

LET ME GO

A FILM BY

Maxime Rappaz

Switzerland - France - Belgium | 2023 | 93 minutes
French with English subtitles | Drama / Romance

PRESS CONTACT

Michael Krause | Foundry Communications
(212) 586-7967 | mkrause@foundrycomm.com

FILM MOVEMENT BOOKING CONTACT

Erin Farrell | Theatrical & Festival
(212) 941-7744 x213 | erin@filmmovement.com

SYNOPSIS

In the Swiss alps, seamstress Claudine (Jeanne Balibar) has a risqué arrangement at the local hotel. In exchange for a tip, the concierge provides her with intel on the available bachelors on brief stays who she pursues for quick sexual trysts. After repeat chance encounters with an attractive German photographer, an unlikely connection is formed.

"A fascinating examination of the human condition," *LET ME GO* sensually evokes the complexities of self-liberation and redefinition in "one of the year's most audacious debuts" (*International Cinephile Society*).



STATEMENT

The mother figure has always driven my desire to tell a story and it was obvious from the outset that the main character of *LET ME GO* would be a mother. I wanted to portray a woman at that turning-point in life when the time one has left to live is shorter than the time already lived. The turning-point that can surprise us, that moment when, more than at any other, we may feel the need to make a change in our life.

LET ME GO is the story of the emancipation of a devoted mother, a demanding lover, an inspired woman in love, a woman who lets us into her world for the duration of a summer. A novelistic world set between valleys and mountains, sets conducive to introspection. A world organized by Claudine and which enables her to have different facets of her character coexist. But it's a world that unravels with the help of a love affair. An impossible story that revives in Claudine an intense thirst for freedom and, at the same time, a painful questioning about her future.

Oriented to a melodramatic tone and a desire to break away from naturalism, *LET ME GO* questions the inclination some people may have to lock themselves into patterns that prevent any access to states of happiness. It's a film with a refined grammar in which, on the face of it, no major events occur. And it is in this *not much* that I sought to make the inner storms of my character vibrate and to offer the viewer a space-time relationship conducive to questioning their own feelings, hopes and possible suffering.

Maxime Rappaz



Q&A

Interview between Jean Perret, former Dean of the HEAD Cinema section and director Maxime Rappaz

The plain, the mountain, the dam, the choice of landscapes, of this topography...

I set out to compose a topography between *high ground* and *low ground* so as to convey in images the double life that Claudine leads. On the one hand, her daily life in the valley with her son and her work as a seamstress, and on the other, the getaways she treats herself to in the mountains, where she behaves as a more independent woman. I liked the idea of the leitmotif of the journeys, which are the cross roads between the two worlds. And these paths contribute to the formal construction of the narrative. The opening of the film with a long tracking-in shot in the train, the passages in the darkness of the tunnels, the vertiginous dam and this sparsely-populated mountain are highly symbolic... And it was also important that Claudine should take my narrative towards the tale, or at least into a world far removed from naturalism.

Why set the story in 1997?

The choice of the 1990s was an aesthetic one, as I wanted to depict a period both close to and far from the present, one in which I grew up and which stimulates my imagination, yet without any documentary referencing. Above all, I wanted to tell a story in a novelistic genre that had not yet been pervaded by modern means of communication. I couldn't imagine my characters using mobile phones! And 1997 was also the summer when Princess Diana - whom Claudine's son, Baptiste, adores - died.



How important is the character with a disability and his relationship with his mother?

Initially, I asked myself some searching questions about the principle of having an able-bodied actor play such a role. In any case, I was very eager to work with the Swiss actor Pierre-Antoine Dubey, whom I had already cast in my short film *Tendresse*. We met with some specialists and the actor immersed himself in a centre for people with disabilities. We did a lot of rehearsing so as to develop a strong and credible presence for this character and to avoid the pitfall of any simplification that could have been a caricature. This character makes it possible to signify his total dependence on his mother. And I liked this best-of-both-worlds side to Claudine, who has a different lover every week to vary the pleasures, but also to be able to find material for the father's fictitious letters... It's true to say that Claudine is less attached to her lovers than the close bond she has with her son.

What about the choice of Jeanne Balibar for the role of Claudine?

I had already thought of Jeanne Balibar for my last short film, as I was already convinced by her allure, distinction and unparalleled diction. I asked her to read the screenplay for *Let me go*, and that convinced her. I was looking for a woman who could play the role of mother, lover and woman in love. A woman who could act in several registers: that of everyday life, sewing, her son; and the register of getaways in the mountains, where she comes across as a more expansive woman when she brings about encounters with strangers in the hotel. An elegant and mysterious woman who emanates a melancholic air that's simply moving. The power of Jeanne Balibar's acting has brought a decisive wealth of nuance and ambivalence to Claudine's character.

And the choice of Thomas Sarbacher to play Michael?

For the character of the man, I had, from the outset, imagined someone whose mother tongue would not be French, a man from Northern Europe. I met the German actor Thomas Sarbacher in Vienna, where we did a few tests that were very quickly conclusive. He has a literary, intellectual side to him, but at the same time he emanates a simple, unpretentious charm, enhanced with a melancholic touch. His Germanic accent adds to his natural charisma. I liked the fact that Thomas Sarbacher is not well-known in the French-speaking world and that he would be a great discovery alongside Jeanne Balibar.

And how about directing the actors?

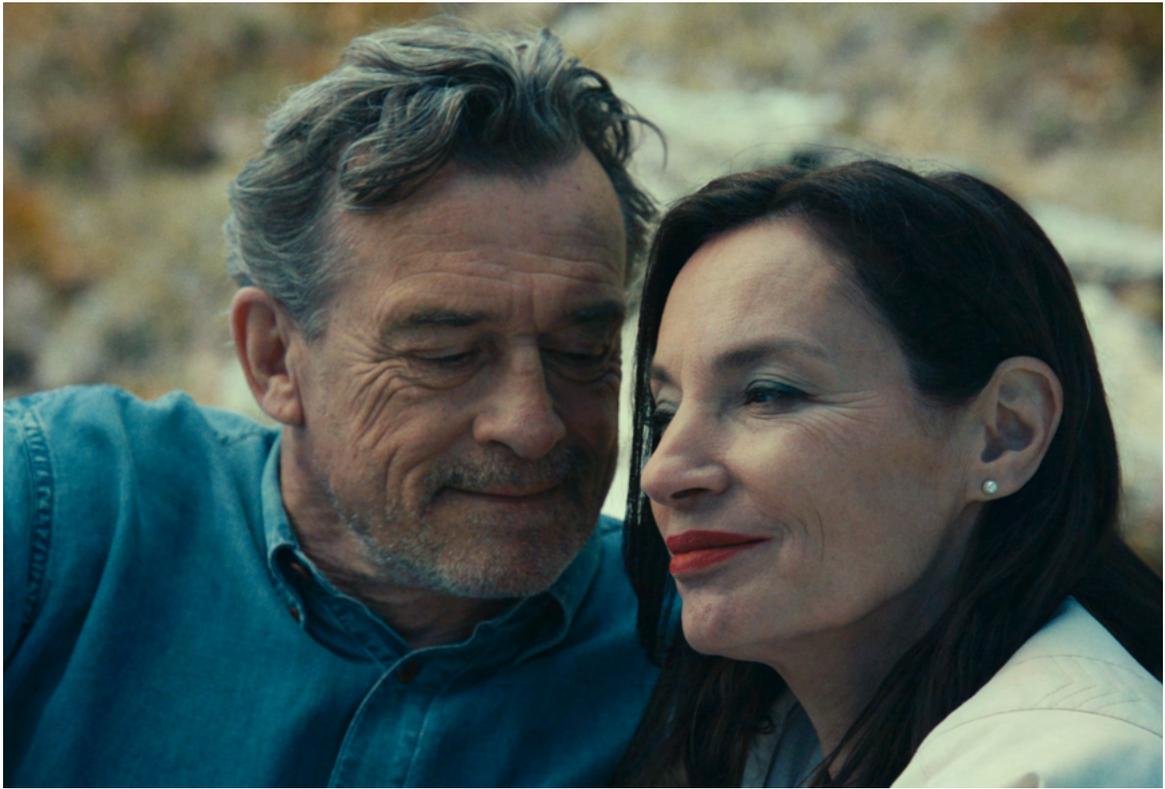
I like giving instructions mainly about voice intensity, the direction in which the actors look and the pace of their replies, I don't like the psychological aspects so much. I feel the need to work scrupulously in line with the screenplay, while preparing the movements and choreography ahead of time with my team and the actors. And I have the impression that this structured working framework nonetheless affords the actors a degree of freedom to make proposals. Jeanne Balibar surprised me in each shot and enabled me to nuance entire aspects of the character during the editing process.

And what about the direction, collaboration with Benoit Dervaux?

I very soon realized that Benoit Dervaux was the right cinematographer for my film: he became integrated in the process very quickly, he always listened to my intuitions and was kind about my hesitations. First of all, I knew about his commitment - camera on his shoulder - to the Dardenne brothers' films, before discovering other facets of his work, notably his own productions. We understood each other right away about the world of *Let me go*: a soft and pictorial tone, full shots, either static or in structured movements. We both wanted to take up the challenge of a rigorous approach to the agreed frames. I'm very grateful to him for his enthusiasm and work.

How was the film's ending decided on?

Even though the love story proved impossible for Claudine, it served as a springboard to change the course of her destiny. It was unthinkable for Claudine to accompany her lover across the Atlantic and, at the same time, everything had to change for her. At the end of the narrative, my character has, as it were, lost her son, she's left her home, let her lover take off: she's alone, she doesn't know where to go. But at last she's been set free! I like endings that gently shake us up and ask questions. I felt I wanted an open ending, in which the main character doesn't know what will become of her, an ending that would call for a second film.



Maxime Rappaz

Born in 1986 in Geneva, Maxime Rappaz worked in the fashion world before turning to cinema. In 2016, he obtained a master's degree in cinema and screenwriting (HEAD/ ECAL) and then directed the short films L'ÉTÉ and TENDRESSE. His first feature film LAISSEZ-MOI, starring Jeanne Balibar, will be released in 2023. Maxime Rappaz is currently writing his second feature film.



FILMOGRAPHY (selection)

- 2023 Let Me Go (*Laissez-moi*) | Fiction, 93' (ch/fr/bel)
ACID - Festival de Cannes
- 2018 Tendresse (*Tenderness*) | Fiction, 20'
Palm Springs ISFF, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Chéries Chéris, Queerlisboa...
- 2016 L'Été (*Summertime*) | Fiction, 13'
Festival Tous Ecrans Genève

Jeanne Balibar

- 2023 Let Me Go | Maxime Rappaz
- 2022 Irma Vep (serie) | Olivier Assayas Memoria
- 2021 | Apichatpong Weerasethakul Illusions
- 2019 Perdues | Xavier Giannoli Merveilles à
- 2018 Montfermeil | Jeanne Balibar Les
- 2018 Misérables | Ladj Ly
- 2017 Cold War | Pawel Pawlikowski
- 2017 Barbara | Mathieu Amalric



Thomas Sarbacher

- 2023 Let Me Go | Maxime Rappaz
- 2022 Ouija (serie) | Thomas Bourguignon
- 2019 Unsere wunderbaren Jahre | Elmar
- 2017 Fischer A Gschicht über d'Lieb | Peter
- 2016 Evers Jonathan | Piotr Lewandowski
- 2015 Solness | Michael Klette
- 2014 Zoe & Julie | Markus Fischer
- 2007 Die Welle | Dennis Gansel



Pierre-Antoine Dubey

- 2023 Let Me Go | Maxime Rappaz
- 2024 My Taiwanese Brothers | Maria Nicollier
- 2023 La Vie Devant (serie) | K. Reynicke & K.
- 2018 Wegenbauer Preparation To Be Together For
An Unknown Period Of Time | Lili Horvath
- 2015 Un Juif pour l'exemple | Jacob Berger
- 2014 Sweet Girls | Xavier Ruiz & Jean-Paul Cardinaux
- 2013 Pause | Mathieu Urfer



CAST

CLAUDINE	Jeanne Balibar
MICHAEL	Thomas Sarbacher
BAPTISTE	Pierre-Antoine Dubey
CHANTAL	Véronique Mermoud
NATHAN	Adrien Savigny
ALBAN	Martin Reinartz
SYLVIE	Alexia Hebrard
ANNETTE	Marie Probst
MARTINE	Yvette Théraulaz
THE ITALIAN	Gianfranco Poddighe
THE ENGLISH	Alex Freeman
THE SWISS	Philippe Schuler
THE DIRECTOR	Étienne Fague
GASTON	Marco Calamendrei



CREW

DIRECTED BY	Maxime Rappaz
WRITTEN BY	Maxime Rappaz
WITH THE COLLABORATION OF & THE PARTICIPATION OF	Marion Vernoux Florence Seyvos
IMAGE	Benoit Dervaux
EDITING	Caroline Detournay
MUSIC	Antoine Bodson
SOUND	Jürg Lempen, Denis Séchaud
PRODUCTION DESIGN	Ivan Niclass, Rekha Musale
COSTUME DESIGN	Claudine Tychon
MAKEUP	Véronique Jaggi
HAIRSTYLIST	Juliette Lamy-au-Rousseau
PRODUCTION MANAGERS	Julia Chraïti, Nicolas Zen-Ruffinen
FIRST AD	Sonia Rossier
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	Joséphine Pittet
LOCATION MANAGER	Kévin Chatelain
GAFFER	Antoine Bellem
KEY GRIP	Basile Duquenne
PRODUCED BY	Gabriela Bussmann, Yan Decoppet & Camile Genaud
ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS	Micha Wald, Gladys Brookfield-Hampson, Alexander Weiss
WORLD SALES	m-appeal
DISTRIBUTION (CH)	Frenetic
DISTRIBUTION (FR)	Eurozoom

