

COHEN MEDIA GROUP
PRESENTS

LINE
RENAUD

DANY
BOON

ALICE
ISAAZ

JÉRÉMIE
LAHEURTE

driving madeleine

A FILM BY
CHRISTIAN CARION



Film Francophone
D'ANGOULEME

France, 91 min, 2.39



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LOGLINE

In *Driving Madeleine*, a seemingly simple taxi ride evolves into a heartfelt meditation on the lives of the driver and his passenger.

SYNOPSIS

A seemingly simple taxi ride across Paris evolves into a profound meditation on the realities of the driver and his fare, a 92-year-old woman whose warmth belies her shocking past. Charles (Dany Boon) is a taxi driver in Paris, and he is having a very bad day. Enter Madeleine (Line Renaud), an immaculately groomed nonagenarian, who informs Charles that the trip today will not be a direct one. She is moving into a nursing home and would like to make some stops along the way predicting that this might be her last car ride through the city. Their ride takes them through the momentous locations of her life and their brief friendship deepens as Madeleine listens to Charles confess his own worries. Boon, an actor best known for his comedic work, creates a dramatic portrait of a frustrated man facing a personal crisis of epic proportions. His darker, sharper edges allow Renaud (renowned for decades in France as a singer) to shine as the pure shimmering light that is Madeleine, reminding us that inside every seemingly benign elderly woman we might pass on the street is a warrior, a nurturer, and a spirited adventurer.

INTERVIEW WITH

CHRISTIAN CARION

***Driving Madeleine* is your seventh film and it's a very special project. What drew you to this story?**

I had in my hands this script that was originally written by Cyril Gély. I read it in one go on a train and by the end of the journey, I was in tears. We are all faced with this question one day: what will happen to our parents when they get old? The story of Madeleine, 92, leaving her home to go live in a care facility touched me. Right from the start, I knew the movie was written for Line Renaud. I wanted to take her on this journey through space and time. I made a few changes to Cyril's script and reached out to Dany Boon, whom I've known since *Merry Christmas*. All three of us are from the same region in North of France. *Driving Madeleine* is the movie that brings us all together. From strictly a director's point of view, I would add that I was very excited about the challenge of filming most of the movie in a car. It's never easy and we had to reinvent the process for the film.

You mentioned Line Renaud and Dany Boon. We know how close they are in real life but it's palpable on the screen right from the first scene outside Madeleine's house.

I talked about the concept of "emotion" for a long time with Dany. When *Merry Christmas* came out, he was worried that the death of his character Private Ponchel at the end,



would upset his fans. “They want me to make them laugh. I don’t want to let them down,” he said. I told him he’s one of those actors who can make us laugh or cry, like Bourvil. Dany replied that as a kid he was disappointed when he saw Bourvil in *The Red Circle*. When I called him about *Driving Madeleine* 15 years later, I realized that he’d changed and was ready to broaden his range. “People don’t offer me roles like that,” he told me, “but now I want them.” He agreed to the role, provided Line joined the cast. What’s marvelous is that Dany lets her shine in the film. She’s got the leading role. I’ve also known Line for a long time, although we’d never worked together before. In fact, Dany’s the one who introduced us at a preview of *Merry Christmas* in 2005.

Did you use their connection and friendship as a director?

Yes, because it’s obvious that they love acting together. They know each other like a book. They finish each other’s sentences! Line often says, “Dany’s my son.” There’s a unique bond between them. They have the same working class roots and rags-to-riches story. I know this story means a lot to them. There’s a pretty rare, joyful chemistry between them. There’s a script

to stick to and they perfectly memorized it, but what they make of it goes well beyond mere dialogue.

Offering this role to Line is not an insignificant choice. The story of this 92-year-old woman brings up a lot of deeply personal issues for us and for her.

We talked a lot about that before shooting began. When I went to see her at her home, she told me: “This has my name written on it!” I told her the role suits her very well and she said, “No, it’s much more than that: it’s my testament film.” I had just lost my mom, which was a really hard blow for me. “But you know, leaving can be a happy moment,” she told me. That’s when I realized that Line and Madeleine have that in common.

“Smiling makes you look younger,” as it’s said in the film. We kept on talking and Line told me that she no longer expected to see characters like Madeleine on screen. She also said “I am Madeleine Keller in your film, not Line Renaud.” There are things in this movie that dovetail with her life. It’s unsettling for her and for us.

During the shoot, I noticed that she let herself be caught up in her own memories. Line is incredibly sincere and truthful. We obviously

made sure she had the best possible working conditions. She only worked in the afternoons and her dressing room was just steps away from the set at the Montjoie studios near Paris. When she was ready, I’d go see her and play tunes she loves, like “Relaxez-vous”, the duet she recorded with Dean Martin in Los Angeles. We’d talk a little bit about her memories of those days. Then we’d go over to the cab where Dany was waiting for us to start shooting. He’d crack a couple of jokes and then off we’d go. I think the result is awesome. Line gave us a lot in this movie.

You used a rather innovative technical process to shoot all the scenes of the cab driving in the streets of Paris and the suburbs. They were all shot in a studio.

We knew that driving in Paris is very complicated nowadays. Making Line do and redo scenes in traffic jams while filming her in a tracking car on 500-meter stretches at a time was not only risky but unthinkable. How could we get around that? Pierre Cottureau, the cinematographer, suggested an LED screen system that he’d just experimented with on a project. He told me this technology is quickly changing and worth trying. We tested it for weeks to see how far we could

go, especially with what we call “transparencies.” In the old days, we’d put a screen behind the car and project scenes on it while shooting. I really like this system, which Claude Sautet, for one, used a lot for his driving scenes. Today there are green screens, but that keeps the actors from seeing what’s happening around them. Everything is done in post- production, so interaction is impossible. For *Driving Madeleine*, it’s the opposite. We set up 4K, insanely high-definition L-shaped screens around the cab in a studio and projected the entire route the cab took during the filming.

We shot it from every angle with a platform truck carrying multiple cameras. We even shot the sky: we had a screen facing the vehicle that lit the windshield and brought the interior to life. Surrounded by these three-by-eight-meter screens, Line and Dany were totally immersed. When I said “action,” they really thought the car was moving! Dany was caught a bit off-balance at first, but I think the result is amazing and the acting is great. When a cyclist passed the cab, they could follow him all the way with their eyes. Dany’s character yells at cars that are too close to him. We even had a kid on an electric scooter ride between the car and the screen and hit the rear-view mirror while zooming past! We’re among the first to

use this technology to this extent we used for almost half of the film. I’m convinced that this is the future of filming in urban areas.

Alice Isaaz plays the young Madeleine. It’s not an easy part.

I was lucky to work with Alice in 2015 on *Come What May*, where she played a schoolteacher fleeing Paris after the German invasion in 1940.

I told her it wouldn’t be easy working opposite actors like Olivier Gourmet and Mathilde Seigner but she did a great job. When

the opportunity came, I thought of her to play the young Madeleine. And you’re right, it’s not easy bringing a young Line Renaud to life! I organized a dinner for them to meet each other. Line really wanted that. They hit it off right away, as though they’d been friends for years. I find that Alice has grown tremendously since 2015, gaining in maturity while keeping all her freshness. Now that she has experience and professionalism, she can completely lose herself in her characters while bringing a lot to the acting. She’s a talent to watch.



The young Madeleine is a victim of domestic violence at a time when it was never mentioned or even thought about.

In one of the scenes on a bridge, Line tells Dany “the fifties weren’t like today...” At that time, which is not that long ago, women had to get their husbands’ permission to work or have access to money. I kept that in mind when I was reading the script. There’s a beautiful, totally unintentional moment in the film: on their way back to the cab, Madeleine and Charles walk past a City of Paris poster with Simone Veil’s face on it.

Not to go back over the past, but we have to remember where we’ve come from. Equality, reproductive rights and rising awareness of domestic violence are yardsticks of how far we’ve come, but also of how far we have to go.

Let’s talk about the cinematography. Looking back at *Merry Christmas*, *Come What May* and, recently, *My Son*, the American version of *Mon Garçon*, you haven’t filmed much in studios...

And I loved it! I was like a little boy in a candy store. The sets of the apartment were just a few steps away from the cab in a 1,000m2 studio. Line worked in the afternoon, so I had time in the morning to shoot the flashback scenes



with the rest of the cast. In short, the studio’s limitations worked out perfectly well for the kind of movie I wanted to make. The film’s starting point is Madeleine’s life-long nostalgia for the passionate night she spent with a GI. Visually, I love the great Hollywood masters John Ford, Douglas Sirk and Alfred Hitchcock. They were a great influence for *Driving Madeleine*. The apartment scenes were shot from a low-angle as a humble tribute to everyone who has influenced me as a filmmaker. I’d like to point out the great work of Pierre Cottreau, my director of photography, who also shot *Come What May*, and Chloé Cambournac, my head set designer, with whom I worked for the first time. I absolutely wanted a woman for the sets. I know they both had a blast with this project and it shows! Same goes for the score, I asked Philippe Rombi (my composer) to listen to Bernard Herrmann, Sir Alfred’s trusty composer. Truth

be told, I even set the first cut to the scores of *Vertigo* and *Psycho*. Philippe listened to it one time and integrated what I was looking for into the score.

How do you look back on this unique experience today?

The touchiest part for me was showing the film to the team, especially the actors. I remember the screening took place at Pathé. Line, Dany and Jérôme Seydoux were there! I felt like I was taking an oral exam! I sat in the back the whole time trying to figure out what they were thinking. When we came out, everybody made comments, and quite insightful ones at that, which I heeded to tighten up the editing, but I knew we had our movie. Now I’m waiting for people to see it. That’s what cinema is all about, isn’t it?

INTERVIEW WITH
LINE RENAUD and
DANY BOON

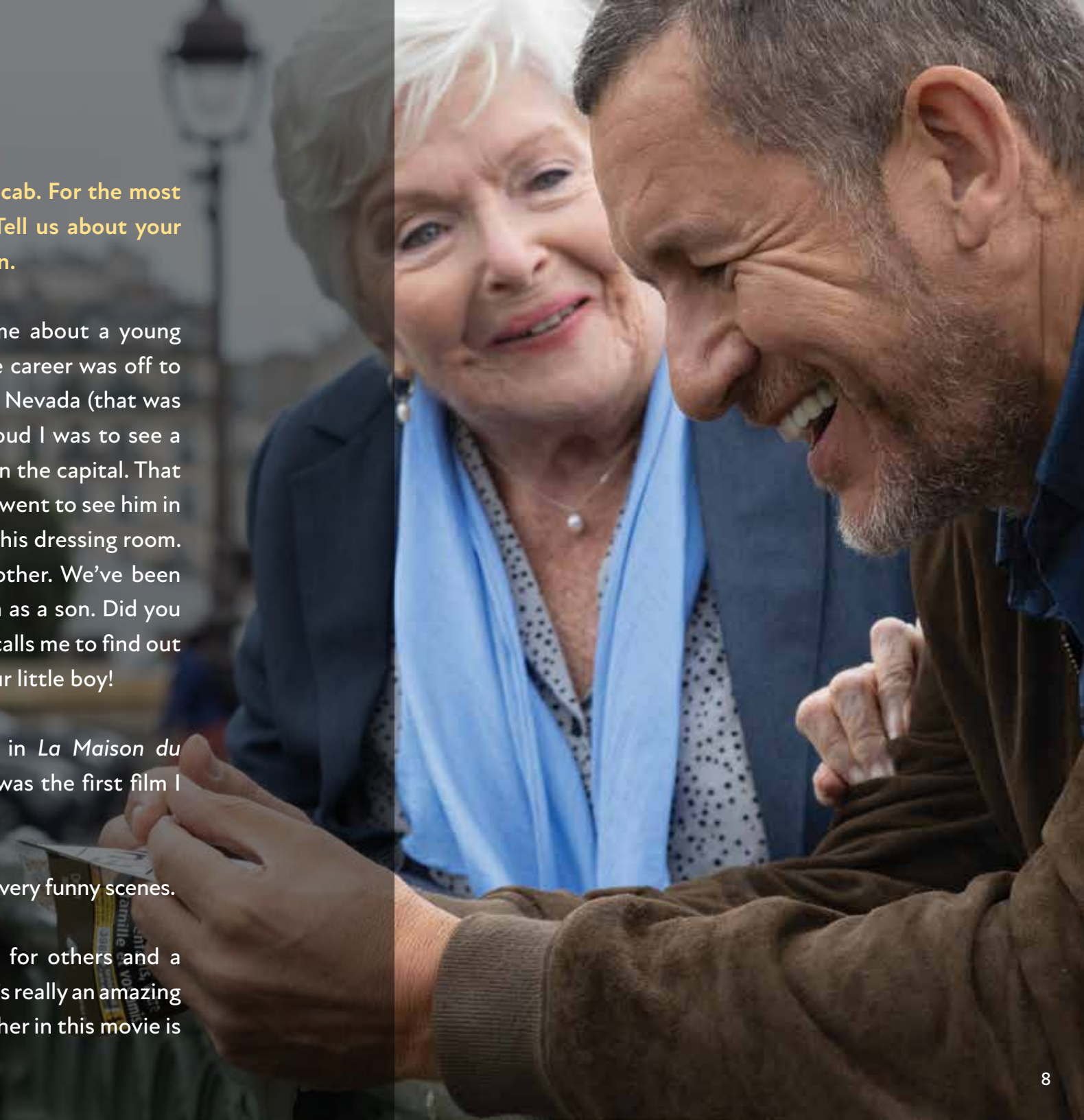
Both of you spend most of your time in a cab. For the most part the movie rests on your shoulders. Tell us about your year-long friendship both on and off screen.

LR: I was in Las Vegas and people told me about a young comedian from the North of France whose career was off to a brilliant start. I sent him a telegram from Nevada (that was still done at the time!) to tell him how proud I was to see a fellow northerner go to Paris and succeed in the capital. That was the first time we were in touch. Then, I went to see him in a play. After the show, I went backstage to his dressing room. That's when we really got to know each other. We've been very close friends ever since. I think of him as a son. Did you know that sometimes his mother, Danièle, calls me to find out what he's up to? Both of us worry about our little boy!

DB: Remember when I asked you to be in *La Maison du Bonheur*, the movie based on the play? It was the first film I ever directed. You played Aunt Suzanne.

LR: Yes, it was a small part but had beautiful, very funny scenes.

DB: Line has a passion for life, a passion for others and a passion for her craft and her profession. She's really an amazing woman! Having the chance to co-star with her in this movie is a beautiful gift.



Your feelings for each other are obvious in *Driving Madeleine*. Christian Carion's film sometimes makes you smile, but it's also very moving.

DB: Yes, it's a lovely drama and a really touching story: an old woman looking back at her life before moving into a nursing home meets a grumpy cab driver. The fact that Line and I know each other so well allowed us to give each other plenty of space and listen to each other. The script about the final chapter of this woman's life is deeply moving: I cried when I read it.

LR: I don't blame you! It's a great story: two strangers get to know each other during the ride from Madeleine's home in the suburbs to a nursing home a dozen miles away.

DB: Madeleine's character gives me an almost philosophical lesson on life. Charles, the cab driver I play, is overwhelmed by his money and relationship problems at first. He agrees to pick up Madeleine mainly because it's a long distance ride and it will be a beautiful one. While driving around and confiding in each other, Madeleine opens his eyes and heart along the way.

Do either of you miss the places where you grew up or lived in, in the past, like Madeleine, who wants to see them again one last time?

LR: Of course. Whenever I go back to where I came from in the North of France, I walk past my grandmother's cafe. That's where I grew up. Today, it's a beauty parlor. I always stop in front of it and talk to people there. Then, I go to see the little one-story working-class brick house in the middle of the street where I used to live. I remember that during the filming of *Welcome to the Sticks* we went to the big beach at Bray-Dunes, not far from Dunkirk, where I also have cherished memories.

DB: That's incredible! My grandparents owned the gas station-garage there! I also go back to see my small red brick house with a tiny garden behind it: it's such a tiny place. To be honest, I think it's nice to go back but I don't really miss it.

LR: Neither do I. I'm not one to dwell on the past, but going back to my childhood home, where my roots are, well that touches me and I think it's important. You should never forget where you came from. That keeps your head on your shoulders!

Let's get back to your characters, starting with you, Line. Why do you find Madeleine interesting or touching?

LR: I think she's the most beautiful character I've ever played. She's also the one that resembles me the most. You know, this year I'll be 94, the same age as Madeleine, but that's not all we have in common. Like her, I've gone through some hard things in my life. I grew up around women like her in my family. Madeleine is my mother, my grandmother and even my great-grandmother. I see them in my character's tormented story. My great-grandmother and my grandmother were victims of domestic violence but they, too, stayed strong. Their life stories are what gave me the strength to live my life and fight my battles. Today, when I see all these feminist movements bearing witness, daring to speak out and making demands, I say to myself thank goodness times have changed, even if there's still a long way to go.

DB: Madeleine's story starts just after the war, but the movie follows her into the 1960s. Women didn't get the right to vote until 1948, but for a long time afterwards they had no financial freedom without their husbands'



approval, not to mention the right to abortion, which wasn't legal until the mid-1970s.

LR: I know about that personally because I got pregnant when I was 17, before abortion became legal. I couldn't keep the baby and had to have a backstreet abortion. But there are also joyful aspects in Madeleine's life. American soldiers, for example. I, too, remember dancing with the GIs who had just liberated France. Madeleine has character. She likes to have fun.

She's a bit tough and I can relate to that as well. When I read the script, I was really moved, but also upset. I would've done the movie

anyway but knowing that Dany would be my co-star made me want to do the film even more. When I watch the film, I see the Dany of *Merry Christmas*, the one we know less well on screen: fragile, sentimental, sensitive and moving, the same way he is in life.

Dany, how do you see Charles, a rather gruff cab driver at the beginning of the story?

DB: Charles serves as a mirror to reflect Madeleine's whole life going by. This old woman who gets into the cab is living in a suspended moment, she's almost already outside of life looking in. When she leaves her pretty house

to go live in a nursing home, she accepts that she's finite. She looks back at her past with calm and humanity and a lot of spontaneity. In contrast, Charles struggles with life. At first, he's shut off from everything around him, and sees the glass half empty. Madeleine helps him find who he really is. Charles takes Madeleine to the end of her story.

Driving Madeleine came at a critical time in my life as an actor. I think it's meaningful that Line and I made it together. It's an incredible gift.

LR: I know you told Christian that you couldn't pass up a project like this when at the very beginning I think he was only asking you to co-produce it. Once I heard that, I couldn't see anyone but you in the role of Charles.

DB: By the way, I want to commend Christian for his fine work on the script. I'd read a version before he came onboard and, while I thought it was pretty good, I wasn't entirely convinced. It was like a promise not quite kept. And then Christian called to say he'd taken over and gave me the new version of the script to read. It touched my heart and I said yes, especially knowing that I'd be working with Line.



There are also flashbacks with Alice Isaaz who plays Madeleine when she was young. Was it moving to see them, Line?

LR: It certainly was. I absolutely wanted to meet Alice before shooting started. As I didn't know much about her acting career, I asked to see some of her films. I was interested in seeing if she looked anything like me when I was young. I found her terrific in every respect, except for her blue eyes! Mine are a lighter shade. I told Christian and he said not to worry about it: he could fix that in post.

A word about your collaboration with Christian Carion, the director. Dany, you've known him

since *Merry Christmas*. *Driving Madeleine* is the first time you worked with him.

LR: To be honest, with him directing it didn't feel like I was making a movie. Christian is good at doing things simply and naturally. He gives you advice about intent, tone of voice and the meaning of the scene, but with such kindness. His remarks are spot-on. And he makes them gently, during a conversation. Being able to create this atmosphere on a set is essential. I've worked with plenty of directors and some of them shout, stomp their feet and throw tantrums. With Christian, it's the opposite and you want to give it all you've got.

DB: Christian means a lot when it comes to my acting career. He offered me the magnificent role of Private Ponchel at a time when I was still doing one-man shows. Beyond the film, there is also some crossover with my personal life: Private Ponchel was in Regiment 26, the same number as the regiment of my great-grandfather André Bailleul, a Zouave during the First World War. I owe a lot to Christian. *Merry Christmas* became my calling card and thanks to him, I've been recognized by the film industry. Before, I was a stand-up comedian and now I'm considered an actor.

CHRISTIAN CARION

BIOGRAPHY

Born into a family of farmers, Christian Carion developed a passion for cinema at an early age. After high school, he respected his parents' wishes and studied agricultural engineering, but several years later, rented a video camera and started shooting. Soon, he met Christophe Rossignon who, at the time, was just beginning his career as a producer and ended up producing all Carion's films under his production banner Nord-Ouest Films.

THE GIRL FROM PARIS, Christian Carion's first film is an homage to his origins, having grown up in the north of France. With a successful theatrical run, it remains one of Nord-Ouest's greatest achievements to this day.

Buoyed by this success, Carion took on a more ambitious project, MERRY CHRISTMAS starring Guillaume Canet, Diane Kruger, Dany Boon, Daniel Brühl and August Diehl. Playing Out of Competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005, the film was in the running for both an Oscar and a Golden Globe in the Best Foreign Film category.

Two years later, Christian Carion reunited with Canet for FAREWELL, a spy thriller that also featured actor and award-winning director Emir Kusturica. The film made the selection of both Telluride and Toronto International Film Festivals.

COME WHAT MAY (2015), his third film is also his most personal. Dedicated to his mother, the film recounts her exodus from the German army in May 1940. Nominated for the 2016 French Cesar, Ennio Morricone composed the film's score.

In 2016, Christian Carion cast Guillaume Canet for MON GARÇON. He instructed Canet to not read the script ahead of time. The actor played the role of an absent father who learns that his 8-year-old son has disappeared. Performing alongside Mélanie Laurent, he discovered in real time what happened to this child all while the camera filmed him.

A few years later, he turned the film into an English-speaking remake starting James McAvoy and Claire Foy. Just like Canet did in the French version, McAvoy discovered the story in real time. The film was released in the US on Peacock and was sold in over forty territories.

DRIVING MADELEINE is his seventh film.

FILMOGRAPHY

DRIVING MADELEINE (2022)

With Line RENAUD, Dany BOON, Alice ISAAZ, Jérémie LAHEURTE
Director, Scriptwriter and Producer
Selections: Toronto International Film Festival 2022, Palm Springs International Film Festival 2023

MY SON (2021)

With James MCAVOY, Claire FOY, Tom CULLEN, Gary LEWIS
Director, Scriptwriter and Producer

MON GARÇON (2017)

with Guillaume CANET, Mélanie LAURENT
Director, Scriptwriter and Co-producer

COME WHAT MAY (2015)

With August DIEHL, Olivier GOURMET, Mathilde SEIGNER, Matthew RHYS
Director, Scriptwriter and Co-producer
Cesar 2016: Nomination for Best Original Score for Ennio MORRICONE



FAREWELL (2009)

With Emir KUSTURICA, Guillaume CANET, David SOUL, Willem DAFOE
Director, Scriptwriter and Co-Producer
Selection: Toronto International Film Festival 2009: Special Presentation

MERRY CHRISTMAS (2005)

With Diane KRÜGER, Guillaume CANET, Daniel BRÜHL, Gary LEWIS
Director and Scriptwriter
Selection: Cannes International Film Festival 2005: Out of competition
Cesar 2006: 6 nominations including Best Film, Best Original Screenplay
Golden Globes 2006: Nomination for Best Foreign Language Film
Oscars 2006: Nomination for Best Foreign Language Film

THE GIRL FROM PARIS (2001)

With Michel SERRAULT, Mathilde SEIGNER
Director and Scriptwriter
Cesar 2002: Nomination for Best first feature film, nomination for Best Actor in a supporting role for Jean-Paul Roussillon

THE CAST

Madeleine LINE RENAUD
Charles DANY BOON
Mado ALICE ISAAZ
Ray JÉRÉMIE LAHEURTE
Denise GWENDOLINE HAMON
Karine JULIE DELARME

THE CREW

Director
Screenplay and dialogue
Adaptation
Original soundtrack
With

Produced by

Co-producers

Associate Producers

Executive Producers

Director of Photography

Sets

Costumes

Sound

Editing



CHRISTIAN CARION
CYRIL GELY
CHRISTIAN CARION
PHILIPPE ROMBI
GWENDOLINE HAMON
JULIE DELARME
THOMAS ALDEN
HADRIEL ROURE
LAURE IRRMANN
CHRISTIAN CARION
ARDAVAN SAFAEE
PATRICK QUINET
MARIE DE CENIVAL
LAURENT BRUNETEAU
THOMAS BRUXELLE
STÉPHANE RIGA
PIERRE COTTEREAU
CHLOÉ CAMBOURNAC (ADC)
AGNÈS NODEN
PASCAL JASMES
FRANÇOIS MAUREL
THOMAS DESJONQUÈRES
THOMAS GAUDER
LOÏC LALLEMAND

First Assistant Director

Casting

Co-produced by

In associated co-production with

With the participation of

In association with

With support from

And development support from

International Sales and Distribution

THIERRY VERRIER

GIGI AKOKA

UNE HIRONDELLE PRODUCTIONS

PATHÉ

TF1 FILMS PRODUCTION

ARTÉMIS PRODUCTIONS

SHELTER PROD

KOBAYASHI PROD

BRIGHT LIGHTS FILMS

CANAL+

CINÉ+

TF1

TMC

LES SOFICA

SOFITVCINE 8

SOFITVCINE 9

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THE TAX OF THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT OF BELGIUM

D'Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

CINÉMA

PATHÉ