



Berlin International Film Festival – Forum 2007

Prince Film und Bloody Mary Productions

present

PAS DOUCE

(PARTING SHOT – DIE UNSANFTE)

A film by
Jeanne Waltz

**Isild Le Besco, Steven de Almeida,
Lio, Yves Verhoeven**

Switzerland / France – 2007 – 35mm – colour – 1,85 – Dolby SR

Length: 85 min.

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CAST

Fred Isild Le Besco
Marco Steven de Almeida
Mother of Marco Lio
Father of Marco Yves Verhoeven
André Christophe Sermet
Renate Estelle Bealem
Father of Fred Philippe Vuilleumier
Friend of Father Christian Sinniger
Wounded drunkard..... Bernard Nissille
Rita Jocelyne Desverchère
Mister Vaucher Rémy Roubakha
Amorous orthopaedist Serge Onteniente
Jeremy Maxime Kathari
Charge nurse Catherine Epars
The Commissar Michel Raskine

CREW

Script and Direction Jeanne Waltz
Delegated and Executive Production Didier Haudepin
and Pierre-Alain Meier
Director of Photography Hélène Louvart (a.f.c.)
Sound Henri Maïkoff
Editor Eric Renault
Original Score Cyril Ximenes
Sound Editing..... Lionel Montabord
Sound Mixing Laurent Chassaigne
Assistant director Marc Atgé
Casting Marie-Christine Lafosse
Production Designer..... Françoise Arnaud
Costume Designer Catherine Schneider, Isabelle Blanc
Make-up Artist..... Heïdi Baumberger
Script Consultant Jacques Akchoti
Line Producers..... Richard Allieu, Jean-Christophe Cardineau

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Focal, Thelma Film AG, Programme MEDIA, Commission Européenne,
Prociprep et de l'Angoa-Agicoa

SYNOPSIS

While failing a suicide attempt in a nearby forest, Frédérique, a 24 years old night nurse, seriously wounds a teenager (Marco, 14) who lands in her ward. No one saw her with her rifle. Everybody thinks of a crazy hunter. In a panic, Frederique realizes that she is going to have to tend to this boy whose aggressiveness has already terrorized her colleagues. While these two “savages” learn to tame one another, Frédérique deliberately leaves a trail of hints that will lead Marco to imagine the unimaginable: this gentle nurse who cares for him is the one that almost killed him.

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

This is the story of two self-centered individuals: (Frederique, A.k.a. “Fred”, and Marco, 14), both painfully at odds with life. But a shared ordeal will force them to see things in a new light.

Though it will not solve all their problems, this ordeal will act like an epiphany, a shared secret. As a result, each will open up to others and to life itself more effectively than if they had never met.

Fred has been a nurse in a small mountain town for the past ten years. Trapped in the image of independence and constant availability she thinks she must project, she has never managed to reconcile it with her need to love, which she represses to the extent of believing herself incapable of it.

This inability to love leads her to believe she has usurped a place that is not rightfully hers. That she doesn’t deserve to live. If she weren’t such a coward, she would already be dead. Her entire life is organized around this self-depreciation.

As a reaction, although she is not yet mature or independent – even if she’d like to think she is – she has created for herself the image of someone tough and standoffish. As reckless as she is in her private and love life, at the hospital Fred is a model nurse. But off duty, she blithely demeans herself with one-night stands or seeks escape at the town shooting range for target practice.

She is haunted by the notion of suicide. It is the very center of her identity.

And in an isolated spot in the mountains, just when Fred has finally made up her mind to go through with her decision, just when she has mustered all her courage... fate plays a dirty trick: The shrill screams of a boy approaching, in pursuit a classmate, remind her she is still alive. In a gut reflex, Fred shoots the youth. To stop the screaming, to be left alone, to end it all.

In the ensuing silence, her entire being tries to grapple with the unthinkable tragedy: instead of killing herself, she has killed another.

A kind of inner strength drives her to become acquainted with her victim. If she has been spared, even against her will, she must make amends. The boy has been hospitalized in the only hospital in town. The one she works in and where, with her fellow nurses, she will have to face and tend to this rebel who terrorizes the entire staff.

Instinctively, Marco will find in her a worthy opponent. He will force her to look herself in the face.

Fred, too, quickly realizes that Marco is like her: the same aggressive instincts, the same cruel arrogance. (But he is only 14 and has plenty of time to learn). And she, who only has opened up to the weak, the dying, the helpless, here she

is faced with a sort of wild child. She must help him understand what has happened to him.

Ironically, Marco unwittingly saves Fred twice. First in taking the bullet that was meant for her. But more importantly because his youth allows him to freely vent all his pent-up resentment and violent temper. He thus serves as a mirror to Fred in which she sees herself in a new light. And in which she recognizes herself.

Except that Fred has learned to bottle up her feelings. Until now she has only directed her violence against herself.

Marco, brutal yet innocent, senses the weakness and contradictions of this oddly behaved nurse. He will push her into a corner without quite realizing how far he can go. And this with all the more ferocity since Fred herself keeps dropping disturbing hints that will gradually lead him to the unimaginable truth: She shot him.

It is only when he tentatively offers her his fragile forgiveness that Fred will find the strength to face human justice.

A universal theme. Form and style:

This story makes no claim to exemplarity. Still, I feel that our western societies – with their blend of heartless competition and the promise of easy happiness – breed isolated individuals who are made into social misfits by a kind of headstrong individualism that may protect them, but that does not allow them to deal with the world as it is.

Despite its theme, this film will neither be gloomy nor despairing. Nor melodramatic, in the negative sense of the term. First it will be steeped in the enormous destructive energy Fred deploys, a dark energy, to be sure, but strongly motivating. Then, when Fred's very peculiar value system has crumbled, the film will get a fresh start, first at a hesitant pace, then more and more assertive, attaining a maturity that Fred was almost never to experience.

This is essentially the story of a reconstruction, with its emotional and absurdly funny moments, and inevitably, its violent relapses.

What I hope to show in this story of a proud, ultra-sensitive young heroine who thinks that she has "seen enough of life," is how she manages to free herself from the trap she built for herself. And by extension, to show, through this specific portrait, how Fred manages in extremis to escape the mirage that allows some of us to believe we are unique, solitary, singular beings and who, like Fred, deliberately place themselves outside the generational link, to such an extent that they end up with no heredity, no heir, forever alone.

To dramatize this idea that is likely to concern many of us, I sought to construct a film that takes the opposite stance from a well-known cinematic tradition, in which the hero must throw off social convention in order to excel. Here, on the contrary, the heroism of Fred - and Marco – resides in finding the courage to adapt. Starting with this nurse who is a bit of a "cowboy," I imagined her becoming an adult woman capable of accepting and taking her place in life, even if it means first serving time in prison.

I imagine Fred becoming capable, more than anything, of changing. Shooting Marco is in fact the first act in her life – even if she is above suspicion and could go unpunished – whose consequences she has decided not to flee. Her itinerary

will take her from a purely individual concern for herself and others to a comprehension of herself as part of a whole.

The vision of the town is important as well: a little clockwork town in the Swiss Jura, Chaux-de-Fonds. The harshness, the incredible number of bars, the endless streets that run off into the mountains, in the middle of a beautiful countryside. A town made up of right angles. It is from this maze of contrasts that Fred must find her way out.

Jeanne Waltz

Interview with Jeanne Waltz

The originality of your film's subject is immediately striking. What gave you the idea in the first place?

It's always hard for me to say exactly how a subject originates. Ideas come and go, some of them fade, others remain. Actually, I wanted to dramatize someone who is walled up inside herself, and who needs a real shock to re-emerge. I wouldn't call it redemption. What interested me was precisely the potential for opening, change, evolution. Unconsciously Fred, the main character, wants to break out of the vicious circle she's in. Fortunately she made the choice, but things could have been different.

How did you go about constructing the screenplay?

My main concern was to get at the heart of the subject, to envelop it. I wanted a very streamlined narrative, even if following such a direct line lends it a certain starkness. That's not really like me, I tend to digress! Finally, the film is like Fred. One of the crucial moments in the writing came when I realized that the kid she wounds has to resemble her. He's so blunt he's brutal, and most of all, he's not a nice little boy.

A boy ill at ease with himself, like Fred?

Marco is in open rebellion against his mother. Fred isn't rebelling against society inasmuch as, being a nurse, she is part of the social system, but she feels uncomfortable in it. She can't manage to fit in. So she turns her rage on herself. She's lost, all alone in her routine, with the feeling she's not really living, that she has no ties with the world and other people, unable to do anything right, with no aim in life.

Yet we quickly grow attached to this fiercely independent young nurse.

Her desire for independence stems from the fact that she's terrified. She's afraid of others, afraid of committing to anything, either friendship or love. Fred can't accept some of her emotions. No sooner does she form a bond than she breaks it. On the other hand, she often cares for terminal patients, in other words, people who need help, and there she can afford to be generous because she needn't become attached. At best, they'll offer her a box of chocolates when they leave the hospital and she'll never see them again!

You show us a very high-strung woman who's always on the defensive.

As she doesn't see any reason to live, as things have no meaning for her, she perceives the world as an aggression... Fred is unable to project herself into the future. She's constantly confronted with her own incapacity, she knows that she's good at certain things, but she can't manage to evolve beyond that stage.

Many people today feel this same pressure, the same state of dissatisfaction, melancholy or depression.

In our Western societies with their blend of cold competition and promises of easy happiness, there is a proliferation of isolated people, or those rendered socially unfit by the headstrong individualism that protects them but that does not enable them to confront the world the way it is. Fred also has that youthful, absolute desire in which you always imagine you're the only one with a key to the truth. She can't lie, she always has to be as forthright as possible, as truthful as she can be, in her logic of being as close as possible to the truth. She believes that she'll never manage to function in this world. What she is living and what she has don't interest her. What is missing for her to be able to live life fully? According to one of the theories on affluent suicidal societies, when people are materially impoverished, they can always hope for better. But when you have everything you need...

Fred's love life is rather a mess...

She's looking for tenderness, and at the same time she's very free in her sexual desires. We can imagine that she sometimes must have been madly in love with her customs agent friend, and the next day tell him "honey, get along without me." There is always this duality of giving herself entirely for a very short time. I didn't want to go into their love life in detail, but you can imagine that after a while, due to her behavior, he decided to leave her!

She consoles herself by picking up two strangers...

That scene where Fred decides to have sex with the two men she picks up in a bar also shows the pressure that surrounds her. Such behavior excludes her once and for all from her little town where everybody knows everything. It's easy to imagine that her father knows, too. That sort of thing gets around quickly in small towns like that.

For Fred, it's also a way of hurting herself, trying to condemn herself, exclude herself.

That's true, social condemnation goes along with it, and that's what she's after. She says to one of the men, "you accept my body for half an hour and I accept yours, it's not particularly enjoyable, not much happens."

And the man says to her: "Can't you be tender?"

Yes, he defines her in the negative.

Fred practices competitive target shooting. It's a way of getting close to a father who rejects her.

Her father most likely got her interested in shooting when she was still his little girl, his little darling. She was good at it, and this skill gave her a well-defined place in life by enabling her to form a strong relationship with her father. One day, she realized that it wasn't what she really wanted to do after all, and that she had just copied her father's wishes. Since this awareness came very late, it's all the more difficult for her to stop. And this brings on a clash with her father. More generally speaking, I think you never forget skills you have learned, things you know how to do. Her shooting skill is important to understand the act she commits. As she says at the party, "if a good shot shoots at someone, it isn't an accident." Target shooting requires such concentration that you find yourself in a total void. There's nothing around you, it eliminates the rest of the world, in fact.

You boldly depict someone on the verge of suicide...

I don't confront my character with that out of audacity. I'm convinced a lot of people have experienced that malaise, either personally or through people close to them. Going through with it is another story. Later in life, when you have a

family and children, you live for them and it becomes unthinkable. But I found it interesting to deal with the reality, to what extent you can bear living with it, or not. And how just a little bit of distancing with respect to yourself enables you to see the world around you and open up to life. Also, Fred has to be pretty young, because there is something juvenile about the act she commits, in that she still has no distance on things. But she can still change.

She is still in the romantic position of a young Werther...

I wouldn't go that far, but there is something of the romantic notion that you have to be completely sincere and realistic, clear with yourself. So if I really want to be honest, if I can't deal with life, the only thing left for me to do is to kill myself. What saves most people and what Fred lacks is a sense of humor. If she could only laugh at herself a little, she'd be better off. Marco, the boy, can come through more easily, because he's lucky enough to have a friend who can kid him and laugh about things.

Ironically, instead of killing herself, Fred shoots Marco. How do you explain her act?

She's totally out of control. She's irresponsible, outside of herself and outside the world, locked into her determination to kill herself. Before she pulls the trigger, she's in that moment of total void, when suddenly the yells of children rip through the inner space into which she had withdrawn. Had she been aware of the incident that disturbed her at that very moment, she wouldn't have fired, she would have yelled at the two kids to stop fighting. Her loss of control is triggered by something in the depths of her unconscious, the act of a dying person, in fact. But this terrible shock will enable her to break out of this state of self-enclosure. She knows she could have killed herself, or killed the boy, but things didn't go that way. And now she has a reason to live.

Marco is not simply a foil for Fred, he's her double, in a way.

At first, Marco is impossible. He shouts and screams all the time, and being confined to a hospital bed makes him even more ferocious. But in their contact with one another, these two are going to change. They are terribly alike, and recognize one another in their energy, and their survival instinct. There's something animalistic and instinctive between them. In fact, Fred's friend says to her, "Now that you've tamed him, we'll have to find someone to tame you." The relationship between Fred and Marco is friendly and there's also something a bit maternal in the way she answers his questions and teaches him things. Suddenly Fred has to face new responsibilities. With respect to this boy, she can no longer run and hide.

They both share a sense of guilt.

We can regret the terrible things we do. But there's also the difficulty, even shame, of accepting that something terrible can make us more alive than in everyday life. And we put ourselves in terrible situations because it's our only way of being alive. In the scene where Marco breaks down in Fred's arms, he's made much more progress than she has. After that, he can afford to be a little nicer to his mother, since he's had the courage to admit to Fred that he was cruel to his friend. Fred is way behind him, since she never manages to talk about things to anybody. She breaks down when she's alone, sure, but she always controls herself with others. Yet Marco's gradual awareness of his guilt helps Fred become aware of hers. And it's just after that Fred calls her old boyfriend, and they make love, for the first time, in a sense. What they share is really love, not just sex!

Marco is both Fred's victim and savior.

Exactly. The notion of victim is very important. Fred has to fully realize that she's really hurt him, that she's done something irreparable.

And in fact, Fred turns herself in to the police.

By accepting the consequences of her act, Fred makes a social choice, she joins society. She submits to its rules. Her accepting responsibility in this way indicates that she is changing. I wanted to show how she finds a way out of her impasse, by taking responsibility for her terrible mistake, her crime. This is a case of involuntary manslaughter. But where is the boundary line between voluntary and involuntary? With Fred, it's interesting. A German proverb says: "In the event of great danger, the middle road only leads to death." In extreme situations, you can sometimes be saved by a huge blunder... Starting with the moment when you let yourself go, when you've lost control. I think people know more about themselves than what they consciously think they know. Sure, we all more or less create a sort of protective shell for ourselves. But all fortresses have been conquered eventually, and in fact we're better off on the outside.

There's a tipping point between the energy that the character initially invests in her attempt to destroy herself, and then her desire to pull herself together again. And at the same time, Marco displays the same malaise and the same determination to pull through.

The film isn't about a girl who bungles her suicide, but who succeeds by not dying! This film is above all about a reconstruction. Fred decides not to flee the consequences of her act. And Marco, at the same time as he forgives Fred, will open up more to others, in his moments of emotion, absurd humor, and also in his inevitable relapses and hesitations. Despite its theme, the film is neither darkly despairing nor morbid. First of all, it is infused with the considerable energy that Fred musters to destroy herself. Then, after the collapse of her personal system of values, it resumes on a more assertive movement towards a maturity that Fred almost failed to experience.

You use a quick-cut editing style that lends tension to the film while allowing breathing space so the audience can get acquainted with the characters.

I needed a certain energy inherent in the very texture of the film, in the shooting script, the directing, and to be able to go quickly because of the weightiness of the theme. The subject didn't lend itself to stylistic effects or complicated self-indulging compositions.

To dramatize the story of a young woman at the boundary line of her life, you shot on location in a little border town.

This little town in the Swiss Jura, near Pontarlier, is full of contrasts. After it totally burned to the ground in the 19th century, it underwent a hugely ambitious reconstruction since it was supposed to be a stop on the route from Paris to Zurich. But in fact the railroad went through another town! So you wind up in a city built on the model of New York, a megalomaniac city, but very tiny. Its large avenues give you a sense of escape, and at the same time you're stuck among cows and pine trees. I thought a setting like this would nicely illustrate Fred's character and the theme of the film. It's a paradox between great tenderness and great harshness.

Isild Le Besco invests Fred with appropriate intensity.

Isild is very private and protects herself a lot. She works from instinct, and only gives herself completely when the camera's rolling. Fred's character, a mixture of excess and self-control, perhaps allowed her to work in a more adult register of emotions than in her previous films.

It's nice to see Lio back in a strong part.

Lio is full of exuberance and generosity. When she arrives on the set, she puts everybody at ease, she knows all the extras! She's the kind of actor who wants to invest a part with her personality. She identified completely with this interpretation of the beautiful but strict Portuguese mother. As she told me, she knows a thing or two about Portuguese mothers!

Tell us about the choice of Christophe Sermet as Fred's lover and Steven Pinheiro de Almeida, as Marco.

In fact, for Fred's lover, I was looking for a giant, someone whose mere stature would be a guarantee of protection, like the Indian in ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST. I couldn't find one. So I offered the role to Christophe, whom I'd seen in Sebastien Lipshitz's beautiful film, WILD SIDE. He has a calm, solid uprightness that also gave him a rock-like quality.

As for Steven, it was more difficult. Marco wasn't supposed to be either a typical bad boy, or to inspire pity. Bruno Dupuis and I held a lot of auditions in both France and Switzerland. For a long time, we only found kids who were able to play either violence or fragility. Not many were able to play both. The fact that Steven is Portuguese and comes from the very place where we shot are coincidences that pleased me immensely.

How would you define your approach as a filmmaker?

I don't know. Actually, I don't talk that much in life. When I'm filming, I try to convey the maximum with a minimum of words, by trying to employ all the means that cinema has to offer. You have to find the right distance, so as not to be too abstract. I'm a great believer in the unspoken, but language is nevertheless what defines what is human. All my ideas have to do with this way of looking at the world and reflecting it in my own way. Sometimes there's a temptation to insert meaning everywhere!

JEANNE WALTZ – Director

Born in Basel in 1962, Jeanne Waltz started her studies in Neuchâtel. Later she studied Japanese at the *Freie Universität* in Berlin, where she operated a theatre for several years.

Jeanne Waltz mainly lives in Portugal since 10 years, where she has realized the majority of her films und collaborated on numerous projects as scriptwriter, coscriptwriter and production designer.

Filmography

2007	PAS DOUCE
2003	DAQUI P'RA ALEGRIA
2000	AS TERÇAS DA BAILARINA GORDA
1999	LA REINE DU COQ-À-L'ANE
1998	O QUE TE QUERO
1997	MORTE MACACA
1994	LA COUVEUSE

ISILD LE BESCO – Fred

Filmography Actrice

2007	CAPITAINE ACHAB Philippe Ramos PAS DOUCE - PARTING SHOT Jeanne Waltz
2006	L'INTOUCHABLE – THE UNTOUCHABLE Benoît Jacquot U Serge Elissalde
2005	BACK STAGE Emmanuelle Bercot CAMPING SAUVAGE Christophe Ali, Nicolas Bonilauri
2004	A TOUT DE SUITE - RIGHT NOW Benoît Jacquot LA RAVISSEUSE - DE PROFUNDIS Antoine Santana
2003	PETITS MYTHES URBAINS Florian Von Donnersmark LE COUT DE LA VIE – COST OF LIVING Philippe le Guay LA MAISON DU CANAL - THE HOUSE BY THE CANAL Alain Berliner PRINCESSE MARIE - MARIE BONAPARTE (TV) Benoît Jacquot
2002	ADOLPHE Benoît Jacquot
2001	UN MOMENT DE BONHEUR Antoine Santana LA NUIT DE NOCES (Court métrage) Eliette Abécassis LA REPENTIE – THE REPENTANT Laëtitia Masson
2000	ADIEU BABYLONE Raphaël Frydman LES FILLES NE SAVENT PAS NAGER – GIRLS CAN'T SWIM Sophie Birot ROBERTO SUCCO Cédric Kahn
1999	UNE FILLE REBELLE (TV) Arnaud Ségnac, Michaëla Watteaux SADE Benoît Jacquot
1998	LE CHOIX D'ELODIE (TV) Emmanuelle Bercot LA PUCE (Moyen métrage) Emmanuelle Bercot
1997	ANNIVERSAIRES Anne-Sophie Rouvillois LES AMIS DE NINON Rosette DES GOUTS ET DES COULEURS Eric Rohmer
1990	LACENAIRE – THE ELEGANT CRIMINAL Francis Girod

Filmography Réalisatrice

2006	CHARLY
2005	LE REGARD D'UN ENFANT (Kurzfilm) VOYAGE A COIN DE LA RUE (Kurzfilm)
2004	DEMI-TARIF

PRINCE FILM SA, GENEVA

Pierre-Alain Meier

Born in Délémont (Switzerland) in 1952. Studies literature at the University of Neuchâtel and later on film studies at the INSAS in Brussels. He founds the production company Thelma Film AG in Zurich in 1988 and operates Prince Film SA in Geneva since 1998. He mainly produced in Africa YAABA by Idrissa Ouedraogo, LAAFI by S.Pierre Yameogo, HYENAS by Djibril Diop Mambéty, adapted from «Der Besuch der alten Dame» by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, BAB EL OUED CITY by Merzak Allouache, in Cambodia LES GENS DE LA RIZIERE – RICE PEOPLE and UN SOIR APRES LA GUERRE – ONE EVENING AFTER THE WAR by Rithy Panh, in India FLAMMEN IM PARADIES – FIRE IN PARADISE by Markus Imhoof, in Switzerland and in Europe LES HOMMES DU PORT by Alain Tanner, BYE BYE by Karim Dridi, BLIND DATE with 12 young Swiss directors, and recently in Argentina MEMORIA DEL SAQUEO and LA DIGNIDAD DE LOS NADIES by Fernando Solanas.

He produced overall 30 features and documentaries. All these films have been presented at important festivals and shown in theaters and television in numerous countries. He also realised several documentaries IKARIA, DOULEUR D'AMOUR, LA DANSE DU SINGE ET DU POISSON and his first feature film THELMA in 2002.

BLOODY MARY PRODUCTIONS

Didier Haudepin

Born in Paris 1951, Didier Haudepin's film career began in 1960 as an eight year old with a part in MODERATO CANTABILE by Peter Brook after a work by Marguerite Duras. He played a part in around 50 films and plays from Marcel Carné to Jules Dassin, from Roger Vadim to Juan Bardem and Luchino Visconti. In 1980 he produced his first feature PACO L'INFAILLIBLE, with Patrick Dewaere (Prix Jeune Cinéma, Cannes 1980). On the occasion of his first production he founded Bloody Mary Productions. His following productions were 1985 ELSA, ELSA with François Cluzet, Lio and Tom Novembre, 1986 THE INNER ROOM with C. Kane, J. F. Stévenin and LE PLUS BEL ÂGE with Elodie Bouchez (Official Selection Cannes 95 Un Certain Regard).

Since many years Didier Haudepin develops projects of young writer-directors; many of whom became important figures of French Film.