

LES FILMS DE LA BONNE MERE present

YOU DESERVE A LOVER

A FILM BY **HAFSIA HERZI**

Starring Hafsia Herzi, Djanis Bouzyani, Jérémie Laheurte,
Anthony Bajon,

Sylvie Verheyde, Karim Ait M'hand, Myriam Djeljeli

France / 2019 / Running Time: 1h42

FORMAT: 2.39 / SOUND: 5.1 / VISA EN COURS

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SYNOPSIS

Following Remi's infidelity, Lila – deeply in love – is struggling to deal with their break-up. From Bolivia, where he has gone on a soul-searching quest, Remi lets her know that their relationship is not over... Moving from one encounter to the next, between discussion, consolation and incitements to crazy love, Lila loses herself.

With *You Deserve a Lover*, Hafsia Herzi delivers a fresh and vibrant first feature in the vein of Abdellatif Kechiche, who showcased her remarkable debut in *Couscous*.

INTERVIEW WITH HAFSIA HERZI

The first shot of a feature film is always significant. Can you talk about yours?

I appear from the back. I'm walking with a purpose. We don't know where, but here I go. The audience can guess that my character must have been thinking hard about things, to be charging forward like this. I find this introduction quite dynamic. I knew when I was writing it that that's how it would be... In the same way that I had the editing of the film in my head beforehand.

Why, for your first film, did you want to tell the story of someone coming to terms with the end of a relationship.

Because it's universal. Everyone 's been there. I tell the story of a girl who tries to understand what is happening to her when there is nothing to understand. After a break-up there is denial, hope, jealousy, anger... and mostly loss of control. Lila does inexplicable things. Because distress can lead to madness. Any advice she gets from the people close to her is useless. She doesn't listen. It doesn't register. The heart remains sealed off. There's no cure. Everything depends on Lila. She would like to get help, but it wouldn't do any good. She can only rely on herself and her own will to get through it.

She explores all possible solutions, even resorting to the services of a marabout!

Because she has no hope, and when I was talking about madness... She is lost, she wants to be reassured, she tries everything. And then again, we're talking about the marabout of Emmanuelle Béart, Carla Bruni and Nicolas Sarkozy! I had some fun here: Bruni and Sarkozy, that's a joke, Béart is a friendly wink – I adore her!

Why did you decide to become a director?

It's what I always wanted to do. I directed a short film, *Le Rodba*, nine years ago. I've always wanted to be free and independent. It's not in my character to depend entirely on the desire of others. I have the desire to create, and a taste for a challenge. You could even call it a passion. When I was working on *Couscous* I had already written screenplays – but they didn't look like screenplays, since I never went to film school. I showed them to Abdellatif Kechiche who encouraged me, he gave me some of his own screenplays, so at least I could see what they looked like! In any case, from the day I first set foot on the sets of *Couscous* I knew I wanted to direct. Watching Abdellatif at work was a revelation. And since you have tons of time in between shootings when you're an actor, I always had time to write.

As a dedicated student of Kechiche, did you need as many takes as he does?

No, because I couldn't afford it. We had to shoot quickly. That said, I was truly well-supported and once I'd captured the right feeling, we'd move on to the next shot. It's like being a parent who must lead her children! The energy of the film depends on the energy of the director, who must never falter. Every day is a challenge. Am I going to nail this scene, finish in time, capture a little magic? I was both instructing and mothering, nurturing each member of the team with admiration and affection.

Was it clear from the start that you would play Lila?

Frankly, no. I acted in my short film and it was frustrating – I always wanted to be behind the camera to check. For *You Deserve a Lover*, I really didn't have much choice. The film was self-financed (I produced it!), I couldn't ask the crew to work for free three weeks in a row. So we shot five days a month. And how could I ever impose such an impossible schedule on an actress? On myself, yes. It was simpler.

What do you mean exactly by self-financed?

I produced it with my own money. And I sorted things out with shop owners, hoteliers, restaurateurs... everyone was adorable. I could have asked for financing, for support... but I didn't want to lose time. I wanted to gather a crew and succeed in meeting a personal challenge.

So you picked crew members according to their schedule?

Not at all. I specifically wanted these technicians. The goal was to surround myself with a young team and to give them a chance. On set,

you often – even always – run into the same people. In this case, I wanted to give responsibilities to people who had never had them. And they were magnificent! Jérémie Attard's lighting is superb, Guilhem Domercq's sound is impeccable, William Wayolle's editing is amazing. My first assistant as well, Alexandra Maïo, did an extraordinary job: she was alone dealing with everything, and it was her first time as first assistant!

I do know that without me they would have had to wait for years before becoming heads of department. They are mostly people I met on shoots. One, Lucas, was fresh out of film school, I invited him on set and he was so motivated that I explained everything to him and offered him his first internship. By the way, he's coming with all the others to Cannes to present the film. I owed it to them to share the whole adventure with them, all the way through. Without them there wouldn't be a film.

And the actors?

Besides Samir Guesmi and the director Sylvie Verheyde, friends came along to take part, and for many it's their first appearance on screen. For example, the young man in the park, Jonathan Eap, I met during a photo shoot for *Pierre et Gilles*. He told me he wanted to try his luck in film. I took his number and called him back because I found him very nice and very cinegenic. In any case I only picked nice, respectful and determined people. Jonathan was so sincere that during a scene where, I ask for his phone number he actually gave me his real number! We had to shoot that scene again of course... Alexandre Ferrario, who plays Sergio, I also met at a photo shoot. He was clowning around, he's really funny. Djanis Bouzyani, Lila's best friend, I've known since we worked together on the dubbing of *The Rabbi's Cat*. I always knew I wanted to direct him, he's truly inspiring. Anthony Bajon, Charly, I had seen in *The*

Prayer by Cédric Kahn. I was really taken by him. He has a very strong presence, he's absolutely spot on. We met at Cabourg Film Festival (where *Mektoub, My Love* won the Swann d'Or). I spotted Jérémy Laheurte, who plays Rémi, in *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*, he's super-talented. Myriam Djeljeli also, who plays the ex, was my little sister in *Sex Doll* by Sylvie Verheyde. Same thing, she's very touching, really throws herself into it... It's only her second time in a film. I immediately thought of her when I was writing.

Was everything written or was there some improvisation?

It was all written. Once the casting was settled, I adapted it according to each actor's personality. I learned to know them and modified accordingly, even added some sequences. As far as dialogues were concerned, the fact that they repeat themselves, that they stumble over words, was yet another challenge: it has to hit the right note, so you actually wonder if it is improvised. It has to be ultra-realistic. The film should feel like a documentary, when in fact it's very much directed. I love hesitations and stammering, as much as I hate, in certain films, over-emphatic gaps between dialogues. So yes, they repeat themselves, but only because in real life we repeat ourselves all the time.

If everything is written, you must have noticed your own verbal tic "This is a joke!" that keeps coming back...

Yes, because I say it very often in everyday life. There is no reason why I shouldn't also adapt my character! And yet, I edited! I did, for everyone in fact, because I encouraged them to repeat themselves, over and over again!

You made Lila a very sexually liberated character...

It was important. If she wants to sleep with someone, she sleeps with someone. Without regrets or remorse. *You Deserve a Lover* is a film for which freedom is the key word. Lila is free. From an artistic point of view the body is like a painting to me. It has to be filmed with love and without taboo, but without descending falling into vulgarity. Even when Lila, who really tries everything without managing to get better, does what is for her the ultimate experience: sleeping with a couple. She isn't traumatised by it. There's nothing too serious here. She doesn't experience it like a tragedy. It's life. It's her life.

What is your relationship with crepes and waffles, which seem to be everywhere in your film!

My relationship with food you mean! We very often see the characters eat, because that's life. It's also an escape, when things are bad. And a sign of generosity, of sharing.

Now that you have had a taste at directing, what's next?

I'm going to do it again – very soon. This summer, to be exact. I'm going to direct *Bonne mère*. In Marseille! We're going to shoot in the Northern district, where I grew up, where my childhood friends are. The casting is finished, non-professionals only, all from Marseille. And this time, I know for sure now, I'm not going to act in it. I still love being an actress but directing is my first choice. And since I have loads of ideas for screenplays...

BIOGRAPHY

Hafsia Herzi made her remarkable screen debut in 2007, in Abdellatif Kechiche's *Couscous*, for which she won the Marcello Mastroianni Award at the Venice Film Festival (2008) and the 2008 César for Most Promising Actress, as well as other prizes worldwide.

In 2010, she directed her first short film, *Le Rodba*.

You Deserve a Lover, her self-produced feature film debut, is selected to screen at Cannes in Critics' Week.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2007: *Couscous* - Abdellatif Kechiche
- 2008: *Française* - Souad El-Bouhati
- 2009: *Un homme et son chien* - Francis Huster
- 2009: *Dawn of the World* - Abbas Fahdel
- 2009: *King of Escape* - Alain Guiraudie
- 2009: *Buried Secrets (Dowaha)* - Raja Amari
- 2009: *L'Autre vie* - Frédéric Zamochnikoff
- 2010: *Joseph et la fille* - Xavier de Choudens
- 2010: *Le Rodba* - Hafsia Herzi (short)
- 2011: *Jimmy Rivière* - Teddy Lussi-Modeste
- 2011: *The Rabbi's Cat* - Joann Sfar and Antoine Delesvaux
- 2011: *The Source* - Radu Mihaileanu
- 2011: *Ma compagne de nuit* - Isabelle Brocard
- 2011: *House of Tolerance* - Bertrand Bonello
- 2012: *Inheritance* - Hiam Abbass
- 2013: *On My Way* - Emmanuelle Bercot
- 2013: *La Marche* - Nabil Ben Yadir
- 2013: *Exit Marrakech (Morocco)* - Caroline Link
- 2014: *The Bag of Flour* - Kadija Leclere
- 2014: *Certifiée halal* - Mahmoud Zemmouri
- 2014: *War Story* - Mark Jackson

- 2015: *By Accident* - Camille Fontaine
- 2016: *Sex Doll* - Sylvie Verheyde
- 2017: *Des plans sur la comète* - Guilhem Amesland
- 2017: *Of Skin and Men* - Mehdi Ben Attia
- 2017: *Les Hommes de la nuit* - Abdeslam Kelai
- 2017: *Mektoub, My Love* - Abdellatif Kechiche
- 2018: *Féminin plurielles* - Sébastien Bailly
- 2018: *Black Tide* - Erick Zonca
- 2019: *Persona non grata* - Roschdy Zem
- 2019: *Mektoub, my Love* - Abdellatif Kechiche
- 2019: *You Deserve A Lover* - Hafsia Herzi

CAST

Lila	Hafsia Herzi
Ali	Djanis Bouzyani
Rémi	Jérémie Laheurte
Charly	Anthony Bajon
Ava	Sylvie Verheyde
Aymen	Karim Ait M'Hand
Myriam	Myriam Djeljeli
Sergio	Alexander Ferrario
Jonathan	Jonathan Eap
Rachelle	Sophie Garagnon
Bruno	Brice Dulin
Mouna	Mouna Soualem
Lina	Lina Soualem
Hajelbrahim	AbdelKader Hoggui
Donia	Donia Bouzyani
Baptiste	Baptiste Cazenace
Montaine	Montaine Bouteillon
Marc	Tom Houguenague
Ben	Samir Guesmi
Nordine	Niro
Paul	Jérémie Attard
Michel	Daniel Di Grazia
Charly's Uncle	Othman Mansour
Kahina	Lilia Hammiche
Lisa	Lisa Bouteldja

CREW

Written & Directed by	Hafsia Herzi
Director of Photography	Jérémie Attard
Sound	Guilhem Domercq
1st Assistant Director	Alexandra Maïo
Editor	William Wayolle
Color Grading	Mustapha Laatia
Production Manager	Chafik Laribia
Sound Mix	Julie Tribout
Sound Editor	Rémi Durel
Original Music	NOUSDEUXTHEBAND
Production	Les Films de la Bonne Mère - Hafsia Herzi
Co - production	ARTE France Cinéma
With the support of	ARTE France
Associate producer	Michel Merkt

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