

Strand Releasing presents

SUMMERTIME

A FILM BY CATHERINE CORSINI

Written by Catherine Corsini and Laurette Polmanss

Starring Cécile de France, Izïa Higelin, and Noémie Lvovsky

*Official Selection:
Locarno Film Festival
Toronto International Film Festival*

Country of Origin: France
Format: DCP/Scope/Color
Sound Format: Dolby 5.1
Running Time: 105 minutes
Genre: Drama
Rating: Not Rated
In French with English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

In 1971 France, Delphine, the daughter of farmers, moves to Paris to break free from her rural lifestyle and to gain financial independence. There, she meets Carole, a Parisian actively involved in the stirrings of the feminist movement who also has a boyfriend. The two women engage in an affair that turns their lives upside down.

INTERVIEW WITH CATHERINE CORSINI

Why did you choose to set *Summertime* in the 1970s?

I really wanted to pay tribute to feminist women, who have often been vilified, called sex-starved neurotics... For years I haven't really been a true feminist myself, I almost agreed with that vision of them. But I quickly came to realize that I owed many of the benefits I live by today to these women who fought and campaigned for them. Many of them were homosexual. Thanks to this movement, they were finally able to make themselves heard. Actually, the homosexuals have really been instrumental in the emancipation of women in general. I was appealed by the vitality, the audacity of the feminist movement. I don't see anything quite similar today. I realized that feminism puts the human element first, and it has been the main principle in the writing of the film.

The historical material is intrinsically mixed with Delphine and Carole's personal journey...

Finding how to connect an intimate story to history was the focus of our debate while we were writing the script. How can you campaign for a cause, be brave for others' sake, but still find it hard to defend your own "cause" in your private life? I could relate to this dichotomy, and it brought interesting elements to action and drama. Delphine feels uneasy in her private life, yet she has the courage to release a man incarcerated because he is gay, and to throw veal lungs at an "anti-abortion" doctor.

How did the casting go?

I wrote the part for Cécile de France, I knew she would be perfect for it. It was just obvious. I like her brightness, her bravery, her stylishness. When you already have an actor in mind, it's simple. For Delphine, it wasn't as easy. To stand up to Cécile, we didn't need an ethereal figure, but rather a strong person. A girl who wouldn't exactly be the "Parisian" type, so that she'd look convincing enough on a tractor. Izia Higelin had this character, this raw and wild side. She has quite a fiery temperament. I think that acting costs her dear, and this is what makes her so touching.

Out of the two characters, Delphine is the one I can relate to the most. This is probably why I found it so difficult to cast the right actress to play her.

How did you direct them?

When you expect an actor to match the ideal character, the one you have in mind, you always get disappointed. So now, rather than fighting with actors to bring them to the characters, I rather try to see them as they are and to bring the characters to them, and let the characters reveal something intimate about them. What happens between a part and an actor is like a chemical reaction, and actors definitely become impregnated with their parts, they don't come out unscathed.

For the first time I used a digital camera, and it allowed me not to stick to the script too much, to capture moments on the side which completely nourish the film, to invent new scenes, to take liberties, to show more flexibility, or even sometimes to reintroduce scenes I had written with my screenwriter Laurette Polmanss and then put aside, thinking I might use them later.

You keep creating echoes between political and intimate issues, for instance in the scene when Manuel points out to Carole that she is fighting for her freedom, yet at the same time she gets caught into a love story that makes her dependent...

I really like the character of Manuel, I found it interesting to have him make Carole confront her own contradictions by telling her that her commitment shouldn't be limited to the lecture hall with her friends, and that we should agree that he is right. He fell in love with Carole because she was free, and he reminds her of it... I didn't want him to be a jerk, just a jealous man, focused on his own problems, even though he is hurt. They are both teachers, heirs to the May 1968 social upheaval, he is a Maoist, and they probably campaigned together at some point. This couple lives by the principle that it is possible not to lead a conventional, bourgeois life. When they do fight, it isn't violent. Manuel tries to make Carole change her mind using reflection, he tries to reach her through reason. *Summertime* is a film with women, about the women's movement, with a love story between two women... I didn't want to have petty men around. I wanted them to pay attention to women, and not just be their antagonists. As Carole says at the beginning: "We are not against men, we are for women".

And why film in the countryside?

I drew from memories, sensations from when I was a child, because I spent part of my youth in the rural department of Corrèze. I wanted to draw a parallel between the effervescence of Paris and the timelessness of the country. How could I combine these two movements in the film? How could these worlds slide towards each other, echo each other, infect each other? Once again, I gathered material, notably via a friend of mine, Anne Bouthry, a farmers' daughter who moved to Paris at that time. She suggested many things and helped me draw a connection between both worlds. It is partly by talking to her that the story took shape. I also watched again films by Georges Rouquier, Farrebique and Biquefarre, which give precious accounts of the rural world, mixing documentary and action. And during location scouting, I had the opportunity to talk to farmers who were young at that time. They told me about the difficult conditions some of them had or still have to endure.

And what about your wish to film bodies in total freedom?

Playing with nudity was almost part of the logic and the writing of these years. Suddenly, people found it normal to be seen naked, with hairy armpits! But oddly enough, the wish to show it arrived slowly, while we were shooting. At first, I felt more like focusing on the beauty of landscapes and farming. I was more inspired by paintings, by Manet... Yet Cécile's performance as Carole brought me to it, in a way. I loved the look

we had given her, that mane of blond hair. And when we decided that she wouldn't wear a bra, suddenly the character began to take shape, as a liberated Parisian woman who feels comfortable with her body, and who walks around naked in her apartment. Cécile offered me this freedom which I find so beautiful about her, and which suited the character of Carole perfectly, as a valiant woman without taboos.

Cécile improvised the moment Carole opens her dress behind the cows. I found it funny, and it's so like Carole to bring a wind of freedom to this austere country. Carole is comfortable with nudity, unlike Delphine, who doesn't feel at ease with her own body at all. Maybe because she knows she is a homosexual and she doesn't come to terms with it. As for the scene where they make love in the fields, we didn't write it much. It is a raw, carnal moment which turns into a funny one because of the cows mooing next to them. My screenwriter also introduced me to Agnès Varda's *Le Bonheur*, an inspiring feature to film love in a discreet yet free way.

Carole and Delphine experience a great love story...

I wanted to make a film whose characters have beautiful souls, radiant personalities, and who are extremely generous and open to others. Which doesn't mean there are no gray areas and no conflicts. But they remain inside the characters. It is quite obvious that Delphine's biggest enemy is herself. True, her mother is an obstacle, but Delphine doesn't dare confronting her, neither does she dare claiming her own desire. The way Delphine sort of imagines her mother's omnipotence makes the drama even more painful.

When they have a picnic with Delphine's mother, we get the impression that the mother could open herself to Carole's arguments and freedom...

The moment you are referring to is a short improvisation at the end of a scene, in which Noémie and Cécile bring such subtlety to their characters that you feel that the mother could evolve, that she isn't completely narrow-minded.

As a result, the truly violent final scene is acceptable, because it steers clear of caricature.

Noémie Lvovsky is a tremendous actress, and her main concern was precisely to know if people would believe in that scene: "You are the devil in this house!". It is fear that makes the mother react so violently. Fear of the unknown, which seems inconceivable and abnormal to her: her daughter's homosexuality.

To play this scene, we first had to elude the cantankerous mother stereotypes. In a way, the actors direct their films. In order to succeed in making people believe in their characters, they need to build something. I had wanted to work with Noémie for a long time. Turning her into a 1970s farmer was a challenge because directors tend to give her parts that are closer to her personality.

What about the end of the film?

Behind the decision not to have a happy ending, at least not a too obvious one, lies the idea that women's fight for their emancipation and the fight to know oneself are long roads to take. If Delphine had managed to leave the farm so quickly, we would have thought that it wasn't a story worth telling! At the end of the film, I feel like she still has to fight. Besides, I like love stories in which the characters miss one another because it wasn't the right time. I may be partial to melodrama, but it is just like life.

Is it still relevant today to talk about the Women's Liberation Movement?

Yes it is, more than ever, considering the fate of women in the world. Women have to rise up, because they are still the first victims of authoritarian regimes. They are still oppressed. The right to abort was questioned in Spain only last year... To me, tomorrow's revolutions and changes must be sparked by women. At the time of the film, women claimed equality, equal pay, "that women shouldn't be objectified like promotional items". Today, the situation remains the same, despite a few advances, people's mentality hasn't evolved enough. We are living in a time of terrible regression, and it is of vital importance to acknowledge it and act on it. Every time I take part in a meeting, I'm making a point of letting women be heard. I don't understand why women are still considered so scary today, why they are prevented to think, why they don't have the same rights. Why?

And as for homosexuality, is there more progress?

I think that people are hiding less, but it is still as painful for some people to announce and to live their homosexuality. In the midst of the dreadful demonstrations against same-sex marriage last year, many families were torn apart, some parents joined the protests even though they knew about their children being gay. A documentary strengthened my will to make my film, Sébastien Lifshitz's *Les Invisibles*. I thought that this film about elderly homosexuals telling their stories was exemplary. Their love stories are magnificent. You can feel the heartbreak some of them endured, like this married woman with children who discovered late in life that she was gay. Such life changes are amazing, they fill me with wonder. I wanted to convey the emotion I had felt through a fiction film.

This is your first collaboration with producer Elisabeth Perez, who is also your partner.

I had just shot three films in a row with my producer, Fabienne Vonier, who passed away two years ago. Fabienne paid me much attention, we were fond of each other, it was hard to find someone to replace her. With Elisabeth there is much intuition going on. I liked her high standards, mixed with much benevolence. Our collaboration has also been extremely rich, pleasant, respectful. I feel like I really shared the film with her, in every step of the way, with the highest level of trust. *Summertime* is sort of a new beginning, and I tried to pass on this feeling to the whole crew: at the beginning of the shooting, I wrote them a note to tell them how special this film was to me, given that it

was the first time I ever worked with Elisabeth, and the first time I addressed homosexuality in such a straightforward way. I had wanted to tell that story for a long time, but Elisabeth is the one who urged me to work on it, who gave me the courage to do it, and who guided me towards the film. I completely owe it to her.

Interview by Claire Vassé

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

2015..... **SUMMERTIME**
2012..... **THREE WORLDS**
2009..... **LEAVING**
2006..... **AMBITIOUS**
2003.....**THE VERY MERRY WIDOWS**
2000.....**REPLAY**
1998..... **THE NEW EVE**
1995..... **JEUNESSE SANS DIEU**
1993..... **LES AMOUREUX**
1987.....**POKER**

CAST

Carole	Cécile de France
Delphine	Izïa Higelin
Monique	Noémie Lvovsky
Antoine	Kévin Azais
Adeline	Laetitia Dosch
Manuel	Benjamin Bellecour
Fabienne	Sarah Suco
Marie-Laure	Nathalie Beder
Charlotte	Calypso Valois
Maurice	Jean-Henri Compère
Professeur Chambard	Bruno Podalydès

CREW

A film by	Catherine Corsini
Screenplay	Catherine Corsini, Laurette Polmans
Original Soundtrack	Grégoire Hetzel
Cinematography	Jeanne Lapoirie (AFC)
Editing	Frédéric Baillehaiche
Sound	Olivier Mauvezin, Benoît Hillebrant Thomas Gauder
Production Design	Anna Falguères (ADC)
Costumes	Jürgen Døring
Makeup	Silvia Carissoli
Casting	Brigitte Moidon, Aurélie Guichard (ARDA)
Production Manager	Angeline Massoni

Produced by **Elisabeth Perez**

A co-production : **CHAZ Productions, France 3 Cinéma, Artemis Productions**

With the participation of **Canal+, OCS, France Télévisions**

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Cinémage 9**

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