



## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Synopsis

Zomer in een nieuwe buitenwijk van Parijs. Veel meer dan naar het plafond staren is er niet te doen. Marie, Anne en Floriane zijn 15. Hun wegen kruisen elkaar in de gangen van het plaatselijke zwembad. Hier steken liefde en verlangen voor het eerste de kop op en ontdekken de meisjes nieuwe gevoelens, die hen dichterbij elkaar brengen en tegelijk verder uit elkaar drijven.

### NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES

85 min. / 35mm / kleur / Frans gesproken / Frankrijk 2007

Nederlandse theatrale distributie: Cinemien

Belgische theatrale distributie: ABC Distribution

DVD uitbreng : Homescreen



## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Crew

Regie	Céline Sciamma
Scenario	Céline Sciamma
Muziek	Para One
Casting	Christel Baras - Laure Cochener
Beeld	Crystel Fournier
Geluid	Pierre André
Montage	Julien Lacheray
1 <sup>ste</sup> regie-assistente	Delphine Daul
Script	Roselyne Bellec
Coach	Véronique Ruggia
Decor	Gwendal Bescond
Line producer	Maud Quiffet
Kostuums	Marine Chauveau
Make up	Marie Lisset
Producenten	Jérôme Dopffer - Bénédicte Couvreur

## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Cast

Pauline Acquart	Marie
Louise Blachère	Anne
Adèle Haenel	Floriane
Warren Jacquin	François



## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Regie: Céline Sciamma

**Céline Sciamma** is 27 jaar. Ze groeide op in de buitenwijken van Parijs. Na het behalen van haar bul Literatuurwetenschappen werd ze toegelaten tot La Fémis, waar ze studeerde voor scenariste. Ze is nu zowel bezig als regisseuse en als scriptschrijfster voor film en televisie. *Naissance des pieuvres* is haar eerste lange speelfilm.

## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Muziek: Para One

**Para One** - werkelijke naam Jean-Baptiste de Laubier - werd in 1979 in Orléans geboren. Hij is een Franse schrijver/producer van Electro/Hip-Hop/Pop. In 2001 bracht hij de EP *Blue Rain* uit. In 2002 werkte hij mee aan het project *L'Atelier* en bracht hij het album *Buffet des Anciens Elèves* en de EP *Beat Down* uit. Para One werkte ook samen met TTC voor het album *Bâtards sensibles* - waarvoor hij de nu al als culthit beschouwde *Dans Le Club* produceerde – en voor zijn recentste album *3615 TTC*. In 2006 bracht hij zijn eerste solo-album *Epiphanie* uit onder het Institutbes label en remixte hij *Daft Punk*. Met zijn regisseursdiploma van La Fémis op zak, schrijft hij momenteel in samenwerking met Céline Sciamma, het scenario van zijn eerste lange speelfilm.

## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Beeld: Crystel Fournier

**Crystel Fournier** is *Director of Photography*. Ze studeerde af aan La Fémis in 1998 en maakte vervolgens een tiental films waaronder *Dreams of Dust* (2006) van Laurent Salgues, *The Man who wanted a Child* (2006) en *Carnage* (2001) van Delphine Gleize, *La Jungle* (2006) van Mathieu Delaporte, *Sauf le respect que je vous dois (Burnt out)* (2005) van Fabienne Godet, *Orlando Vargas* (2005) van Juan Pittaluga, *Why (not) Brazil?* (2004) van Laetitia Masson, *Saltimbank* (2003) van Jean Claude Biette en *Clément* (2001) van Emmanuelle Bercot.

## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Interview met Céline Sciamma

*Can you tell us about your life leading up to *Naissance des Pieuvres*, your first feature film? One thing that stands out is that you have never made a short film...*

I studied screenplay writing at the film school La fémis. To graduate, I wrote a feature film screenplay. Xavier Beauvois was on the graduation committee... He said I absolutely had to make the film myself. When I met producers, the question of the director came up again. The writing had a signature, which reinforced the idea that I had to direct it myself. The idea made headway and in the end, I realized I didn't want to hand it over to someone else. I had the choice between several producers and then I met Balthazar Production. They said they wanted to do the film as fast as possible and making a short film would only put time between the film and me. They gave me the luxury of not doing a trial run, which meant I could dive into *Naissance des Pieuvres/Water Lilies* with the fresh approach I needed. It all happened very fast. A year after I graduated from La fémis, I was preparing the film.

*Where does the idea for the film come from, both the world of synchronized swimming and the three female characters?*

For synchronized swimming, it starts with an experience from my past. When I was a teenager, I went to a synchronized swimming gala by chance. It made a strong impression on me but I couldn't really work out why. I felt I'd made a mess of my life and it's what I should have done. After a few days, I realized I'd been impressed by girls my age who had already reached a stage of accomplishment and skill, when I was only potential. I think this is pretty representative of what you can feel as a teenager. You misunderstand your motivations. There are underlying things that impact on everyday events. I thought the situation was trivial but also a very good illustration of that age. I also think it's important to talk about subjects you know. At my age, you can talk about things that happened ten years ago. You've digested it but it's still fresh. Cinema often talks about women but it's also full of fantasy. Often men do the talking and I wanted to give a woman's perspective on these wonder of the first times. I wanted to be in the present, in the cruelty of that age and work on feelings rather than reproducing frames of mind. It's the reason I decided on a three-way film. Three characters meant three issues to shake off my own life, to lose myself a little more and ultimately, to bring together more threads. It was also an X-ray of the birth of femininity starting out with archetypal issues. It was fun playing with the codes of teenage films: questions of beauty, uncertainty, coming out of your shell and being physically awkward. They are three characters that could have been in *American Pie*. The idea was to settle the viewer into that convention, get him to put on slippers and feel like he's on known ground so as to go deeper into these initial situations and take him on a ride. For me, the film is about what a tough job it is to be a girl. It's a woman's perspective from inside.

*The film strikes us by its lack of adults. What made you take that stand?*

It happened very early on. I started writing scenes with parents. I soon felt like they were compulsory figures. I got the impression I was writing scenes that we'd seen over and over. Parents embodied a sort of law that limited the film to its genre. The point is that adolescence is a world without laws. Its inner imperatives come from a community that positions itself in terms of adults but always in a stereotypical, rebellious manner. I didn't feel this dimension was an asset to the film. The point was to get under the skin of adolescence, looking at it from inside the bubble. It seemed right in terms of feelings. Parents are enemies that are too obvious and too marked out. Locking the characters into overly sociological typecasting could have made my angle more ordinary, especially on the question of homosexuality. In French cinema, the subject is only just starting to be dealt with, especially for girls. I didn't want to do a typical coming out movie that inevitably implicates laws and parents. I wanted to leave them to their own devices in this ordeal by fire. In terms of identification, I wanted the viewer to only have the choice among the three girls. I wanted parents to not fall back on identifying with a mother or father figure. This hard line also came from wanting to take the viewer where he doesn't necessarily want to go. It's a

challenge. Another notable absence is boys. There is no male perspective or man's vision in this film. *Water Lilies* does not take on any line on what boys are like. They are side B for another film. They're not around. They don't speak. It also comes from teenage girls' view that men are uncontrollable raw forces that you don't dialogue with and that don't speak.



*Do you think there is a specifically female perspective in *Naissance des Pieuvres*?*

A woman's perspective in film interests me mostly in the way it's made. But as an end result, it is not necessarily a film I want to promote under that banner or under the gay film banner either. But they are still questions I looked at. I think they're working questions, not standpoints.

*How exactly did you get that mix of a naturalistic grounding and stylization?*

I wanted a sense of timelessness and this comes through on all levels, including the sets and costumes. For example, there are no cell phones. They're minor details but they contribute to the

feeling I was looking for. In terms of clothes, I think the girls are dressed in a contemporary style but they could have been dressed like that ten years ago, especially with today's revival of the 1990's. I wanted the soundtrack to be timeless too. This is why the songs the teenagers listen to were written especially for the film. This stylization also applies to the choice of settings. The exteriors were not modified much but were carefully selected. I know the places where we shot well. It is the type of town that sprung up in the 1960's. Towns without a History. They are places that don't vehicle fiction. They are pretty much untouched and nobody has really filmed them. Yet Rohmer filmed Cergy-Pontoise, like Verneuil in *I comme Icare*. And Verneuil filmed it like it was America. For me, this suburb is not middle class or boring. It is very French, very representative, even if it does not officially represent a political position. At the same time, it is a town that has mushroomed with architectural projects that create unlikely groupings of places and atmospheres that encourage stylization. It is a place we could work with. It says something about the present.

*In the film there are places that are almost neutral...*

I shot everything in one town and yet it looks like a strange patchwork of places. For example, the columns designed by the architect Ricardo Bofill that were filmed by Rohmer. We don't know where we are. It's Gattaca. The housing estates in red brick look straight out of some American or Northern European suburb. All the places are within twenty square kilometres. There is a balance between the place's real personality and what you can create by filming it.

*There is a place that structures the film. It's the swimming pool, which is like a mini-society with its own rules.*

The swimming pool is very cinematographic. A lot of French movies have their swimming pool scene. It's usually the time when the heroin is thinking. She does a few strokes and looks back on her life. One great film about teenagers at the pool is *Deep End* by Jerzy Skolimowski. The pool is a sweaty place. It has its own share of stereotypes but it can be approached in very different ways. In some films, it is a confined place. In others, on the contrary, it represents freedom. Even sound-wise, you can play on suffocation or something more open. For me; it's a muggy place where desire is born and things are revealed. The theme of desire is what really struck me in *Deep End*. It is also a world with its own rules, with visual and sound elements that are a dream for directors. With synchronized swimming, it is an even more regulated world with castes. I threw myself into the documentary side of it. It's a world that is totally unknown and pretty fascinating. It is a 100% female sport so it generates a position on femininity. It is a particularly difficult and athletic sport. The girls train 15 hours a week. They have to have exceptional physical qualities. And it's all for nearly nothing because there is no possibility of making a career of it. It's a sport that demands a lot of effort that has to be hidden. The girls have to make it look easy and smiling is compulsory. That's what interested me. Synchronized swimmers are little soldiers made up like dolls. They have to seduce and fight... As a director, it was a challenge too because synchronized swimming in cinema has a past with Esther Williams' water

ballets. Often when I talked about the film before making it, people had horrific and nostalgic memories. There were pitfalls to avoid, such as kitsch and choreography. For me, it was about filming synchronized swimming as a sport, which meant showing the effort, discipline and the military aspect... It's like a girls' army.

*What is the role of dialogue in Naissance des Pieuvres? It's a film that holds back and at the same time, it is structured around letting teenagers speak for themselves...*

I thought about it a lot. Traditionally, films on teenagers are full of talk. The timeless side of *Naissance des Pieuvres/Water Lilies* also meant avoiding a focus on really contemporary language that I can't say I even master. For me, it was better to get the girls to talk like anyone else. I don't think it's necessarily right to associate teenagers with a lot of talking. It's more a time of holding back. I wanted the dialogues to be decisive. I tried to think of *Water Lilies* as an action film. You say you're in love by eating a trashcan. I thought it was interesting to work underground? There is no gratuitous talk. Each time a character says something, it leads to action. Everything was like an action film.

*Let's talk about the three characters in the film, starting with Anne, the chubbiest girl...*

She's not the main character but she's the only one who is alone. She interacts with the male character but in reality, she is totally on her own. Hers was a character that was hard to handle throughout the film because she had a particular tone and was very appealing. She had to find a place when we were editing. She's a character that can cause misunderstandings, especially at the start of the film. She contributes to setting up an archetypal situation. Once she has found her place, the character reinforces the film's hard line. She is deceptive at first because she plays the good friend and the nice fat girl because she's not pretty... In the end, she is the bravest character, the one who confronts, the one who gets the least love and the most cruelty. This turn-around in situation and image inevitably pays off. Anne plays a pivotal role through her disappearances and reappearances. For me, she is an essential entity in the film. The violence she encounters gives her a certain grandeur. She dreams out loud. She is the most childish. She acts on faith, with unlikely rituals like burying her bra or praying... Like all good believers, her logical destiny is to be a martyr.

*Floriane, on the contrary, operates on beauty, apparent ease and seduction...*

She is the object of desire. In fact, back when I was writing the screenplay, I really wanted to talk about the tragedy of being a pretty girl. Films usually celebrate the beauty of girls and I wanted to join them, but I think it is a real subject and cinema is the ideal instrument for talking about it. We create desire around a character and we also raise the issue of desire. It creates an interesting ambiguity. It is hell being too beautiful. Once this issue was raised, I saw *Naissance des Pieuvres/Water Lilies* as a film with three heads or three hearts. It wasn't about push and pull. It was about three characters and

three real lives. It was really fascinating to participate in that desire, to create it, to make falling in love with Floriane believable and at the same time, deal with the suffering this desire generates.

*Then there is Marie, who can be considered the main character of the film and who is above all an observer...*

She is the most childish and the youngest. I wanted their bodies to be different and most of all not get caught up in the fantasy of cotton underwear. Marie is a mix of grace and awkwardness. She is the main character but paradoxically, she is the one who observes most. She has a goal to reach but she is above all an observer. I was interested in that for the main character. She examines but we're going to examine her too. Through her, I wanted to talk about the moment when inescapable desire is born. For her, the birth of this desire is unpredictable. It happens in real time and the viewer has to experience it at the same time as her. We accompany her seduction, understanding and suffering. I wanted to embody the moment that lasts a few days, when awareness is born... it is the birth of the feeling of love seen from a very physical angle. I wanted to avoid a sociological study. For me, homosexuality is not a subject, it's a journey. Generally speaking, the film stops where most films dealing with the issue start. Before anything else; *Naissance des Pieuvres/Water Lilies* tells how we fall in love. The prism of homosexuality allows me to talk about the birth of love in a different way. It gives me the chance to film things that have never been filmed before like the scene where the two girls take each other's virginity. But through these three characters, the film says all forms of desire are inevitable, all forms of desire are unappeased and Marie's possibly contextual homosexuality does not make her a martyr.

*In the virginity losing sex scene, there is something shown and something hidden. How did you deal with this scene?*

I didn't really consider big ethical issues for this scene. When I was writing, I knew how I wanted to represent it. I didn't want to play on the ambiguity of sensuality. I wanted it to be a harsh, clinical scene. The two characters want totally different things. On one side, there is love and on the other, there is a favour. I had to find the right distance. When I was shooting the scene, I didn't worry about distance. I had to find the two angles that avoided voyeurism. I looked at simple questions. I wondered how to start and end the scene. I also thought about the sheets. And I did a lot of work with the actors. I wanted a sequence-length shot, using almost one take.

*There is no blood on the sheets...*

I thought about what people would be expecting. I had written there was blood on Marie's hand. I tried to keep it minimal and restrained. I focused more on faces than the rest. Viewers have to believe in a scene like this. I did a lot of research on blogs and internet forums. A lot of teenage girls ask how to

get rid of their virginity, which they don't want to inflict on their boyfriends... There are also people who give very detailed answers... You have to trust in gestures, awkwardness and their own beliefs...

*Let's talk about the actresses and the casting, which are fundamental elements in the film...*

We started out looking for actresses in the street. I wanted actresses who had the same age as the role. The casting director found Pauline Acquart, who plays Marie, at Jardin du Luxembourg by chance. Louise Blachère who plays Anne answered our ad in Studio magazine. Adèle Haenel who plays Floriane, had worked in cinema before in Christophe Ruggia's *Les Diables*. I was looking for physical types above all. In American films, people look the part and I like that... I wanted to play with archetypes so I had to go all the way. Then we had to get to work. We rehearsed for over a month before shooting... They weren't exactly rehearsals... We worked on the periphery of the characters with a coach and also on the girls' concentration. We had to reach an understanding on what we wanted to say. I didn't want any misunderstandings. I was surprised and moved by the three girls' ability to give what they are but also give what they are not at all. They went a lot further than I imagined... They wanted to do the film because it talked about who they are and it seemed real. They felt a sense of responsibility to a cause. It was gripping. It's logical to want to be in movies when you're fifteen years old but in the end, you realize it's for the right reasons.

*What did you say to the young actresses to prepare them?*

For me, directing actors is above all about a relationship of trust. It's nothing technical. There are no tricks, especially with teenagers. I wanted them to get close to their characters because their characters were very different from them. I had to familiarize them with what they were going to be. I had to keep putting things back into context. We worked on the body and on movements that are not necessarily theirs. I also worked on making the girls responsible, on their ability to commit, as well as feelings, tiredness, music, etc. Of course there are things you can take from these actresses but not that much. I don't believe in the naïveté of actresses who are either possessed by a role despite themselves or manipulated by a demiurge. I believe in overall commitment, which doesn't stop me giving very precise directions. I lived with these girls for several months and we developed a relationship of mutual devotion to the film.

*Let's talk about the music, which can be described as electro-aquatic.*

The music was composed by Para One. We met at La fémis where he was studying too. He is a filmmaker and composer. I was really lucky to be able to collaborate closely with him. From the outset, I knew he would do the music. He started composing very early on. This meant we could really communicate and it had an impact on the image editing. I chose electronic music because it is powerfully cinematographic. It allows you to create a coherent object in the whole soundtrack. It really helps you have an overall approach to the film. It gives you freedom and allows you to try a lot of

things. It's very narrative music and it is becoming more and more widespread. It is both experimental and mainstream. The music in the film undergoes a narrative voyage itself. The first track in the film is the most strictly electronic and the last is more symphonic, more cinema, with a mix of strings and synthesizers. It also reflects the film's development. I've never considered music as a commentary. There is no system for knowing how it will come in.

*How do you approach directing a feature film without ever having run a set before? Do you think it's a handicap?*

I had a basic knowledge of shooting. But at La fémis, everyone did mini-apprenticeships of all the different areas. I had also worked on several films with a director, Jean-Baptiste de Laubier, (alias Para One) who I met at La fémis, as assistant director, script and screenplay writer. I had seen what making a film was about, even if I'd never been in command before. I think my relative virginity was an asset. My anxiety ended up dissolving in action. I dealt with each problem when it came up and I was constantly learning. Paradoxically, it allowed me to stand up for a lot of things. I was in action and it was truly a privilege. Also, I'm not a hardcore movie buff. Storytelling interests me in a more general way. I like television, comics and literature as much as cinema. For me, making films was not a childhood dream. It was an adult dream. I wasn't caught up in the fantasy of shooting... My desire to direct was tied up with the object. It helped me be pragmatic.

*Interview by Thierry Jousse*



## NAISSANCE DES PIEUVRES - Prijzen

Naissance des Pieuvres won in 2007 de *Jeugd Award* op het Cabourg Romantic Film Festival in Cabourg, Frankrijk.

