

QUINZAINE
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2022

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

A FILM BY
LIONEL BAIER



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BANDITA FILMS presents

ISABELLE CARRÉ • THÉODORE PELLERIN • URSINA LARDI • TOM VILLA
IVAN GEORGIEV • DAPHNÉ SCOCCIA • ADAMA DIOP • ELISABETH OWONA

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Nathalie Adler is on a mission in Sicily for the European Union, organizing the upcoming visit of a migrant camp by Macron and Merkel. Their presence has great symbolic value, demonstrating that everything is under control. But who is still prepared to believe in this European family on the verge of a nervous breakdown? Definitely not Albert, Nathalie's son, who is an activist with a nonprofit and turns up out of the blue, years after breaking off all contact with his mother. Their reunion will prove more explosive than the diplomatic mission...

INTERVIEW WITH LIONEL BAIER



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Why is the film set in 2020 ?

Lionel Baier : I started working on the screenplay in 2014, following the first great migrant crises in the Mediterranean. I visited Italy and Greece to see how "reception" operations on European soil actually unfolded. At the time, the character of Nathalie was a British woman working for the European Union. Then came Brexit, the closure of Italian ports and Covid! Between 2016 and 2021, my co-writer Laurent Larivière and I were constantly chasing after events, which are always one step ahead of fiction. If we shot the movie in 2022, we'd have to incorporate Putin's war. We decided to set the action in 2020, on the basis that it is a sufficiently iconic year for everybody to be able to cast their minds back to it. After all, we talk about pre-Covid and post-Covid, just as we used to talk about pre-war and post-war. Everybody remembers what they were doing just before Covid struck.

The pandemic bursts in at the end of the film...

Yes, there is a tragicomic effect that, to our minds,

shakes the film up one last time so we dodge the full happy end. It might have seemed slightly inappropriate given the theme of migration running through the film.

So why combine comedy and drama genres?

That was the gamble with *La Dérive des continents*. When I visited Moria, in Greece, to see Europe's personnel at work, I was struck by the dramatic absurdity that reigned there. Inflatable boats washed up on the coast of Lesbos, and an employee slashed them so they could not be used for another crossing from Turkey, which is visible to the naked eye across the water. TV channels fought to get exclusive live footage of arriving migrants, picking out the most telegenic. Tourists from all over Europe included a visit to the camp in their stay on the island, to peer at the migrants behind the razor wire. There was something pathetic and shameful about it. Since comedy is the polite form of cinema, I thought it was better to try to be funny than despairing.

How did the subplot between Nathalie, played by Isabelle Carré, and her son Albert, played by Théodore Pellerin, fit in?

As an upstanding European, I abided by the lesson of the Greeks and Rossellini: boil down issues that run through civilizations to personal problems! The Iliad or A Journey in Italy are stories of a family or couples that problematize a state of the world. And then, I remember the girl who, on the evening of Emmanuel Macron's election in 2017, waved the European flag outside the Louvre Pyramid. When a journalist asked her why, she replied, "Europe is the mama!" That made me smile, and I wondered who this "mama" was. In what way had she been there for her children? Or did her children blame her for everything that goes wrong, as it is so easy to do with your mother. So we have the Franco-German duo competing for primacy and a Europe that does not match the expectations of its children.



Might that idea not seem a little theoretical?

Clearly not when you are lucky enough to have Isabelle Carré, Théodore Pellerin, Ursina Lardi and Tom Villa in your cast. It's beautiful to bring together members of such diverse film families. Isabelle Carré is an actress of absolute elegance, teeming with ideas, and always attentive to her screen partners. She reminds me of Miriam Hopkins: dynamic and coping quite marvelously with setbacks. I spotted Théodore Pellerin in *Genèse* by Philippe Lesage. When his photo cropped up among the French actors who could play Albert, I immediately wanted to meet him. Working with him is a rare pleasure that blends the audacity of youth and the strength of experience. Filming Théodore is like putting your fingers in Christ's wounds: all your doubts fade away! I am a passionate Theodorian! I had already had the pleasure of working with Ursina Lardi, who plays Ute. We know each other well. Seeing her play Lenin at the Schaubühne in Berlin is something else. She's just prodigious. For the role of Charlan, special advisor to President Macron, I was looking for an actor who, with the straightest of faces, could deliver the sort of completely absurd lines that sometimes come out of the mouths of Emmanuel Macron's wingmen. I saw Tom on a TV show hosted by Thierry Ardisson. His ability to demolish political figures in a single sentence with his innocent choirboy smile grabbed my attention. Tom Villa has an innate sense of the comedy in a situation, sniffing out every opportunity to improve a



gag. Bringing together Quebec, Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland, we formed a small band lost in the sweltering sunshine of Sicily, delighted to be pulling together to make this movie.

This is the third film in a tetralogy...

Yes, I already shot *Comme des voleurs* (in the east) in Poland, *Les Grandes ondes* (in the west) in Portugal, and one day there will be *Keek* (in the north) in Scotland. If there is one thing I believe in, it is the construction of Europe. To my eyes, this is the only rampart against barbarity and nationalism,

which I loathe. Since the European Union is a democratic space, it is our duty to question it, poke fun at it and criticize it. But I believe deeply and sincerely in Europe, and even in its bureaucrats! They are a lesser evil compared to war and the annihilations of the past. My films attempt to capture the passions that cross borders like Trans-Europe Express trains at full speed, connecting Europeans.

There is also the appearance of a non-professional actress at the end of the movie...

Rather than non-professional, I would say that



Elisabeth Owona is starting out as an actress. Her character draws on her own experiences, coming from Cameroon, crossing the sea in an inflatable boat and experiencing the camps in Italy. When we were casting in Catania, she came along with a list of demands. Either she raised them in *La Dérive des continents*, or she wouldn't take part in the movie. Her strength and determination astonished me. And since the film is about courage, it would be a shame not to give Elisabeth her say. On top of that, her intervention puts everyone in their place, including the director and the audience.

To conclude, in a few words, can you recount the scene shot in a village destroyed by an

earthquake?

That's Gibellina in north-western Sicily. The artist Burri enclosed the ruins in a sarcophagus that respects the layout of the village's streets. I visited his piece of land art in 2016 when the SQFF in Palermo organized a retrospective of my movies. I was overwhelmed by the solemnity and tranquility of the place, which speaks to the fragility of our constructions—whether they are houses or nations—in the face of tragic history. As the African and European tectonic plates move closer together, earthquakes occur which are capable of bringing poverty to both sides of the sea. Gibellina reminds us of our fragility in the face of continental drift. ■







cAsT

Nathalie - **Isabelle Carré** • Albert - **Théodore Pellerin** • Ute - **Ursina Lardi** • Timotei - **Ivan Georgiev** • Boubacar - **Adama Diop** • Elisabeth - **Elisabeth Owona** • Antonio - **Indri Shiroka** Observer - **David Coco** • Hostel Manager - **Mario Opinato** Carabinieri - **Massimo Cagnina** • Danilo - **Sebastiano Tinè** • Civil protection man - **Nicolò Prestigiacomo** • Vitti - **Maria Isabella Piana** • The old woman - **Rosalinda Musumeci** • The Communist - **Maria Antonietta Scornavacca** • Jonathan - **Nicolas Roussi**

CRew

Directed by **Lionel Baier** • Written by **Lionel Baier** and **Laurent Larivière** • Cinematography **Josée Deshaies** • Editing **Pauline Gaillard** • Sound **Patrick Becker, Lucas Lebart, Raphaël Sohler, Stéphane Thiébaud** • Set design **Béatrice Scarpato** • Costumes **Laura Pennisi** • Make Up/Hair **Marina Aebi** • 1st Assistant director **Giorgia De Coppi** • Production Manager **Claude Witz** • Post-production Manager **Marine Dumas** • Produced by **Pauline Gygax** and **Max Karli** • Coproduced by **Margaret Menegoz** • Line Producer Italy **Cattleya** • In coproduction with **RTS Radio Télévision Suisse** et **Blue** • With the support of **Office Fédéral de la Culture (OFC)** • With the participation of **Cinéforum** and the support of **La Loterie Romande, Centre National Du Cinéma** et de **l'Image Animée** • With the support of **Ministero Della Cultura – Direzione Generale Cinema E Audiovisio, Suissimage, République Et Canton De Genève, Media Desk Suisse, Focal Stage Pool** • In partnership with **Cinémage 15, Arte/Cofinova 17** • Swiss Distribution **Pathé Films AG** • French Distribution and International Sales **Les Films du Losange**



LIONEL BAIER

Born in 1975, Lionel Baier was Head of the Cinema department at ECAL from 2002 to 2021. With Ursula Meier, Jean-Stéphane Bron and Frédéric Mermoud, he co-founded Bande à part Films (2009), then Bandita with Pauline Gygax and Max Karli (2017). In 2014, he received the Grand Prix de La Fondation Vaudoise (Great Prize of Vaudoise Foundation) for his participation in the enrichment of the country through its cultural work. He is also the vice-president of the Swiss Cinemathèque's board and a member of Visions du Réel's committee. ■

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022 • **Continental Drift** - Feature Film
- 2017 • **Shock Waves – First Name Mathieu** - TV Feature Film
- 2015 • **Vanity** - Feature Film
- 2013 • **Longwave** - Feature Film
- 2011 • **Claude Goretta** - TV Documentary
- 2008 • **Another Man** - Feature Film
- 2006 • **Stealth** - Feature Film
- 2004 • **Stupid Boy** - Feature Film

ISABELLE CARRÉ

(Cinema – select filmography)

2021 **La Dégustation** by Ivan Calbérac • 2019 **Delicious** by Eric Besnard • 2018 **Blind Spot** by Pierre Trividic & Patrick Mario Bernard • 2017 **Joint Custody** by Alexandra Leclerc • 2016 **How I Met my Father** by Maxime Motte • 2014 **Breathe** by Mélanie Laurent • 2012 **21 Nights with Pattie** by Arnaud & Jean-Marie Larieu • 2012 **Looking for Hortense** by Pascal Bonitzer • 2011 **Headwinds** by Jalil Lespert • 2010 **The Refuge** by François Ozon • 2008 **God's Offices** by Claire Simon • 2007 **Client** by Josiane Balasko • 2006 **Private Fears in Public Places** by Alain Resnais • 2005 **In His Hands** by Anne Fontaine • 2004 **The Plane** by Cédric Kahn • 2003 **Holy Lola** by Bertrand Tavernier • 2002 **Feelings** by Noémie Lvovsky • **Beautiful Memories** by Zabou Breitman • 2001 **He Loves Me, He Love Me Not** by Laetitia Colombani • 2000 **Tomorrow's Another Day** by Jeanne Labrune • 1999 **The Log** by Danièle Thompson • 1998 **Children of the Century** by Diane Kurys • 1996 **The Banned Woman** by Philippe Harel • 1995 **Beaumarchais the Scoundrel** by Edouard Molinaro • 1994 **The Horseman on the Roof** by Jean-Paul Rappeneau • 1992 **Set Fare** by Christian Vincent • 1990 **The White Queen** by Jean-Loup Hubert • 1988 **Mama, There's a Man in Your Bed** by Coline Serreau

THÉODORE PELLERIN

(Cinema)

2021 **Mayday** by Karen Cinorre • 2020 **Underground** by Sophie Dupuis • **My Salinger Year** by Philippe Falardeau • 2019 **Cousins** by Eliza Hittman • **Three Months** by Patrick Brice • **There's Someone Inside Your House** by Patrick Brice • **Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always** by Eliza Hittman • 2018 **Boy Erased** by Joel Edgerton • 2017 **Genesis** by Philippe Lesage • 2016 **Isla Blanca** by Jeanne Leblanc • **Family First** by Sophie Dupuis • **It's Only the End of the World** by Xavier Dolan • **Never steady never still** by Kathleen Hepburn • **First light** by Jason Stone • 2015 **Boost** by Kieran Crilly & Frédéric Bohb • **Endorphine** by André Turpin • **Someplace Else** by Samuel Matteau • 2014 **The Demons** by Philippe Lesage • **Cité Mémoire** by Michel Lemieux & Victor Pilon

URSINA LARDI

(Cinema – select filmography)

2019 **The Girl and the Spider** by Ramon & Silvan Zürcher • **The World Is a Golem** by Omer Fast • 2017 **Prélude** by Sabrina Sarabi • 2016 **Casting** by Nicolas Wackerbarth • **The Stone Eater** by Nicola Bellucci • **Shock Waves** by Lionel Baier • 2013 **Child 44** by Daniel Espinosa • **The Lies of the Victors** by Christoph Hochhäusler • **What's Between Us** by Claudia Lorenz • 2012 **Dreamland** by Petra Volpe • 2011 **Fortress** by Kirsi Liimatainen • **Lore** by Cate Shortland • 2010 **The Forster Boy** by Markus Imboden • 2009 **Songs of Love and Hate** by Katalin Gödros • 2008 **The White Ribbon** by Michael Haneke • 2001 **Passing Summer** by Angela Schanelec • 2000 **The Queen (Marianne Hoppe – Die Königin)** by Werner Schroeter

TOM VILLA

(Cinema)

2018 **Neuilly Yo Mama!** by Gabriel Julien-Laferrrière • 2016 **My Family Already Adores You** by Jérôme Commendeur, Alain Corno

IVAN GEORGIEV

(Cinema)

2022 **Continental Drift** by Lionel Baier • **A Piece of Sky** by Michael Koch • 2021 **The Girl and the Spider** by Ramon Zürcher • 2017 **Those Who Are Fine** by Cyril Schäublin • 2015 **Vanity** by Lionel Baier



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