

Mongrel Media

PRESENTS

BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR

ADÈLE: CHAPTERS 1 & 2

A FILM BY ABDELLATIF KECHICHE
starring LÉA SEYDOUX and ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS

FILM FESTIVALS

2013 FESTIVAL DE CANNES – PALME D'OR WINNER
2013 TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL
2013 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
2013 NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
2013 CHICAGO FILM FESTIVAL

179 MIN / FRANCE / COLOR / 2012 / FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

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SYNOPSIS

"BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR" centers on a 15-year-old girl named Adèle (Exarchopoulos) who is approaching adulthood and dreams of experiencing her first love. A handsome male classmate falls hard for her, but an unsettling erotic reverie upsets the romance before it begins. Adèle imagines that the mysterious, blue-haired girl she encountered in the street slips into her bed and possesses her with overwhelming pleasure. That blue-haired girl is a confident older art student named Emma (Seydoux), who will soon enter Adèle's life for real, making way for an intense and complicated love story that spans a decade and is touchingly universal in its depiction.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ABDELLATIF KECHICHE

Why did you choose to adapt Julie Maroh's graphic novel "Le bleu est une couleur chaude" ("Blue Angel") for your fifth film?

The film is very loosely adapted from the graphic novel. It was the combination of reading the graphic novel and a film project I've had in mind for a long time that triggered my desire to make "BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR" ("Adèle: Chapters 1 and 2"). Since "Games of Love and Chance" [2003] I have had a project for a screenplay about the career of a female French teacher passionate about theatre. I was interested in developing a female character who was passionate about her professional life who wanted to pass on her enthusiasm. At the same time this teacher had to take on the repercussions of her private life on her work: her loves, her bereavements and her break-ups. I met many such teachers, men and women, while making "Games of Love and Chance." I was moved by the way they lived their vocation. They were true artists, who felt very strongly about reading, painting, writing.

Each of us remembers that turning point in our school life when a passionate teacher took us to see this film, or encouraged us to read that book, and perhaps instilled the seeds of a vocation in us. But in the end, my screenplay never reached fruition. So when I came across Julie Maroh's graphic novel, the story of absolute love between two women which at the same time was about a young woman becoming a schoolteacher, I saw how I could link these two projects.

Vocation is a strong theme for the two lead characters in your film: painting for one, teaching for the other.

I find this notion of vocation entirely legitimate and honorable, and all the more so since these are anonymous, selfless vocations. Neither is about trying to secure the recognition of others. I'm full of admiration for teachers who are deeply engaged with the progress of their students. It becomes part of their lives, the thing that gives them satisfaction.

Your film is first and foremost a love story between two women.

Telling a love story between two women means working with two actresses to the fullest; this kind of work excites me deeply and it's becoming more and more important in my film career.

I have asked myself, what was it about this story from the graphic novel that was most inspiring, what was the spark? The illustrated panels showing naked bodies? It's possible. In the end I don't really know the precise motivations.

How did you choose your actresses, Léa Seydoux and Adèle Exarchopoulos?

First, I met Léa Seydoux for the role of Emma. She shared her character's beauty, voice, intelligence and freedom. But what was decisive during our meeting was her take on society: she's very much tuned in to the world around her. She possesses a real social awareness, she has a real engagement with the world, very similar to my own. I realized to how great an extent, as I spent a whole year with her between the time she was chosen for the role and the end of shooting.

I also thought there was something that could be described as quite 'Arabic' about Léa, something of an Arabic soul. She told me later she has Arabic half-brothers, which I didn't know. Léa has a way of going through life fully aware of what's happening. It's also a way of accepting life's vicissitudes. It has something to do with nomadism, wandering and with melancholy, and what we call 'mektoub'. Léa is tinged with all this, with this way of going through the world.

And Adèle Exarchopoulos?

We organized a huge casting session and I chose Adèle the minute I saw her. I had taken her for lunch at a brasserie. She ordered a lemon tart and when I saw the way she ate it I thought: "It's her! She was very much "within her senses", her way of moving her mouth, of chewing. Her mouth was a very important element in this film; in fact, both characters' mouths were decisive and for very human reasons. They provoke all sorts of feelings and sensations. Something in a face touches us: a nose, a mouth, whatever. For me this is the beginning of everything.

Why did you decide to change the name of one of the characters from Clémentine to Adèle?

Clémentine became Adèle because I wanted to keep the name of my actress. It didn't bother her. I think it even helped her merge with her character and I with her. It's also a matter of sound: Adèle, Emma, Léa are all light, ethereal names.

Of course, it's subjective. And then there's the fact that Adèle means 'justice' in Arabic, which I liked a lot.

'[Social] justice' is an important concept with regard to all your films. Here, is it conveyed by a vision of the two different classes to which the characters belong?

It is indeed one of the recurring themes in my films, and has become almost an obsession: where is the social difference? Perhaps it's a finger on the pulse of a world to which I feel I belong, the class to which Adèle also belongs - the working class.

Emma belongs to an elite class: intellectual, artistic. Each of my heroines is defined by her social class. The difficulties they have with their relationship, that which causes them to break up and ultimately what the film is about, is their class differences, since it generates a difference in their personal aspirations. It's not at all their homosexuality, which would be more or less tolerated, or understood, by the world around them.

Why did you choose to treat homosexuality as a love like any other, with no specific demands, given that society can sometimes be intolerant?

I had nothing militant to say about homosexuality. I didn't try to define it, and at no point during the process of making of the film did I say to myself: "Yes, but these are two women." I felt rather that I was telling the story of a couple. I didn't see why I should talk specifically about homosexuality, especially since the best way would be - if I had to have a discourse on the subject - not to. I wanted to film it like any other love story, with all the beauty that this involves.

But it can only have a powerful and positive impact that you - a French citizen of Arab origins (where homosexuality is not always accepted) - should chose to direct such a story.

Once the film was completed I thought: "This is going to do Tunisian youth some good." A revolution isn't complete unless it's also a sexual revolution.

The sex scenes are essential to explain the powerful love between your two heroines. How did you approach them?

What I was trying to do when we were shooting these scenes was to film what I found beautiful. So we shot them like paintings, like sculptures. We spent a lot of time lighting them to ensure they would look beautiful; after, the innate choreography of the loving bodies took care of the rest, very naturally. They had to be made aesthetically beautiful while keeping the sexual dimension. We tried many different things; we worked hard. We talked a lot but in the end discussions led nowhere. You talk a lot on set but ultimately what you say doesn't matter that much because it's so intellectualized, whereas reality is more intuitive.

The theme of romantic loneliness follows the theme of love.

The theme of breaking up, the emptiness you can feel, the loneliness you experience when you're no longer loved, the bereavement you go through; everyone has known this. Everyone feels it, and no one can explain the pain it can create, but what interests me is that despite the pain, life goes on and what must be accomplished goes on. For me, that's why Adèle's character is heroic. She takes it all upon herself and continues to fulfill that for which she was destined.

The loneliness triggered by heartache leads to courage, a theme that also seems to interest you in this film.

I greatly admire the character of Adèle: this free woman, courageous, devoted and strong. Adèle is devastated by her sorrow but doesn't once let it show in her work as a schoolteacher. She copes. Whenever I see courage like this in someone, it troubles me. Personally I don't feel courageous, but I hold on to the idea. I often see it in young women, this strength, this self-affirmation. It reminded me - without my wanting to compare myself to him in any way - of Marivaux, and in particular of "La vie de Marianne," with its orphan heroine so determined and full of courage in the face of hardship. There is a kinship with Adèle.

Your cinematic style is also noticeable, a real endeavor to have the acting as natural as possible. How do you achieve this?

It is important that what is conveyed by images should be natural, and even though there's always fabrication, it must be as little as possible. It's a process of seeing how close you can get to "the truth" of a character, of trying to get rid of the acting, while knowing you never really quite get rid of it.

This is even more pronounced in the group scenes where the exchanges between the characters seem improvised. Is there any improvisation involved?

In these group sequences, the text, the lines, are very precisely written. They exist but I try - I don't feel I have quite succeeded yet - not to have a predefined rhythm. I try to find the rhythm while we are shooting since I have difficulty with rhythm in screenplays, even regarding the plot structure. When I'm on set I need to break free of that principle, the principle of the screenplay that must be respected at all cost. I prefer to move towards others with my lines, to be open to something else, and not get stuck on what is written. So when it comes to these kinds of scenes, everything is open. Lines disappear and the writing continues during shooting. I feel very comfortable with these scenes. They are constantly being re-created to get the actors to react to each other. That amuses me.

Now the film is completed. What has it given you?

It didn't give me any answers. On the contrary, it has multiplied my questions and uncertainties about the feminine principle: the principle of life, of hope, of mystery. I have the feeling that perhaps one day I will find an answer.

Is that the reason for the film's subtitle "Chapters 1 and 2"?

Chapters 1 and 2 because I don't yet know the other chapters. I'd really like Adèle to tell me what happens next.

Is Adèle your Antoine Doinel? [Truffaut's hero and alter ego played by Jean-Pierre Léaud in several of his films]

Antoine Doinel? I admit it has crossed my mind.

FILMOGRAPHIES

ABDELLATIF KECHICHE

2013 BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR – Writer/Director/Producer
2010 BLACK VENUS - Writer/Director
2008 SUEUR (short) - Director
2007 THE SECRET OF THE GRAIN - Writer/Director
2003 GAMES OF LOVE AND CHANCE- Director
2000 POETICAL REFUGEE - Writer/Director

LÉA SEYDOUX

2013 BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR - Emma
2013 GRAND CENTRAL - Karole
2013 PRADA: CANDY (short) - Candy
2012 SISTER - Louise
2012 FAREWELL, MY QUEEN – Agathe-Sidonie Laborde
2011 MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – GHOST PROTOCOL – Sabine Moreau
2011 TIME DOESN'T STAND STILL - Elle
2011 MYSTERIES OF LISBON (TV mini-series) – Blanche de Montfort
2011 MIDNIGHT IN PARIS - Gabrielle
2011 LE ROMAN DE MA FEMME - Eve
2010 ROSES A CREDIT - Marjoline
2010 PETIT TAILLEUR (short) – Marie-Julie
2010 BELLE EPINE – Prudence Friedmann
2010 ROBIN HOOD – Isabella of Angouleme
2010 TRACELESS - Fluer
2010 GOING SOUTH - Lea
2009 LOURDES - Maria
2009 INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS – Charlotte LaPadite
2009 DES ILLUSIONS – LA fille du metro
2009 LA BELLE PERSONNE - Junie
2008 DES POUPEES ET DES ANGES - Gisele
2008 ON WAR - Marie
2008 LES VACANCES DE CLEMENCEA (TV Movie) - Jackie
2007 13 FRENCH STREET - Jenny
2007 THE LAST MISTRESS - Oliva
2006 MES COPINES – Aurore

ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS

2013 BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR - Adele
2013 I USED TO BE DARKER - Camille
2012 PIECES OF ME - Erell

2011 CARRE BLANC – Marie (jeune)
2011 CHEZ GINO – Maria Roma
2010 TETE DE TURC - Nina
2010 LA RAFLE – Anna Traube
2008 LES ENFANTS DE TIMPELBACH - Marianne
2007 BOXES - Lilli

CAST

Emma Léa SEYDOUX

Adèle Adèle EXARCHOPOULOS

Samir Salim KECHIOUCHE

Lise Mona WALRAVENS

Thomas Jérémie LAHEURTE

Béatrice Alma JODOROWSKY

Adèle's Father Aurélien RECOING

Adèle's Mother Catherine SALÉE

Amélie Fanny MAURIN

Antoine Benjamin SIKSOU

Valentin Sandor FUNTEK

CREW

Directed by Abdellatif KECHICHE
Screenplay Abdellatif KECHICHE and Ghalya LACROIX
Freely adapted from Le Bleu est une couleur chaude
by Julie MAROH - Éditions Glénat

DP Sofian EL FANI
Sound Jérôme CHENEVOY
Editors Albertine LASTERA
Camille TOUBKIS
Jean-Marie LENGELLÉ
Ghalya LACROIX

Supervising Sound Editor Patrick HUBARD
Sound Editors Fabien POCHE
Roland VOGLAIRE

Production Sound Mixer Jean-Paul HURIER
Mixer Yoann NALLET
Color Grading Marc BOUCROT
Elie AKOKA

1st Assistant Director Roxane GUIGA
Casting Director Bahijja EL AMRANI
Production Manager Diana ANGULO
Post-production Manager Antoine RABATE
Produced by ALCATRAZ FILMS
Olivier THERY LAPINEY
Laurence CLERC

Executive Producers QUAT'SOUS FILMS
Abdellatif KECHICHE
WILD BUNCH
Vincent MARAVAL
Brahim CHIOUA

Coproduction FRANCE 2 CINÉMA
SCOPE PICTURES - Geneviève LEMAL
VERTIGO FILMS - Andrès MARTIN
RTBF

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FRANCE 2

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