmes. I went to journalism schools, to see who the newcomers were... Who will make tomorrow's news? What are their ambitions? In the end, I realised that the passion for the search for the truth was still very much alive. The profession isn't jeopardised because of journalists, but because of the businessmen who seize power in the newsrooms and who consider field reporters as a useless luxury.

Where does the French title, *Vivants* (ALIVE), come from?

In the film, there is a scene from a report filmed in Sarajevo*, in which Damien (played by Vincent Elbaz) follows a group of young people through a combat zone on their way to a nightclub. For me, it illustrates how the impulse of life is still strong even through dark times. In war zones, there is an incredible resilience, especially among young people, that urges them to reach for the light. It is

also the case for the journalists in *ON THE PULSE* they share that will to keep fighting and do their job despite the increasingly hostile climate for their profession. There is no hypocrisy about what drives them. As Damien shows, it goes beyond his professional commitment; there is also a form of addiction to the adrenalin that comes from filming in tough areas. It is in those moments of fear and close encounter with death that you feel most alive.

**This sequence is an archive from the "24H in Sarajevo" news programme, filmed by Pascal Manoukian.*

We can even hear people laughing at the end of that sequence in Sarajevo...

That's the laugh of someone who has just dodged a sniper's bullets.

Angèle & Tony was released in 2011, *The Last Hammer Blow* in 2014... It's been a long time since then.

When you talk about the end of a major news programme, you also address the changes of an era... In order to understand them, I needed to take a step back, to extract myself as much as possible. Besides, the film is based on my first professional life, and I also needed to find the right distance between my personal experience and a story that would speak to everyone, whatever their profession...

How did you go about directing this ensemble film?

Just like a journalist looks for the truth in his or her work, I try to show the truth of the characters, I write to bring it out. Then, the direction has to create and support this empathy.

How did you find your Gabrielle, Alice Isaaz?

From her very first screen tests, she blew me away. She had worked on the character beforehand, and within three

minutes, she showed me several aspects of her, some of which I hadn't even considered. It is a very special moment to experience. When you witness the almost staggering meeting between an actress and a character. She shows you that the role was made for her, at this precise time in her career.

And Vincent, played by Roschdy Zem?

For the part of Vincent, I was looking for an actor with an established career. A man who was charismatic but not seductive. And above all, someone with an immediate, natural authority. Once it was established, the point was to unsettle him a little. The character of Vincent allows him to show another side of himself. I've known Roschdy for a long time, he played in my first short film, *Le piège*, in 2003. He's been really supportive throughout the project.

How should we interpret the sequence with Ravel's *Boléro*?

Some war reporters suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. This disorder has long been treated for soldiers, but less so for journalists. It is not an easy thing to portray in a film. Showing a journalist who talks on and on about himself and his "feats of arms" would only seem fake. And PTSD is all the more difficult to express because it is not conscious. This moment of externalisation when Vincent dances to Ravel's *Boléro* is a way to make the viewer feel this confusion. It is also a moment of utter connection. The elders relive and share with younger journalists memories of a time when they could express themselves with more means and fewer limits, more freely. I think everyone can relate to that.

It seems slightly nostalgic...

I am showing the end of a world, that of the great

international reports that made for great television. Today, audience figures are declining, and network executives are increasingly driven by cost-effective objectives. Little by little, young journalists end up censoring themselves. It's a shame, but it doesn't make me pessimistic. When the character of Vincent announces the end of the show, he asks his young colleagues if they really want to cling to a programme that is over fifteen years old. "Invent your own stuff!" At that point, he is relieved of the burden of trying to keep this prestigious programme, a symbol of integrity, going on at all costs. Out of nostalgia, actually.

The opening credits feature a succession of photos of reporters in the field, mixing real photos and photomontages...

I couldn't talk about the end of an era without showing how it used to be like. It is a way of showing the long friendship between the characters, but also of placing them in a reality. I needed viewers to think that it had really happened, that these reporters had covered conflicts and travelled all over the world. On some of these photos, especially those taken in Gaza, we replaced the faces of actual people from that time with those of our actors when they were younger. The pictures come from the collection of Laurent Langlois, a sound engineer at the Capa agency. They were all taken in the field. Laurent never meant to take beautiful photos, just "family photos," as he puts it.





DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Alix Delaporte made her debut as a journalist-camerawoman at the CAPA agency, where she trained in directing, while studying screenplay writing on the side. She then shot 2 short features, including *Comment on freine dans une descente ?*, Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 2006. The film stars Grégory Gadebois and Clotilde Hesme, whom she reunited with five years later for her first feature, *Angèle & Tony*. The film was presented and awarded in several international festivals, sold in more than 25 countries, captivated over 250 000 spectators in France and the two actors won the César Award for Best Promising Actor. Again with the same duo, she then directed *The last hammer blow*, which was presented in Competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2014, where it received the Marcello Mastroianni Award for Best Young Actor. Her third feature film, *On the pulse*, will be presented Out of Competition at the upcoming Venice Film Festival in September.



CAST

Alice Isaaz Gabrielle
Roschdy Zem Vincent
Vincent Elbaz Damien
Pascale Arbillot Camille
Pierre Lottin Alex
Jean-Charles Clichet Kosta
Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet Big Boss
François De Brauer Jo
Nicolas Carpentier Laurent
Guillaume Marquet Simon

CREW

Direction **Alix Delaporte**
Screenplay **Alix Delaporte** et **Alain Le Henry**
Produced by **Alain Attal**
Original Music **Evgueni** et **Sacha Galperine**
Image **Inès Tabarin**
Editing **Virginie Bruant**
Sound **Pierre Tucat, Arnaud Rolland, Eric Tisserand**
Art direction **Nicolas De Boiscuillé**
Costumes **Caroline Spieth**
1st Assistant Director **Alexandra Denni**
Unit Production Manager **Laziz Belkai**
Post-Production **Nicolas Mouchet, Séverine Cava**

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